

# **AN INVESTIGATION INTO CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM WITHIN IRELAND**

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## **Abstract**

Although there have been many studies carried out investigating the influences and factors surrounding environmental attitudes and behaviours, the researcher identified a gap in existing theories surrounding corporate environmentalism. The researcher could not identify any existing literature that examines individuals attitudes and behaviours regarding corporate environmentalism, and their awareness as consumers. Therefore, it is evident that further research is needed surrounding the topic, as environmentalism is an issue that affects everyone, and companies and corporations have such a huge contribution to environmental issues. According to Jowit (2010), companies and corporations cause approximately \$2.2 trillion of damage to the planet annually, being a major contributor to many environmental issues.

The aim of this research paper is to identify the attitudes and behaviours of individuals living in Ireland, and their levels of awareness surrounding corporate environmentalism. The primary objectives are to investigate the influence of residential location on attitudes and behaviours, to investigate the existence of a value-action gap, to investigate gender and age as a factor determining attitudes and behaviours, and to investigate the awareness of individuals purchasing habits as consumer.

To determine these objectives, a quantitative deductive approach to the research was applied, resulting in a total of 129 participants, all of whom are over 18 years of age, and are currently residing in Ireland. A survey was the primary data collection instruments and the data was then analysed by thematic analysis.

# Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland  
Research Students Declaration Form  
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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**Title of Thesis:** An Investigation Into Current Attitudes Towards Corporate Environmentalism Within Ireland

**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022

## Material submitted for award

A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself.

B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access repository NORMA.

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This study investigates the current attitudes towards corporate environmentalism within Ireland. Environmental issues are at large and with each passing day they only tend to get bigger and much worse. A large number of environmental issues stem from the unsustainable practices of many companies and corporations globally. It is crucial that these corporations change their ways and lessen their harmful impacts on the environment, and the starting point of this is to ensure that individuals and everyday consumers have positive environmental attitudes, and are aware of the extent of their actions on corporate environmentalism.

Previous studies have been conducted examining the environmental attitudes and actions of individuals in Ireland, and influences of these attitudes. These studies have found that consumerism is a large contributor to environmental issues, as many individuals don't realise the extent of their actions, and the consequences they have on the environment. Past studies have also identified a value-action gap among individuals living in Ireland, and that disparities may occur in some sociodemographic elements.

Although environmental attitudes and behaviours have been studied to some extent, there has been a lack of exploration into the attitude and behaviours surrounding corporate environmentalism. The value-action gap previously mentioned in past studies need to be further addressed and investigated, to determine if it still exists, and if so, to what extent. Further influences such as residential location and age, need to also be explored in this study.

## **1.2 Research Question**

This research paper will aim to answer the proposed research question:

“What are the current attitudes towards corporate environmentalism within Ireland?”.

The paper will also set out to answer a number of research objectives which will aid in the determination of the conclusion to the research question. The research objectives of this study are as follows:

Table 1.2 – Research Objectives

<b>Research Objective 1:</b>	To investigate if residential location (rural versus urban) plays a role in influencing environmental attitudes and behaviours.
<b>Research Objective 2:</b>	To investigate if there is still an existing value-action gap among individuals in Ireland, in regards to environmental attitudes and behaviours.
<b>Research Objective 3:</b>	To investigate if gender and age are factors determining an individuals environmental attitudes and behaviours.
<b>Research Objective 4:</b>	To investigate the awareness of individuals purchasing habits as consumers.

### 1.3 Research Methods

The research objectives outlined above will be investigated and determined by the use of primary research methods. The researcher will adopt a quantitative approach to research in the collection and analysis of the primary research. The researcher will use a close-ended survey as their data collection instrument and the data will then be analysed by thematic analysis to investigate the four research objectives.

### 1.4 Outline of Research Paper

#### 1. *Introduction*

The study begins with an introduction with the purpose of providing background into the proposed research topic, an outline of the research aims, and research objectives. The existing theories and gaps in the literature will also be outlined, in addition to an overview of the structure of the study.

#### 2. *Literature Review*

This chapter examines existing theories surrounding the research topic, including background, current attitudes, and influences. The chapter concludes with clarifying gaps in the existing literature which will be investigated in the study.



### 3. *Methodology*

This chapter provides an in-depth understanding of the research philosophy, the research approach, and the research strategy undertaken in this study. It describes the primary research process, including data collection instruments, sample details, and time horizon. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations of the research study, and any limitations to the paper.

### 4. *Analysis and Findings*

This chapter focuses on the results of the primary data collected, and what the data has discovered. The use of charts in the chapter helps to visually analyse findings. Relationships are explored and themes are formed.

### 5. *Discussion*

This chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of the findings of this study in relation to existing theories found in the literature review. It allows the researcher to either verify the theories as true, or class them as false. It also discusses the findings of the primary research and how they fill or address gaps in the literature.

### 6. *Conclusion and Recommendations*

The final chapter concludes the entire paper and reflects on the findings on discussion in relation to the objectives. The researcher specifies recommendations for the findings of the study and future research.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, existing theories and background information around the topic of environmentalism within Ireland will be examined and contrasted, so the researchers understanding of the research topic can be enhanced. Saunders et al. (2016) states that a critical literature review is essential for the researcher to form grounds for investigation into a specific research topic. According to Kenny (2019), an individuals environmental attitudes can have positive or negative effects on the implementation of environmental policies or strategies. In the past 20 years there has been a lot more awareness around environmental concern, and individuals are beginning to favour environmental protection and extra measures, rather than the growth of the economy. Motherway, et al. (2003) believe that the only way to influence change in environmental behaviour is to spread knowledge and inform on the subject.

All sources used are either journal articles, or research websites, with dates ranging from 1998-2021.

## 2.2 Historical Background

Soyka & Feldman (1998) believed that existing environmental issues weren't of any major importance to past generations. In a study carried out among corporate investors in 1998, it was found that they had little to no interest in the environmental aspects of the companies in which they were investing, most likely because taking environmental measures would be deemed costly and be a liability for the company. Thapa (1999) argues that although some individuals displayed concerns about the environment, only very few actually took measures such as recycling, and purchasing products crafted from recyclable materials, and very few were actually supportive of making changes.

In terms of attitudes within Ireland, Fahy (2005) noted that there was a huge gap between the environmental values and the environmental actions of individuals, as those who expressed concern failed to carry out the appropriate measures to mirror their concerns. Some of this may be due to a number of social factors restricting the extent of peoples actions. Factors beyond the control of individuals such as limited incomes, time constraints, or the lack of access to facilities like recycling, will restrict actions which can be taken.

In a study carried out by Drury Research (2000), 22 years ago, they came to the conclusion that environmental attitudes and issues within Ireland were highly conflicting. This is because after scrutinising the behaviours of the general public towards the environment, they found that although people may say one thing about their environmental beliefs, they don't back up their words with their actions. Using recycling as an example, a lot of individuals declared that if the appropriate recycling measures were in place within a close proximity, then they would surely take part in recycling. However, it was found that once an area has the appropriate recycling facilities in place, there is still a huge amount of people who don't bother with efforts to recycle. This can also be backed up by Thapa (1999), who noted that individuals did not want to take any beneficial measures to help making changes for the environment, even though they had expressed concerns.

As of 2002, in a survey carried out by Motherway, et al. (2003), it was found that within Ireland, the area for greatest cause of environmental concern was nuclear power plants. A lot of people were also particularly concerned about how lakes and rivers were being highly polluted. People also believed that industry such as construction, manufacturing, and production was an area of concern for the environment.

With regards to Irish adolescents and their environmental attitudes, Daneshmandi (2006) found that they scored quite highly for their knowledge on environmental issues and their environmental attitudes.

### **2.3 Current Attitudes**

Kenny (2019) examined individuals environmental attitudes in relation to the introduction of water charges in Ireland. He found that peoples inclination to value environmental protection rather than the state of the economy, didn't have any affect on their support for the implementation of water charges. However, how willing they were to personally make sacrifices for environmental change, did have an affect on their support for the implementation of water charges.

In a study carried out by Connolly and Prothero (2008), it was found that individuals with good environmental attitudes believed in boycotting companies who did not practice good environmental behaviours, as a way of making them become more sustainable.

One major contributor to many environmental issues is individuals tendency to purchase unsustainable goods from unsustainable companies. Consumerism has many environmental impacts, which many people may not be aware of.

A quote from Maniates (2002) states: *“the individualisation of responsibility, because it characterises environmental problems as the consequence of destructive consumer choice, asks that individuals imagine themselves as consumers first and citizens second”* (Maniates, 2002, p.58).

Which simply means, that individuals should take more time to look at what they are purchasing and the company which they are purchasing from, and where possible, to try and only purchase goods and services which are environmentally friendly, from companies with positive environmental behaviours.

Although it is important to have a good environmental attitude, it is not always beneficial in influencing others to follow suit, as the majority of the time there is a value-action gap where people will say one thing about their environmental attitudes, yet they will do another thing, and not portray environmentally beneficial behaviours. Like Drury Research (2000) and Thapa (1999), it was mentioned by Kenny (2019) that individuals often proclaim to have “green” or environmentally-friendly attitudes, but do not express behaviour to back up their proclamations. He also stated that many people of the general public tend to have a negative attitude towards environmental taxes. Most people believe that it is the government’s way of increasing revenues, rather than benefitting the environment, as they fail to understand how taxes such as the water charges, or taxes on energy could have any positive benefits on the environment.

