

The Sustainability Census



2023/24



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Executive Summary

According to the survey's results:



65% of organisations worldwide have made public commitments to sustainability.

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Respondents in the property & real estate sector believe their industry is taking the most proactive approach to sustainability.

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Sustainability professionals across all sectors are sceptical about their organisation's ability to meet its sustainability commitments within the designated timeframes.

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The property & real estate sector reports the most widespread sustainability budget increases.

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More than half of organisations in North America and Asia are boosting their sustainability team budgets.

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The life sciences, pharmaceutical & health sector reports the highest dissatisfaction with the resources available for achieving sustainability objectives.

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Respondents in North America express the highest level of satisfaction with their available resources.

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North American respondents report the largest remote workforce.

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The manufacturing - materials, chemicals, and components sector reports the highest levels of employee compensation satisfaction.

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Respondents in the United Kingdom report the highest levels of organisational dedication to advancing EDI.

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65% of sustainability professionals have completed a master's degree.

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Sustainability professionals in Europe report the highest level of traditional educational qualifications.

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9% of respondents receive bonuses that are partially determined by their sustainability/ESG performance.

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61% of freelance sustainability professionals have worked on an interim basis for less than two years.

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Foreword



Joseph Kenner

*Greyston President, CEO
& Board Member*

GREYSTON

“

Sustainability professionals face the greatest challenges of our time.

The urgency of scientists' warnings about climate change grows louder by the day, paralleled by public demands for businesses to tackle societal challenges. Meanwhile, certain investors and officials push to strip ESG considerations from decision-making processes. What a complex era we navigate!

In this landscape of conflicting and costly demands, sustainability professionals face the task of creatively reconciling these challenges while ensuring business models remain robust. This tightrope walk fuels uncertainty. According to this census, there's scepticism among respondents about their organisations' ability to achieve sustainability goals within the projected timelines. This should be a concern for us all.

The antidote lies in disruptive thinking.

As the President & CEO of Greyston, a pioneering 41-year-old social enterprise and New York's first B Corp in 2012, I am at the forefront of such innovation.

Where the sustainability profession sees escalating levels of rewards and significance, I advocate for those who haven't even had

the opportunity to engage — the overlooked and marginalised. In the following paragraphs, I aim to plant a seed of innovation, hoping you will cultivate it in various ways to address our shared challenges.

Since its inception, Greyston's radical and innovative approach has been encapsulated in Open Hiring®.

Picture this: individuals brimming with potential yet marginalised by societal barriers — be it a criminal record, gaps in employment, or various life hurdles disproportionately affecting some.

Open Hiring® is a groundbreaking model that avoids traditional hiring methods like resumes, interviews or background checks for entry-level positions in our industrial bakery. It's simple: if you're next on the job list and you show up, you get the job — a fresh start, the first stepping stone over turbulent waters.

In pursuing economic empowerment for the underserved and overlooked, Greyston has also committed to the highest standards of governance and transparency. By marrying business sustainability with social responsibility, we produce not just quality baked goods, but also generate positive societal impact.

Greyston is now on a mission to globally expand Open Hiring, aiming to create 40,000 opportunities by 2030. Our collaboration with The Body Shop has already generated over 5,000 Open Hiring positions to date.

When they adopted Open Hiring three years ago, The Body Shop saw a dramatic 60% reduction in monthly staff turnover at a North Carolina facility. Just last year, they reported a significant increase in the number of seasonal employees gaining permanent contracts, a marked improvement from their traditional hiring practices.

My goal is to transform how society perceives employment and to redefine the narrative of leadership. Every individual willing to work deserves that chance, free from the constraints of prolonged reliance on public assistance.

I urge business leaders to momentarily step away from the intricacies of their daily operations and envision a redefined path forward. A great many unexplored strategies lay dormant, ready to be unearthed. These innovative approaches, when combined, have the potential to generate transformative tipping points, steering us towards a more positive and sustainable future.”



Introduction

Every day, thousands of sustainability professionals around the world are working to drive meaningful change and deliver measurable impact.

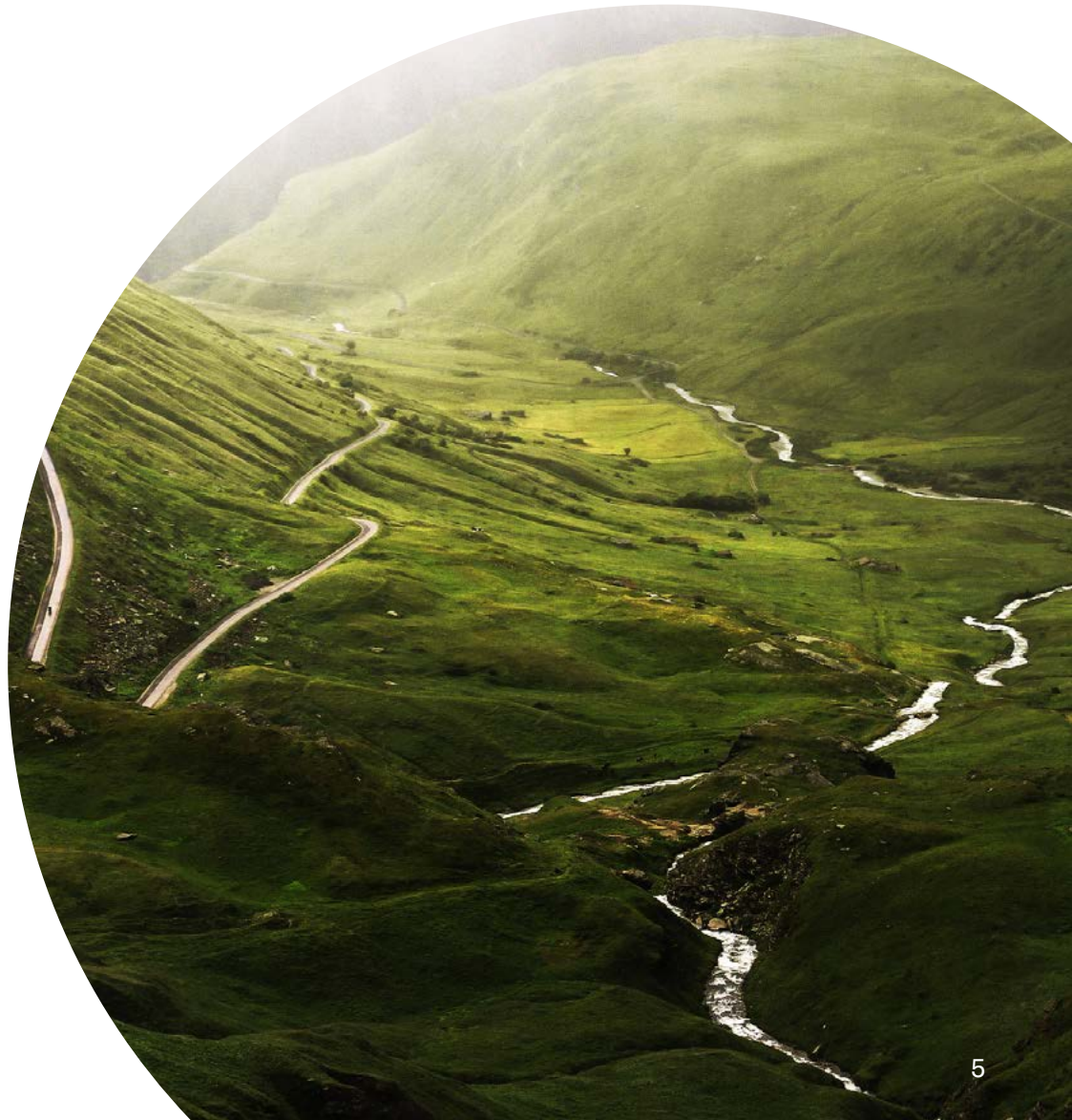
Building on the legacy of the [CR Salary Survey](#), the first edition of which was launched by Acre and Carnstone in 2007, The Sustainability Census brings us closer to uncovering the true state of the profession.

By capturing objective data on the full sustainability employment landscape – covering everything from compensation and working patterns to job functions, current challenges, and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) – we can support the transition to a sustainable future.

This report isn't a passive collection of facts and figures; it's an attempt to capture a genuine, global snapshot of what it's like to work in a sustainability-related profession today.

With a 43% increase in participation from the 2020 CR Salary Survey, the results offer a benchmark for better, more informed decision-making.

*As the world leans heavily on the shoulders of the few, **this report offers insight into the current state of the sustainability profession**, offering a benchmark for navigating the challenging terrain ahead with hope.*





Understandings & Limitations

Terminology & Sample Size

- For ease of interpreting this report, “sustainability” will be used as an umbrella term that includes:
 - Environment, Social and Governance (ESG)
 - Corporate sustainability and responsibility
 - Philanthropy
 - Net-zero
 - Impact
 - Other related terms
- While the meaning of “the sustainability agenda” will vary from business to business, the UN defines it as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
- While **2,253 responses globally** make The Sustainability Census the largest survey of its kind, we acknowledge that even with a sample of this size, drawing definitive conclusions from every dataset is challenging.
- With that said, the size of our sample provides valuable insight into the current realities of working in a sustainability-related profession today and sets a solid foundation to shape future research.

Geographical Breakdown

- Where possible, the data is broken down by sector and geographical region. While grouping countries, states and continents with significant socio-economic variations may not be a seamless approach, it proves most logical when examining broad-scale patterns across regions.
- Due to the limited availability of data to perform meaningful analyses for individual countries, we have categorised the responses into the following four regions:
 - United Kingdom
 - Europe
 - North America
 - Asia (which includes data from Oceania)

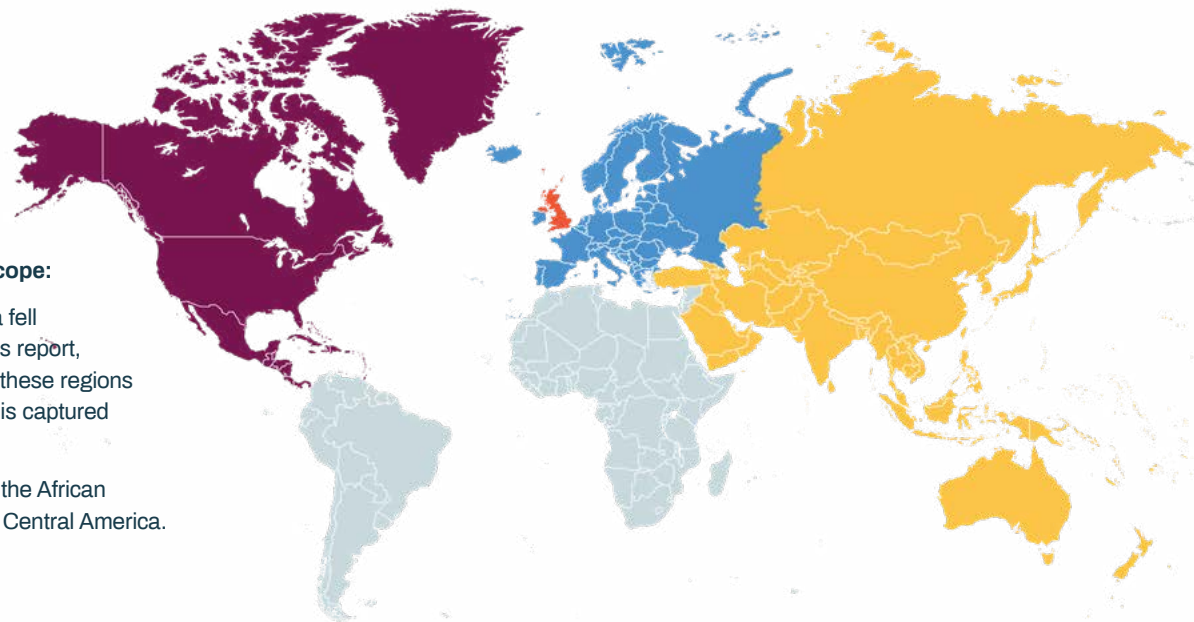
Regions that fall outside our scope:

Africa and Central/South America fell outside of the central scope of this report, but we are grateful to those from these regions who contributed and whose data is captured within sector tables.

This includes 27 individuals from the African continent and 30 from South and Central America.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

- EDI insights presented in this report reflect voluntary diversity data collected within the survey. It is, therefore, important to factor in any gaps, inaccuracies or variations this may cause.
- Readers are encouraged to supplement this analysis with broader insights into workplace dynamics and efforts.



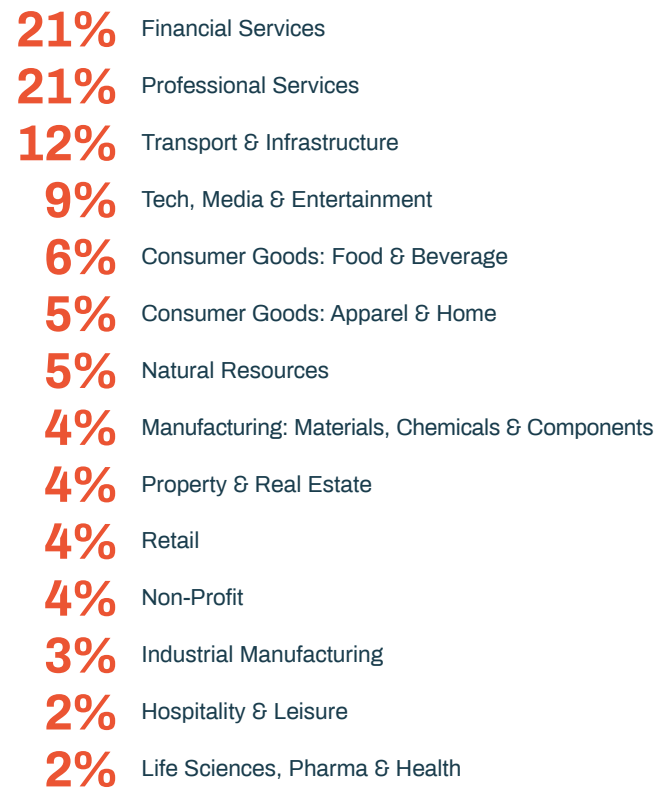
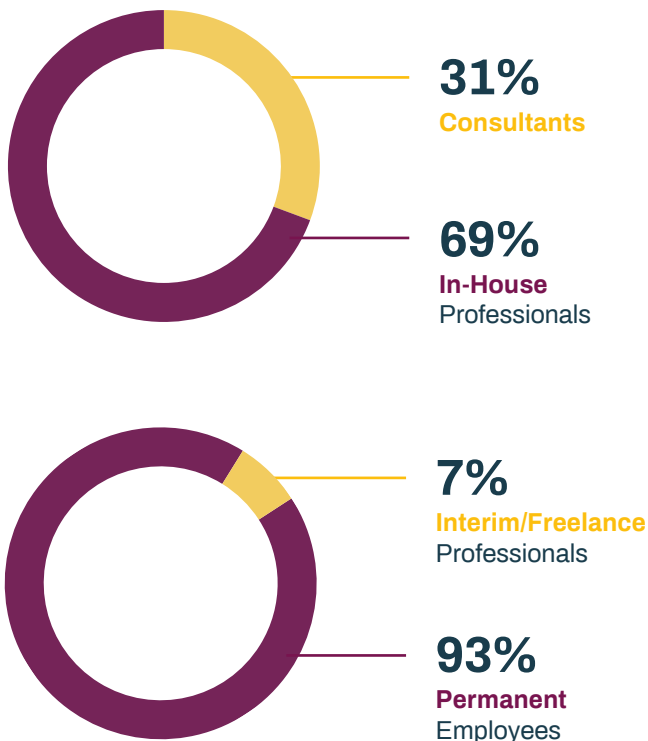
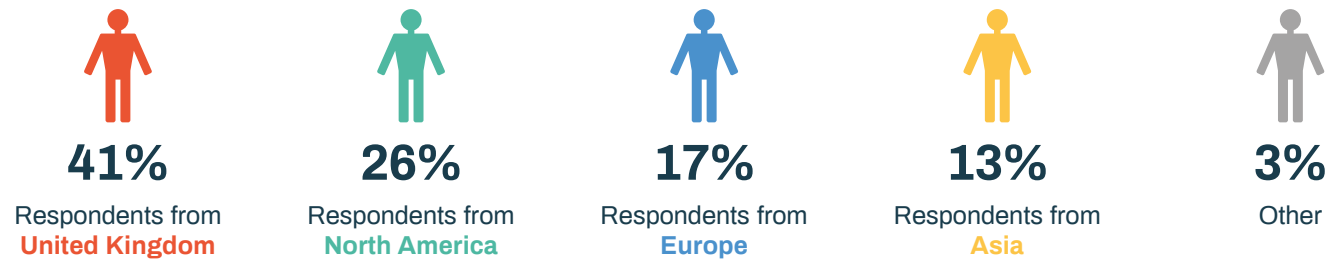


Sectors Represented in this Report





The Sample



In March 2023, for a period of six weeks, data was collected from

2,253

sustainability professionals worldwide.

+43%

Increase in responses from the 2020 CR & Sustainability Salary Survey.



The Sample

Race & Ethnicity

1,734 respondents shared their race/ethnicity through the census. We have chosen not to report on the Asian demographic this time around, because we don't feel that the categories offered sufficiently reflected the diversity in the region. Indeed, definitions of race and ethnicity are difficult to define and vary from region to region.

Our survey follows on the coattails of Diversity in Sustainability's (DiS) State of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Sustainability survey released in September 2021. Their sample was composed of respondents living in 52 countries, although it was heavily tilted towards the UK, Canada and US who made up 85% of respondents.

We have tried to mirror their categorisation, although offer less granularity in two categories which we will seek to amend in the future (Asian

and black). We include the DiS data in our results table for comparison.

In our sample, overall, only 15% of respondents reported as being non-white. This was lowest in the UK at 9% which can be compared to UK government census data which reported 18% of the population being from non-white ethnic groups in 2021 (www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).

The 2022 US Government Census (www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US) places the country's "white-alone" percent (excluding Hispanic or Latino)" at 58.9%. When those of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity also report as "white," this figure increases to 75%.

**This census only gave the option of "native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander," whilst the DiS survey offered a broader "indigenous" category. diversityinsustainability.com*

	Europe	North America	United Kingdom	Combined	DiS Survey (2021)
White	86%	75%	91%	85%	57%
Asian	4%	12%	5%	7%	16%
Multiracial/multi-ethnic	9%	7%	3%	5%	5%
Black	1%	4%	1%	2%	9%
Hispanic or Latinx	0.0%	1%	0.4%	1%	4%
Other	0.5%	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%	6%
Middle Eastern /North African	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	2%
Indigenous (native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander*)	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.1%	1%

Gender

Of the 1,922 respondents who shared their gender in the census, 60% reported as being female, in contrast to 57% in our 2020 CRS Salary Survey. Asia was the only region in which the male demographic was higher. For comparison, the 2021 DiS survey reported similar results with females making up 65% of the population (male – 31% and non-binary 2%).

	Asia	Europe	North America	United Kingdom	Combined
Female	41%	58%	66%	63%	60%
Male	58%	42%	33%	37%	39%
Non-Binary	0.4%	0.5%	1.3%	0.2%	0.6%



Commitment to Sustainability *At a Glance*

The data in this section provides insight into the sustainability landscape, reiterating the role that regional and sector nuances, executive engagement and confidence levels play in shaping an organisation's commitment to sustainability.

While the United Kingdom reports the highest levels of public commitments to sustainability, Asia reports the highest perceived levels of executive engagement in the subject.

The results demonstrate that where executive engagement levels are high, there is a greater likelihood of organisational proactivity when it comes to sustainability.



