



SBP  
STOWARZYSZENIE  
BIBLIOTEKARZY  
POLSKICH



# FROM READING ROOMS TO **GREEN** ROOMS

THE SUSTAINABILITY JOURNEY  
OF POLISH PUBLIC LIBRARIES

---

MAGDALENA PAUL, PHD

UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

POLISH LIBRARIANS' ASSOCIATION

16TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IN LIBRARIES (LIBPMC)  
3-4 JUNE 2025, LIVERPOOL, UNITED KINGDOM









Library and Cultural Centre in Želazno  
September 2024





Library and Cultural Centre in Želazno  
September 2024

**libraries ~~can~~ help fight climate crisis**

*must*

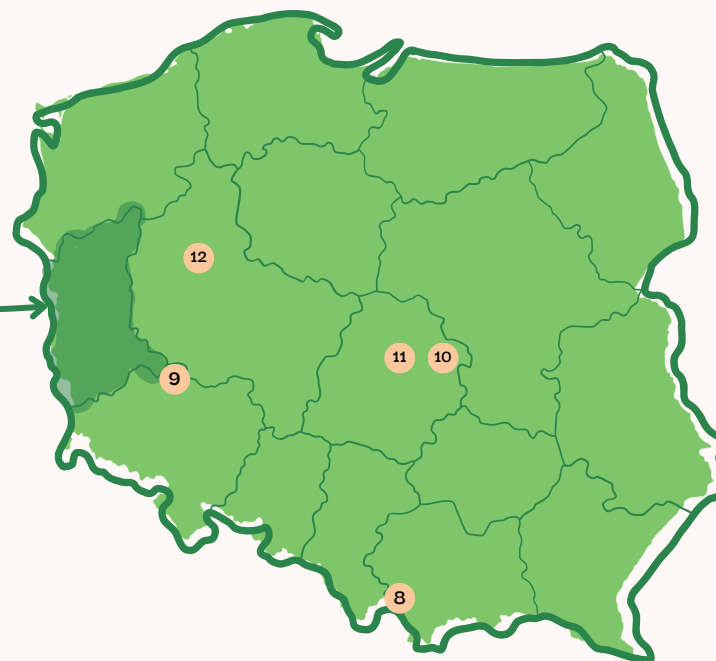
*do*



# The **Green** Library Action

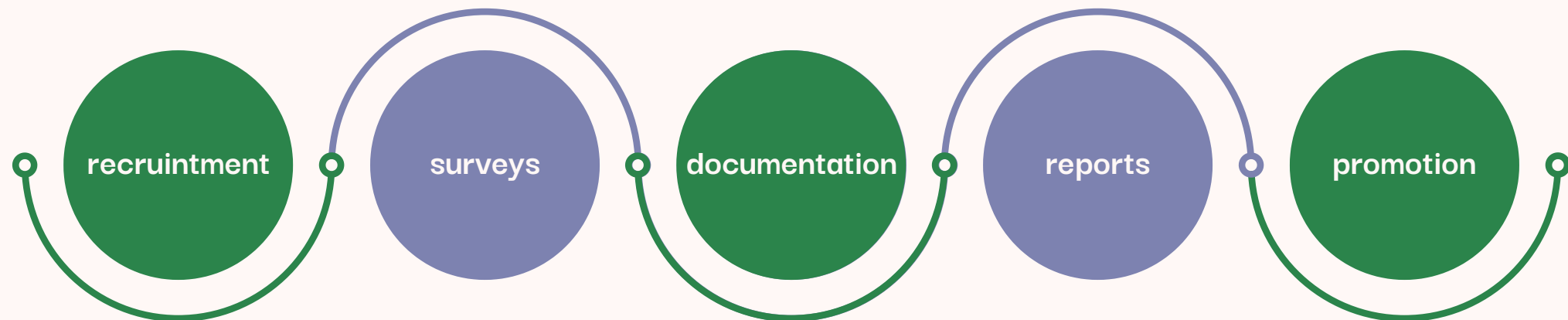
- In September–October 2024, the Polish Librarians' Association launched the pilot action "Green Library".
- **12 public libraries** from various regions took part – rural, municipal, and regional institutions.
- The project spanned **6 weeks** and focused on practical ecological activities and community engagement.