Many people desire to live in the countryside or rural areas, as there are many beneficial environmental qualities to rural areas. Because of this it is interesting to know what environmental attitudes individuals living rurally have. According to Brereton, et al. (2011), objective measures set in place to monitor environmental performance, in many rural locations in Ireland, have considerably degenerated. The development of new properties including houses, housing estates, and other buildings and infrastructure into rural locations have brought with them environmental issues such as air pollution, noise pollution, and the pervasion of urban areas into rural regions. It was found that people living rurally were

concerned about the development of new housing as it meant an increase in environmental issues such as downgrading the natural landscapes, higher levels of carbon dioxide gases into the atmosphere from the increased volume of cars, and the pollution of natural water sources from septic tanks.

On the other hand, we have individuals who live in more built up towns or urban areas of Ireland. Connolly and Prothero (2008) conducted a survey on a number of individuals living in urban areas of Ireland. The outcome of the survey found that even though they were living in urban areas, most of the individuals still had some sort of positive environmental attitudes and they tried to mirror this in some of their day-to-day routine. It was found that everyone who took part in the survey, took part in recycling to some extent, and some of them had compost bins for food scraps. Some of these individuals tend to keep a close eye on their usage of water and energy, in the hopes of doing their part to lessen the impact on ecological footprints. In today's society, a lot of people tend to value material items or follow trends, and are unaware of how damaging these items or where they come from, may be. This has been acknowledged by individuals who took part in this survey, as they say that they tend to try their best to purchase from more sustainable companies. Apart from this, some individuals from urban areas also try to attend meetings for environmental associations, local council meetings for conservation practices, among several other activities for the promotion of environmental awareness. Many of the individuals who partook in the survey, said that they felt that they had a responsibility or a duty to do their part for positive environmental change, but at the same time they felt anxiousness about what their actions should be.

Among the environmental attitudes of individuals living in rural areas, their main concern was the awful quality of drinking water from wells, of which 25.6% was contaminated with faeces and 22% containing E. coli. They also believed that farming and slurry spreading was an issue for the environment.

According to Kenny (2019), there are many sociodemographic elements linked to environmentalism. He found that males tend to have less positive environmental attitudes and behaviours than females, as females are more likely to portray strong environmental behaviours, followed by strong environmental attitudes. He also noted that formal education and an individual's income, are major factors in influencing an individual's environmental attitudes and behaviours. This is due to the extra knowledge surrounding positive

environmental attitudes and behaviours that individuals will gain through formal education. Not only this, but he suggests that current political matters and individuals interest surrounding these will also have an impact on their environmental attitudes and actions.

Kenny (2019) also found that when it comes to national elections, the environmental attitudes of individuals will be made clear by the outcomes of the elections, and therefore, if European government renewable energy policies and strategies will be acquired in Ireland. This works when people with positive environmental attitudes become aware of the beneficial or detrimental effects of policies on the environment as this will then alter their view of the policy either positively or negatively. Either way, their responses to these policies may then have an impact on the introduction of such policies, by political parties or the government. Such an example would be the introduction of water charges in Ireland. When the Irish government initially tried to implement water charged in Ireland, it resulted in nationwide protests, which ultimately ended with the abandonment of the charges.

Charges introduced as environmental measures may end up having more of a negative effect on individuals in general rather than an positively affecting their environmental attitudes and behaviours. For example, the introduction of water charges may affect individuals who are already struggling financially, and in turn, they would then begin to use much less water than what covers basic human needs. This may then end up causing families to not only be struggling financially, but it could also cause health struggles (Kenny, 2019).

## **2.4 Influences**

In a recent study by Gong and Zheng (2021), they suggested that individuals who reside in countries where their cultures rely on the heavy consumption of harmful resources, don't tend to realise the extent of the current environmental difficulties being faced.

According to Kenny (2019), within Ireland a major factor influencing environmental attitudes and behaviours is education. Information and knowledge around environmental issues and strategies, which have been taught in schools at all levels, have an affect on the formation of individual attitudes and beliefs.

There has also been suggestions that attitudes on corporate environmentalism have been influenced financially. Kenny (2019) states that people who tend to have more disposable income or higher rates of pay, will be more likely to spend on climate change initiatives, or

environmental protection measures. Economic conditions will also have a role to play in influencing environmental attitudes and behaviours. During periods of high economic growth, is when individuals will be more likely to spend on environmental protection, which is seen as a luxury good. Therefore, when the economy takes a hit, or there is a recession, environmental protection is not seen as a necessity or a priority, and a lot of people will not spend on it. Contrary to this, Brereton et al. (2011), found that in a survey conducted on individuals residing in rural Ireland, most people rated aspects of environmental importance such as ‘good air quality’ and ‘excellent quality of drinking water’, much further up their list of priorities than their personal incomes, suggesting that individuals living in rural areas perceive environmental issues as more important than economic conditions.

The research presented in this section indicates that culture and location can play a role in influencing attitudes towards environmentalism, and many other factors such as ones education or maturity may also have an influence.

## **2.5 Gaps in current literature**

Most recent research in this field has failed to address the corporate side of environmentalism and individuals attitudes towards corporate environmentalism within Ireland. Jowit (2010) suggests that companies cause \$2.2 trillion of damage to the planet, being a major contributor to many environmental issues. Therefore, it is important and of interest to have some insight into current attitudes that currently exist around corporate environmentalism, such as individuals awareness surrounding it, their attitudes towards it, their actions that may actually be influencing or contributing to corporate environmentalism.

Also, most previous research has failed to address any differences in environmental attitudes among rural versus urban living individuals, as it would be interesting to note any differences in concerns or opinions, based on location within Ireland. It could be suggested that individuals residing in rural Ireland may have better environmental attitudes as they may have more appreciation for the environment and nature because they’re constantly surrounded by it. Likewise, it could be suggested that individuals residing in urban locations may have more negative environmental attitudes or behaviours, as most of the time a lot of towns in Ireland are more prone to littering, and therefore this is what a lot of urban living individuals may be accustomed to. So, it would be of value and of interest to the study, to explore these theories to either verify or falsify them.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The primary objective of this research paper is to investigate current attitudes towards corporate environmentalism within Ireland. The research process began with the collection and interpretation of secondary data in the literature review, that looks at any existing or past attitudes towards environmentalism in general, and also corporate environmentalism within Ireland. The literature review identified gaps in the literature where there has been a lack of research on the corporate side of environmentalism, and differences in attitudes existing between individuals living in rural or urban locations. This research will aim to address these gaps by determining and investigating current attitudes and influences of these attitudes among individuals in rural and urban Ireland.

The use of primary research will then be used further on in the study. This chapter aims to outline the primary research process and the reasons for the choice of primary research.

The chapter will begin by examining the research philosophy, the chosen approach to research, the research strategy, the time-horizon, sampling strategy, and the chosen method for data analysis. The chapter will conclude by addressing methodological limitations to the collection and interpretation of the primary research, which is followed by a conclusion.

### **3.2 Research Philosophy**

The research adopted an positivist philosophy for this study. A positivist research philosophy is most suitable for this study because according to Saunders, et. al. (2016), it believes that social entities and organisations are real, just as physical objects and natural phenomena are.

Researchers adapting a positivist approach, must collect primary data and existing theories surrounding the topic being explored, in order to form the backbone of the study, and to determine sub-objectives to the research question.

This study aims to discover and analyse the social aspects and attitudes existing around corporate environmentalism. The primary research for this study is carried out in a real environment, and therefore, the nature of the study will be limited to positivism. The data for this study is collected from an observed social environment, which further reflects a positivist



approach. As a positivist approach focuses on collecting pure data, without the impact of interpretation or bias, it is the method that best suited this study.

It is also critical that a positivist researcher remains neutral and disconnected from the research that they are carrying out, and the data that they collect so they do not have any sort of a personal influence on the research findings. In order to do so, the method in how the researcher gathers the data, must be done so that it is value-free, and the researcher remains external from the collection of data.

As primary research is collected from individuals, analysed and interpreted, more insight is gained into the topic, so this is the most suitable approach.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

Although the literature review examined and shed some light into the topic of environmental attitudes within Ireland, it was concluded that there were gaps in the literature, and therefore, additional research is necessary regarding up-to-date attitudes, and the area of corporate environmentalism. The gaps identified in the literature review was attitudes surrounding corporate environmentalism, and differences in attitudes of individuals living in rural versus urban Ireland. These gaps are important to discover and address as they will provide more insight into influences on environmental attitudes, and an insight into the attitudes and behaviours towards corporate environmentalism among individuals within Ireland.

This study took a deductive approach, as academic literature and established theory was first identified and collected, followed by a research survey which was designed and distributed to gather the appropriate data and build onto the already established theory.

Secondary data was first collected and analysed, before the use of primary data, which would be tested against secondary data, and also address any gaps in the literature review. Although both primary and secondary data are being used, the study relies heavily on the use of primary data as; 1) secondary data around the topic is scarce, and 2) the use of surveys means the researcher has direct communication with participants, therefore the researcher has better power over the primary data being collected.

### **3.4 Research Strategy**

This subsection will describe the chosen primary research method used to gather the relevant data to fill the previously mentioned gaps in literature.