Commitment to Sustainability



Dr Nicola Kimm

*Member of the Managing Board
& Chief Sustainability Officer*

Heidelberg Materials



Business leaders need to navigate in a world of increasingly complex environmental, social and economic challenges. This requires them to have a broad skillset.

As an integral part of boardroom discussions, sustainability is the lens through which many corporate decisions are made. Whether it's in due diligence, green procurement, sustainable finance, or recruiting – ESG is pervasive across the board. It's not just a result of the business landscape changing through legislation, customer interests, and financial instruments, but also because purpose, climate action, and attracting talent are becoming more important than ever.

These newly prioritised topics for business leaders and their stakeholders, such as investors and NGOs, have led to a shift in standing and airtime of the corporate sustainability function. This also requires a changing skillset of sustainability professionals and different approach to sustainability management. What may have been a specialised, less-integrated function



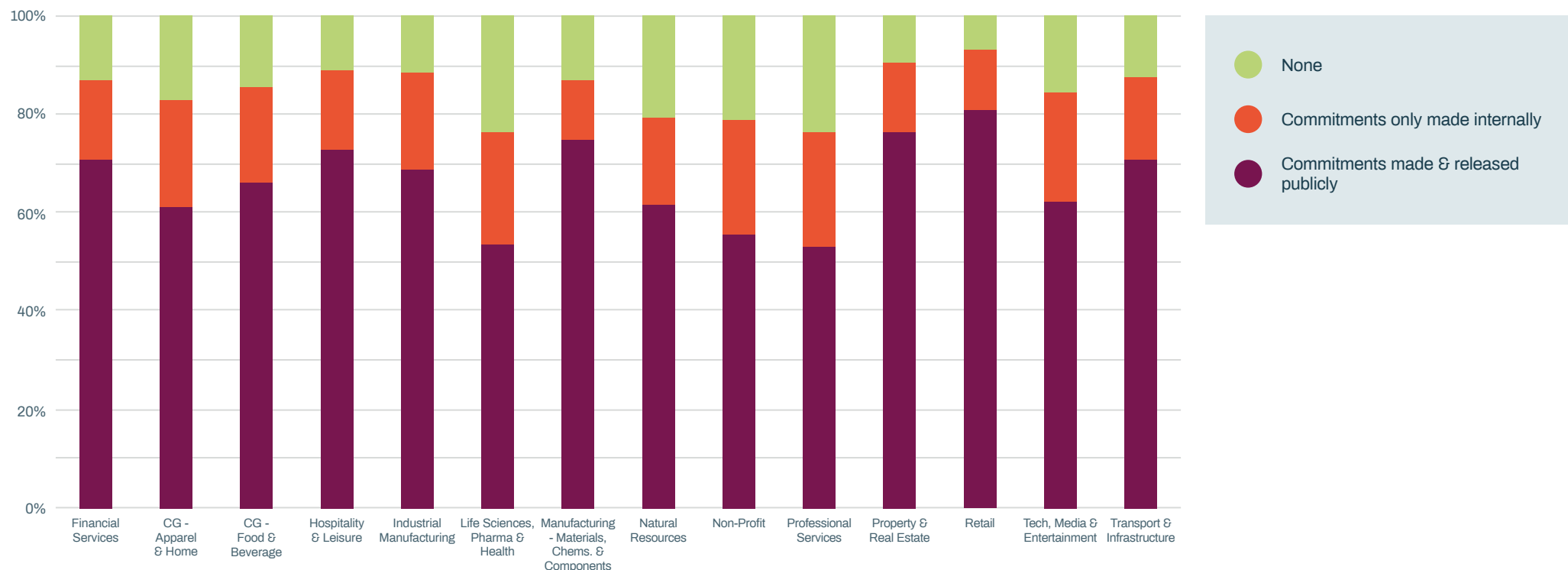
Sustainability professionals are, more than ever, the catalysts needed for transformation. Expertise is the starting point, but collaboration and influencing – with and as leaders – are equally needed.”

in the past is transforming into a highly sought-after centre of expertise, providing cross-company guidance, influencing and collaborating, instead of owning.

Surprisingly, most respondents of this survey were sceptical about their organisations' ability to reach their sustainability commitments. How can organisations accelerate to meet their commitments? Perhaps one answer lies in another insight from this report – the increased ownership of sustainability topics in other departments. This wider ownership will certainly help corporates to scale their efforts and drive implementation, alleviating concerns around timely achievement. This means sustainability professionals are, more than ever, the catalysts needed for transformation. Expertise is the starting point, but the abilities to engage, collaborate and influence will be critical to achieve sustainability leadership in the future.”



Organisational Commitment to Sustainability *by Sector*



The majority of respondents say that their organisation has made public commitments to sustainability.

Across all sectors, an average of 65% of respondents confirm their organisations' public commitment to sustainability.

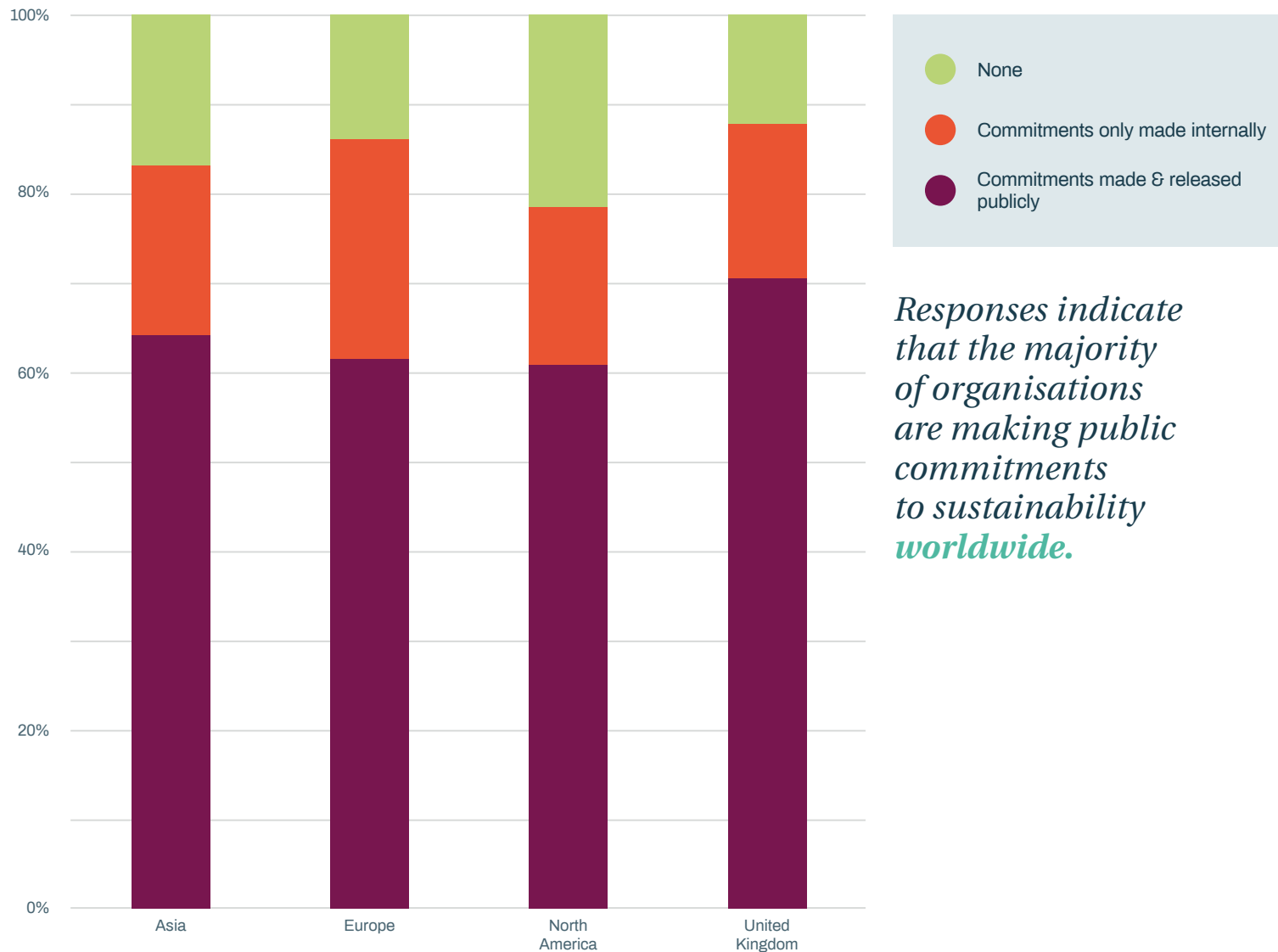
The retail sector leads in this area, with 81% of respondents attesting to these public commitments.

While these findings provide insight into the level of engagement among organisations when it comes to making commitments to a new

sustainable strategy, they prompt a critical question: **do these public commitments effectively translate into actionable goals?**



Organisational Commitment to Sustainability *by Region*



Responses indicate that the majority of organisations are making public commitments to sustainability worldwide.

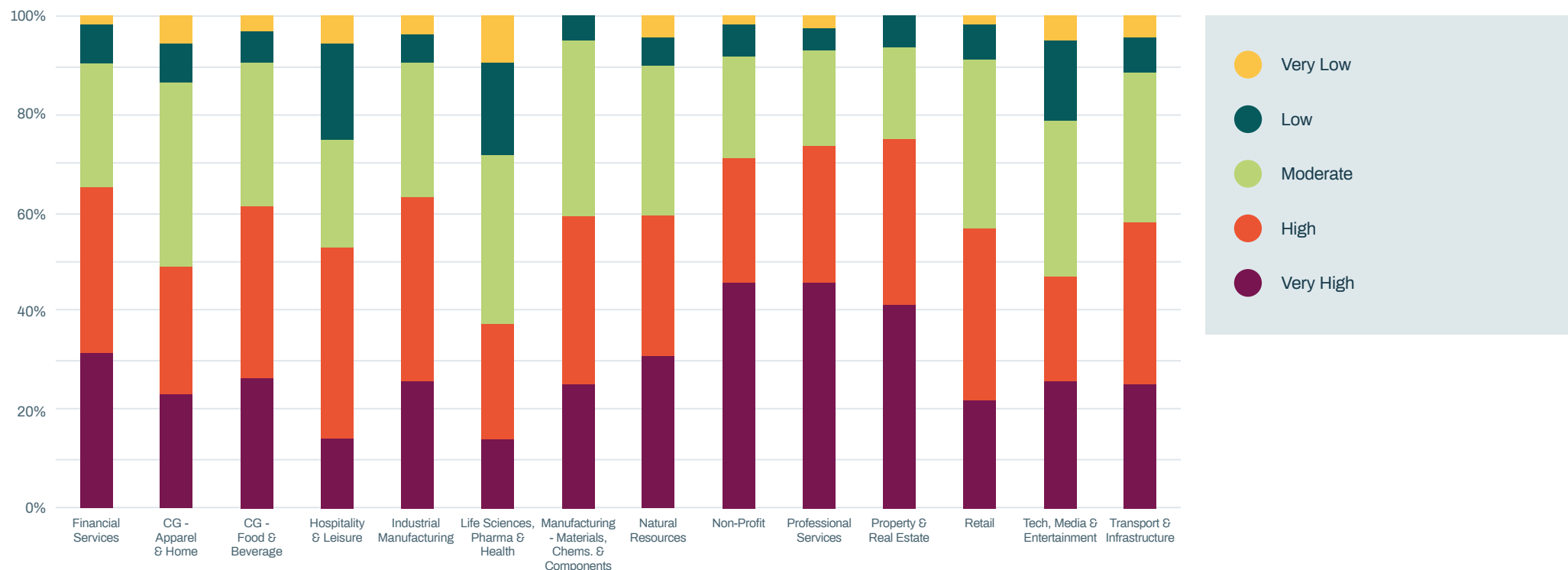
The United Kingdom leads regionally, with more than 70% of respondents affirming that their organisations have publicly pledged to prioritise sustainability.

Conversely, at 21%, North America reports the highest proportion of organisations that have yet to make any internal or public sustainability commitments.

Despite these regional variations, the data suggests that most organisations have publicly declared or internally endorsed their commitment to sustainability.



Executive Management's Engagement in Sustainability *by Sector*



*In the life sciences, pharmaceutical and health sector, executives are generally perceived as **less involved in driving sustainability efforts.***

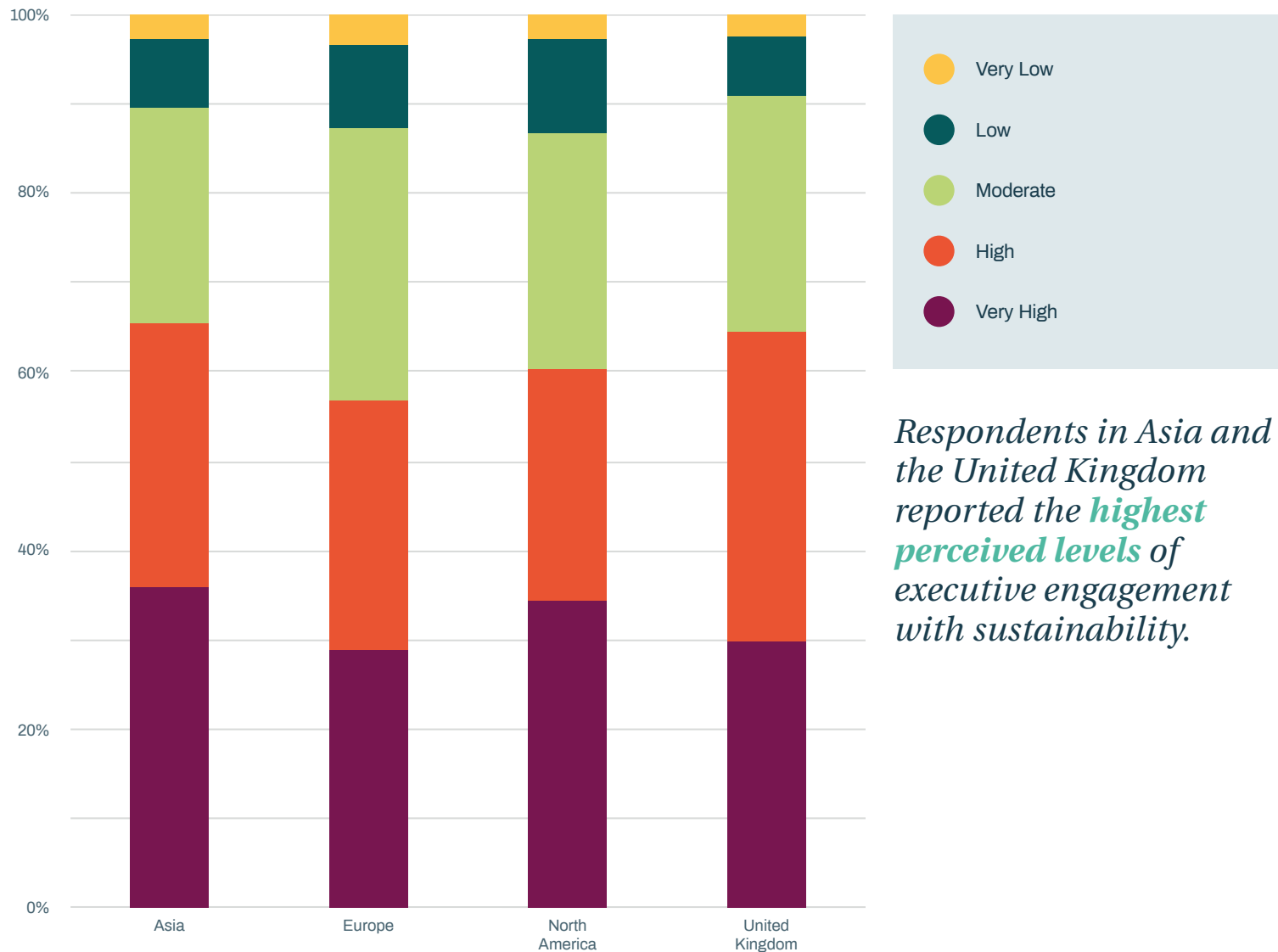
While almost half of all organisations perceive their executive leadership to be highly committed to sustainability, the life sciences, pharmaceuticals and health sector falls short. Just under 30% of respondents in this sector indicate a low or very low level of perceived executive engagement in sustainability practices.

The non-profit, professional services and property & real estate sectors indicate the highest perceived levels of executive engagement.

The question remains: **how does executive management's involvement in sustainability affect a company's performance, reputation and employee satisfaction?**



Executive Management's Engagement in Sustainability *by Region*



*Respondents in Asia and the United Kingdom reported the **highest perceived levels** of executive engagement with sustainability.*

While respondents in Asia and the United Kingdom reported the highest perceived levels of executive engagement with sustainability, the data trends similarly across all regions.



Commitment to Sustainability



Maurice Loosschilder
Global Head of Sustainability

Signify

“

The Sustainability Census confirms what we see around us every day: across all sectors, companies are making commitments to sustainability, and most of these commitments are made in public. Voicing commitments, targets, and progress is essential, both for accountability and so that forerunners tread paths that others can follow.

Corporate sustainability is reaching a new phase of maturity where it is no longer enough to state goals. We must also demonstrate that our actions are effective in terms of absolute impact. This can be achieved with a combination of short and long-term goals: goals with a short enough horizon to achieve something without delay, and long-term goals to keep focus and ensure long-term positive impact.

Both long-term and short-term goals must be ambitious, but they must also be achievable. The census also shows that sustainability professionals have little confidence in organisations' ability to meet

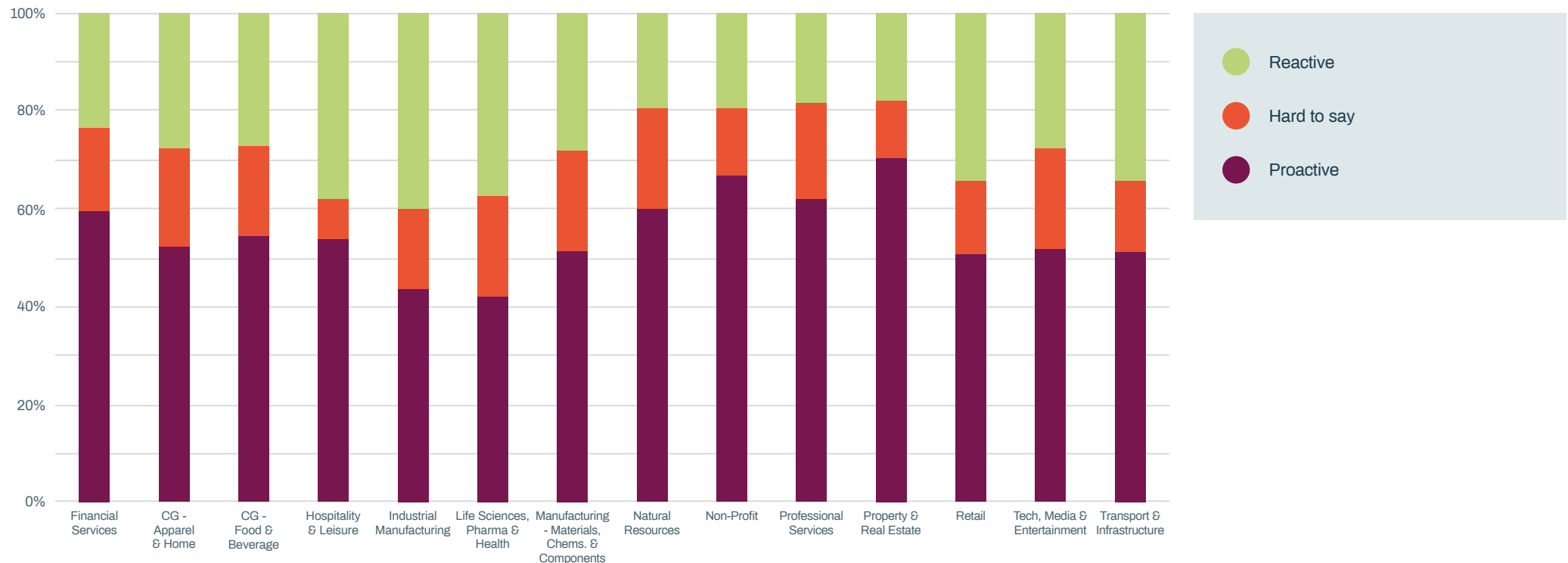
their targets. This lack of confidence risks undermining successful implementation and execution of these programmes. Organisations in this position must take a proactive approach to ensure that they reach their targets and commitments and keep progress visible and on track.

