

THE VALUE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE VERY YOUNG

Key Messages

SURVEY BY THE MUSEM OF SAVING AND EPISTEME

Target and Approach

The Museum of Saving has fostered this research to explore how very young people (13-18) approach the topic of sustainability in a broad sense. It is a wider addition to the educational activity of S.A.V.E., the project that the Museum has developed and has been promoting over three years, together with the EIB Institute.

400 interviews have been carried out using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) technique; questions have been asked of a sample of 13-18-year-olds, that make up a reference universe by gender, individual age groups and geographical area of residence.

The survey was carried out from 5 to 17 February 2021.

Research insights

1. Young Italians show a **remarkable and unique maturity and orientation to the future**. A generation that is able to **connect principles and beliefs on one hand, and daily actions on the other**.

This **ethical-mental consistency** is supported and enhanced in a number of ways:

- ❖ **Support to the idea of sustainability is high, a sign of a rooted sensitivity**, it may be said “native” to the *Fridays for future* generation:
 - both when it comes to attention to **environmental resources**
 - and when dealing with **money management****and it converts into personal, concrete commitment, and into daily virtuous behaviour.**
- ❖ Young Italians demonstrate that they **think in a new way**, by replacing
 - Conventional, linear, analytical thinking, with “I”, as key focus of the argument
 - **A ‘circular thinking’, able to hold together** present, past and future causes and effects and above all targets and implications of actions, **by replacing “I” with “we”**, to whom they feel they belong.

Both the average score of the Environmental Awareness Index and the Economical Awareness are equal to 6.7 on a scale ranging from 0 to 10.

96.1% of Italian teens heard about the issue of climate change. Young people's personal commitment to reduce waste of natural resources gets a score of 6.7. The severity of lack of attention towards environmental subjects by adults is rated at 7.9.

83.5% of young Italians that have money at disposal declare to think how to spend it. 85.9% save money with a specific target (to carry out a project, or secondarily, to remove the fear of becoming poor). The individual ability of keeping expenses under control, by delaying those unnecessary, is 7.1.

Please note: all average scores are referred to a scale ranging from 0 to 10

2. Environmental and Economic Awareness is strictly connected: who pays a great deal of attention to natural resources, manages money with the same care.

- ❖ From awareness of **finitude** – in some cases real **shortage of resources** – evoked by repeated economic, work, social, climate-environmental crises, and nowadays also health crises, Italian teens have learned to **use available goods with responsibility**.

The Top quartile of the Environmental Awareness Index (comprising namely the most attentive to the environment) gets 7.8 scores in the Economical Awareness Index and the Top quartile of the Economical Awareness Index (i.e. made up of the most careful to money management) obtains 7.6 scores in the Environmental Awareness Index.

Please note: all average scores are referred to a scale ranging from 0 to 10

3. When it comes to sustainability, differences between girls and boys are blended. Attention to the environment and to money cuts across gender.

However, as regards other aspects, the survey shows there are still different educational **conditionings and pressures** for boys and girls. In particular, the results reveal the following.

- ❖ **A stronger bond that links girls:**
 - **in attention** (when it comes to decide how to spend money, girls are less individualistic in comparison to boys and think more about others' happiness);
 - **as reference and inspiration** (girls love more to become acquainted with stories of people from different places in the world);
 - **also in their dependence on judgement** (girls show less confidence and self-esteem than boys).
- ❖ **A major independence than boys**, that appear to be **more individualistic** in their choices (as for example the use of money) and **happier**.

Boys and girls obtain respectively 6.8 and 6.9 scores in the Environmental Awareness Index and 6.9 and 6.9 in the Economical Awareness Index.

Girls are less inclined than boys, 5.3 vs 5.6, to spend money only for their own happiness. They more often feel they are worthless, 5.9 vs 4.9 of the boys. They like stories on social media that tell about people from different parts of the world, 6.9 vs 6.0 of the boys.

Boys are happier, they have in fact a score equal to 7.1, while girls stop at 6.7.

Please note: all average scores are referred to a scale ranging from 0 to 10

4. The analysis by personality traits shows a **positive link between character stability and attention to the environment and money management.**

The **three big identified clusters**, the Troubled, the Curious, The Dutiful, are in fact characterised by a **different participation to sustainability themes.**

❖ **The Dutiful and the Curious are more involved** in the conscious management of resources:

- **The Dutiful**, thanks to the combination of **having confidence in others and diligence**, traits that make them people who **trust rules and respect them**;
- **The Curious**, thanks to **the passion towards everything that is new** and different and that make them an **open-minded and responsive to change** cluster.

❖ Last, **the Troubled** are the **less interested or involved in environmental and economical sustainability.**

- Their personality traits are characterised by **low self-esteem**, by **isolation** and by **confliction**. Fragility, frustration and rage feed a **loop that distances them from the opportunity to play a leading role in a sustainable and cognisant life.**

The Dutiful have an Environmental Awareness Index equal to 7.7 and an Economic Awareness Index equal to 7.4. They are the cluster that trusts people the most, with an average score of 6.5 and they are very efficient in carrying out what they start, with an average score of 8.1.

The Curious have an Environmental Awareness Index equal to 7.0 and an Economic Awareness Index equal to 7.2. They like to learn new things during classes, average score 8.7.

The Troubled have an Environmental Awareness Index equal to 6.4 and an Economic Awareness Index equal to 6.5. They often feel they are not worth much, average score equal to 6.5. A lot of things that happen make them angry, average score 6.9.

Please note: all average scores are referred to a scale ranging from 0 to 10

5. Parents still play a **primary role** for 13-18 year-old Italians, they are in fact **taken as a model by a large majority** of teens, when it comes both to environmental sustainability and economic sustainability.

- ❖ The **family reference model is almost exclusive, as regards economic awareness**, because
 - Parents are the **first source of money**, which reinforces their educational leadership;
 - **They are often the sole existing model**, because, outside of the family, at school or in a relational context, money management and economic education are not discussed enough.
- ❖ Parents play **an equally important role, even if less exclusive, when it comes to environmental sustainability**
 - Both because **teens play a leading role in the change of attention towards the environment**;
 - And because they are very good in adopting **new behaviour** (separating their waste, paying attention to water waste, using alternative forms of transport, etc).
 - And because, last but not least, **the environment is widely discussed** in the media and outside the family context.

91.2% of very young Italians draw inspiration from their parents as far as money management is concerned. This percentage rises to 93.2% if considering the most careful to economical sustainability.

82.9% of very young people draw inspiration from their parents as regards management of environmental resources. This percentage rises to 85% if including the most attentive to environmental sustainability.