It was determined that a survey was the best research instrument for this study, along with a quantitative analysis method. Qualitative methods such as interviews were considered for the data collection method. However, interviews are quite time consuming once transcripts are created, edited, and analysed. Also, the amount of participants is extremely limited so there wouldn't be enough insight into the topic to gain accurate information, or results. For example, the study of a large number of residents in Ireland, their environmental attitudes, and their beliefs or attitudes towards corporate environmentalism, would be beyond the extent of interviews.

This study took a quantitative approach in the form of surveys, which was a flexible, dependable and methodical method, for the research topic, as the gathered information can then be put to use in both descriptive and explanatory forms. The research survey will be utilised by obtaining information based on the perspectives and attitudes of individuals in Ireland. The researcher will analyse the survey responses from participants, which is primary data highly crucial to the study, and this data will then be studied to determine cause and effect. Although some of the survey questions may not relate directly to the research question, they will help provide a deeper, more meaningful insight into existing relationships and existing attitudes.

Quantitative data is used, as it is most efficient in measuring descriptive data, like attitudes and opinions, of individuals towards corporate environmentalism. Not only this, but the data collection methods of quantitative research, tends to be highly structured (Saunders, 2016), such as the close-ended survey questions used in the study. The reason for using a survey as the main data collection tool, is because it can be easily distributed to a vast sample size, to gain better feedback and responses, in order to fill any gaps in the literature review, to the highest quality. The quantitative survey is efficient in gathering information relevant to, and highly essential to the research topic, so variables and relationships can be identified and analysed accordingly (Saunders, 2016). Relationships such as the attitudes and actions of individuals on a particular topic, eg. Recycling, or purchasing sustainably, can be easily examined. When statistical analysis is then applied to this data, the collected theory in the literature review, can then be either proved or disproved. Because quantitative data can be analysed scientifically, this is a lot more efficient and a lot less time consuming for the researcher, also leading to more accurate outcomes (Nueman, 2014). Following the analysis of data, relationships, and correlations found from the primary research, this can then be compared to, and tested against, the theory gathered in the literature review.

### **3.5 Survey sample**

The target population for the survey was individuals, both male and female, aged 18+, currently residing in rural and urban Ireland. The sampling carried out in the primary research was non-probability sampling. The sample was gathered using a random snowball sampling approach, on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat.

### **3.6 Time Horizon**

The study took a cross-sectional approach to research on the basis of time constraints, as this was most suitable for the research at hand. The research also took a quantitative approach, as qualitative research methods are a lot more time consuming due to the vast amount of data to be analysed, which also proves difficult in generalising results.

Participants were notified at the beginning of the survey that in total, it would take approximately 2-3 minutes to complete. The survey was active on many social media platforms accepting responses for 11 days, as any longer and the researcher would not have had sufficient time to complete the study.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Method**

The data collected from the surveys will be analysed using thematic analysis. All data will be input into a Microsoft excel spreadsheet, and will be sorted according to themes and categories. This ensures the data can be easily accessed for analysis. Any surveys containing errors or any unfinished surveys will be disregarded, as data must be clean before beginning the analysis process, as to ensure accurate results (Duignan, 2014). Charts will be created in Microsoft Excel for the data, to better visually analyse, and to showcase any existing relationships between specific datasets. Once this is complete, the researcher will again familiarise themselves with literature review, in order to code the data. Once all of the data has been coded, the researcher will use the survey questions along with the coded data from the literature review and they will be divided into common themes. These themes will form sub-sections, and shall be renamed to suit the data being analysed (Saunders et al, 2019). In each sub-section, the findings for each survey question will be analysed, along with any existing relationships or correlations. The analysis section will conclude with a brief overview of the findings before they are discussed in greater detail in the discussion section.

### **3.8 Ethical Principals**

Before beginning this thesis, the researcher ensured to make themselves familiar with NCI's ethical policy. The policy is titled: Ethical Guidelines and Procedures for Research involving Human Participants, dated September 2013. It is essential that during the whole data collection process, that the privacy of participants is always respected. Participants may feel that some of the survey questions are personal in nature, and therefore it will be stated that all data collected will be stored securely, with participants identities remaining anonymous.

*“During the collection and analysis of data, it is imperative that no harm is caused to participants”*(Saunders, 2016)

At the beginning of the survey, the researcher will give context to the background of the research, and will clearly state that at no point during the research process the responses of participants will be shared with anyone else. Participants will be informed that the survey is completely voluntary, and they are free to leave the survey at any time they wish. Participants will be let know that if at any point during or after the survey process they wish to make contact with the researcher, the researchers name, contact email, and contact number will be provided. Participants of the survey must be over the age of 18, as no minors will be included in the survey process due to ethical principals.

### **3.9 Methodological Limitations**

The sample size of participants in the study was relatively small in regards to the topic being investigated, and the requirements of the study. There was also a higher number of female participants which may or may not have affected the results of the survey.

There was of course a time constraint, which limited the amount of participants that the researcher could gather.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of the research paper was to determine current attitudes towards corporate environmentalism within Ireland. To do this, research was carried out to examine the general environmental attitudes of individuals, to gain some insight into their thoughts surrounding the environment and protective environmental measures, as a starting point. Research into their attitudes towards companies and corporations and their effects on the environment was then also gathered. Survey questions were focused around environmental concerns, sustainable actions, sustainable habits, and beliefs towards corporate and government strategies.

The first couple of questions in the survey aimed at gathering some background information on the participants. There are six different age groups for participants, 18-24 years, 25-34 years, 35-44 years, 45-54 years, 55-64 years, and 65+ years. The gender categories were male, female, and other. In order to gain a deeper insight into individuals attitudes and what may influence them, a question asking the residential location (rural/urban), of the participants, was included.

The survey findings were divided into four separate cases sections for analysis. These sections were sociodemographic, environmental concerns, environmental awareness, and environmental actions. Upon analysis of the results, it could be seen that there was quite positive environmental attitudes among individuals in Ireland, although this could not be applied to everyone who had participated in the survey. The results shed light onto the influence of residential location on environmental attitudes. Sociodemographic elements such as gender and attitude differences and, attitude differences within multiple age groups were also explored.

## 4.2 Sociodemographic

Below are the responses of participants to the sociodemographic survey questions:

- **Age**
  - 42.6% - 18-24 years
  - 21.7% - 25-34 years
  - 8.5% - 35-44 years
  - 20.9% - 45-54 years
  - 5.4% - 55-64 years
  - 0.7% - 65+ years
  
- **Gender**
  - 31% - Male
  - 69% - Female
  
- **Location**
  - 52.7% - Rural
  - 47.3% - Urban

The responses of individuals concern towards Global warming was quite similar among males and females, but still slightly higher in females, with 20% of males 30% of females stating they were 'a great deal concerned'. 20% and 30% of males, and 28% and 26% of females, stated their concern was 'a lot' and 'moderate', respectively. 6% of females responded that they were 'not at all' concerned about global warming, however, despite this, it is still clear that females have a higher concern towards global warming than men.

With regards to age, the highest positive responses and lowest negative responses concerning global warming, came from the 35-44 years age group. The highest number of negative responses, being those who care 'a little' or 'not at all' about the effects of global warming, are the 25- 34 years age group, scoring 26% and 4% respectively. This age group was also

highest scoring for being on the fence, being ‘moderately’ concerned, along with the 45-54 age group, pertaining a more neutral attitude towards global warming.

In regards to the area of residence of participants, there was quite an even split with 52% residing rurally and 48% living in more urban, built up areas. Responses from participants from both areas were actually quite similar, but slightly higher positive responses from those living in urban locations. In terms of concern for global warming 47% of respondents living rural stated they were definitely concerned, with a slightly higher positive response of 58% from those living urban.

Figure 1. Importance of Recycling by location

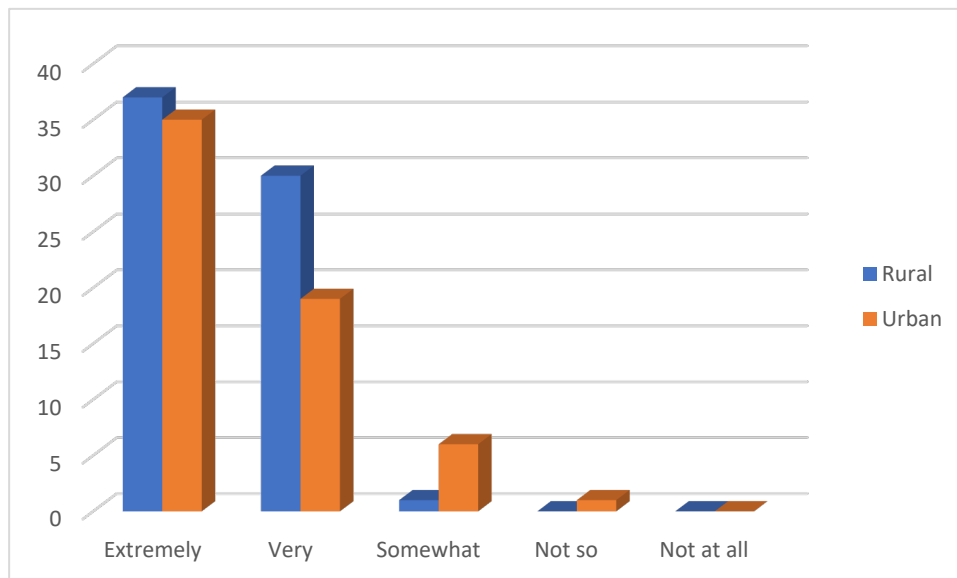


Figure 1 shows the attitudes towards were cycling as a positive environmental strategy among participants by location. It is clear by the graph that both groups have positive attitudes towards recycling measures, with rural individuals having a combined total of 98% believing recycling is ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important, and urban respondents having a combined total of 88%. Positively, none of the verbal respondents believe that recycling is unimportant, while only 2% of urban participants do.

