

February to March 2023

The Human Geography Zone (humangeog23.imascientist.org.uk) ran from 20 February to 10 March 2023 and was funded by UK Research and Innovation.

This was the first time a Geography themed zone has been run on the *I'm a Scientist* platform. It was aimed at Geography teachers and featured a range of geographers previously uninvolved with our activities.

Key activity figures

	Zone
Students logged in	367
Students active	85%
Schools	12
Geographers allocated	27
Geographers active	21 (78%)
Chats booked	22
Chats took place	16
Lines of Chat	5,019
Average lines per Chat	314
Follow up questions asked	113
Follow up questions approved	106
Answers given to follow up questions	158
Geographer comments	17
Votes	198

Who took part?

367 students from 12 schools across the UK logged into the Zone and connected with 22 geographers working in industry and academic - careers included a social scientist, an environmental anthropologist, youth campaigner and GIS analyst. The zone also featured PhD researchers and lecturers who study topics including how environmental courses make young people feel and how social media affects nature experiences. 312 students (85%) actively participated by writing Chat lines and asking follow up questions.

83% of active students were from priority schools: 26% from underserved schools and 66% from widening participation schools.

A total of 198 votes were cast by students. The winning scientist with the most student votes was George Foden who studies the links between post-disaster shelter and housing reconstruction and long-term community resilience.

Activity

22 Chats were booked. 16 took place.

Out of the remaining 6 Chats booked, 4 were cancelled and in 2 cases, the school did not attend and did not give notice. All schools were chased and invited to rebook.

There was 1 Chat where the teacher asked questions on behalf of their students. It is also common for students to share login details or computers during Chats. Therefore, the number of students engaged is expected to be higher. Students asked 113 follow up questions of which 106 were approved and sent to geographers.

School activity

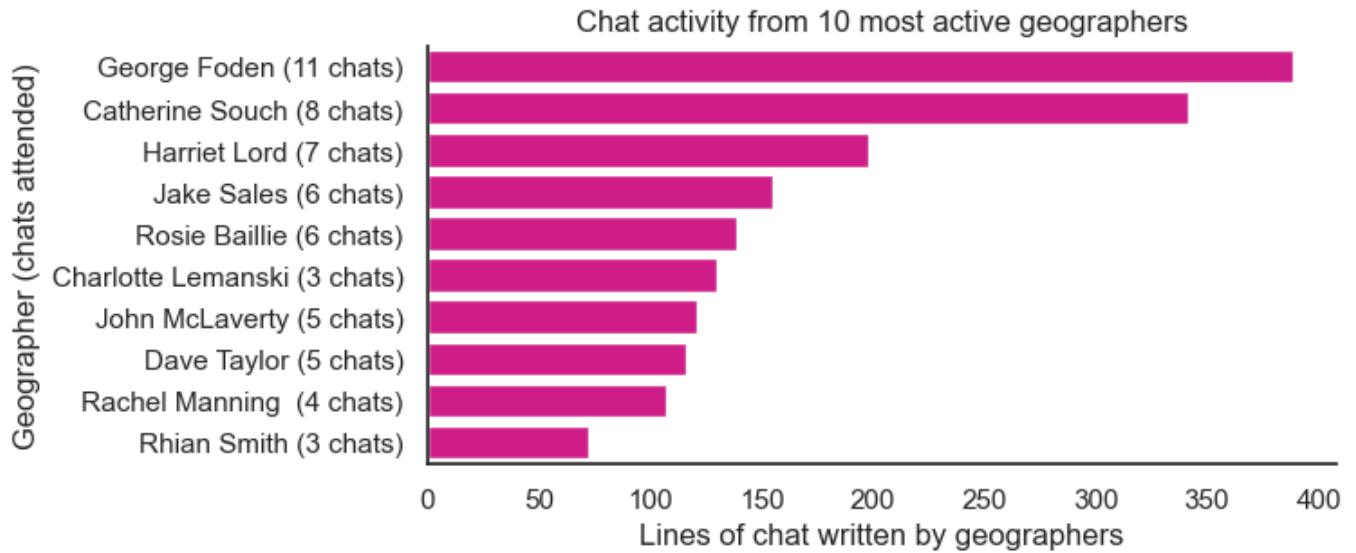
Students from 12 schools across the UK actively participated in the Zone.