Rural Public Library of the Sulechów  
Public Library in Siedlisko  
Rural Public Library in Zabór  
Municipal Public Library in Nowa Sól  
Municipal Public Library in Gubin  
Municipal Public Library in Żary  
Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Zielona Góra  
8. Rural Public Library in Kęty  
9. Rural Public Library in Niechlów  
10. Municipal Public Library in Rawa Mazowiecka  
11. Municipal Public Library in Brzeziny  
12. Municipal Public Library in Opatów – Cultural Institution

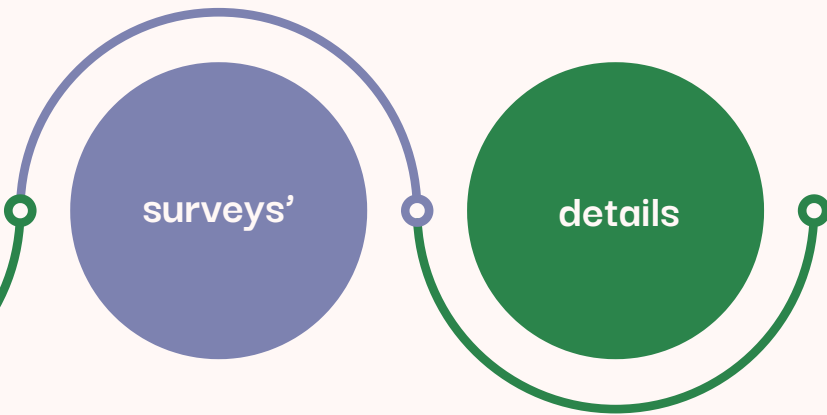


## The goals of the **Green Library** action were to:

- Explore how libraries are already responding to climate change, sustainability, and today's key environmental challenges.
- **Measure the real impact of libraries – how simply using and engaging with them can inspire climate awareness and eco-friendly habits.**
- Understand what communities need and expect from libraries in terms of green initiatives.
- Raise awareness about the kinds of climate-positive actions libraries can take – and share them widely.
- Position libraries as active players in environmental education, sustainability, and local climate action.







### For managers of a library

N=12

- Pro-environmental practices
- Infrastructure and investment
- Educational and community activities and their topics
- Book and multimedia collection
- Promoting sustainable transport
- Cooperation with local organizations
- Information and promotion