Figure 2. Recycling actions taken by location

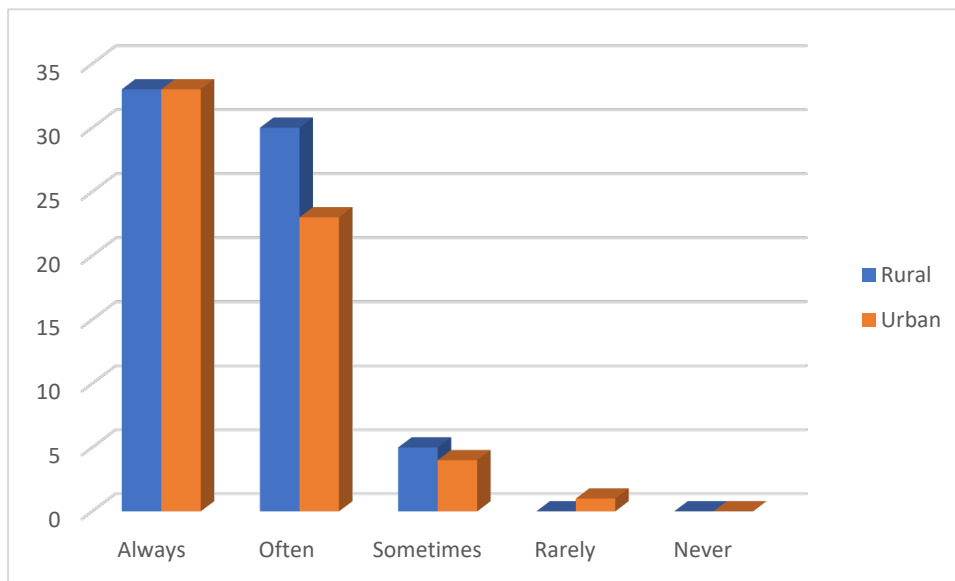


Figure 2 shows the recycling actions taken by the participants divided by location. 93% of participants who live rurally take part in recycling either all, or most, of the time. Likewise, 92% of participants from urban areas take the time to recycle their waste all or most of the time, and only 1% rarely recycle. When compared, figure one and two show us that in both locations most peoples actions actually do mirror their thoughts or intentions when it comes to recycling measures.

To delve even deeper into the socio demographic findings, it has been discovered by the results that “Females”, aged “18-24” years and living in a “rural” location, has the greatest concern for global warming.

### 4.3 Environmental Awareness

Below are the responses of participants to the environmental awareness survey questions:

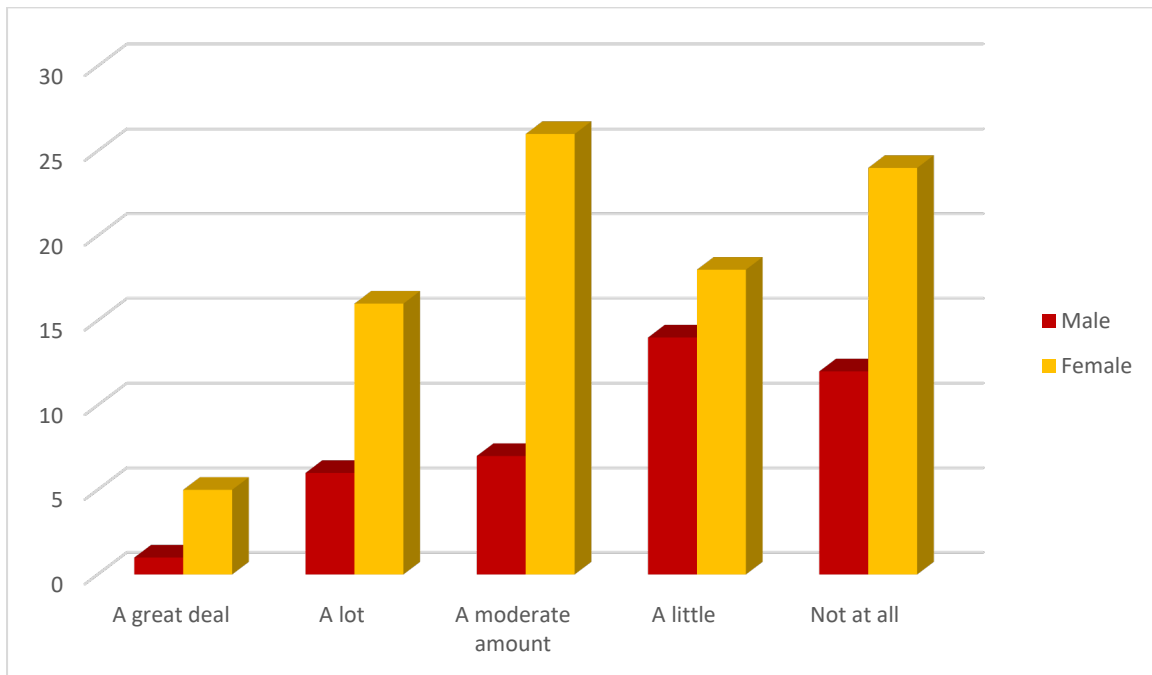
- **How important do you think it is to recycle waste?**
  - 55.8% - Extremely important
  - 38% - Very important
  - 5.4% - Somewhat important
  - 0.8% - Not so important



- 0% - Not important at all
- **How important do you think it is to try and purchase from sustainable companies?**
  - 22.5% - Extremely important
  - 47.3% - Very important
  - 26.3% - Somewhat important
  - 2.3% - Not so important
  - 1.6% - Not important at all
- **How conscious of the environment are you while purchasing clothing?**
  - 4.7% - A great deal
  - 17.1% - A lot
  - 25.6% - A moderate amount
  - 24.8% - A little
  - 27.8% - Not at all
- **How conscious of the environment are you while purchasing cosmetics/toiletries?**
  - 8.6% - A great deal
  - 16.3% - A lot
  - 29.4% - A moderate amount
  - 28.6% - A little
  - 17.1% - Not at all
- **How conscious of the environment are you while purchasing groceries?**
  - 8.6% - A great deal
  - 19.4% - A lot
  - 39.4% - A moderate amount
  - 16.3% - A little
  - 16.3% - Not at all

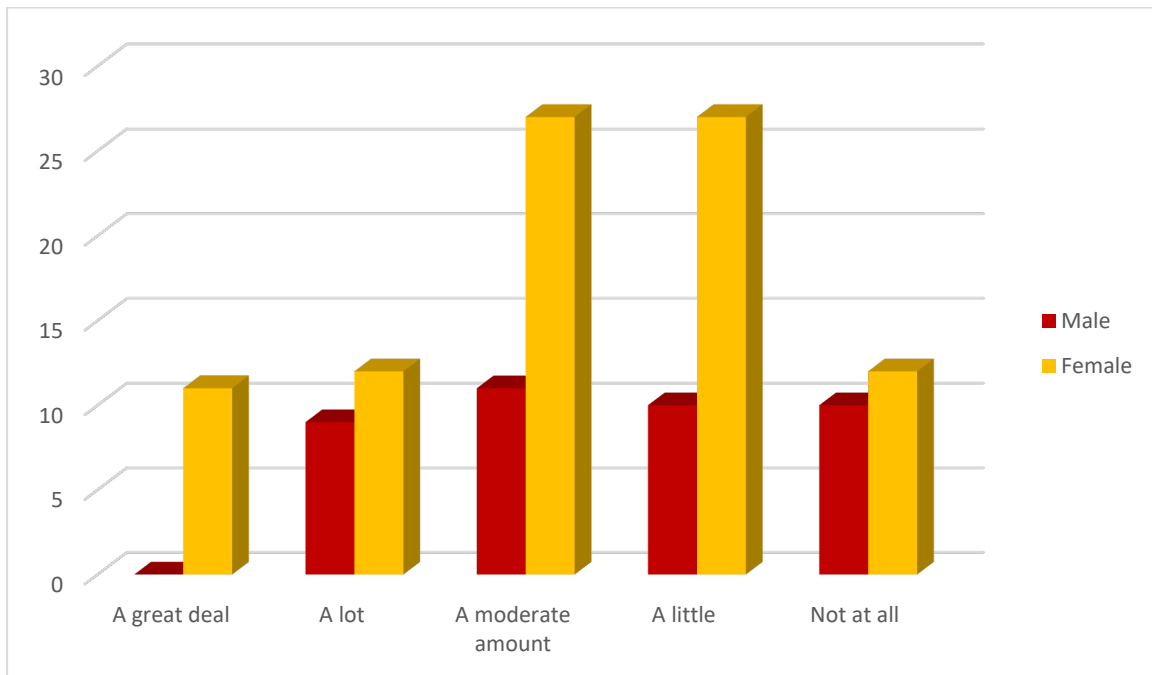
In terms of environmental awareness in everyday life, the majority of respondents scored quite poorly on this. There were questions with three different scenarios presented to the participants. The results of these questions were then analysed in regards to gender, age, and residential location.