In this new age of maturity, we have a clear direction from customers, investors, and other stakeholders that our sustainability efforts need to go beyond sustainable operations to encompass our wider impact: from supply chain to full product lifecycle. The regulatory direction is pushing towards more sustainable companies and products, and better transparency and consistency of reporting.

The companies already making progress here are not merely box ticking, but making sustainability a core part of their strategy, mission, purpose, and business process. Reporting must follow strategy, not the other way around.”



Organisational Approaches to Sustainability *by Sector*



*Respondents in the **property and real estate** sector believe their industry is taking the **most proactive** approach to sustainability.*

71% of respondents in the property and real estate sector view their organisation's approach to sustainability as proactive.

This result will likely stem from various factors, including a trend towards more stringent regulation. For example, in the United States, numerous cities and states are increasingly adopting regulatory measures (such as New York City's Local Law 97 and California's Senate Bill 253).

This data illuminates the divide in sustainability approaches across different sectors. As it gains prominence in the global business landscape, organisations will need to continue to find innovative ways to align their practices with environmental and commercial expectations.



Commitment to Sustainability



Joelle Chen

Head of Sustainability, Asia

Lendlease

“

“Some progress, must try harder.” The headline for The Economist’s recent [climate report](#)¹ aptly sums it up.

While more than 50% of sectors are considered to have a proactive approach to sustainability, and with the sector I represent, property & real estate, being highly proactive at >70%, we all need to try harder.

In order to ‘try harder’, I think we need introduce a fresh mindset. My view is that all of us in sustainability need to keep challenging our organisations to think not only about doing ‘less bad’ but also about how we can do ‘more good’. This is a fundamental shift. Thinking about doing ‘more good’ pushes us from, say, managing carbon emissions within our direct operations to being prepared to tackle those tricky carbon emissions outside of our control. And aiming to do ‘more good’ is more likely to inspire our employees and align with their personal values.

In Asia, it is heartening to see that executive management’s engagement is high, which could be attributed to increasing compliance and growing recognition for executive education and engagement. A more telling indicator for engagement is whether executives have remuneration and KPIs tied to sustainability performance, literally putting money where their mouth is.

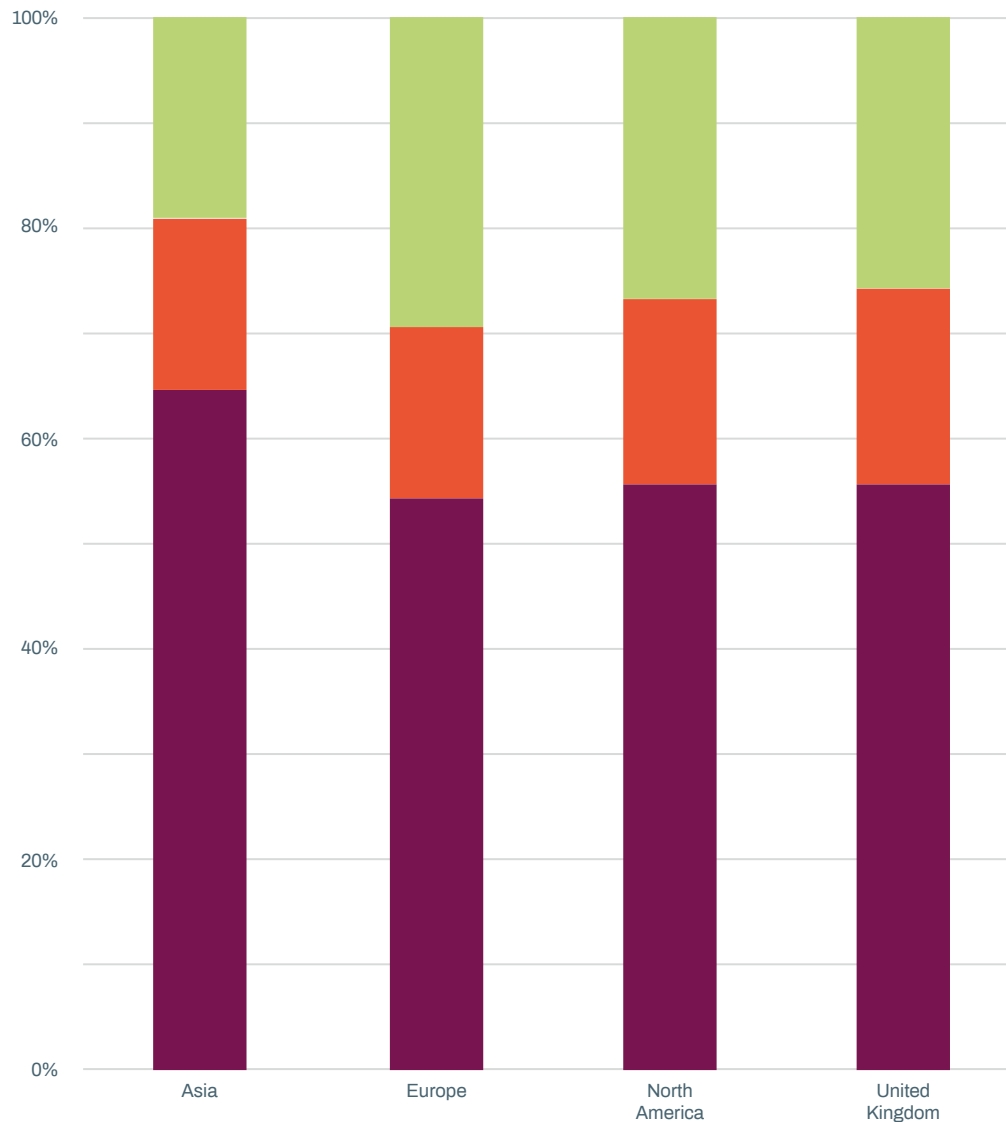
The call to action is two-fold: sustainability professionals must continue to lead courageously, grounded in contextual understanding and in line with science; and executive management must continue to forge strategic partnerships with their sustainability counterparts and tap into opportunities to do more good, be it nature-based solutions or social co-benefits.

Through a genuine partnering approach, confidence levels in meeting sustainability commitments would undoubtedly rise, and enable us to redefine our relationship with the planet and society, fostering a more equitable future for all.”

¹Climate report: Some progress, must try harder. The Economist. 25th November 2023.



Organisational Approaches to Sustainability *by Region*



- Reactive
- Hard to say
- Proactive

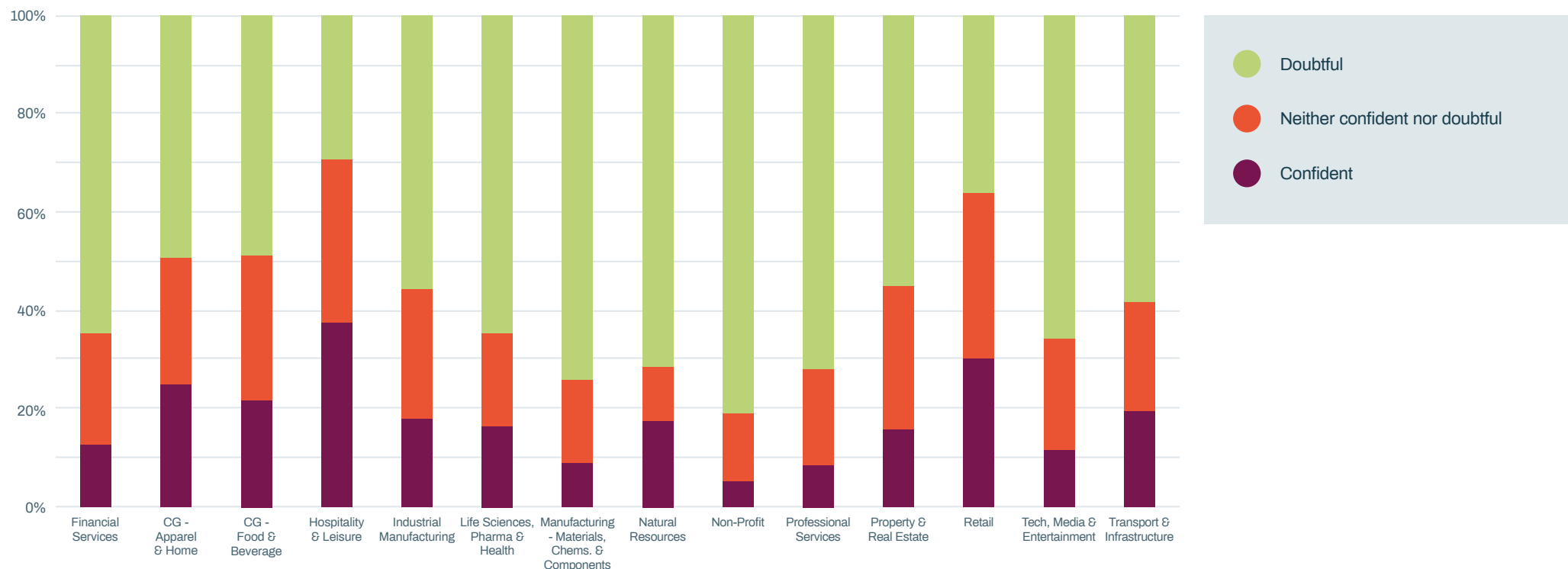
*Respondents in **Asia** perceive their organisations as having the most proactive approach to sustainability.*

Among respondents from Asia, 64% say that their organisations are taking a proactive approach towards sustainability.

The other regions report a similar distribution between proactive and reactive approaches.



Realistic Timeframes for Delivering Against Sustainability Targets *by Sector*



Across all sectors, respondents *express scepticism* about their organisation *meeting its sustainability commitments within the timeframes set*.

When asked about their confidence in their organisation's ability to deliver against its sustainability commitments within the timeframes set, respondents across all sectors expressed doubts. This may suggest a misalignment between the individuals setting these targets and those responsible for implementing them.

The hospitality & leisure sector shows the highest perceived confidence levels, with 38%

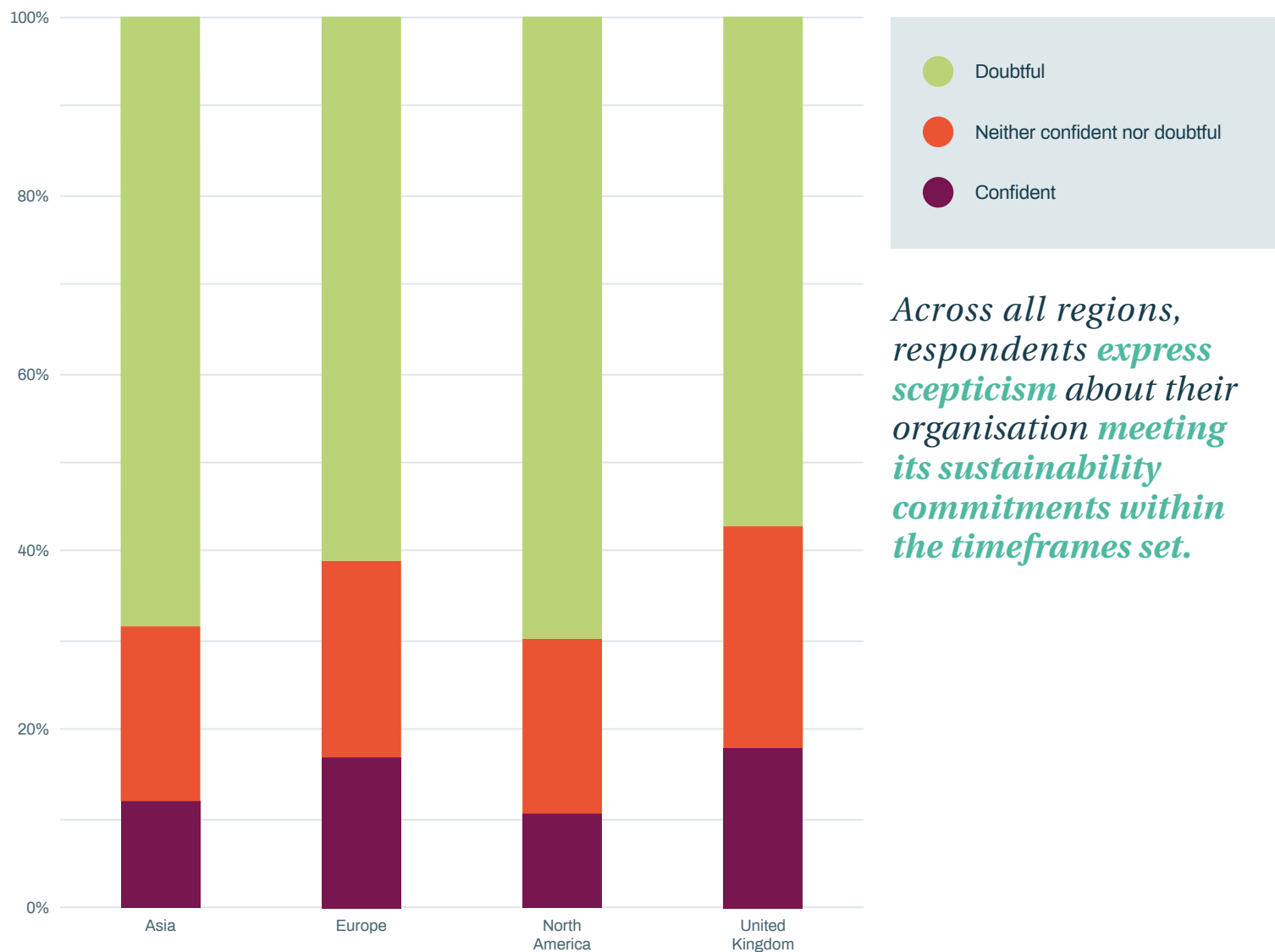
of respondents expressing high confidence that their commitments are achievable within the specified timeframes.

Respondents from the non-profit sector viewed their organisations' ability to deliver against targets as the least realistic; however, their perspective on this question may differ from those in commercial organisations. Non-profit respondents are likely focusing on the

challenges of fulfilling their ambitious missions, rather than strictly on operational performance.



Realistic Timeframes for Delivering Against Sustainability Targets *by Region*



Regionally, confidence in delivering against sustainability targets is also low, with the United Kingdom reporting the highest levels of confidence and North America reporting the lowest.

*Across all regions, respondents **express scepticism** about their organisation **meeting its sustainability commitments within the timeframes set.***



Commitment to Sustainability



Kamran Khan

*Managing Director
& Head of ESG for Asia Pacific*

Deutsche Bank Group

“

After several years of observing the sustainability market we are finally starting to see emergence of some important patterns globally. Perhaps the most meaningful pattern coming out of the data presented in this report addresses the fundamental question: are the efforts made to adopt sustainability practices creating value for the company at a strategic level?

One telling finding is that sectors, such as real estate and hospitality & leisure, in which sustainability practices more directly equate to strategic value for the company are leading the market across many of the observed indicators. This is because in these industries establishment of credentials as a sustainable business or having a sustainable asset translates to better quality clients, higher price points and more fundraising flexibility.

For example, most multinational corporations now routinely view green certification and sustainable operations of building as a key criteria in the selection of new office

space. Similarly, hospitality and leisure clients increasingly associate sustainability credentials of the property with a clean environment and a no-guilt vacation.

Sustainability teams that are not able to link their work to the creation of value for the company are and will continue to face the challenges highlighted in this report, including lack of executive commitment, staffing, budget and compensation of sustainability professionals.

The creation of value via sustainable practices can be based on improving the attractiveness of a company's products to its customers, protecting the company from potential regulatory or legal liabilities, or ensuring that the company and its products are not downgraded by the market due to inappropriate or inadequate operational practices.

Of course, government policy and associated market price corrections can change the sustainability - value creation equation

in many industries, as we are beginning to observe in Europe. Retail consumers can also change the equation by shifting buying preferences towards sustainable products. We are beginning to see signs of these changes, but clearly much more needs to be done by governments and consumers to even the playing field for sustainable business practices and their impact on the value of companies and their products.”



Team Structures & Resources

At a Glance

How organisations structure their teams greatly impacts their ability to deliver upon sustainability objectives.

The 2020 CR Salary Survey found that 46% of respondents reported an increase in their team headcounts compared to the prior year. Fast forward to 2023, this figure has risen significantly to 65%, indicating a notable upward trend in team growth.

Globally, it is evident that all regions witnessed growth in their team budgets over the past year. When we delve deeper into the preferences of respondents regarding budget allocation, we find a common theme: a preference for investing in specialised skillsets.



Team Structures & Resources



Leigh Pezzicara

VP Sustainability & Member of the Executive Board

La Prairie

“

Strategically embedding sustainability within organisations is not just crucial for the effective execution of sustainability initiatives, but it also serves as a catalyst for enhanced collaboration and operational efficiencies across the entire organisational spectrum. The placement of sustainability teams within organisations can vary, yet elevating their status to the Executive Committee level, with the Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) or Sustainability lead reporting directly to the CEO, is a strategic move that underscores the paramount importance of sustainability.

By integrating sustainability at the highest echelons of decision-making, organisations send a clear signal about their commitment to sustainability as a core strategic imperative. This approach ensures that sustainability professionals actively engage and collaborate with various departments, contributing to the identification and implementation of sustainable solutions.

While a top-down strategy is indispensable, it must be complemented by a robust

bottom-up approach. Establishing a dedicated implementation team is essential to support the integration of sustainability practices across business functions. Recognising that sustainability professionals cannot be experts in every facet of the business, aligning them with functional sustainability experts ensures a focused and nuanced approach to sustainability improvements within specific areas.

Moreover, the engagement of voluntary sustainability ambassadors plays a pivotal role in fostering a culture of sustainability at the grassroots level. These ambassadors connect with colleagues, making sustainability commitments relevant to specific offices and regions. This grassroots engagement ensures that creativity and initiatives spring from the bottom-up, aligning with strategic commitments and sustaining motivation among employees.