### Library staff and workers

N=69

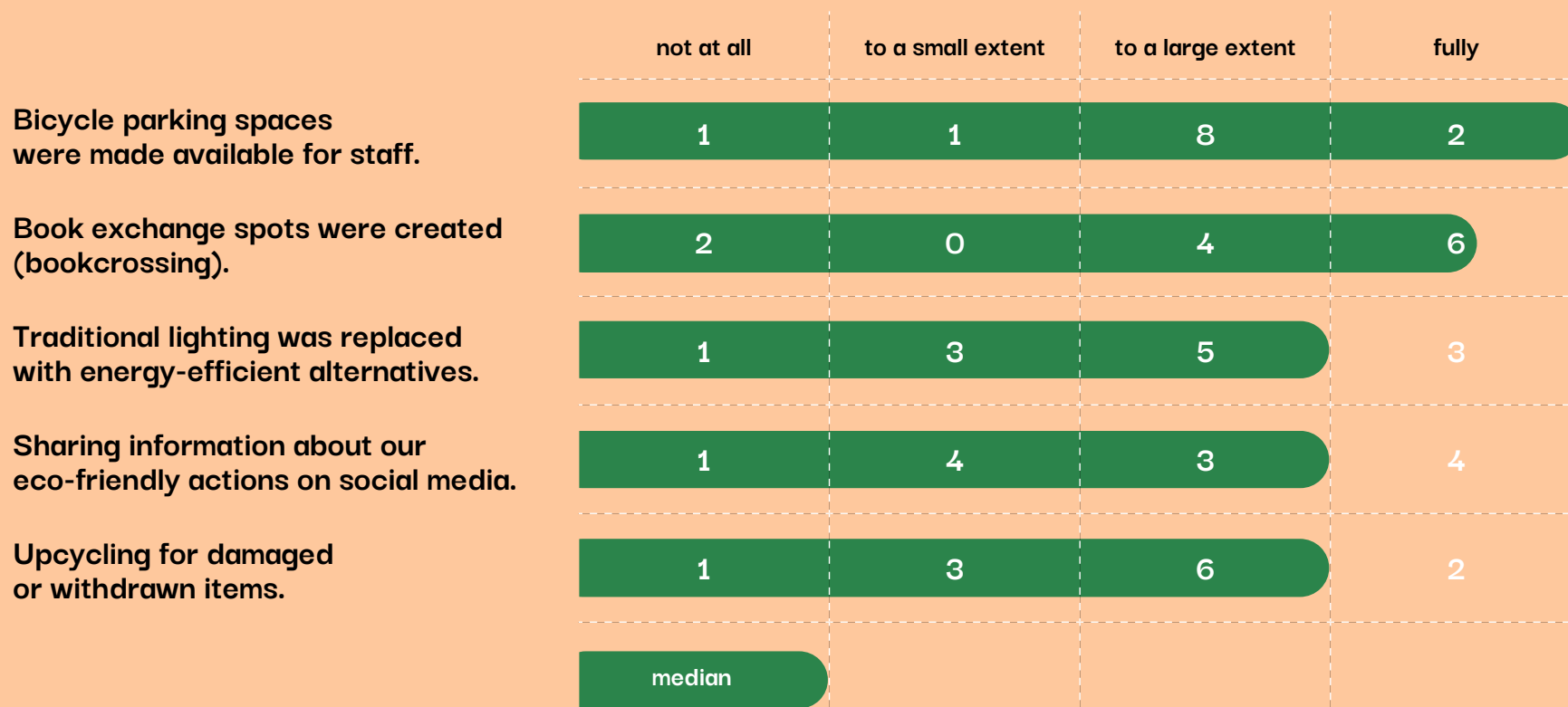
- Daily eco-friendly habits
- Reporting issues

### For library's users

N=130

- Access to information
- Participation in activities
- Gained knowledge
- Gained skills
- Changes in attitudes and behaviours

# Pro-environmental practices & Infrastructure and investment



The chart shows the range of eco-friendly activities that libraries carried out in the three years before the survey.

- On the vertical axis, you can see specific actions – like switching to energy-efficient lighting or introducing waste segregation.
- On the horizontal axis, the chart shows how much each activity was implemented, using four levels: "not at all," "to a small extent," "to a large extent," and "fully."
- The numbers inside the boxes show how many libraries gave each answer.
- The bars show the median – the middle value – for each activity.



# Daily eco-friendly habits & Reporting issues

	never	rarely	hard to say	often	always
Lights are turned off after leaving a room.	1	1	1	14	52
Electronic devices are switched off when no longer in use.	2	0	4	16	47
Water is being saved.	1	0	8	16	44
Issues related to energy or water use are reported.	2	0	14	17	36
Plants inside the library are cared for.	4	1	12	11	41

- The numbers in the table cells show how many library staff members chose each response.
- The bars indicate the median (the middle value) for each question.

# What did libraries do in 12 months before the surveys

10

so 83% of libraries held lessons and workshops for children and youth on environmental and climate-related topics; 83% also promoted environmental literature among young readers.

8

so 67% of libraries organised lectures and workshops for adults and families.

11

so 92% of libraries acquired and provided access to printed books, magazines, or films on environmental and climate-related topics.

4

so 33% of libraries organised group bike rides.