Figure 3. How conscious of the environment are you while purchasing clothing?



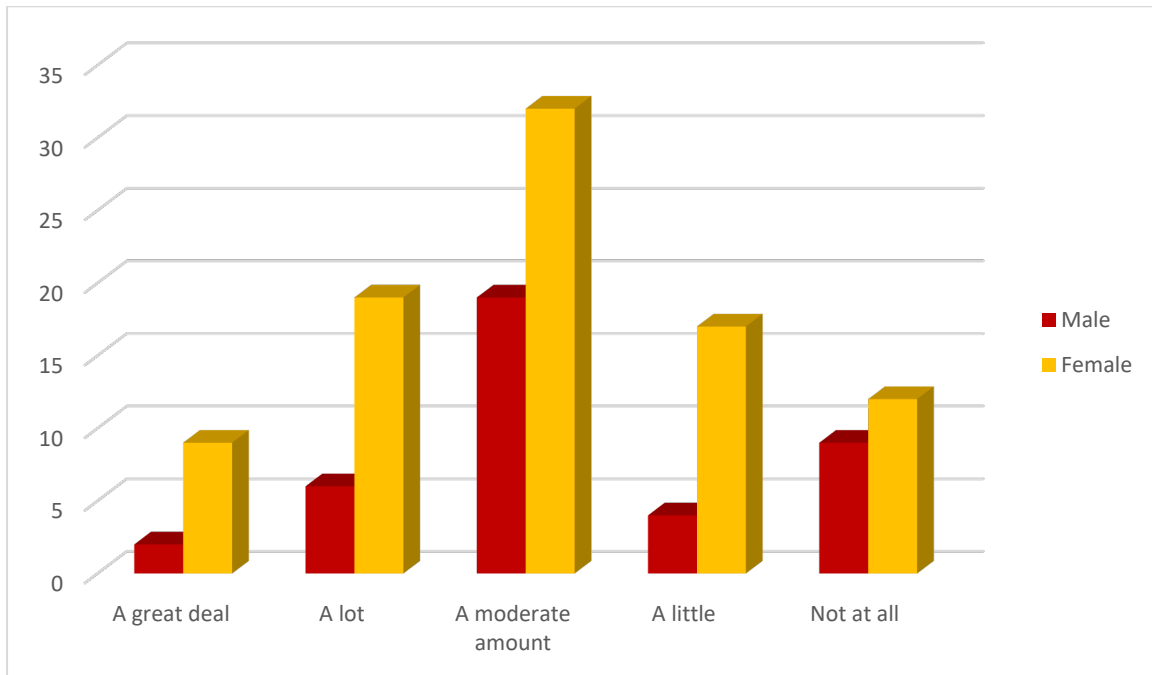
The first question asked was “How conscious of the environment are you when purchasing clothes?”. Respondents could choose from 5 answers, ‘a great deal’ being the highest, and ‘not at all’ being the lowest. When first analysed against gender, the results showed that only 2.5% of male respondents were ‘a great deal’ conscious of environmental effects while clothes shopping, but this was slightly higher among females, being 5.6%. Similarly, 15% of males and 18% of females responded that they were conscious ‘a lot’ of the time while purchasing clothing. However, these positive responses are significantly lower than the high rate of negative responses to the question. The combined responses for both ‘a little’ and ‘not at all’ conscious was 65% for males and 47% for females, which tells us that there is poor awareness around the detrimental effects of the clothing/ fashion industry on the environment, or possibly just a lack of concern among individuals. Digging even deeper again, the group portraying the highest levels of awareness towards the negative effects of the clothing industry on the environment is “females”, aged “45-54” years, residing in an “urban” area.

Figure 4. How conscious of the environment are you while purchasing cosmetics/toiletries?



The second question was “How conscious of the environment are you when purchasing cosmetics/ toiletries?”. Although responses to this were still leaning more towards the negative end, there was a slightly better response rate for females who were conscious ‘a great deal’ when purchasing cosmetics/ toiletries, being 12%. No male respondents are ‘a great deal’ conscious when purchasing cosmetics/toiletries. 50% of male respondents and 43% of female respondents are in some way unconcerned about their effects on the environment when purchasing cosmetics/toiletries. “Females”, aged “45-54” years, living in “urban” areas, where the group showing the highest level of concern of their purchasing habits in regards to cosmetics/toiletries. one possible reason for the higher levels of awareness in females over males when purchasing cosmetics/toiletries, is because there would be a lot more products in this market aimed at females. For example, when purchasing products such as make up, a lot of females may only purchase products from companies that do not take part in animal testing. the process of animal testing is 1 area that has had quite an improvement in the past few years, and there has been a lot of increased awareness around it, But this doesn’t necessarily mean that other aspects of environmentalism are given much thought when individuals are purchasing products.

Figure 5. How conscious of the environment are you while purchasing groceries?



The third question surrounding awareness of purchasing habits was “*How conscious of the environment are you when purchasing groceries?*”. Only 8.5% of total participants said they were ‘a great deal’ concerned (5% of males and 10% of females). 48% of males and 36% of females were moderately conscious of the effects their buying habits could have on the environment while 23% of males and 13% of females didn’t consider the effects of their purchasing habits at all while grocery shopping. Overall, the group showing the highest level of awareness was “females”, aged “45-54” years, living in an “urban” area. One possible explanation for the poor levels of purchasing awareness and effects on the environment while grocery shopping is because they may be too focused on the prices of the goods themselves, And therefore they may not give much thought to the packaging of the goods, where they came from, or where they were produced, etc. For example, when participants were asked about what was limiting them from taking better environmental actions, 66.7% of respondents stated ‘limited income/cost of living’. Upon comparing these results with the results of this question, it was found that 9% of those struggling financially were still ‘a great deal’ conscious while purchasing groceries, 40% were moderately conscious, and 29% were ‘a little’ or ‘not at all’ concerned about their purchasing habits environmental effects when buying groceries.

When asked about how important they believed it was to purchase sustainably, 22.5% said they believed it was ‘extremely’ important. 47.3% believed it was ‘very’ important, and only 3.9% believed it was less than somewhat important. The group which believed it was most important to try and make more sustainable purchases is, “females”, aged “45-54” years, and living in an “urban” location.

#### **4.4 Environmental Concern**

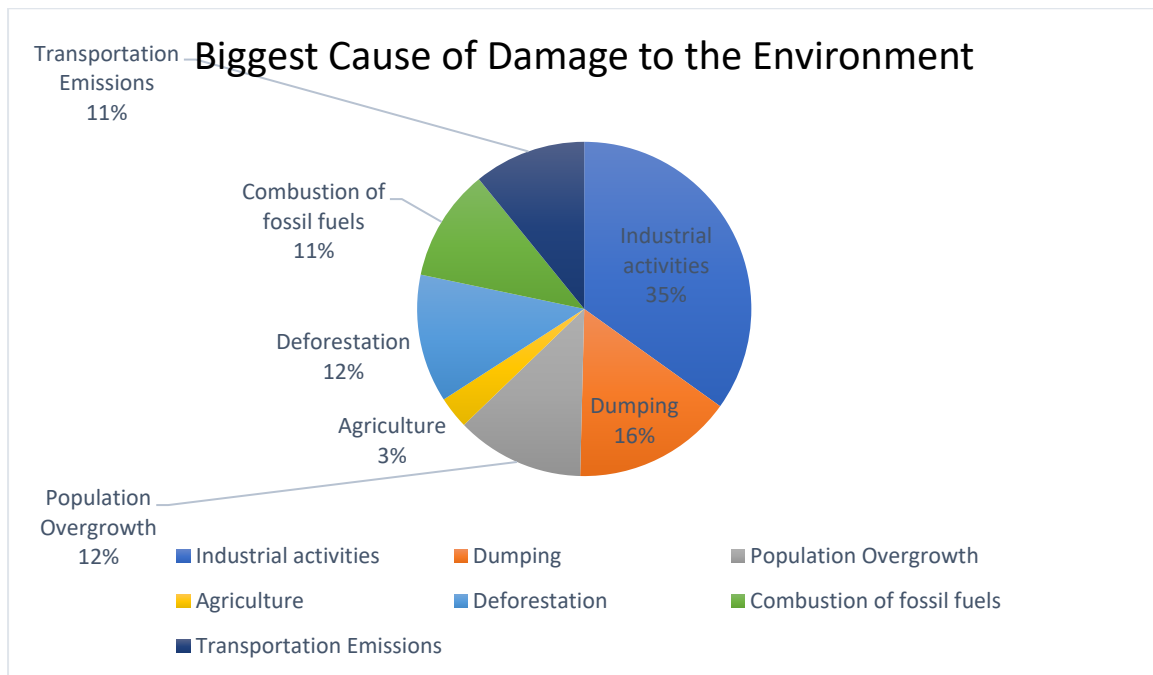
Below are the responses of participants to the environmental awareness survey questions:

- **Is environmental protection more important, less important, or just as important as improving the economy?**
  - 32.6% - More important
  - 60.4% - Just as important
  - 7% - Less important
  