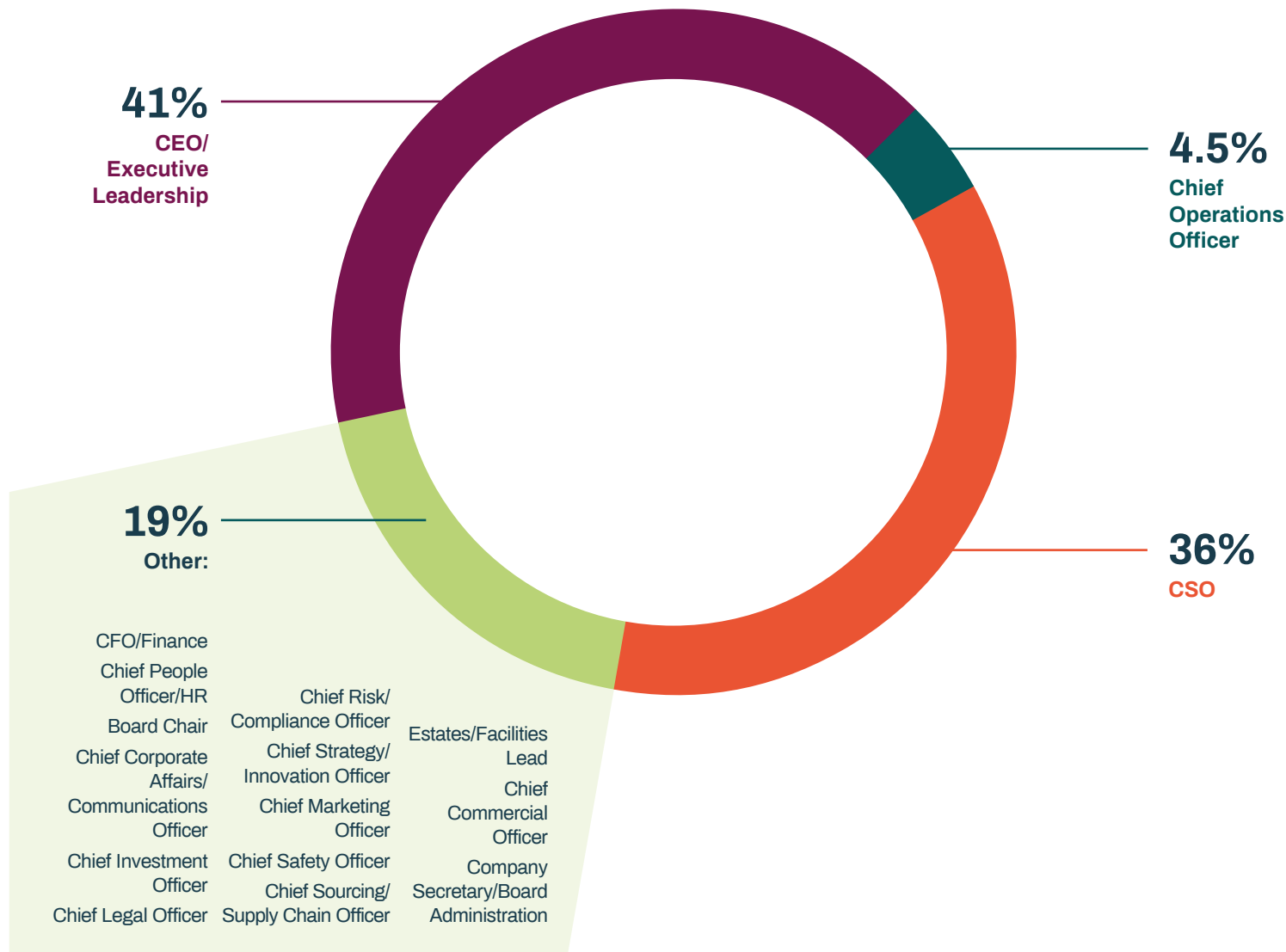
The increasing demand for dedicated sustainability resources is evident across organisational structures. To future-proof

organisations and stay ahead of evolving sustainability legislation, a commitment to dedicated sustainability resources is paramount. The aspiration is for sustainability professionals to leave a lasting legacy, instigating behavioural change and a fundamental shift in mindsets, ensuring that sustainability considerations are woven into every organisational decision-making process from inception. This holistic approach positions organisations to thrive in an era where sustainability is not just a choice but a prerequisite for enduring success.”



Team Structures & Resources

Who owns sustainability at the board level?



Organisational structures for sustainability teams vary significantly between sectors and regions, but a few prominent patterns emerge.

Most organisations have established a dedicated sustainability function responsible for leading internal sustainability initiatives.

More than 75% of respondents reveal that, at board level, accountability for sustainability sits with either the CEO (41%) or the CSO (36%). This suggests that the majority of organisations take a top-down approach where sustainability is driven from the highest levels of the organisation.

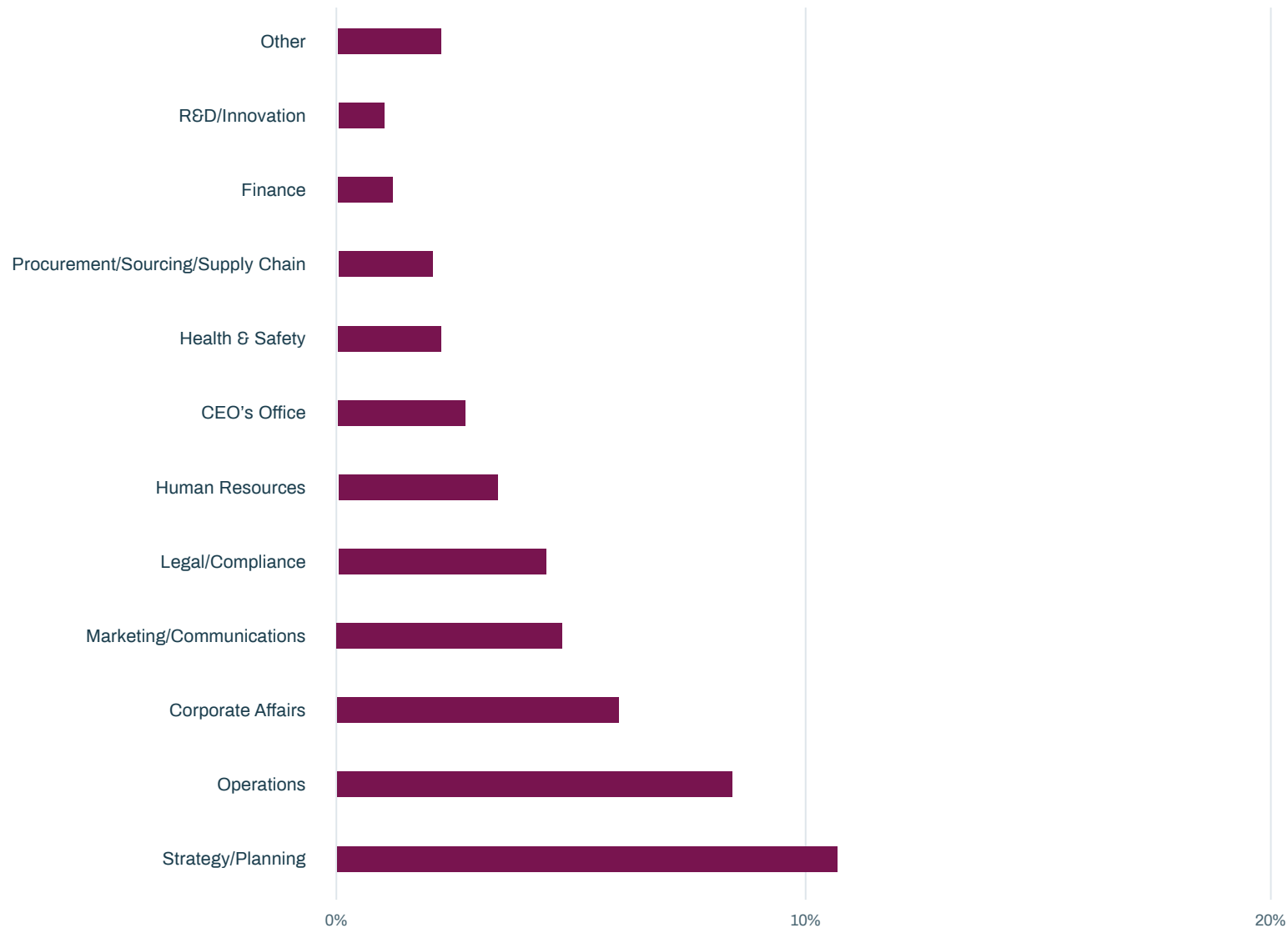
Although the remaining percentages may be small, the diversity of ownership and departments responsible for driving sustainability initiatives reveals a broad spectrum of individuals and functions involved in the process.

This indicates that organisations have embraced a flexible and adaptable approach, that fits best with their ambitions and needs, to incorporate sustainability into core business operations.



Team Structures & Resources

Which department owns sustainability?



Sustainability teams ultimately report into a broad range of core business functions. When organised effectively, this integration ensures that sustainability relates to, and informs key organisational strategy.

The results demonstrate a broad range of departmental ownership, the most frequent being Strategy/Planning, Operations and Corporate Affairs.



Team Structures & Resources

“

Forward faster through entrepreneurial leadership.”



Jenny Wassenaar

*Chief Sustainability Officer
& SVP Global R&D*

Trivium Packaging

“

It's time for CSOs to step up and enforce radical change and partnerships beyond their own company walls to make a true impact for our customers, our planet and our people!

Currently six of the nine planetary boundaries are surpassed, which means that the Earth is now well beyond the safe operating space for humanity. Only 18% of the companies committed to the Science Based Targets initiatives are currently on track to meet the requirements to protect the world from global warming above 1.5 degrees. Looking at the Sustainable Development Goals, supported by the UN Global Compact, only 15% of these targets are currently on track while we are halfway through the programme to 2030. There is no longer a choice. We have to move forward faster.

The CSO role has never been more important than today. We have a significant challenge ahead which we can overcome together, but we all have to step up and

enable our companies to make real changes to the way we operate, the way we work, and the way we do business. For example, at Trivium Packaging, where I work, we make metal packaging solutions. Metal can be used infinitely and we make 100 million metal packaging items every single day. Just imagine the ability we have to drive change. Trivium Packaging has signed up to the Science Based Targets initiative and is currently on track to meet our objectives. However, we cannot reach the finish line without working with our full value chain to make the changes needed. Therefore, we initiated sustainable innovation sessions with our customers and our suppliers. We also work with universities to develop knowledge-based programmes and with our local communities to explore collaboration possibilities.

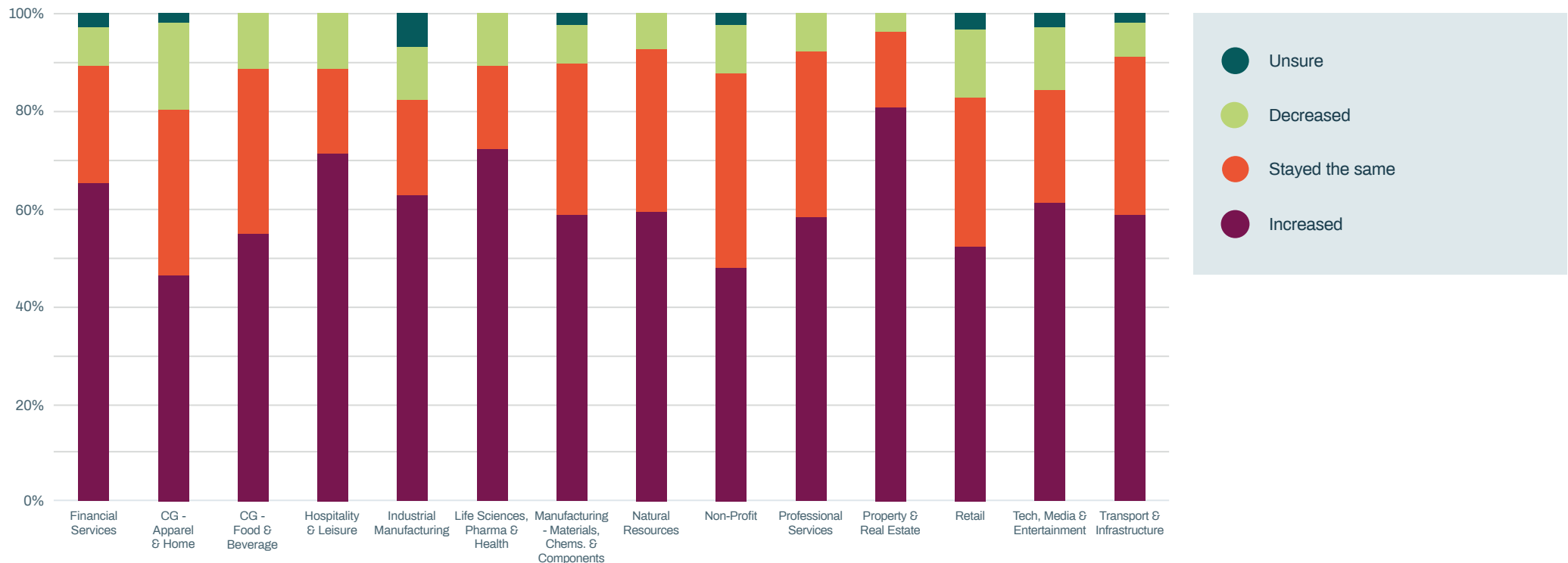
This is the beauty of being a CSO. Be courageous and take the lead, collaborate on the changes that are needed to safeguard and strengthen the environment through

your companies. The technical solutions to many of our challenges are out there, and it is your role to connect the dots and drive execution faster.

As mentioned, you cannot and should not do this by yourself, but you can lead the way forward and guide your company through passion, teamwork, and excellence: CSO, you matter!”



Changes in Team Size by Sector



Across all sectors, responses indicate that **sustainability capacity is growing**, but not without challenges.

While 65% of all respondents stated that their sustainability headcount had grown over the previous 12 months, there were some clear sector outliers. The consumer goods – apparel & home sector reported the lowest team growth, with 18% of respondents reporting a decrease in team size.

In contrast, 81% of those in the property & real estate sector experienced an expansion in team size. Similarly, in the financial services, life sciences, pharma & health, and hospitality

& leisure sectors, over 70% of respondents noted team growth.

The increasing demand for specialists across the market has led to a growth in headcount within core sustainability teams, as well as within other functional areas where sustainability is becoming integrated, such as procurement and finance.

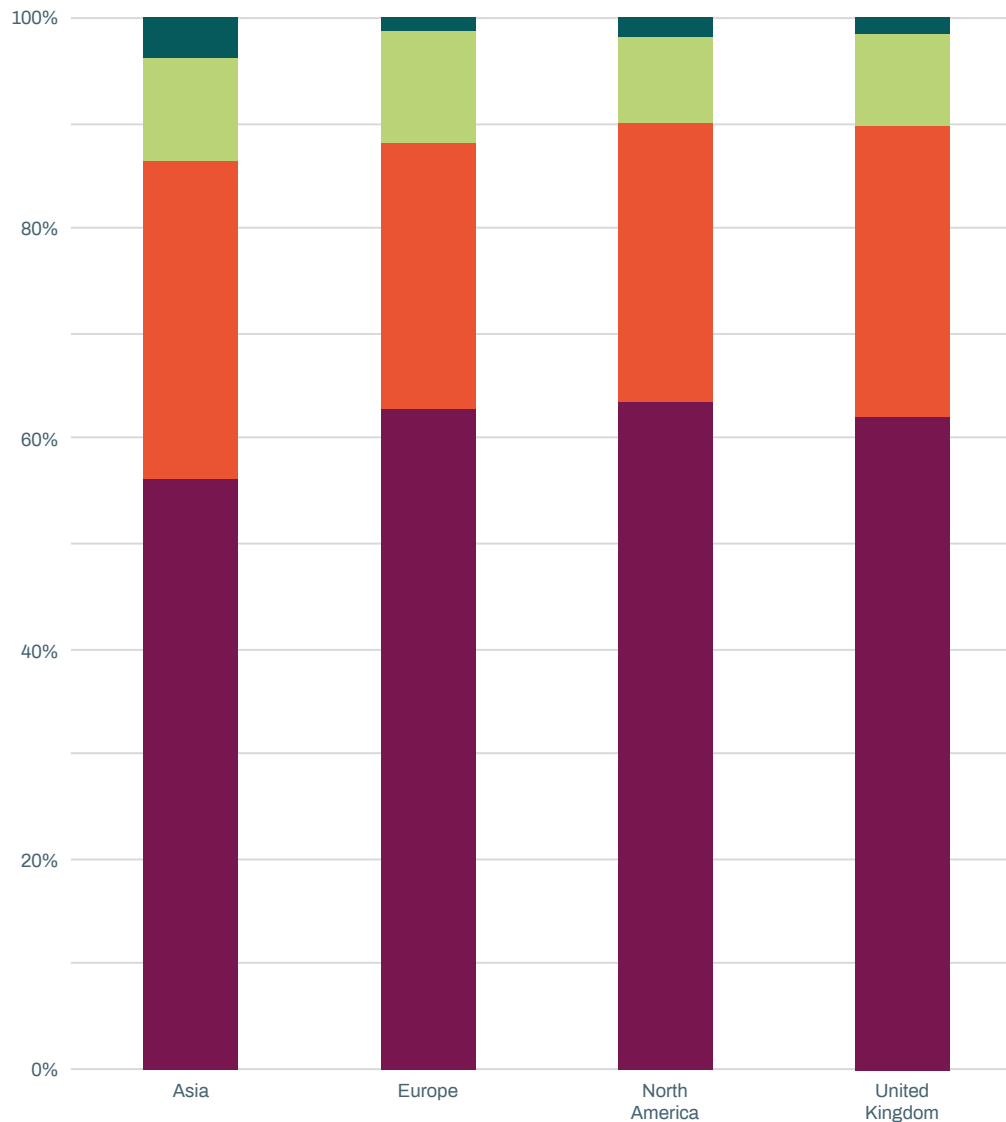
Additionally, sustainability positions are increasingly attracting individuals from other

functions, who have little or no prior sustainability experience.

That said, the market can change dramatically – even within a year. While teams may have been expanding when the data was captured, it is not necessarily the case that they are still growing today.



Changes in Team Size by Region



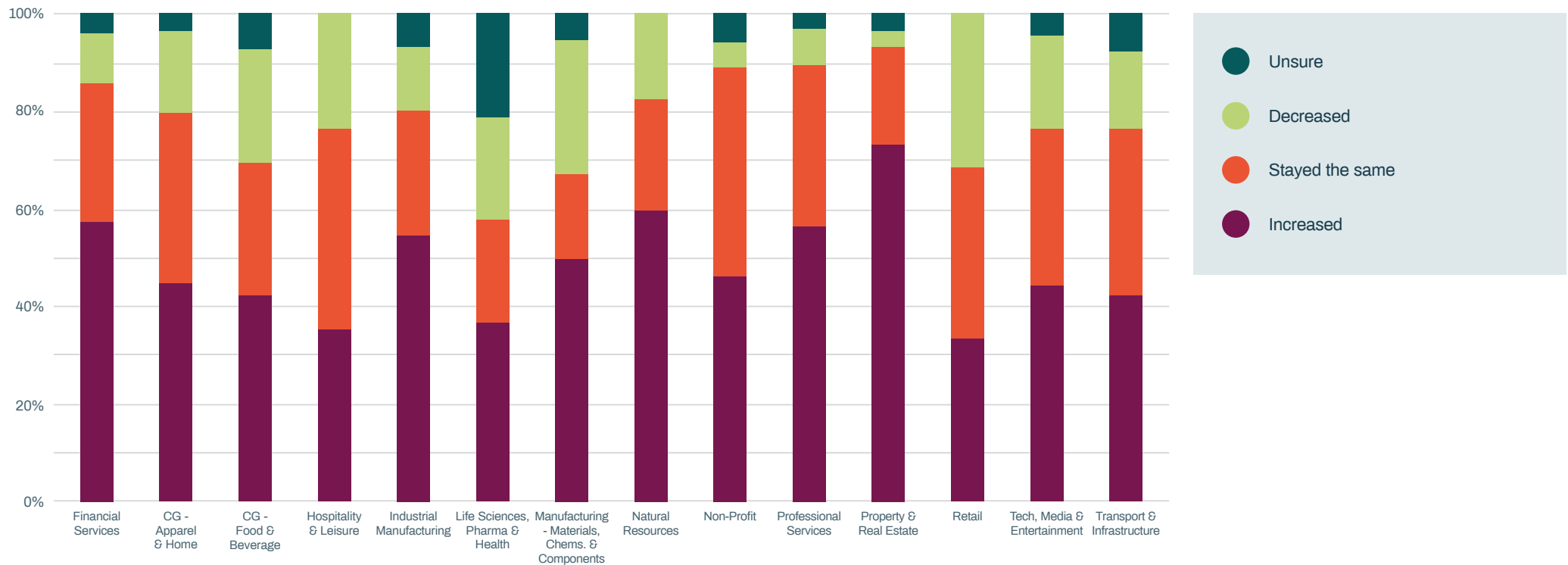
- Unsure
- Decreased
- Stayed the same
- Increased

Respondents report that their sustainability teams are growing globally.