4

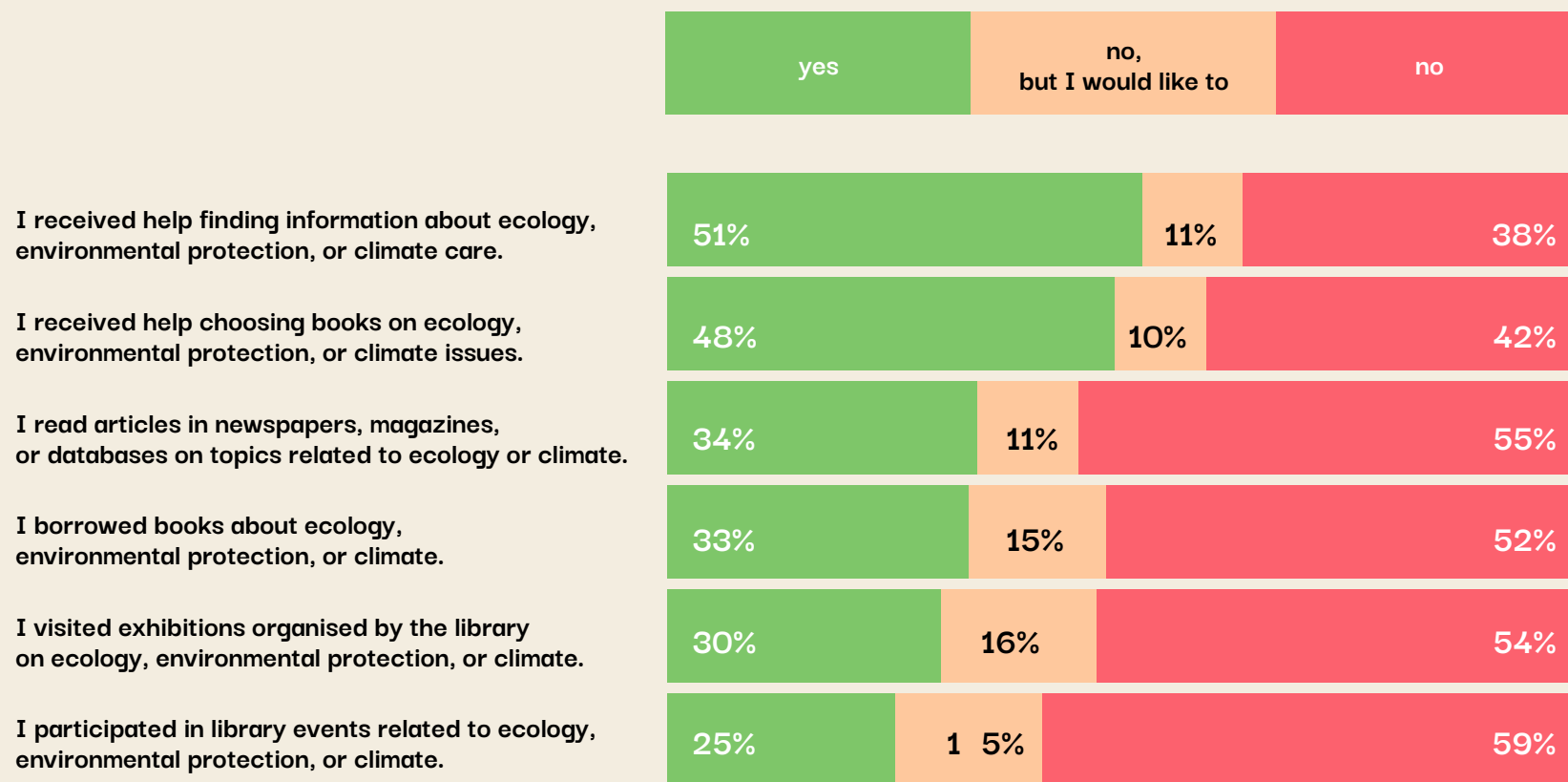
so 33% of libraries participated in clean-up campaigns in green areas.

5

so 42% of libraries provided tips and guidance on sustainable living on their social media