School	Active students	Chats attended	Chat lines (total)	Chat lines (per user)	Follow up questions approved	Votes
Shirenewton Junior School, Monmouthshire	54	2	678	13	84	42
King Edward VI Northfield School for Girls, West Midlands (WP)	50	2	358	7	7	29
The Norton Knatchbull School, Kent (U)	47	2	299	6	6	45
Southfields Primary School, Cambridgeshire (WP)	40	2	390	10	3	27
St Bridget's Primary School, Glasgow City (WP)*	30	1	366	12	0	1
Forest Park Primary, Staffordshire (WP)	28	2	466	17	1	22
Saint Olave's Grammar School, London (WP)	17	1	48	3	1	13
Turves Green Girls' School, West Midlands (WP/U)	15	1	108	7	0	12
Billingham CE Primary School, Lincolnshire (WP/U)	13	1	176	14	0	0
Litherland High School, Merseyside (WP)	9	1	123	14	1	7
Great Hockham Primary School, Norfolk (U)	5	1	71	14	0	0
Firbeck Academy, Nottinghamshire (WP)	3	0	0	0	3	0

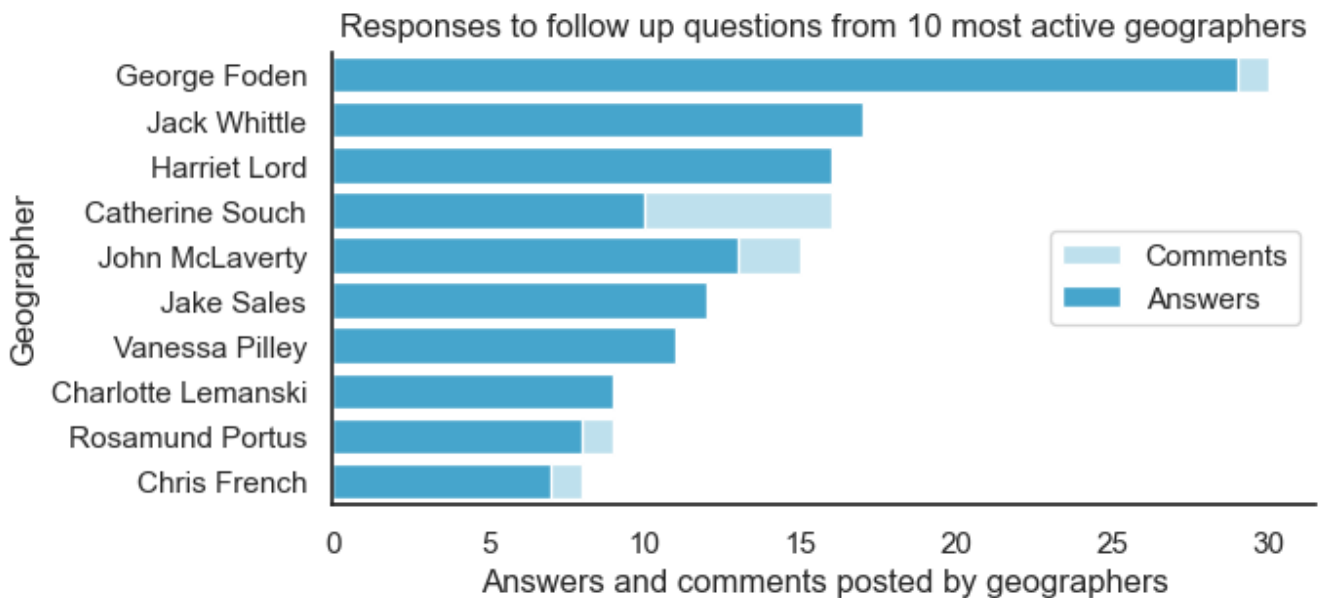
* In these chats teachers typed questions on behalf of their students, with the chat displayed on a screen.

We want to increase the participation of under-represented groups. Find out what we mean by under-served (U) and widening participation (WP) schools, and how you can support us in working with more of these: about.imascientist.org.uk/under-served-and-wp

Geographer activity



The geographers shown wrote 93% of the lines of chat in the zone.
The average geographer attended 3 chats, and wrote 91 lines.



The geographers shown posted 84% of the answers, and 65% of the comments in the zone.
The average geographer posted 8 answers, and 1 comments.

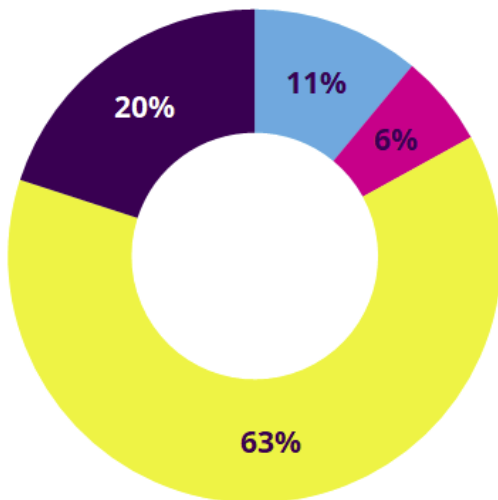
Chats

The word cloud below demonstrates what students and geographers talked about in Chats. The bigger the word, the more frequently it was used.



Follow up questions

The chart below shows an analysis of questions students sent to the geographers. Questions are coded into overarching categories. The examples are coloured by category.



● Geography topics
 ● Geography skills
 ● Careers and education
 ● Personal
 ● Event/Other

- How do factors like high birth rates, high deaths rates or ageing populations impact food security?
- What is your favourite land formation in the UK?
- How do you communicate to the people when you are in India?
- How do you improve peoples lives?
- What did you like best about working with COP26?
- What qualifications do you need to do your jobs??
- Where is the most bizarre place you have worked? Like anywhere overseas
- Have you ever sold any of your art work?