In all regions, respondents agreed that their sustainability teams were increasing in headcount, with over half of all respondents reporting this change.



Team Budget by Sector



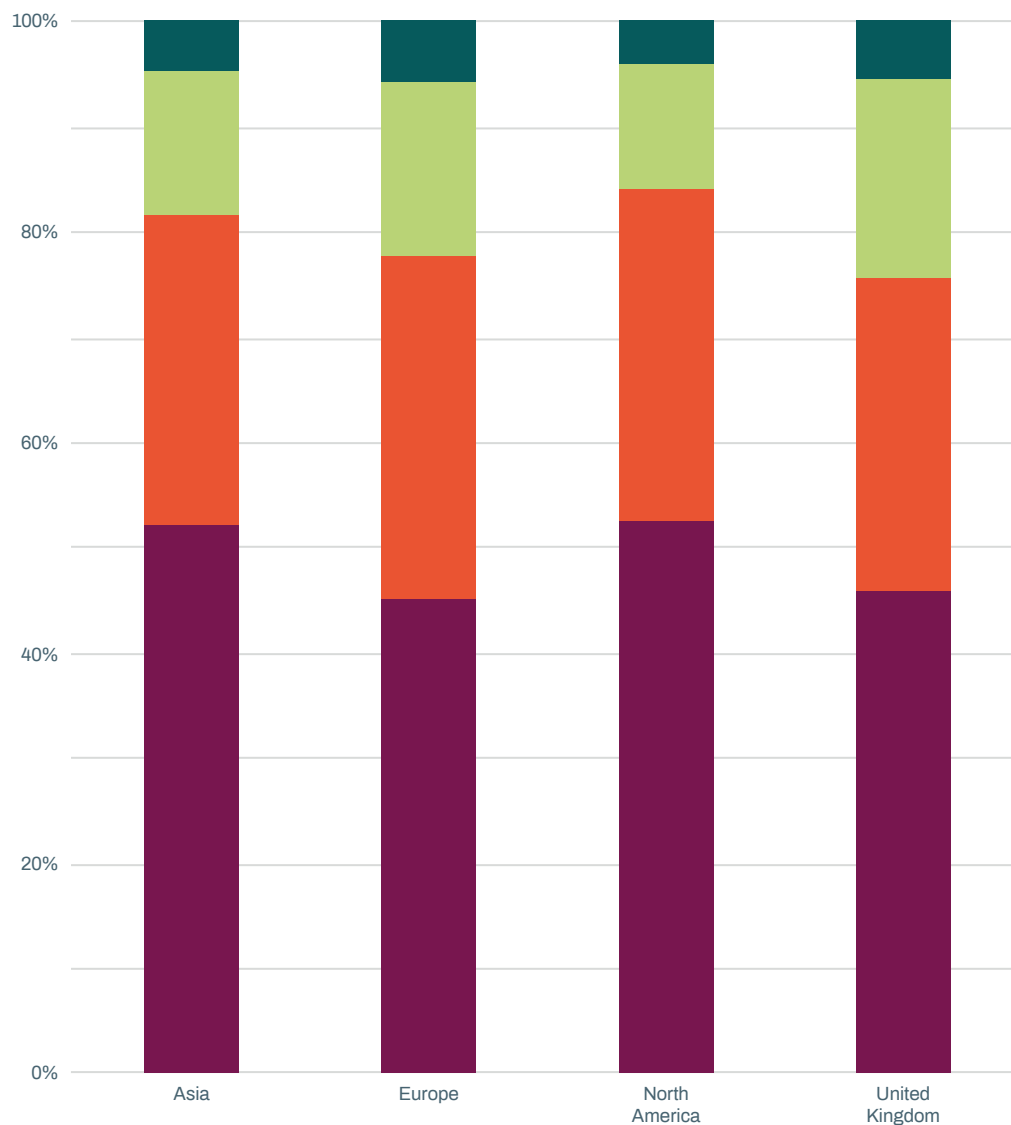
*The **property & real estate sector** reported the most widespread sustainability budget increases.*

With 73% of respondents reporting budget growth, the property & real estate sector has seen more widespread budget increases than others.

This statement may have quickly become outdated in light of interest rate hikes throughout the year. It is likely, where large real estate firms are concerned, that there will be increased caution in spend until the cost of borrowing decreases.



Team Budget by Region



*More than half of organisations in **North America and Asia** are boosting their sustainability team budgets.*

52% of respondents from North America and Asia have seen increased team budgets over the past year.

Approximately 30% of all organisations have maintained their existing budgets, and the most significant reductions in team budgets are observed in the United Kingdom, where nearly 20% of respondents reported decreases.



Team Budget Increases by Sector

Given the choice, respondents were asked where they would direct their budget spend from the following options:

- Bringing in a specialist skillset
- Broader recruitment spend
- Technical training & qualifications
- Consultancy support
- Investment in infrastructure
- Internal communications & marketing
- Non-technical development

Consumer Goods - Food & Beverage	Hospitality & Leisure	Financial Services	Consumer Goods - Apparel & Home
44% Bringing in a specialist skillset	33% Consultancy support	40% Broader recruitment spend	42% Bringing in a specialist skillset
34% Broader recruitment spend	30% Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels	37% Bringing in a specialist skillset	35% Broader recruitment spend
33% EV fleet	30% Bringing in a specialist skillset	32% Technical training & qualifications	32% Technical training & qualifications
Manufacturing - MCC	Natural Resources	Industrial Manufacturing	Life Sciences, Pharma & Health
43% Bringing in a specialist skillset	43% Bringing in a specialist skillset	48% Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels	43% Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels
40% Consultancy support	39% Technical training & qualifications	48% EV fleet	43% EV fleet
38% Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels	30% Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels	33% Technical training & qualifications	43% Bringing in a specialist skillset
Property & Real Estate	Retail	Non-Profit	Professional Services
35% Broader recruitment spend	45% Bringing in a specialist skillset	38% Broader recruitment spend	41% Bringing in a specialist skillset
35% Consultancy support	35% Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels	37% Bringing in a specialist skillset	41% Broader recruitment spend
31% Bringing in a specialist skillset	35% EV fleet	33% Technical training & qualifications	38% Technical training & qualifications
	Technology Media & Entertainment		Transport & Infrastructure
	37% Consultancy support		38% Bringing in a specialist skillset
	33% Bringing in a specialist skillset		32% EV fleet
	32% Broader recruitment spend		32% Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels

Sustainability professionals say investing in specialist skillsets is the key to maximising their impact.

When asked where sustainability professionals would invest their budget, were it to increase, most sectors reported a desire to build specialised skillsets into their teams. The retail sector, in particular, stands out with a high percentage of respondents (45%) favouring the idea of bringing in specialised skillsets.

This may reflect that retail is one of the most developed sectors from a sustainability perspective, and has complex supply chain considerations requiring specialist environmental and social expertise.

A notable outlier is industrial manufacturing where respondents demonstrate a preference for concrete infrastructural advancements that align with sustainable practices.

For example, by prioritising investments in solar power infrastructure and transitioning to electric vehicle fleets, this sector is demonstrating a commitment to reducing environmental impact through tangible, large-scale interventions.



Team Budget Increases by Region

Given the choice, respondents were asked where they would direct their budget spend from the following options:

- Bringing in a specialist skillset
- Broader recruitment spend
- Technical training & qualifications
- Consultancy support
- Investment in infrastructure
- Internal communications & marketing
- Non-technical development

Asia

49%	Bringing in a specialist skillset
38%	Technical training & qualifications
28%	Consultancy support
27%	Broader recruitment spend
23%	Internal communications & marketing

Europe

36%	Technical training & qualifications
34%	Bringing in a specialist skillset
30%	Broader recruitment spend
23%	Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels
21%	Internal communications & marketing

North America

38%	Bringing in a specialist skillset
36%	Broader recruitment spend
32%	Consultancy support
27%	Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels
21%	Internal communications & marketing

United Kingdom

39%	Broader recruitment spend
37%	Bringing in a specialist skillset
27%	Consultancy support
26%	Technical training & qualifications
25%	Investment in infrastructure i.e. solar panels

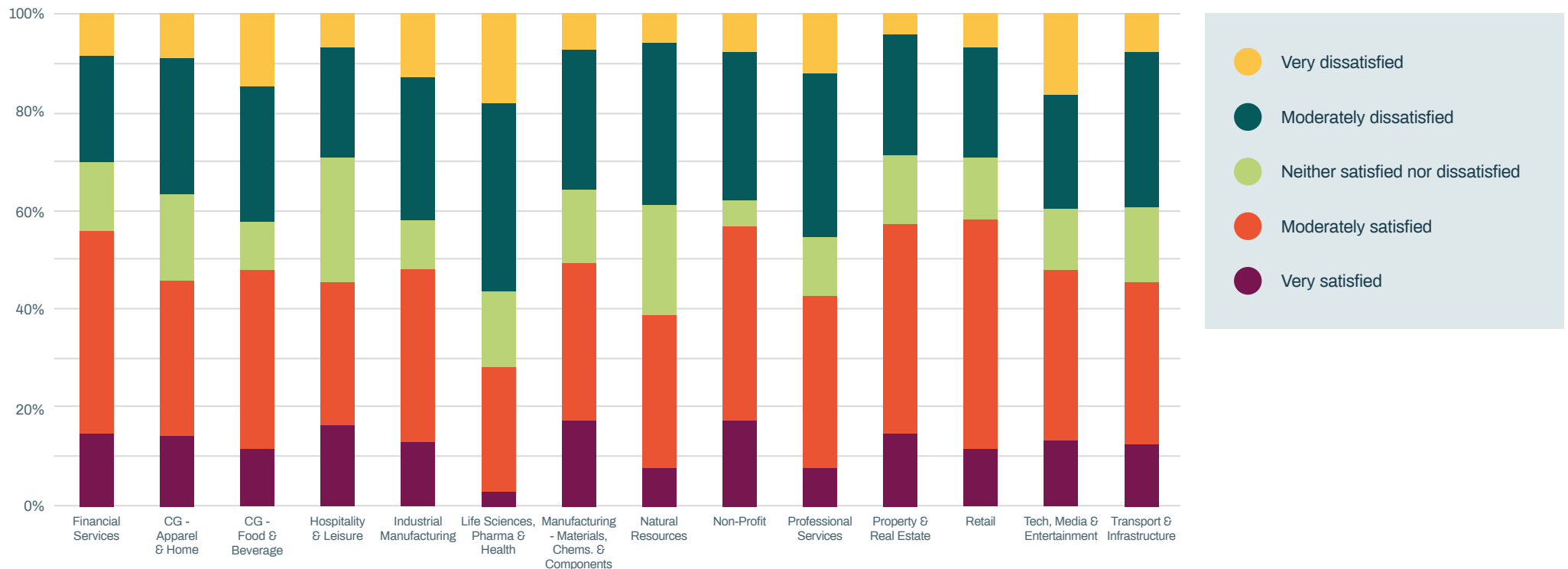
Asia leads among regions looking to bolster sustainability teams with specialised skillsets.

Nearly half (49%) of all respondents in Asia express a desire to augment their teams with specialised skillsets.

Conversely, European respondents show a preference for investing in technical training and qualifications. This suggests a focus on equipping existing teams with the knowledge and skills needed to advance sustainability efforts within their organisations.



Team Resources by Sector



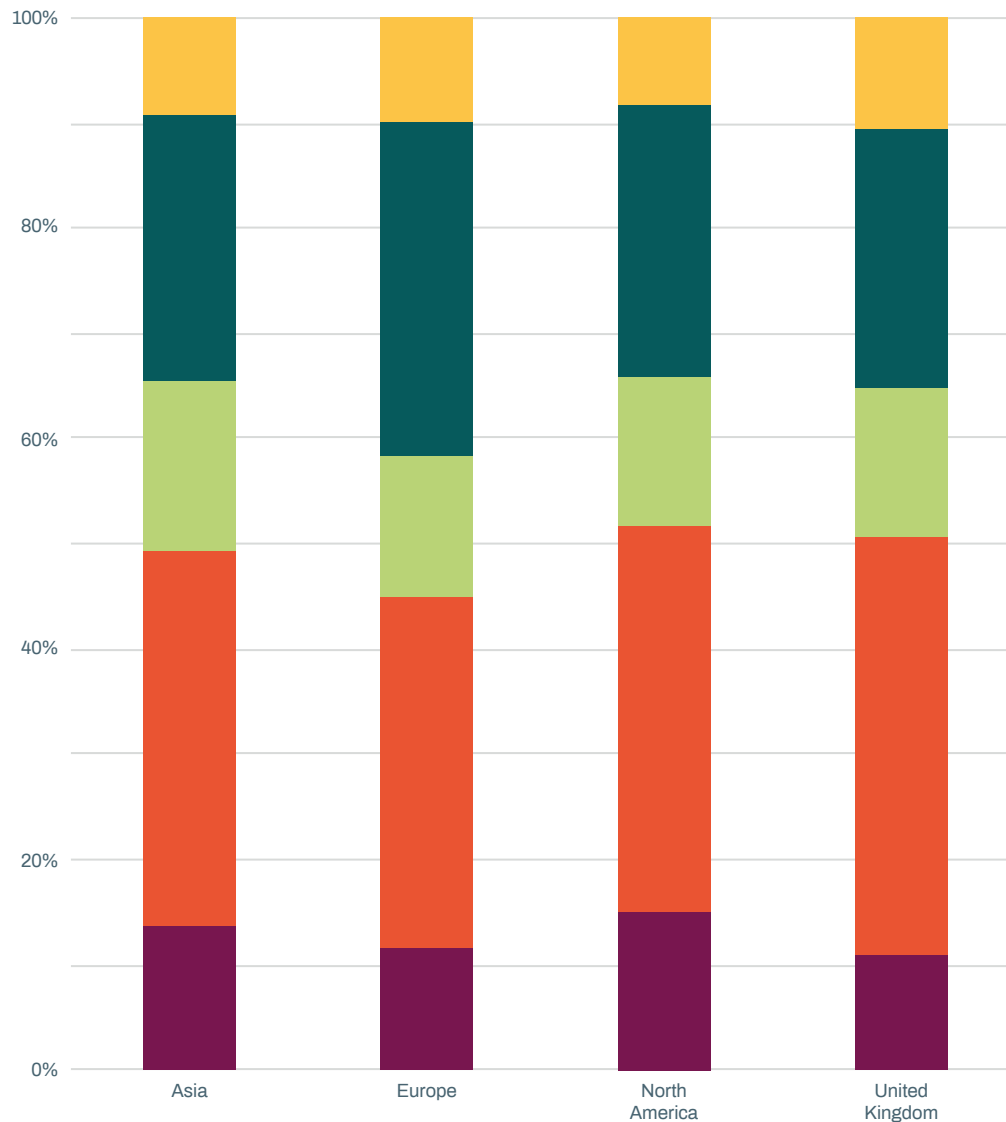
*The **life sciences, pharmaceutical & health** sector reports the highest dissatisfaction with the resources available for achieving sustainability objectives.*

56% of respondents within the life sciences, pharmaceutical & health sectors express either significant or moderate dissatisfaction with the resources they have, surpassing dissatisfaction levels seen in any other sector.

The overall trend leans toward moderate satisfaction, indicating that most respondents find their available resources sufficient.



Team Resources *by Region*



- Very dissatisfied
- Moderately dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Very satisfied

*Respondents in **North America** express the highest level of satisfaction with their available resources.*

Similar to the sector-wide distribution of responses, the data reveals that a significant proportion of respondents tend to fall into the two categories of moderately satisfied or moderately dissatisfied, indicating a general lack of extreme sentiment on either end of the spectrum.

However, North America has a slight edge, with over half of its respondents expressing that they are moderately or very satisfied with their resources.



Team Resources & Structures



Pat Dwyer

Founder & Director

The Purpose Business

“

Until 2015, I was one of Asia-Pacific's first Chief Sustainability Officers, working in luxury hospitality.

I had six other regional CSR/Sustainability chiefs on speed dial, as we'd compare notes and navigate the next big new complexity - from food waste to green buildings, migrant labour to health and safety. We partnered with green NGOs and started monetising social impact.

A decade on and the landscape is very different. A survey on the sustainability landscape reveals that ESG sector jobs in Singapore increased 257% in the last three years. ESG job offers across Asia have increased - Malaysia by 986%, India by 468%, and Hong Kong by 442%.² Stock exchanges have required training for boards to understand and take ownership of ESG issues.

Most tellingly, 49% of respondents have also expressed a desire to augment their teams with specialised skillsets. Clearly then, there's a greater need than ever, for continued sustainability resourcing. But, how? What is the optimal way of skilling up, when we have to right-size it for an organisation?

There's no 'one size fits all' to capacity and skills-building. Get the right help at the right time. Make it local - and demand value from your partners. Start with knowing:

- The company's learning culture - If you have the time and resources, senior leadership executive education courses can bring great uniformity and understanding around key principles. Fortune 500 companies engage universities to deliver this or commission local customised programmes with regional business schools or consultancies. SMEs may develop in-house modules with their learning & development team, bringing in subject matter experts to help curate. The objective is that everyone learns the same basics - and then implements it in their own functions and spheres.
- Pace for and appetite for change - Are we hiring transformation officers to instigate change fast? Or does the organisation prefer slow, organic change from people who understand the organisation and are more effective in winning hearts and minds? In Asia, the most successful programmes admittedly require knowledge from the inside. Family businesses and

lean enterprises equip existing function heads with sustainability knowledge then bring in consultants only to complement with big picture or wider systems thinking. Their value comes partly in demonstrating inspiring practices outside the industry, as well as setting you up for success.

- Level of ambition - Does the organisation want to be an industry leader or remain a dutiful follower? How ambitious is the quest to depart from business as usual and be more purposeful? Bring in help that matches the boldness - knowing well that at some point, cruising along won't be good enough.

In navigating sustainability resourcing, don't go it alone. Use partners wisely based on your objectives. Non-profits can be research desks and engagement tentacles. Bring in think tanks, industry associations and educational entities to support your capability. Work with consultants who challenge your thinking and inspire you with successes, but do not simply replicate what others have done.

Sustainability is complex enough - find the right partners and let the community help."

²ESG jobs demand up 257% in the last 3 years. Singapore Business Review. December 2022.