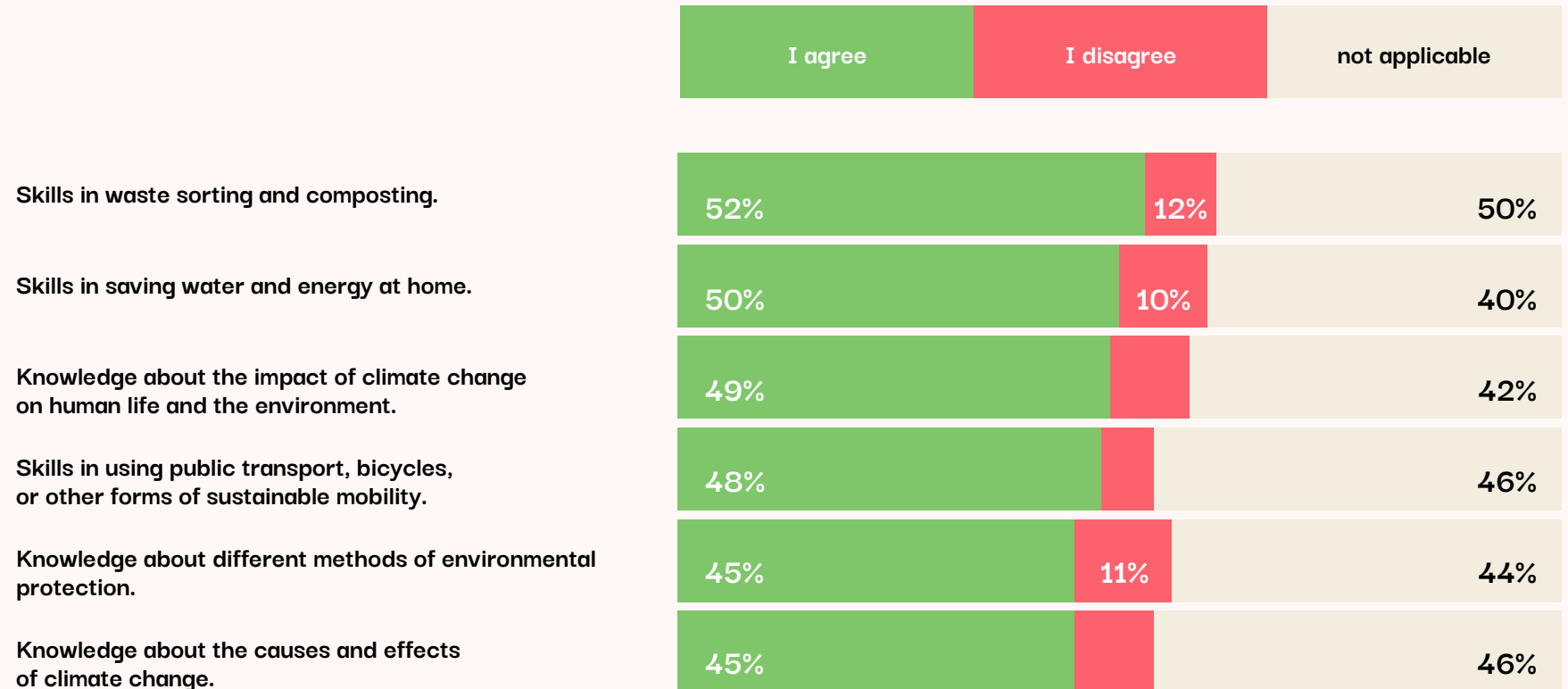
# How did users interact with “green” public libraries?



Data from 130 users across 7 libraries.

The numbers in the table cells show the percentage of respondents who selected each response option listed in the column headers.