- **How concerned are you about global warming?**
  - 27.1% - A great deal
  - 25.6% - A lot
  - 27% - A moderate amount
  - 16.3% - A little
  - 3.9% - Not at all
  
- **Which do you think is the biggest cause of damage to the environment?**
  - 34.9% - Industrial activities
  - 15.5% - Dumping
  - 12.4% - Population Overgrowth
  - 3% - Agriculture
  - 12.4% - Deforestation
  - 10.9% - Combustion of fossil fuels
  - 10.9% - Transportation Emissions
  
- **Do you believe companies/corporations pose a threat to the environment?**

- 90.7% - Yes
- 9.3% - No
  
- **Do you believe companies/corporations are doing enough to be environmentally friendly?**
  - 5.4% - Yes
  - 74.4% - No
  - 20.2% - Maybe
  
- **Do you believe the Irish government should have stricter environmental policies/strategies in place?**
  - 77.5% - Yes
  - 5.4% - No
  - 17.1% - Maybe

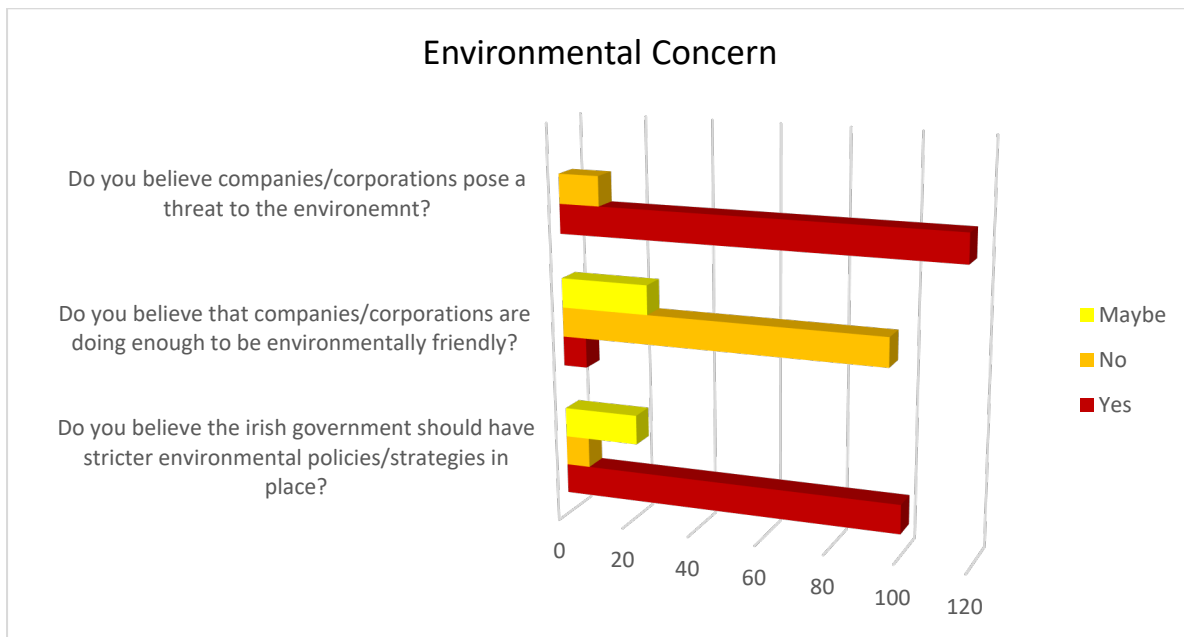
Participants in the survey were asked if they believed that Environmental Protection was more important, less important, or just as important as improving the economy. ‘Just as important’ received the highest amount of responses (60.4%). 47.5% of males and 66% of females believed the environment and economy to be of equal importance. 32.6% of respondents believe that protecting the environment is more important than improving the economy (42.5% of males and 27% of females). 7% of participants would rather a healthy economy over a healthy environment, being 10% of males and 7% of females. In terms of location, the two areas scored very evenly. 30% rural and 32% urban believe that environmental protection is a top priority, while 63% rural and 57% urban would rank Environmental Protection and improvement of the economy as equally essential.

Figure 6. Biggest cause of damage to the environment



The participants were then asked what area they believed was the biggest cause of damage to the environment. There were seven options to choose from; industrial activities, dumping, population overgrowth, agriculture, deforestation, combustion of fossil fuels, and transportation emissions. According to the survey results, the area with the biggest cause of concern is industrial activities (34.9%). The area which respondents believe is the least cause for concern is agriculture (3%). This is telling us that most individuals believe that companies/ corporations need to drastically lessen their impact on the environment and become a lot more sustainable.

Figure 7. Corporate Environmentalism



The next question asked respondents if they believed that companies/corporations posed a threat to the environment. It is clear from the results that the bulk of individuals feel strongly that companies/corporations have a detrimental effect on the environment. 91% of participants voted “Yes” and 9% of participants voted “No”. When broken down among male and female respondents, 95% of male respondents and 87% of female respondents chose “Yes” they did believe that companies/corporations were damaging the environment. The group with the greatest concern for companies/corporations negative effects on the environment is “females”, aged “18-2” years, residing in a “rural” location. This huge skew towards the “Yes” outcome tells us that people are aware of the damages companies/corporations have on the environment.

Following this, participants were then asked if they personally believe that companies/corporations are doing enough to change their ways and try to be more sustainable. 74.4% of respondents believe that companies/corporations could be doing a lot more to lessen their impact on the environment ( 75% of males and 73% of females). 20.2% of participants were unsure ( 20% of males and 20% of females). This outcome suggests that most individuals believe that companies/corporations could be taking extra measures to try and limit their damaging effects on the environment.



Participants were then asked if they believed that the Irish government should have stricter environmental policies or strategies in place. 80% of males and 76% of females responded “Yes”. Only a small number of participants believe that the Irish government do not need to enforce stricter environmental policies or strategies (7.5% of males and 4.5% of females). 12.5% of males and 19% of females were unsure about whether stricter strategies or policies should be put in place. The group with the largest amount of “Yes” responses is “females”, aged “18-24” years, residing in a “rural” location. The group with the largest amount of “No” responses is “males”, aged “18-24” years, residing in a “rural” location. This is a clear disparity among genders in the same age group and same location. Overall, it is clear from the results that the majority of respondents believe that the Irish government needs to be a lot stricter enforcing environmental policies in Ireland.

#### **4.5 Environmental Actions**

Below are the responses of participants to the environmental awareness survey questions:

- **How often do you recycle waste?**
  - 51.1% - Always
  - 41.1% - Often
  - 7% - Sometimes
  - 0.8% - Rarely
  - 0.8% - Never
  
- **How often do you try and purchase from sustainable companies?**
  - 8.5% - Always
  - 41.1% - Often
  - 38% - Sometimes
  - 9.3% - Rarely
  - 3.1% - Never
  
- **How likely are you to buy a more expensive product if it is better for the environment?**
  - 14.7% - Very likely

- 32.6% - Likely
  - 31.8% - Neither likely nor unlikely
  - 15.5% - Unlikely
  - 5.4% - Very unlikely
- **What is limiting you from taking extra environmental measures?**
    - 66.7% - Limited income/ cost of living
    - 14% - Time constraints
    - 15.5% - Lack of access to facilities
    - 3.8% - Other
- **How likely are you to change your lifestyle to better suit the environment?**
    - 15.5% - Very likely
    - 50.4% - Likely
    - 24.8% - Neither likely nor unlikely
    - 6.2% - Unlikely
    - 3.1% - Very unlikely
- **Do you believe in boycotting companies, in order for them to implement environmental policies/strategies?**
    - 42.6% - Yes
    - 19.4% - No
    - 38% - Maybe

Participants were asked a range of questions to determine their environmental actions. The data from this section would then be compared to the data in the ‘Environmental concern’ and ‘Environmental awareness’ sections, to determine if there was an existing value-action gap, where individuals say one thing and do another.

The first question participants had to answer surrounding environmental action was how often they recycle waste. 92.2% of respondents take part in recycling waste either ‘always’ or ‘often’. Only 0.8% of respondents ‘rarely’ recycle. 53% of males and 51% of females stated that they ‘always’ recycle, 33% of males and 45% of females ‘often’ recycle, and only

2.5% of males 'rarely' recycle. Regarding location, recycling measures are slightly better in urban areas rather than in rural regions. 48% of participants living in a rural setting would 'always' recycle, whereas 54% of participants in urban areas would 'always' take part in recycling. The group with the best recycling habits is "females", aged "45-54" years, living in an "urban" location. This may suggest that Recycling centres on other recycling facilities are a lot more accessible in urban regions, and this may be why there are better recycling habits among individuals living in an urban area.