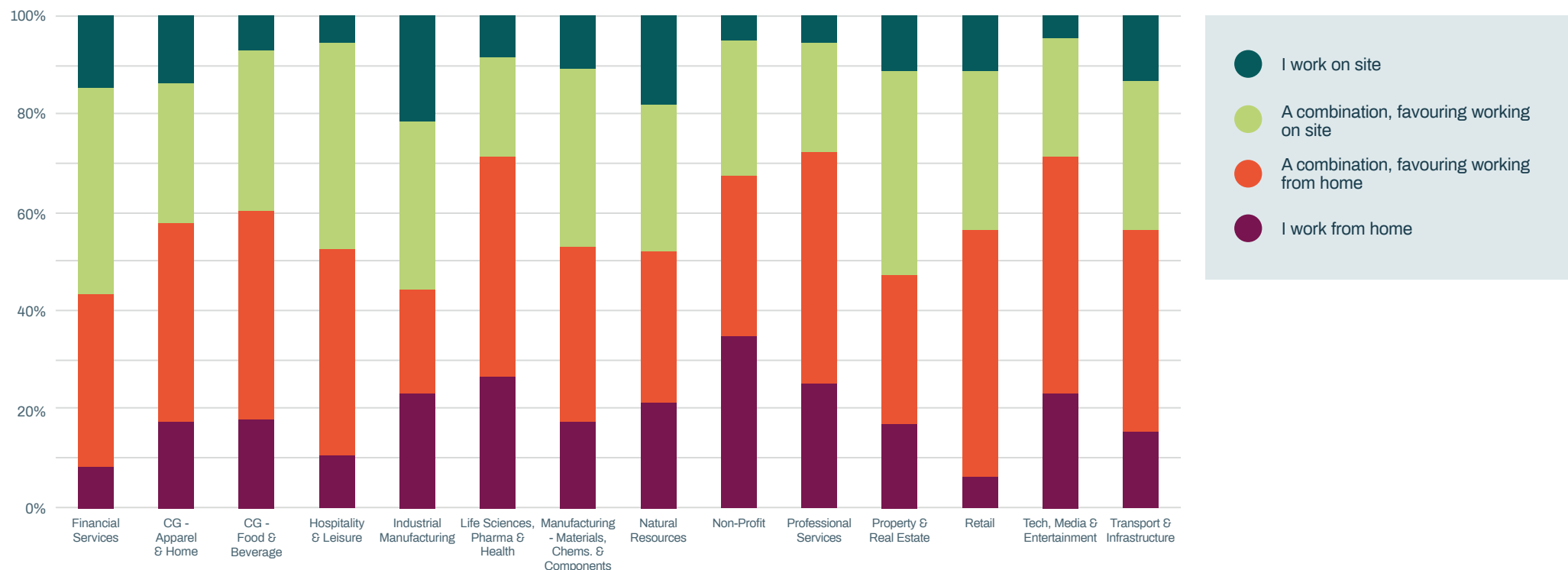
Working Patterns *At a Glance*

All sectors have transitioned to hybrid working patterns, representing a significant departure from traditional practices. A notable trend has emerged, with nearly 60% of respondents across various industries opting for full-time remote work or predominantly working from home.

The prevalence of remote work is particularly evident among North American respondents, reflecting the region's adaptability to geographical challenges and a broader shift in workplace culture.



Working Patterns by Sector



All sectors have adopted hybrid working, signifying a substantial departure from traditional work practices.

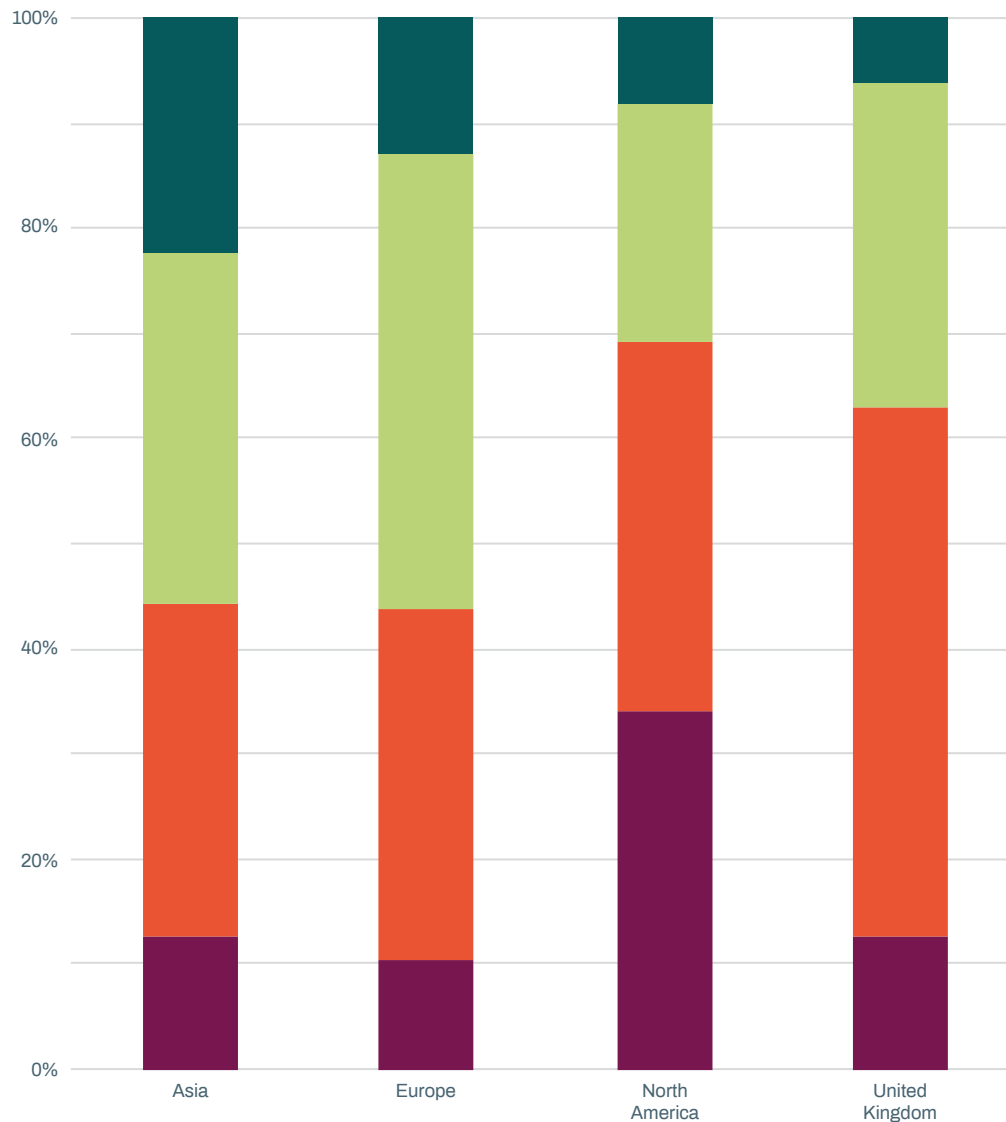
Nearly 60% of all respondents have shifted towards fully or predominantly remote work. Acre's experience, and broader market trends, indicate that organisations not offering the option of flexible work risk limiting the available talent pool.

When examining remote working patterns, specific sectors stand out: non-profit, professional services, life sciences, pharmaceuticals & health, and technology & entertainment sectors.

In contrast, industrial manufacturing and the financial services sectors show a different pattern, with almost 60% of respondents indicating the opposite.



Working Patterns by Region



- I work on site
- A combination, favouring working on site
- A combination, favouring working from home
- I work from home

North American respondents report the largest remote workforce.

34% of survey respondents in North America have fully embraced remote working. An additional 35% work in a hybrid model. This showcases the robustness of the at-home workforce culture in the region.

Looking at work locations from a consultant vs. in-house perspective, consultants exhibit a considerably higher inclination toward working from home or adopting a hybrid model, with 82% reporting that they work remotely compared to 63% among in-house professionals.

The higher prevalence of remote work in North America can be attributed to factors such as geography, market maturity and pandemic-induced migrations. Even pre-pandemic, the expansive nature of North America necessitated a flexible working approach.



Job Satisfaction & Motivations

At a Glance

There is an even split between the desire for further career progression and the desire for better compensation across all sectors.

A particularly interesting trend we see here is a compensation satisfaction paradox. In North America, respondents express the highest compensation satisfaction levels but still prioritise increased pay as their primary reason for job changes.

This is replicated at the sector level, within manufacturing - materials, chemicals & components.



Drivers for Next Job Change *by Sector*

When asked what respondents' primary motivation would be to seek a new job, the top three motivations emerged across each sector, from the following options:

- Better benefits
- Better compensation
- Better location
- Career progression
- To focus on different theme
- Lack of recognition
- Learning & development opportunities
- More flexibility
- More resources
- Values do not align with employer
- Desire to have more impact
- Not enough cultural alignment

Consumer Goods - Food & Beverage	Hospitality & Leisure	Industrial Manufacturing	Life Sciences, Pharma & Health
49% Career progression	42% Career progression	44% Better compensation	56% Career progression
40% Better compensation	36% Better compensation	41% Career progression	35% Desire to have more impact
33% Desire to have more impact	25% Desire to have more impact	26% Desire to have more impact	33% Better compensation
Manufacturing - MCC	Natural Resources	Non-Profit	Professional Services
55% Better compensation	44% Career progression	49% Better compensation	56% Better compensation
53% Career progression	42% Better compensation	45% Career progression	44% Career progression
38% Desire to have more impact	35% Desire to have more impact	25% Desire to have more impact	33% Desire to have more impact
Property & Real Estate	Retail	Technology Media & Entertainment	Transport & Infrastructure
50% Better compensation	55% Career progression	43% Better compensation	46% Better compensation
47% Career progression	45% Better compensation	41% Career progression	43% Career progression
40% Desire to have more impact	29% Desire to have more impact	38% Desire to have more impact	32% Desire to have more impact

Sustainability professionals across all sectors are motivated by career progression and better compensation.



Drivers for Next Job Change *by Region*

When asked what respondents' primary motivation would be to seek a new job, the top three motivations emerged across each region, from the following options:

- Better benefits
- Better compensation
- Better location
- Career progression
- To focus on different theme
- Lack of recognition
- Learning & development opportunities
- More flexibility
- More resources
- Values do not align with employer
- Desire to have more impact
- Not enough cultural alignment

Asia

- 45%** Better compensation
- 41%** Career progression
- 37%** Desire to have more impact
- 18%** Learning & development opportunities
- 14%** To focus on different themes

North America

- 54%** Better compensation
- 54%** Career progression
- 34%** Desire to have more impact
- 10%** More flexibility
- 10%** To focus on different themes

Europe

- 43%** Career progression
- 40%** Better compensation
- 30%** Desire to have more impact
- 14%** Values do not align with employer
- 14%** Learning & development opportunities

United Kingdom

- 45%** Better compensation
- 44%** Career progression
- 31%** Desire to have more impact
- 11%** More flexibility
- 10%** Values do not align with employer

Sustainability professionals across all regions are motivated by career progression and better compensation.

Across Asia, Europe, North America, and the United Kingdom, better compensation and career progression consistently rank as the top two motivators for seeking a new job. It's no surprise that financial and professional growth remain universal priorities for job seekers worldwide.

The desire to have a more significant impact is a prominent motivation in all regions. This is strongly emphasised in Asia (37%). The remaining regions have slightly lower percentages, although all sit above 30%.

While compensation, career progression and making an impact are universally important, regional variations exist in other motivators. For instance, North America places a higher value on flexibility, with 10% of respondents selecting it as a motivation to change roles. At the same time, the United Kingdom emphasises misalignment of values with the employer, with 10% of respondents choosing this option.



Sector Movement Over Time

When asked which sector respondents moved from during their last job change, the following themes emerged:

				Financial Services 68% Stayed in the same sector 13% Professional Services 4% Transport & Infrastructure	Consumer Goods - Apparel & Home 48% Stayed in the same sector 14% Professional Services 11% Tech, Media & Entertainment
Consumer Goods - Food & Beverage 42% Stayed in the same sector 14% Consumer Goods - A&H 10% Professional Services	Hospitality & Leisure 29% Professional Services 26% Stayed in the same sector 12% Transport & Infrastructure	Industrial Manufacturing 54% Stayed in the same sector 14% Professional Services 6% Tech, Media & Entertainment	Life Sciences, Pharma & Health 32% Stayed in the same sector 13% Professional Services 10% Transport & Infrastructure		
Manufacturing - MCC 39% Stayed in the same sector 11% Professional Services 9% Industrial Manufacturing	Natural Resources 59% Stayed in the same sector 13% Professional Services 7% Financial Services	Non-Profit 24% Professional Services 21% Stayed in the same sector 11% Financial Services	Professional Services 42% Stayed in the same sector 15% Financial Services 11% Tech, Media & Entertainment		
Property & Real Estate 63% Stayed in the same sector 9% Transport & Infrastructure 9% Financial Services	Retail 42% Stayed in the same sector 11% Transport & Infrastructure 11% Tech, Media & Entertainment	Technology Media & Entertainment 34% Stayed in the same sector 15% Professional Services 12% Transport & Infrastructure	Transport & Infrastructure 53% Stayed in the same sector 13% Professional Services 6% Financial Services		

*Globally, the majority of respondents **stayed in the same sector** when they last changed jobs.*

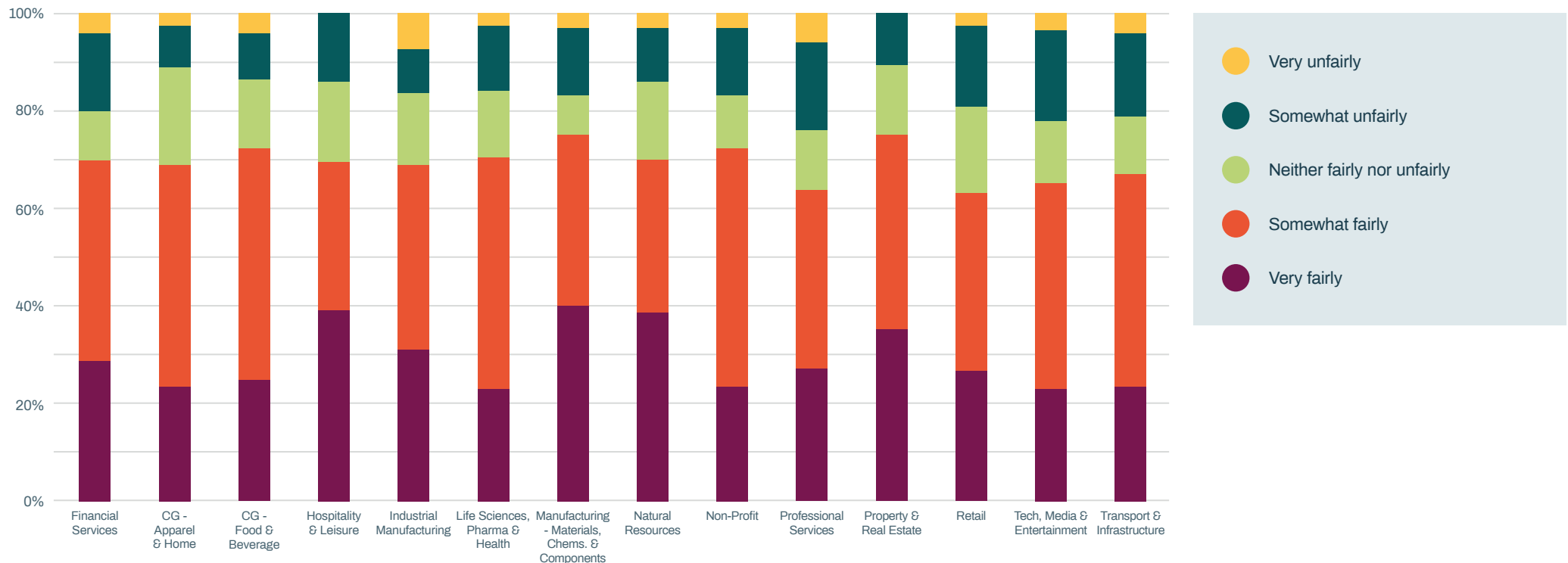
The financial services and the property & real estate sectors exhibit the highest retention rates with approximately 68% and 63%, respectively, indicating that their most recent position was within the same sector.

There are two exceptions: within the non-profit and hospitality & leisure sectors where more than a quarter of respondents had previously worked in professional services, possibly demonstrating a greater degree of cross-sector mobility compared to other sectors.

Acre's experience suggests that the lack of movement between sectors may reflect the extent to which sustainability issues vary across sectors. For example, a retail organisation might prioritise supply chain concerns while an extractives organisation may be more likely to focus on land degradation; a specialist skill set in one sector may be less applicable to another.



Satisfaction with Compensation by Sector



The manufacturing - materials, chemicals, and components sector report the highest levels of employee compensation satisfaction.

40% of the manufacturing - materials, chemicals, and components sector's respondents stated that they feel very fairly rewarded for their work. This is closely followed by both the hospitality & leisure and natural resources sectors, where 39% and 38% of respondents expressed a high level of contentment with their compensation.

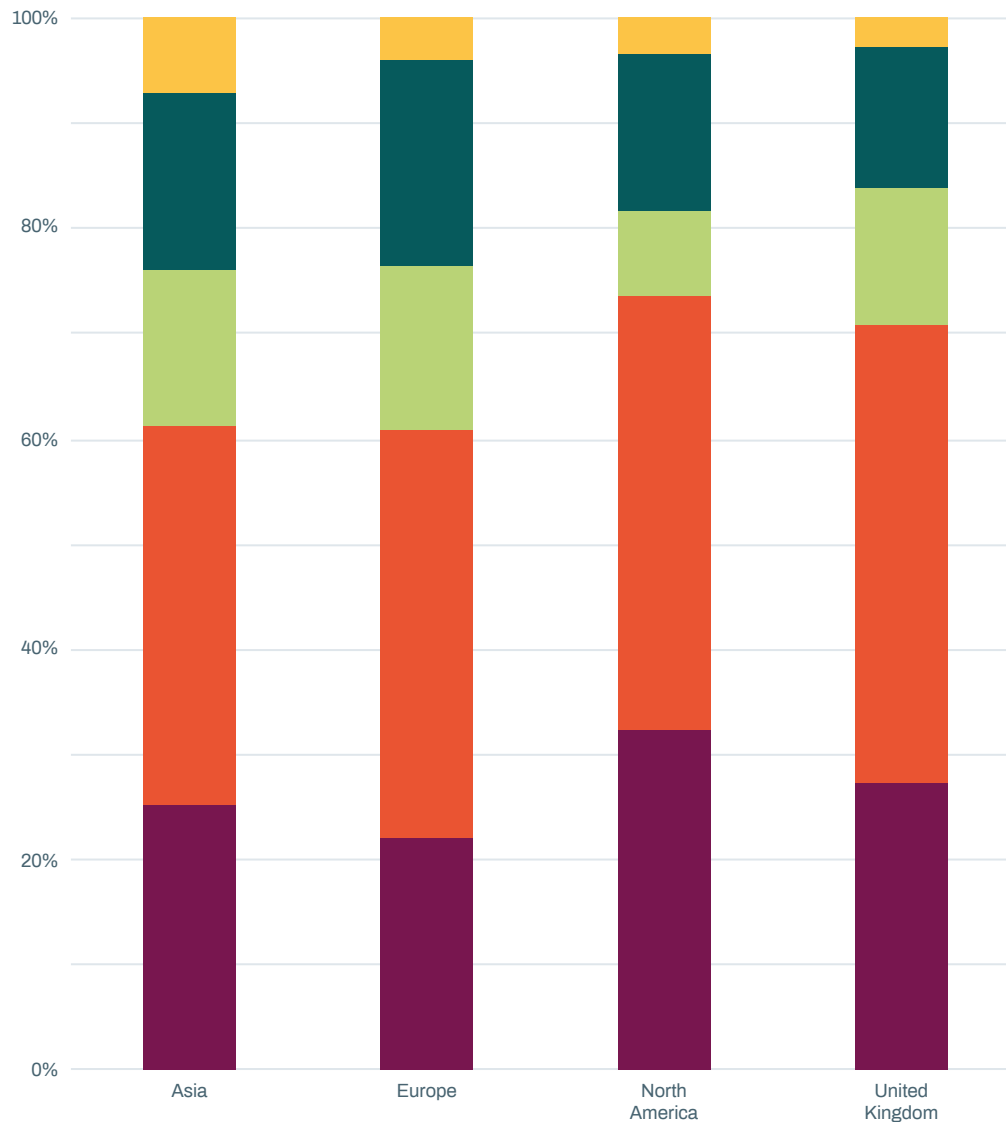
It is worth mentioning that in almost every sector, there was a portion of respondents who indicated that they felt significantly under-compensated for

their efforts; however, both the hospitality & leisure sector and the property & real estate sector stand out as the only two where no respondents indicated feeling very unfairly compensated.

