

British public opinion on the needs of “future generations”

*This report gives summary findings of research carried out by Ipsos MORI in November 2011 on British public opinion on the needs of future generations. The research was jointly commissioned by the **Intergenerational Foundation** (<http://www.if.org.uk>) and the **Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development** (<http://www.fdsd.org>). It was produced as a contribution to the work of the **Alliance for Future Generations** (see <http://bit.ly/uDvWXb>). The Alliance is a group of more than forty organisations and individuals working to bring long-termism and the needs of future generations into the heart of UK democracy and policy processes, in order to safeguard the earth and secure intergenerational justice.*

*A total of 989 people over the age of 15 were interviewed face-to-face between November 1st and November 4th 2011. The results were weighted to reflect the wider British population. **Charts showing summary data are on page 2.***

Findings

1. When prioritising future generations over different time-scales, almost two thirds believe the needs of “all future generations” are more important than the needs of any particular generation such as their own or their children’s.

When asked (in Q1) to select which generation’s needs should take priority in terms of sharing the Earth’s resources, the majority of people (64%) chose that “all future generations” should take priority rather than “my children’s generation” (13%), “my generation” (13%) or “my grandchildren’s generation” (7%).

2. A majority of people place the needs of future generations of all people living on Earth above future generations of either their own family, or the people of their own country. Over a fifth of people place the needs of future generations of all “plants and animals living on Earth” first.

When asked (in Q2) which future generations should take priority, nearly half (49%) of those interviewed chose “all people living on Earth” and about a fifth (22%) chose “plant and animal species living on Earth”. Only 13% prioritised “my family” and 12% prioritised “people in my country”.

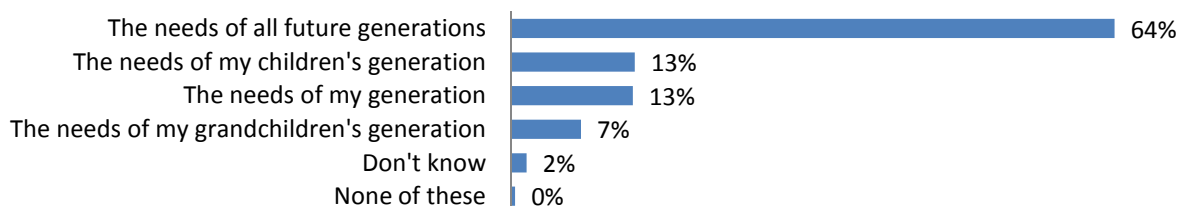
3. More people choose “a healthy planet” as the most important legacy to hand on to future generations than any one of five other options including “an unspoilt countryside”, “a thriving economy” and “safety and security”.

When asked (in Q3) what is the most important thing to hand on to future generations, 46% chose “a healthy planet”, 16% chose “the technology and skills to ensure mankind’s survival”, 16% chose “safety and security”, 9% “a thriving economy”, 8% “thriving communities” and 4% chose “an unspoilt countryside”.

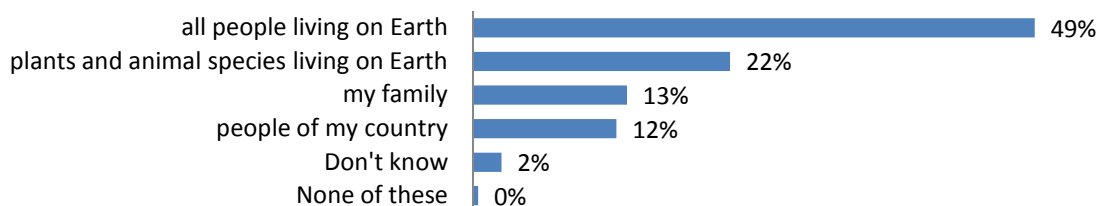
4. Two thirds of people believe the UK Government does not adequately consider future generations in the decisions it makes today. Only 5% say the UK Government considers future generations too much.

When asked (in Q4) how well the UK Government considers future generations in its decisions, just over two thirds (67%) selected either “too little” (38%) or “far too little” (28%), whereas just under a quarter (24%) chose “the right amount”. Only 5% chose either “too much” or “far too much”.

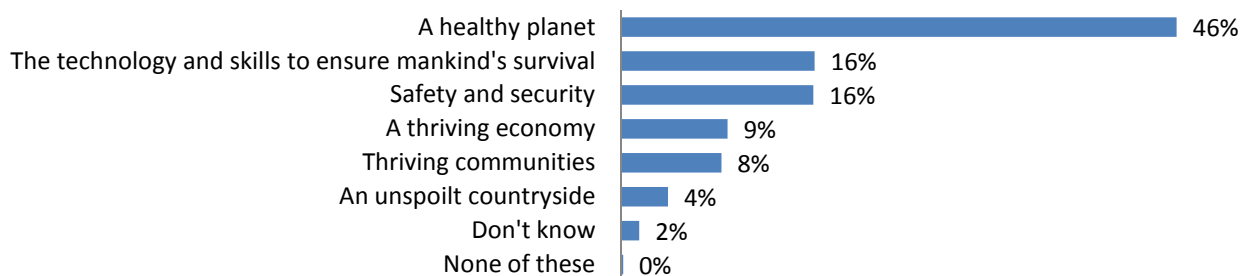
Q1. Which one of the following generation's needs, if any, should have priority when thinking about using the Earth's resources?



Q2. Which one of the following generation's needs, if any, should have priority when you consider the needs of each?



Q3. And which of the following, if any, do you think is most important to hand down to future generations?



Q4. What best describes your opinion of how well the UK Government considers future generations in decisions it makes today?