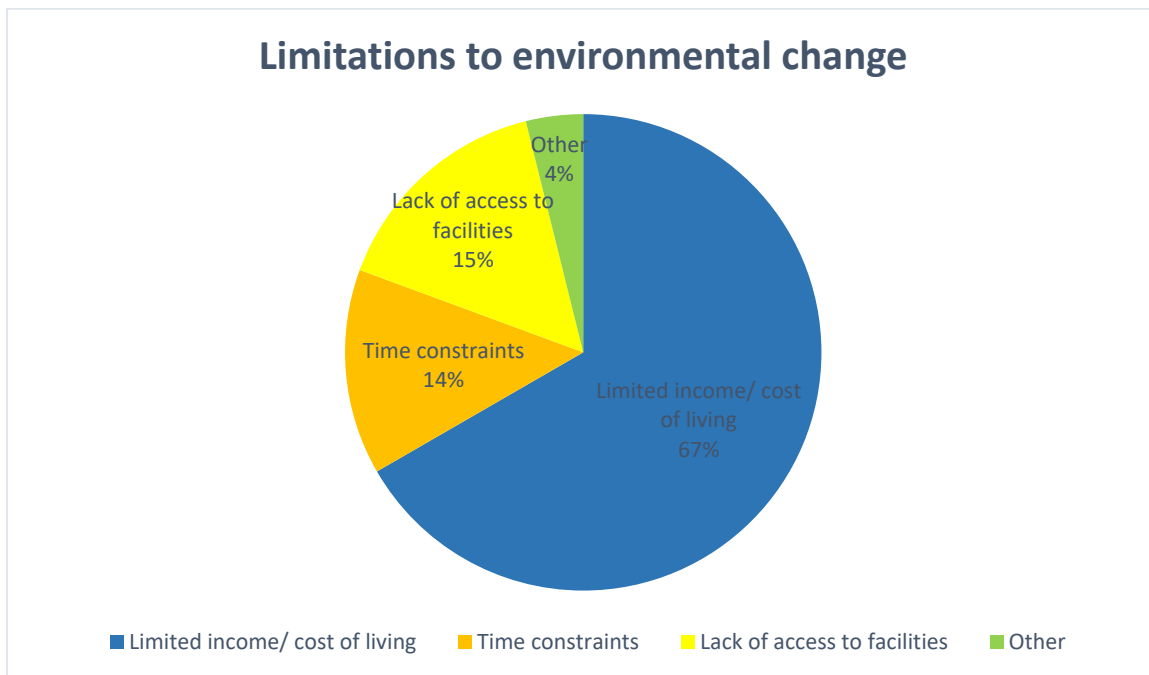
Next, the survey participants were asked how often they would try and purchase products from more sustainable companies. Only 8.5% said they would 'always' purchase from sustainable companies (2.5% of males and 11% of females), 41.1% said they would 'often' (37.5% of males and 43% of females), 38% said they would 'sometimes' (45% of males and 35% of females), 9.3% said they would 'rarely' (12.5% of males and 8% of females), and 3.1% said 'never' (2.5% of males and 3% of females). There is a clear despair and see here as females tend to have a higher percentage in the 'always' and 'often' categories, while males have a higher percentage in the lower two categories combined. The group which most often try to purchase from sustainable companies is "females", aged "45-54" years, living in an "urban" location.

The next question was aimed at finding out how likely individuals will be to purchase a more expensive product if it was more environmentally friendly. 31.8% said that they would be neither likely nor unlikely (30% of males and 33% of females). 47.3% of respondents (just under half said they would be somewhat likely to purchase more expensive products for the sake of the environment (50% of males and 46% of females). The number of respondents who said that they would be 'unlikely' or 'very unlikely' to purchase more expensive environmentally friendly products is 20.9%, quite a high number (20% of males and 21% of females). This may be down to a number of factors such as limited incomes, or other priorities for extra disposable income. Overall, the group that will be most likely to spend more money on environmentally friendly products is "females", aged "18-24" years, living in a "rural" area, "females", aged "45-54" years, living in a "rural" area, and "females", aged "45-54" years, living in an "urban" area.

In addition to this, participants were asked how likely they will be to change their lifestyle to better suit the environment. 65.9% of participants said they will be either 'very likely' or

‘likely’ to change their lifestyle to help the environment (62.5% of males and 67% of females). 9.3% of participants said that they will be either ‘unlikely’ or ‘very unlikely’ to change their ways to become more environmentally friendly (10% of males and 9% of females). 24.8% of people said that they were neither likely nor unlikely to change (27.5% of males and 24% of females). The group who were overall most likely to change their lifestyle and habits to become more environmentally friendly and aware is “females”, aged “18-24” years, living in a “rural” setting, and “females”, aged “45-54” years, living in an “urban” area. Overall, these results tell us the most individuals will be likely to change their lifestyle to lessen their negative impacts on the environment.

Figure 8. Limitations to environmental change



It was found that among the survey participants the biggest factor limiting them from taking better environmental measures was ‘limited income/cost of living’ (66.7%). Next was ‘lack of access to facilities’ (15.5%), followed by ‘time constraints’ (14%). 3.8% of people voted that they had ‘other’ reasons as to what was limiting them from taking better environmental measures. The ‘other’ option allowed the respondents to write in a dialogue box. Some of the other reasons stated was: “Lack of knowledge”, “The government is not addressing the issue properly”, and “I won’t change habits etc, to suit a situation that one person can’t fix”. In conclusion, it is clear that many products or services that are less harmful on the environment

are more expensive, and therefore even if people wish to try and be more environmentally friendly, it just may not be possible for them. Due to the responses of ‘Lack of knowledge’, more information on the steps people can take and certain products or services to look out for which are better choices, would be beneficial to help those gain a little more insight into the topic.

The final question surrounding the environmental actions of participants was, if they believe in boycotting companies to force them to become more environmentally friendly. 42.6% said “Yes” (52.5% of males and 38% of females), 19.4% said “No” (15% of males and 21% of females), and 38% said “Maybe” (32.5% of males and 41% of females). These results suggest that while a lot of individuals do agree to boycotting companies or corporations to lessen their impact on the environment, there are still a large number of people who are unsure as to whether this is a good idea or would be beneficial.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter goes deeper into the findings of the survey which were analysed in the previous chapter. The findings will now be compared against the existing theories which have been explored in the literature review and will be discussed regarding similarities, differences, and to address any existing gaps. The survey findings of this study will be used to clarify any existing theories as true or false and to try and form a conclusion as to what the existing attitudes are towards corporate environmentalism within Ireland, and what disparities exist between gender, age groups, and location of residence. The four sections containing subsets of questions which were previously examined in the analysis and findings section, will be discussed in further detail.

### **5.2 Sociodemographic**

The primary observation of the findings presented in the previous chapter strongly suggest a females tend to have more positive environmental behaviours, habits, and attitudes than males. Not only is gender a factor in positive environmentalism, but according to the data results in the research findings, age is also a huge factor at play. The data results showed that females aged 18-24 years living in rural locations, and females aged 45-54 years living in urban locations, had the best environmental behaviours and attitudes overall. Such findings support Kenny (2019) findings surrounding sociodemographic elements affecting environmental attitudes. He suggested that females tended to have more positive environmental attitudes than males. He also suggested that the income levels of individuals is a factor influencing environmentalism, a theory which to findings of this study can verify. Over 2/3 of respondents claimed that a limited income/cost of living was limiting them from taking better actions for the environment. The findings of this research paper suggests that an individual's income has an influence on their environmental behaviours.

A gap identified in the literature which was a sub-objective of the research paper, was to identify any noticeable differences in attitudes or behaviours regarding location. The research paper findings suggest that there are no major disparities among rural versus urban settings in terms of environmental attitudes and behaviours. But it did find that in both locations environmental attitudes were slightly higher than environmental actions, suggesting that

while individuals in both locations may be conscious of the environment, this doesn't necessarily mean that they are environmentally friendly. However, the research found that when it comes to the environment versus the economy, that the majority of individuals in both rural and urban locations would perceive them as being of equal importance. This is closely followed by the environment being more important than the economy, and very few individuals believe that the economy is of greater importance. These findings verify those suggested by Brereton et al. (2011), as he believed individuals living rurally thought the environment to be of greater importance than the economy, as they prioritised aspects such as air quality and the quality of water.

### **5.3 Environmental Awareness**

The findings from this study suggest poor levels of environmental awareness among individuals in regards to purchasing products and services. Past literature from Connolly and Prothero (2008) suggests that a major factor affecting environmental issues is the purchasing and consumption of unsustainable goods and services from unsustainable companies who have negative effects on the environment. They suggest that many individuals are completely unaware of the devastating effects that their buying habits, and consumerism in general, has on the environment. The findings of this research paper can testify for this statement, as individuals responses to three questions regarding their consciousness of the environment while shopping, gathered unsatisfactory results. The majority of individuals didn't think of their effect on the environment at all while purchasing clothes. This suggests that many individuals may be unaware of the hugely negative effects that fast fashion and the fashion industry as a whole has on the planet. The fashion industry and the whole concept of 'fast fashion' is highly damaging to the environment on the earth's atmosphere. It has been found that less than 1% of the worlds clothes are recycled, and every year, approximately 53 million metric tonnes of old clothes are either sent to landfills or incinerated. 65% of these fabrics are polyester, a man-made material made using fossil fuels. Essentially, polyester is a plastic. Polyester and other synthetic fabrics that end up in landfills take around 200 years to disintegrate, and in doing so they produce methane gas which is deadly to the earths atmosphere. Not only this, but around 20% of worldwide industrial water pollution is caused by the release of 72 toxic harmful chemicals from clothing dyes. Wood pulp is another element used in the production of man made fabrics, resulting in the cutting down of over 70 million tonnes of trees annually, causing 1.2 million metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions (Cho, 2021).