The sector experiencing the lowest employee compensation satisfaction is professional services, where 24% of respondents believe they are either somewhat or very unfairly compensated for their work.



Satisfaction with Compensation by Region



- Very unfairly
- Somewhat unfairly
- Neither fairly nor unfairly
- Somewhat fairly
- Very fairly

*Respondents in **North America** report the highest levels of employee compensation satisfaction.*

31% of respondents from North America felt they were fairly compensated for their labour, with an additional 43% expressing overall satisfaction with their compensation packages.

This combined figure of 74% demonstrates that North American sustainability professionals generally feel that their employers are compensating them fairly for their contributions.



Job Satisfaction & Motivations



Jennifer Kenning

CEO & Co-Founder

Align: Your Impact Partner

“

It is clear from the data, that many firms are still under-resourced from their commitments to sustainability which is encouraging as the next generations of professions are committed to driving profits while preserving the planet at the same time.

This, along with the data that professionals seek meaning in their work when looking for a new opportunity, will allow the space to continue to grow and properly staff as we align capital with solutions for our collective future.

It is not surprising that professionals today lack clarity as it relates to their career progression in sustainability, since we are still getting clear on what the path of the market looks like across asset classes, geographies, and sectors.

We tend to focus on compensation, benefits, and career paths, but this data clearly says professionals today will leave if they are not tied to the mission of the organisation and if their work doesn't go beyond the profits.

The workforce is desperately seeking more meaning where they spend the most time and believes it is critical for us to thrive as a society since business can be a driving force towards a sustainable future.”



EDI & Education *At a Glance*

Research indicates that higher levels of EDI correlates with improved organisational outcomes. For instance, a McKinsey report³ found that companies with diverse executive teams were more likely to experience above-average profitability. Despite this, a gap exists between organisational commitments to EDI and their effectiveness. In sectors like retail, property & real estate, manufacturing, and hospitality & leisure, over 75% of organisations publicly endorse EDI. Yet, the perceived effectiveness of these initiatives is low, with only about 20% of respondents in these sectors considering them truly effective. This is particularly pronounced in the property & real estate sector, where despite a 76% public commitment, only 18% perceive these efforts as effective.

This disparity suggests that while many organisations commit to EDI publicly, the translation of these commitments into impactful actions within the workplace is lacking. The evidence from McKinsey underscores the potential benefits of effective EDI implementation, emphasising the need for organisations to move beyond mere statements of intent. To bridge this gap and realise the associated benefits, it is crucial for organisations to prioritise the practical application of their EDI initiatives, ensuring that they lead to tangible improvements in workplace inclusivity and equity.

³Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters. McKinsey & Company. May 2020.



EDI & Education



Jennie Galbraith

ESG Director

Inflexion Private Equity Partners LLP,
Chair of the Institute of Corporate
Responsibility & Sustainability

“

The evolution of our profession has been dramatic. Recent years have witnessed a massive upsurge in interest in sustainability, and to meet these challenges, the number of people working in the sector has increased significantly. However, the profile of those people joining the sector doesn't seem to have evolved significantly.

Sustainability has always been a profession where a high number of those employed have a university education. I was interested to read in the sustainability census that 65% of those employed in the sector today have a master's degree.

As sustainability professionals, we deal with multiple challenges each day, often technical. So, a high level of academic qualification is often what is required. But we are also the profession that has set itself the task of solving some of the planet's biggest challenges - and that requires diversity of thought.

Although we often focus on making our organisations, companies and practices more inclusive and diverse, we haven't made significant strides to do the same in our own profession.

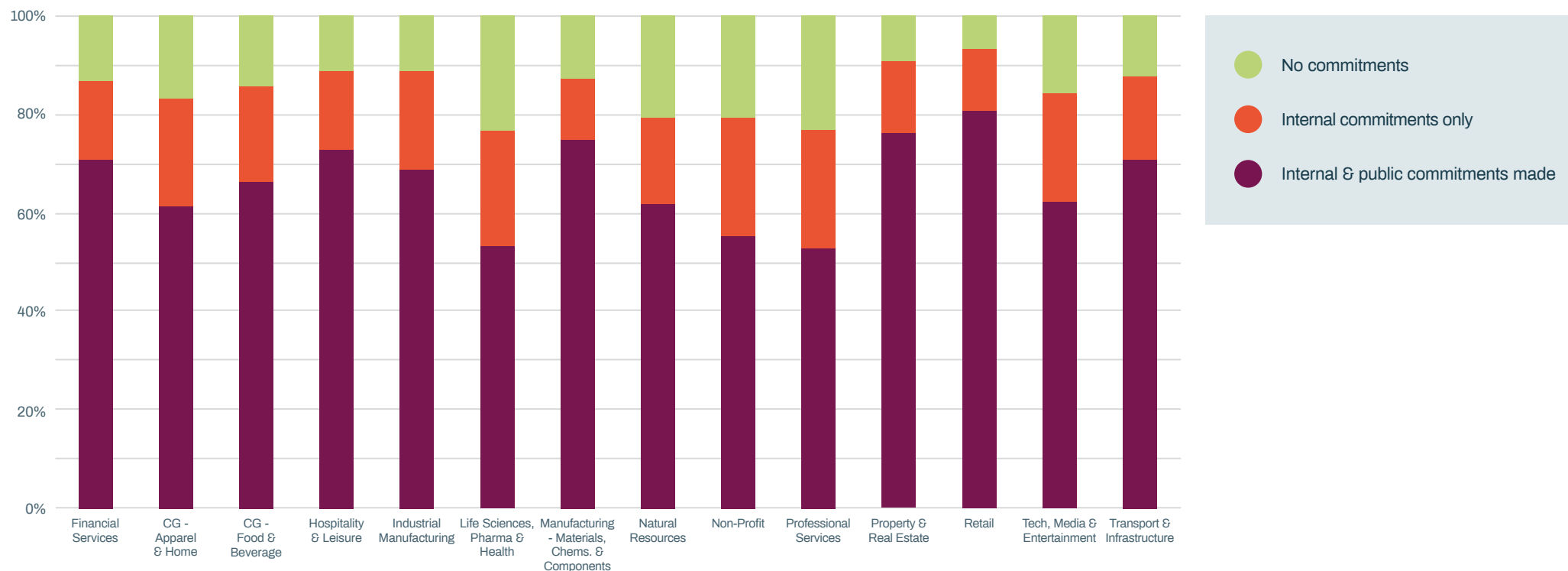
Yes, ensuring our profession is diverse is the right thing to do, but it's more fundamental than that. We need diversity of thought if we are going to succeed.

We know the same thinking doesn't accelerate change fast enough. To have the right leaders in place in ten years' time, we need to invest in that pipeline today. This is why the new Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability (CR&S) Practitioner apprenticeship standard is so important. It was developed to widen access and create pathways into the sustainability profession, and as the first cohort complete their apprenticeships, we are seeing a whole host of business benefits.

So, looking ahead, I would like us to think more about apprenticeships – and other complementary initiatives – that can contribute to broadening access to the profession and removing barriers to entry. We will always need those with master's degrees and PhDs, but we also need much more than that.”



Organisational Commitment to EDI by Sector



Organisations are actively pledging their dedication to advancing EDI.

According to respondents, 65% of organisations have made public commitments to EDI, while an additional 20% have created internal commitments that aren't yet public.

In the retail sector, 81% of respondents have reported public commitments to advancing EDI within their organisations, with only 6% reporting a lack of commitment.

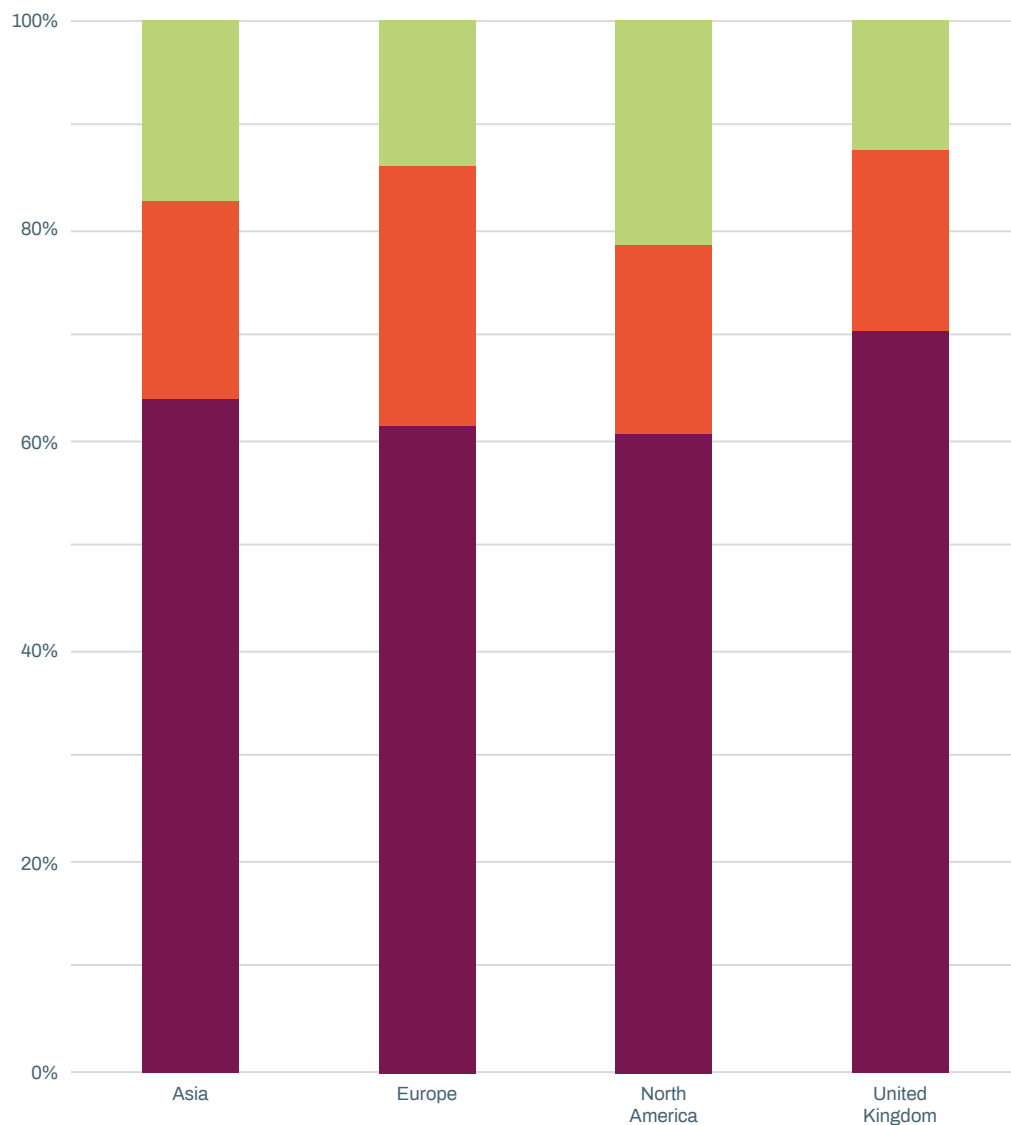
In contrast, the life sciences, pharmaceuticals & health, as well as the professional services

sectors, appear to have made the least internal and/or public commitments.

As we move forward, there are opportunities across all sectors for progress to be made.



Organisational Commitment to EDI by Region



- No commitments
- Internal commitments only
- Internal & public commitments made

*Respondents in the **United Kingdom** report the highest levels of organisational dedication to advancing EDI.*

Although commitments to EDI can be observed in all regions, the United Kingdom emerges as the frontrunner, with the highest proportion of respondents (70%) affirming a public commitment from their organisation.

While Europe may not demonstrate as robust a public commitment as Asia and the United Kingdom, a quarter of respondents in Europe still indicate that their organisations have taken internal steps to advance EDI.



EDI & Education



Rhian Sherrington FRSA
Founder

Women in Sustainability Network

“

The ACRE Sustainability Census 2023 raises some critical questions for all organisations serious about being on the right side of history in the green transition to a regenerative and sustainable economy.

The report quite rightly flags sustainability professionals as catalysts for transformation, especially when they link their work to the creation of value for their organisations. Whilst investing in specialised skills in-house is highlighted, it is the report's findings around the importance of influencing skills as well as abilities to engage and collaborate that really stood out for me. When the ownership for sustainability is widening out to include almost every organisational function, it is essential that sustainability professionals and their organisations continue to invest fully in learning and development opportunities.

Against the findings of this report however, is the deeply disturbing trend of not only a talent and green skills shortage but of mid-life

women walking away from their careers just at a time when they could be stepping into senior decision making roles, ensuring the diversity of thought and leadership so widely recognised as essential for organisational performance.

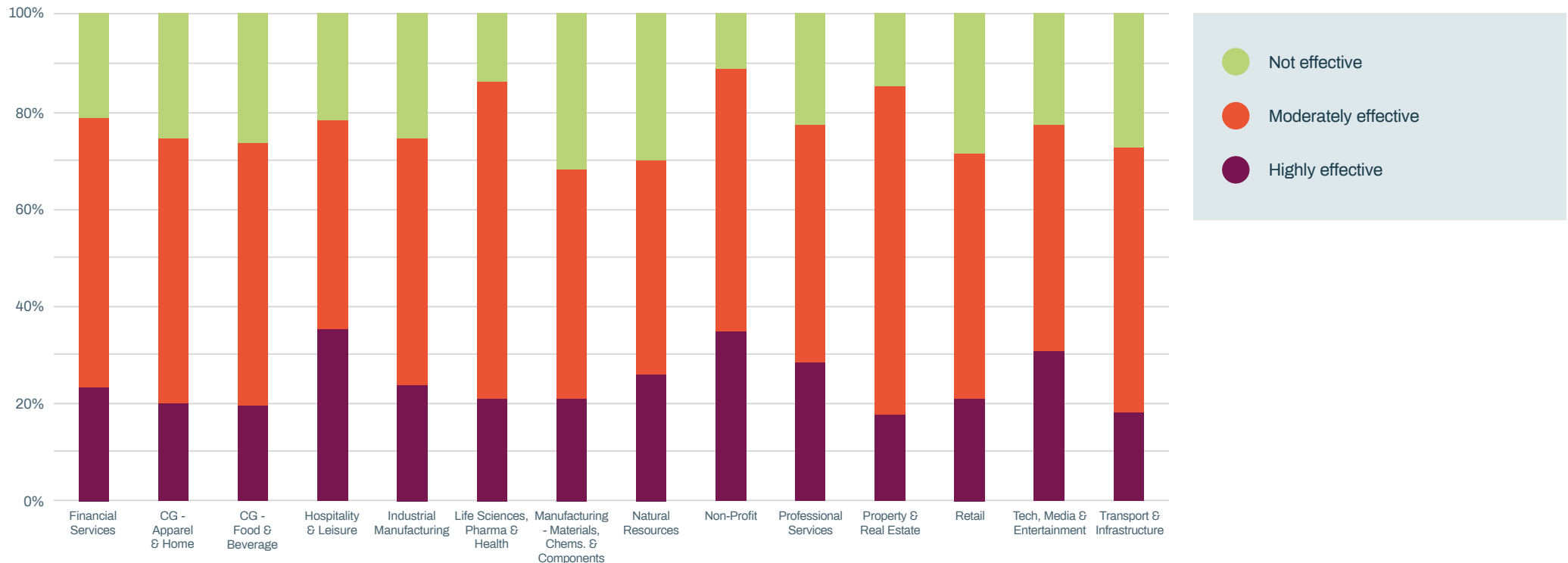
Women in Sustainability Network's research report, [Why Being Heard Is Not Enough](#)⁴ 2020, Dr Lucy Ryan's recent book, [Revolting Women](#), Why Midlife Women are Walking out and what to do about it, and [Why Women Leave](#)⁵ research, 2023, by Encompass Equality, offer plenty of insights as to why we are facing such a crisis of female retention. The question remains - what are organisations doing to ensure they fully integrate such solutions for D&I with the findings from this report?"

⁴[Why Being Heard Is Not Enough](#). Women in Sustainability.

⁵[Why Women Leave](#). Encompass Equality.



Effective Internal Promotion of EDI by Sector



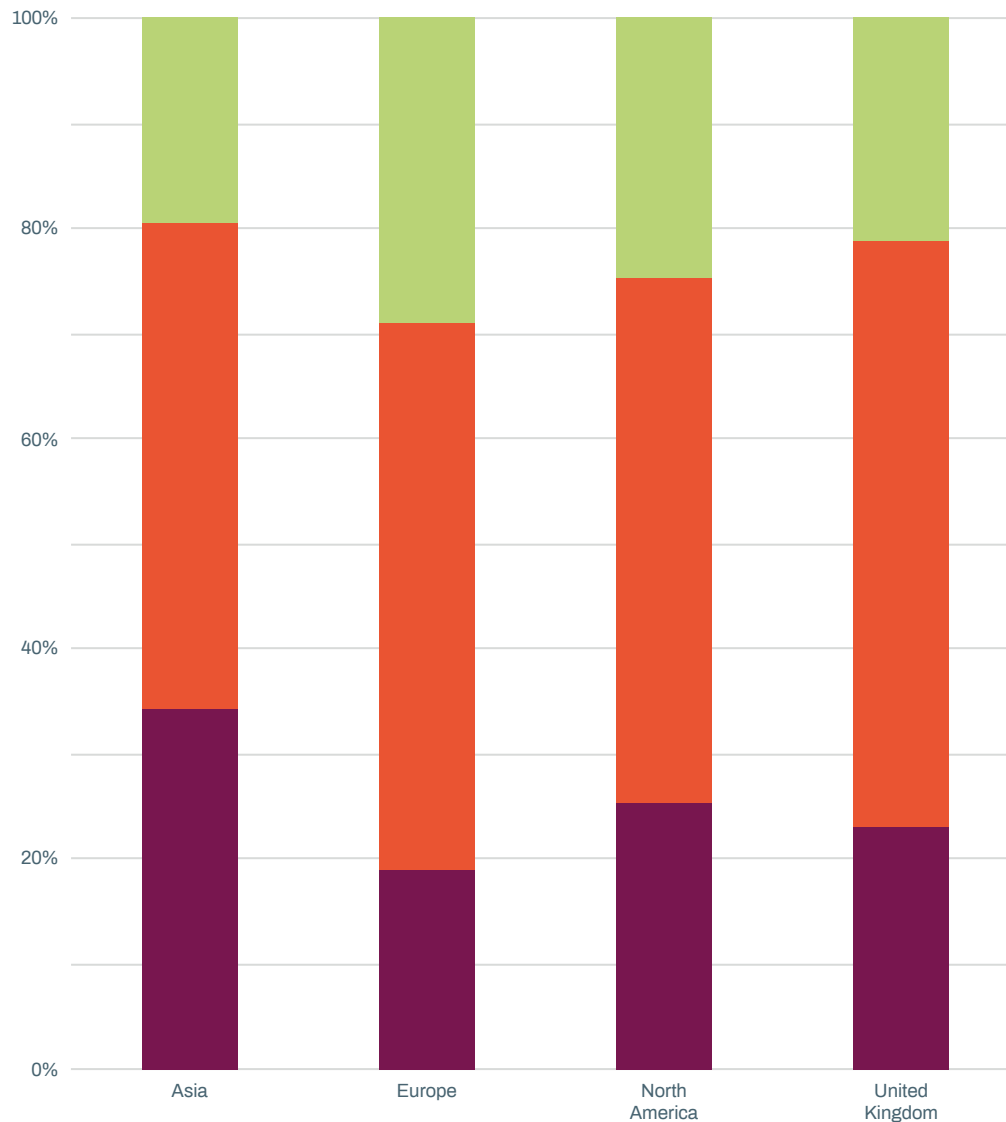
*Most respondents view their organisations' internal promotion of EDI as **moderately effective**, signifying that there is still room for improvement.*

Within the hospitality & leisure and non-profit sectors, there is a slight uptick in the perception of effectiveness in promoting EDI. 36% of respondents in both sectors see their organisations' strategies as highly effective.