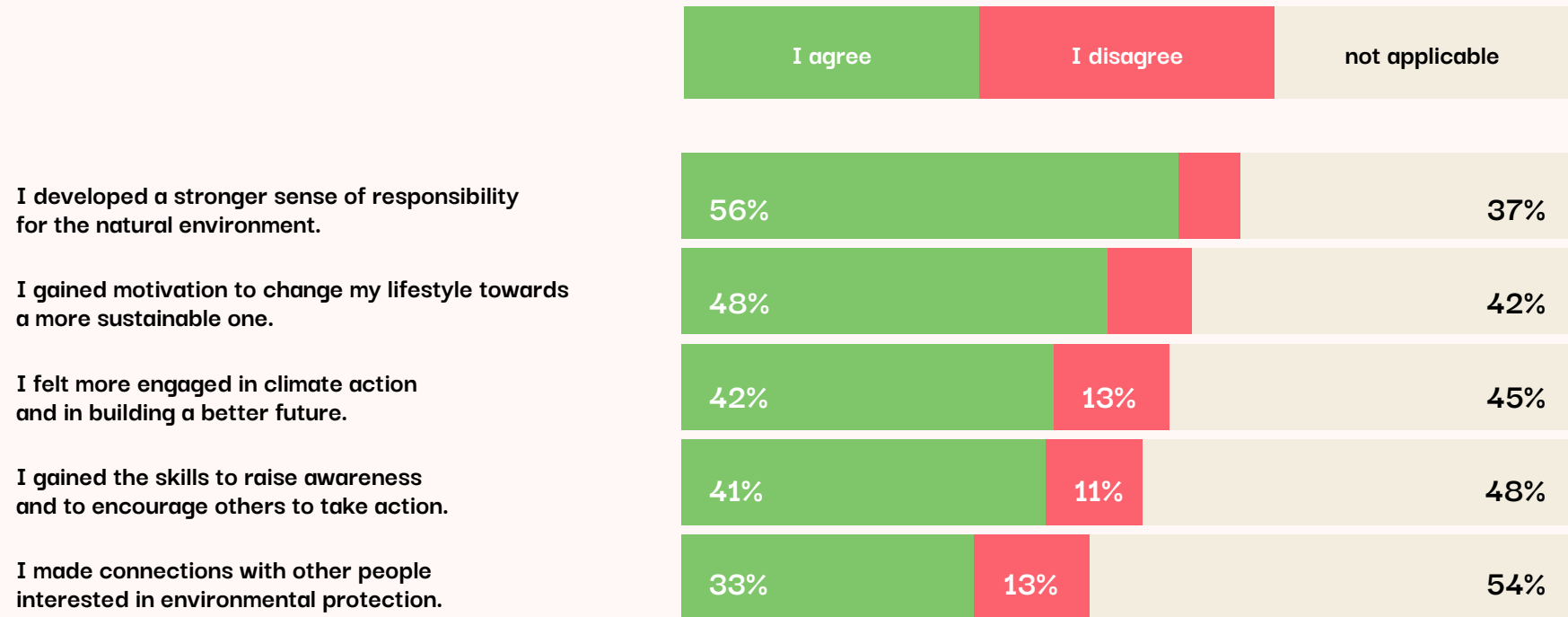
# Impact / Changes in knowledge and skills



**Data from 130 users across 7 libraries.**  
**Only values equal to or greater than 10% are shown.**

The numbers in the table cells show the percentage of respondents who selected each response option listed in the column headers.

# Impact / Changes in attitudes



**Data from 130 users across 7 libraries.**  
**Only values equal to or greater than 10% are shown.**

The numbers in the table cells show the percentage of respondents who selected each response option listed in the column headers.



**‘It’s not about books’**

**Financial and infrastructural barriers**

**Lack of systemic support**

**Organisational and spatial limitations**



“The power of book” by Jorge Méndez Blake

# What We've Learned



## **Local action matters:**

Even small libraries can drive meaningful environmental change.



## **Education is powerful:**

Workshops and events raise awareness and inspire behaviour change.



## **Community engagement amplifies impact:**

Partnering with local groups strengthens initiatives.



## **Show not tell:**

Staff's action play a key role in promoting sustainable habits.



## **Challenges are real, but not final:**

Barriers exist, but creative solutions can overcome them.



## **Sustainability is measurable:**

With the right tools, libraries can track their green impact.



# From Story to Structure



**Pilot insights informed real tools:** Findings shaped a new sustainability module for performance assessment.



**Integrated into national framework:** The module became a part of the Public Libraries' Social and Economic Impact Questionnaire.



**A model for replication:**

Designed for adaptability in other libraries and countries.



**Focus on measurable impact:**

Tracks activities, behaviours, and outcomes related to sustainability.



**Supports advocacy:**

Helps libraries demonstrate value to funders and decision-makers.



**Bridges storytelling and data:**

Translates individual actions into systemic evidence.





SBP  
STOWARZYSZENIE  
BIBLIOTEKARZY  
POLSKICH



# THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

---

## LET'S STAY CONNECTED

MAGDALENA PAUL, PHD

[M.PAUL@UW.EDU.PL](mailto:M.PAUL@UW.EDU.PL)

[RESEARCHGATE.NET/PROFILE/MAGDALENA-PAUL-3](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Magdalena-Paul-3)

16TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IN LIBRARIES (LIBPMC)  
3-4 JUNE 2025, LIVERPOOL, UNITED KINGDOM