Individuals regard for the environment was slightly better but still not great when purchasing cosmetics/toiletries. As it was mainly females who moderately thought of their actions affect on the environment, it could be suggested this was based around the purchasing of makeup products, and some level of awareness around animal testing methods for cosmetics. Within Ireland there are laws in place surrounding the welfare for animals in regards to scientific testing. These laws were put in place in December 2012. They aim at minimising the requirement for testing on animals, but where this is not possible, they aim at minimising the pain and suffering the animals may endure (HPRA, 2022). However, many companies and corporations who sell their products and services in Ireland, are based in the US. Currently in the US, there are no active laws in place which protect animals from the unnecessary and inhumane testing practises, in which they suffer horrifically. There are no laws in place to try and minimise their suffering, and when testing is over, the animals are usually then killed (PETA, 2022).

Once again, environmental awareness while grocery shopping was moderate among individuals. Although individuals may be aware of good and bad choices on the environment while grocery shopping, this doesn't necessarily mean that they will opt for the more environmentally friendly options. As previously mentioned, the findings of the study the term and that limited income/cost of living is a factor influencing individuals environmental behaviours. Therefore, individuals who have financial struggles, or face financial uncertainty regularly, will tend to prioritise the cost of the goods themselves, rather than the packaging it is in or if it was sustainably sourced. These findings are in support of Fahy (2005), who suggested that external factors beyond the control of consumers may affect their behaviours and the actions they can take.

#### **5.4 Environmental Concern**

The findings from this research study suggest that most individuals would value Environmental Protection over improving the economy, or they believe that they are equally important. Such findings support Kenny (2019) beliefs that over the past number of years, peoples attitudes favouring a strong economy over environmentalism has definitely shifted. It was stated that individuals may favour the environment over the economy, a statement which the findings of this study can back-up as true.



Theories in the literature review from Motherway et al. (2003) Claimed that individuals were highly concerned about the effects that industries such as construction, manufacturing, and production, etc, were having on the environment. The findings of this study suggests that this still remains true, as it was determined that individuals believe that industrial activities are the biggest cause of damage to the environment. As many industrial activities take place around the world everyday, this means there is a 24/7, never ending pressure on the environment. Industrial activities have many devastating effects on the environment as they are constantly damaging the Earth's atmosphere by releasing emissions and chemicals, Producing colossal amounts of waste, and unsustainably consuming the earth resources (European Environment Agency, 2022). Currently, the European Union has a number of policies in place surrounding environmental protection from industrial activities. As of December 2019, they sat in place a new climate law with the aim of Europe becoming the first climate neutral continent by 2050. This would require all industries and companies on the continent to have net zero emissions by 2050. Not only this but they have also taken up a 'green oath', aiming to deal with the loss of biodiversity, reducing harmful chemicals, and changing farming to become better for the environment (Jordan et al, 2021). Although these policies apply to Ireland, the Irish government themselves should have their own additional policies and strategies put in place, according to the findings of this study.

The findings of the research suggests that individuals strongly believe that companies/corporations pose a threat to the environment and that they are not doing enough on their behalf to be more environmentally friendly.

### **5.5 Environmental Actions**

According to past literature and existing theories from Drury Research (2000), Thapa (1999), and Kenny (2019), A value-action gap exists among individuals when it comes to environmental attitudes and behaviours. They suggest that a lot of the time individuals will claim to have positive environmental attitudes and claim to be environmentally friendly, but a great deal of the time, their behaviours do not mirror this. The findings of this study determine that overall, many people will follow up their attitudes with their behaviours. However, the findings of the study also suggests that there is a slight value-action gap that exists. For example, recycling was an area where individuals believed it is extremely important, and therefore they take part in recycling all or most of the time. These findings disregard theories found in the literature review by Thapa (1999), who claimed that many

individuals said they believed that recycling was important, but when the appropriate facilities became available they didn't actually take part in recycling. It could be suggested that this theory can now be disregarded as individuals behaviours have developed over the past 23 years, and even more recycling facilities have become more readily available, such as colour coded waste bins, and a lot more recycling centres.

Likewise, the findings of the study determined that individuals beliefs towards sustainable purchasing was mirrored by their actions. The findings suggest that the individuals who believe it is of importance to try and purchase more sustainable products, either always or often purchase products which are more environmentally friendly, or produced under better conditions. The research suggests that there is a slight value-action gap where individuals say they are very likely to change their lifestyle to suit the environment, but when it comes down to paying extra for more environmentally friendly products, they are unlikely to do so. This may suggest that individuals want to be perceived as being environmentally friendly, but they are not actually willing to make sacrifices for the environment. But this could also suggest that few individuals are financially struggling, and unable to pay any extra for better choices.

The findings of the study suggests that a high number of individuals believe that boycotting companies is a good way to get them to change their actions, and to become less harmful and more environmentally friendly. These findings support the theory presented by Connolly and Prothero (2008) that individuals who portray positive environmental attitudes, believe the boycotting of companies to be an effective method of making them become more sustainable.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the current attitudes towards corporate environmentalism within Ireland. The researcher initially gained a broader understanding of the topic being explored, and background information within the field. The aim of the study was to provide answers and insight into the research question and sub-objectives of the study, which have been previously mentioned in Chapter One. The sub-objectives of this study were a central part of the research process, as they kept the research focusing on the specific areas being explored. Through the collection and analyzation of primary research data from surveys which took the form of quantitative, deductive research, it can be said that the researcher has gained a much broader, clearer understanding of the existing attitudes towards corporate environmentalism within Ireland. In addition to this, a greater understanding has been acquired of attitudes and behaviours surrounding environmentalism in general, which ultimately form the foundations for individuals attitudes towards corporate environmentalism.

The collection of primary data, the analyzation of data results, on the participation of 129 survey respondents, has immensely helped contribute to the researchers conclusion that there are generally positive attitudes surrounding corporate environmentalism. However, there still remains a lack of knowledge surrounding the topic, and therefore, there is a lack of awareness within consumers. In addition to this, findings suggest that many individuals find environmentally friendly options while shopping, to be more expensive, and a lot of individuals do not have the income to support such purchases. As a result of these two factors combined, there is a major limitation on the behaviours of individuals as consumers, and the actions they can take to lessen their environmental impacts. These findings of the research study has allowed the researchers to accept the theories of Kenny (2019) who suggested that attitudes towards corporate environmentalism are to some degree influenced financially, And individuals behaviours are determined by their income levels.

The researcher also concludes that there are sociodemographic elements present surrounding environmental attitudes and behaviours. The study found that females tend to have greater positive environmental attitudes and behaviours than males. This has allowed the researcher to verify the theory from Kenny (2019), that there are disparities among genders, and more specifically, that males do not have as positive of environmental attitudes and behaviours as females. It was also being explored if there were any notable disparities among age groups.

Although it was determined that females aged “18-24” years and “45-54” years had the best overall attitudes and behaviours among survey participants, it could not be concluded that they have better attitudes in general. In order to conclude this, a greater number of respondents of more age groups, particularly 65+, would be needed to make such assumptions. It could be argued that environmentalism is more of a young persons issue, influenced directly by activists such as Greta Thunberg, and this may also be the reason for greater attitudes and behaviours among females. Although there were high levels of positive environmentalism among 45-54 year old females aswell, studies with larger numbers of participants would be beneficial in exploring this in greater detail, and determining if it is indeed a young persons issue. The issue of the significant differences in attitudes and behaviours among genders is something that needs to be addressed and highlighted. Obviously, it needs to be addressed how males tend to have more negative environmental attitudes and beliefs, and what can be done to influence them more positively. Marketing or advertising techniques may be a way of influencing males to become more environmentally aware, and gain more positive attitudes and behaviours. This could possibly be done through advertisements for male products, or by companies whose target audience is males. The researcher had identified a gap in the literature as to whether location (rural vs urban), had an influence on the environmental attitudes and behaviours of individuals. Therefore, this was a sub-objective of the research. The researcher can conclude that a residential location such as rural or urban areas does not have any major influences on environmental attitudes.

It can be concluded that individuals actions and behaviours have improved over the past 20+ years, as suggested by the findings of the study. The researcher can conclude that the value action gap that exists as described by Drury Research (2000), has significantly lessened, as individuals began making better choices. It can only be assumed that individuals will continue to change their ways and become more environmentally friendly, and make themselves more aware of issues surrounding corporate environmentalism, and what can be done to enforce change.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Although this study has improved understanding surrounding environmentalism, and highlighted influences and elements linked to environmentalism within Ireland, there are additional areas and influences which remain to be explored. Areas such as environmental attitudes of CEOs and top level managers within companies and corporations could be of

benefit to the field. Further research into the influences of environmental attitudes and behaviours on each gender, would also make it clearer as to why males have more negative environmental attitudes and behaviours, and what can be done to change this, or influence them more positively. Further research should also explore if education levels, or particular professions, have any influence on environmental attitudes.

It can be suggested that measures can be taken within communities to try and address environmental issues, on to encourage individuals to have more positive environmental attitudes on behaviours in general, and towards corporate environmentalism. Individuals need to be made more aware of their actions as consumers, and how they are contributing to negative corporate environmentalism. Community groups highlighting the importance of positive environmental behaviours and actions, to encourage change among companies and corporations for better environmental practices, could be a possibility. If communities work together to increase awareness and try to enforce change, there is a much higher chance of individuals taking part and changing their ways.

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Fig 6. Biggest cause of damage to the environment.

Fig 7. Corporate Environmentalism

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