Examples of good engagement

The range of questions asked in the live chats and ask platforms helped the geographers engage with the students in different ways. One of the most popular questions covered what inspired the geographers to study and work in the field. George and Harriet offer their input.

Student 1: What inspired you to become a geographer

George (Geographer): Wanting to learn about how different people live in different parts of the world. There's always more to learn!

Harriet (Geographer): From all my learning at university on how much the planet needs our help, and how little people know about it. I love using my knowledge to make change happen

It was helpful for the students to hear about what the geographers studied when they were the same age. This type of question really helps students feel connected.

Student 2: what did you study in school?

Charlotte (Geographer): I didn't actually study geography at school! I was interested in politics and history, which you couldn't take with geography. Later, I came back to geography

Rebecca (Geographer): I took triple science, geography, french and IT

Rosie (Geographer): When I was at school I was mostly interested in science, so I took chemistry, biology, physics, and I also did art, french, and german alongside the standard maths and english.

The students delved deep into the knowledge and opinions of the geographers by asking about energy. Kat, one of the geographers taking part in the zone, answered the question by focusing upon nuclear energy!

Student 3: What's the best and worst energy for the planet?

Kat (Geographer): Nuclear energy can be great in lots of ways. However nuclear waste must be buried deep in the Earth so it's untouched for many yrs until it becomes safe. In the future it has the potential to seriously harm the environment

Student 3: Thank you for your answer! :)

Another important question for students was finding out from the geographers what career opportunities are available. Catherine and George answer by focusing upon their career journeys.

Student 4: What career prospects are available through a degree in geography?

Catherine (Geographer): Lots. The knowledge and skills lead to jobs in geography - on the environment, international development, working on sustainable finance, teaching etc. But the skills are also really useful for other professions too - marketing, journalism.

George (Geographer): I think geography opens up lots of doors because it's related to so much to do with people and the environment. I know a lot of people working as sustainability consultants, but also in academia or as journalists or teachers

Student 3: thanks

Jake (Geographer): Town Planning needs a lot of geographers and then analysts like myself who use geography to solve problems all usually come from an academic background in geography

A combined thread of questions, this student focused upon the start of the career journey for many of the geographers who took part in the zone! Jake and George had an opportunity to answer.

Student 5: what do you have to do to get into all of your jobs

Jake (Geographer): I started off doing basic mapping work and as the years went by I learnt more and more and became an analyst

Student 5: what age did you start your job at

Jake (Geographer): I've been doing this kind of work since I was 25 (42 now)

George (Geographer): If you can get involved with charity activities in your local community, like I did, then that gives you experience you can use when applying for jobs. For me it was being a trustee of a small charity that helped me to get into my current job

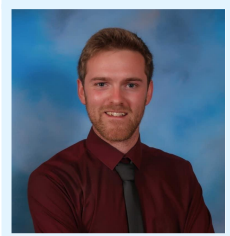
Student 5: so you can get into your job by helping others like charity work. What age did you start your job at

George (Geographer): Yes that's how I got started. I started working with the charity I am a trustee of when I was 23, and I got my job working with the current job

Geographers of the week

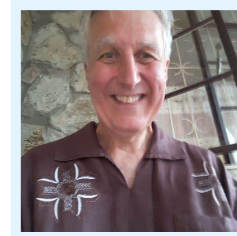
Students voted each week for their favourite geographer to be named scientist of the week.

The geographers of the week were:



George Foden

researches the links between post-disaster shelter and housing reconstruction and long-term community resilience



John McLaverty

a youth campaigner for Oxfam GB organising events for young people that showcases the work which Oxfam does around the world

Winning geographer

The overall winner, with the most votes at the end of the Zone was:

- **George Foden**, researches the links between post-disaster shelter and housing reconstruction and long-term community resilience

As Zone winner, they receive £500 to spend on further public engagement projects.



"I really enjoyed the challenge of responding to such a wide variety of questions in the live chats and the Ask tab. The experience of having to explain my job to a group of people with such wide interests was really useful for helping to get a better understanding of how to talk about my work in a way that makes sense, and boosted my confidence in talking about a wide range of topics in human geography.

I'm really excited to use the prize money ... to run workshops with shelter practitioners and community members in the UK and Malawi to discuss the topics of community resilience and housing reconstruction"

You can read their full statement [here](#)

Feedback

"This is a brilliant chat. Well done P7 - and to the geographers, your fingers must be burning at the rate you are answering the questions" **Teacher**

"Thank you for talking to us and answering our questions! Thank you! Have a nice rest of your day :)"

Student

"Goodbye and thank you for answering all our questions"

Student

"I like it when they ask you what you like about your job its made me appreciate it more, suppose we don't spend enough time asking ourselves that :)"

Rebecca (geographer)

"Really good opportunity to inform students of cultural capital and open their minds to opportunities"

Alison Hammami

"It's such a great idea and a wonderful resource to enrich learning. Thank you all who take part"

Teacher