Given that most respondents perceive their organisation's EDI strategy as only moderately effective, it is clear that organisations have an opportunity to re-evaluate their approach and how they communicate on the subject internally.



Effective Internal Promotion of EDI by Region



- Not effective
- Moderately effective
- Highly effective

*Respondents in **Asia** view their organisations to be the most effective at promoting EDI internally.*

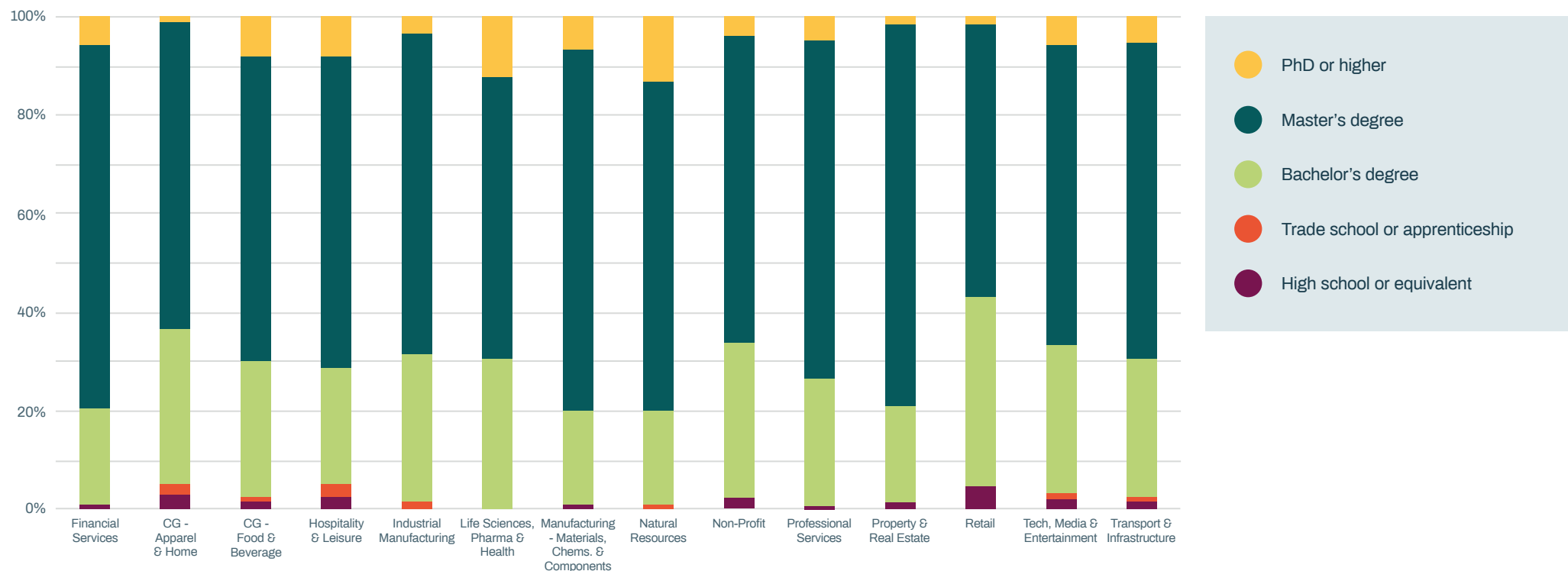
Globally, the majority of respondents perceive their organisations' internal promotion of EDI as moderately effective; however, respondents in Asia report a higher level of effective communication.

It's important to note that different cultural factors can play a role in this type of regional analysis. In addition, the maturity of EDI practices in certain regions may lead to higher expectations.

A more in-depth analysis, built from a greater response rate, would be required to better understand the realities across all regions.



Highest Level of Education by Sector



*The majority of sustainability professionals have completed a **master's degree**.*

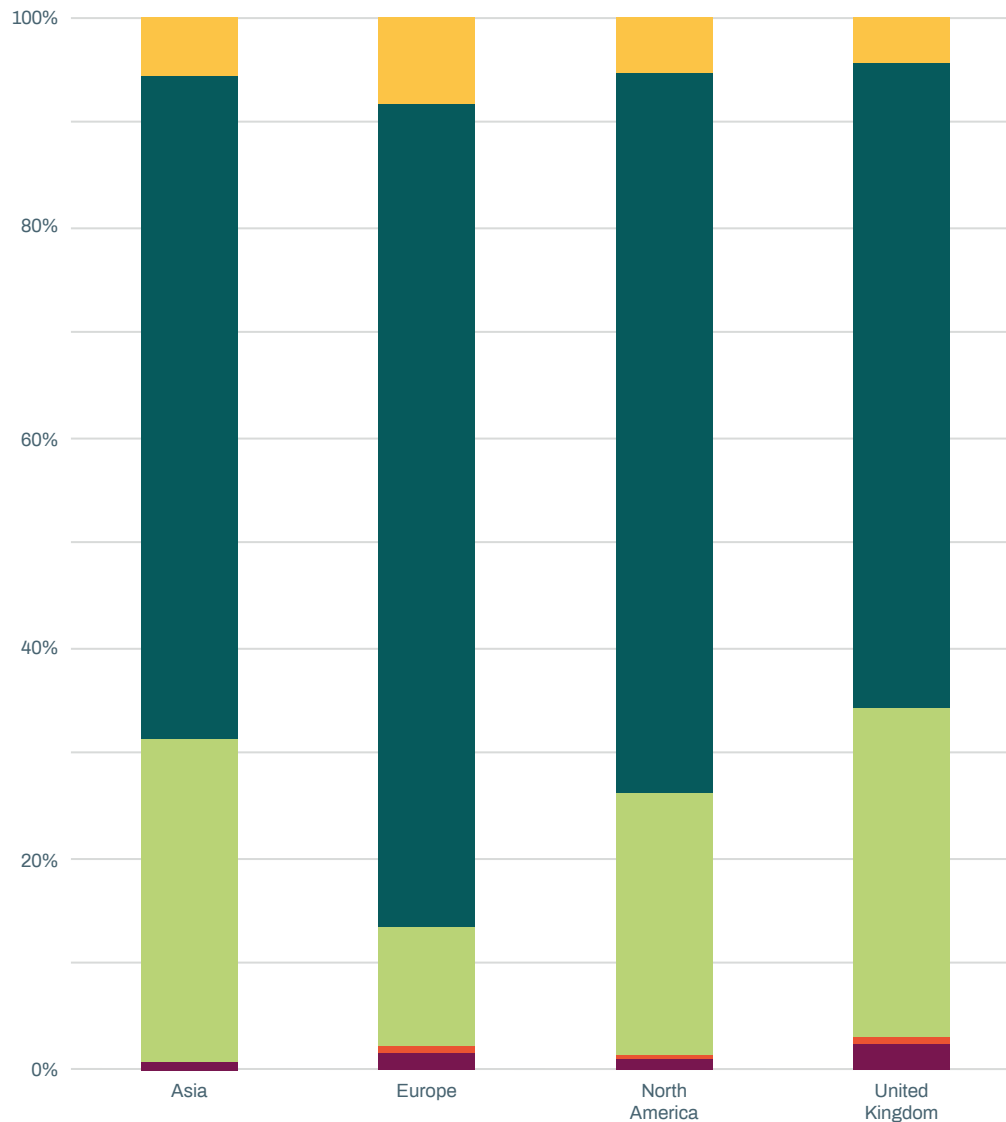
65% of all respondents have completed up to a master's degree, making it the most commonly pursued educational milestone in the field.

In the natural resources sector, all respondents possess at least a bachelor's degree, and 13% of respondents have reached the highest level of academic achievement, holding a PhD. From a formal academic perspective, this sector is the most highly educated. This

sector appears to prioritise advanced education to address complex environmental and resource management challenges.



Highest Level of Education by Region



- PhD or higher
- Master's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Trade school or apprenticeship
- High school or equivalent

*Sustainability professionals in **Europe** report the highest level of educational qualifications.*

Across all regions, a master's degree is the prevailing level of academic attainment for sustainability professionals.

Europe distinguishes itself by boasting a significantly larger percentage (78%) of respondents holding master's degrees, highlighting the region's emphasis on advanced formal education.



EDI & Education



Cindy Forde

Author, Activist, Founder

Planetari

“

“Many things on which our future health and prosperity depend are in dire jeopardy: climate stability, the resilience and productivity of natural systems, the beauty of the natural world and biological diversity. It is worth noting that this is not the work of ignorant people. It is largely the result of work by people with BAs, BScs, LLBs, MBAs, and PhDs.” - Professor David Orr, from ‘Earth in Mind’.

While it is encouraging to see such high levels of education among sustainability practitioners, both specialist and tertiary, what is more disturbing is that in the 25 years or so since the first sustainability qualifications began to appear, carbon emissions, temperatures and sea levels have all risen at unprecedented rates pushing humanity to ‘Code Red’.

What kind of education do business professionals need to make the genuine systemic change for Earth to remain a safe space for human life?

The data in this report highlights frustration and low levels of confidence from sustainability practitioners in their companies’ ability to meet sustainability commitments in time and their biggest budget spend would be on specialist help.

Will current forms of sustainability education ever be capable of doing more than tinkering around the edges of a business model that was designed for a purpose that no longer serves us, with its unsustainable demands for endless resources and new markets?

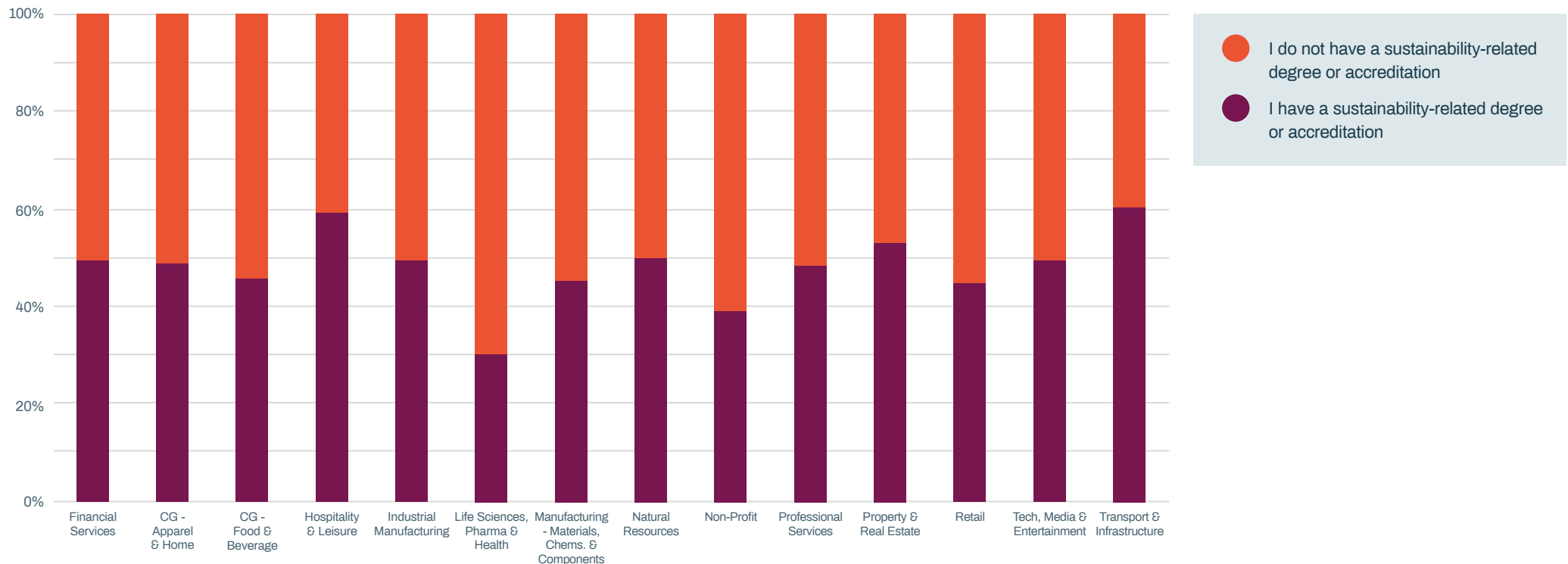
A model that has pushed us past safe levels in six of the nine planetary boundaries. How long will customers tolerate corporate strategies that expose the human family to such danger? Sian Sutherland, founder of A Plastic Planet, says: “These companies will no longer be relevant or attractive to consumers and therefore their investors. If your company / product / brand doesn’t help push back Earth Overshoot Day, it will be a future failure. Only businesses that are

additive, regenerative and truly circular will be part of our future. So ask yourself - does my business #move the date? If not, just stop.”

Traditional education often filters out people who can think in the syntropic, or regenerative, ways where answers to our current problems lie. Indigenous people, frontline innovators of climate solutions from marginalised communities, people who have long understood what Yvon Chouinard founder of Patagonia voices: Earth is now our only shareholder.”



Sustainability-Related Education by Sector



*Respondents from the **transport & infrastructure** sector are the most likely to complete a specific sustainability-related degree or accreditation.*

Throughout the sectors, there's an even divide when it comes to the pursuit of sustainability-related degrees or accreditations.

The transport & infrastructure sector stands out as the most academically proactive, with 60% of respondents confirming their completion of such accreditations.

The life sciences, pharma & health sector is the least likely to have sought out a specific accreditation, with 70% of respondents reporting

that they did not have a sustainability-related degree or accreditation

Note: There were no significant regional differences in the attainment of a sustainability-related degree or accreditation.



EDI & Education



Jaz Rabadia MBE

Global Head of Responsible Business & Sustainability

JustEatTakeaway.com | Non-Executive Director at 4imprint Group Plc

“

Over the years we have seen traditional education evolve to embrace a more holistic and inclusive approach, mirroring what we have also seen across the sustainability industry.

Within the sustainability sector, the emphasis on increasing sustainability literacy among those professionals responsible for crafting and executing strategies has become a fundamental pillar of progress. The complex and multifaceted nature of today's sustainability challenges require an understanding that goes beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. As sustainability professionals become more literate in environmental, social, and economic considerations, they will become better equipped to design effective strategies.

However, the need for sustainability literacy extends beyond specialised roles within the sustainability sector. To truly advance against sustainability goals, it is crucial to cascade this knowledge to a much broader audience

because achieving company sustainability goals requires involvement from individuals at all levels in an organisation.

Both the challenges and opportunities related to sustainability are continuously evolving with technological advancements, regulatory changes, and shifting societal expectations. Staying abreast of these through education and accreditation will allow professionals to adapt sustainability strategies helping them to remain effective, relevant and compliant.

Most importantly, ensuring we have a pipeline of diverse and educated sustainability professionals will be key in helping to address the sustainability challenges that will shape our future. Bringing together individuals from all walks of life with varied perspectives, experiences, and insights will help to deliver a positive impact on our planet and communities.”



Industry Bodies

Respondents are members of a diverse range of membership bodies and institutions – many of which have a sustainability focus, and many of which relate to other specialisms and professional disciplines.



Top 5

IEMA (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment)	187
ICRS (Institute of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability)	63
ISSP (International Society of Sustainability Professionals)	30
CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development)	23
CFA Institute	19



Global Remuneration

At a Glance

Compensation for sustainability professionals varies widely. To the extent possible, this section provides a benchmark for what cash compensation looks like across the sectors and regions represented in this report. Where sample sizes do not permit a thorough analysis, Acre has supplemented the findings with its business intelligence data. It is also worth noting that data of this kind can be affected by a small number of outliers, inflation and/or cost of living variations. We suggest the use of this information as guidance, rather than absolute fact.

To assist you in evaluating your own or your team's salary positioning, this section includes three key elements:

1. Salary Overview Table: This table is the focal point of each regional report. It displays remuneration at four career stages: junior, management, leadership, and executive level. For each level, we present the median salary as a midpoint, and a salary range spanning the 25th to 75th percentiles. These figures are an aggregate across all sectors, providing a general benchmark. In addition, in the UK only, we provide an equivalent chart for the consultant role type.

At the executive level, for all regions except Asia, we separate salaries by large companies who employ more than 1000 people, and smaller organisations who employ less.

We provide two remuneration categories; one for basic salary, and one for total cash reward, which reflects basic salary + employers contribution to a retirement plan + bonus.

2. Salary Distribution Graphs: For each region, these graphs segment basic salaries into 10th percentile intervals (with outliers removed). This detailed breakdown allows a clearer understanding of salary distribution, particularly at the higher end, helping you determine where your salary or that of your team members stands in the overall distribution.

3. Sector Key: This component helps you compare specific industry sectors with the general benchmarks in the inhouse Salary Overview Tables. It answers whether salaries in your sector tend to be higher, lower, or similar to those in the table. The Sector Key is based on a global dataset, rather than regional data, offering a broader perspective.

Financial Services Natural Resources	Up to 30% more than sample midpoint
Manufacturing - Materials, Chems. & Components Property & Real Estate Life Sciences, Pharma & Health	Up to 15% more than sample midpoint
Industrial Manufacturing Retail Consumer Goods Technology, Media & Telecomms	10% either side of sample midpoint
Hospitality & Leisure Professional Services Transport & Infrastructure Consultancy (Role Type)	Up to 15% less than sample midpoint
Non-Profit	Up to 30% less than sample midpoint



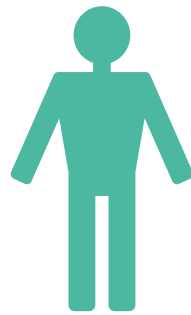
Job Levels Represented

For In-House Role Types



Junior

The junior level indicates an individual who is in the early stages of their career. The role may involve assisting in the development and execution of sustainability strategies, conducting research and data analysis to measure the effectiveness of these strategies, and contributing to sustainability reporting. Key skills for this position usually include strong analytical abilities, good communication, and a foundational understanding of environmental science and/or other elements of the sustainability agenda, often acquired through studying a master's in a relevant subject.



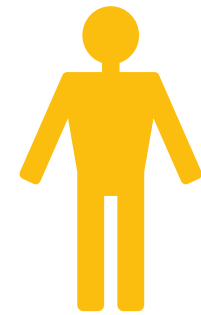
Manager

At management level an individual may be responsible for devising and executing strategies to improve an organisation's sustainability performance. This role may involve developing environmental policies, ensuring their compliance, and engaging with various stakeholders to promote sustainability practices. Skills at this level may include strong analytical abilities, strategic thinking, and effective communication and the ability to persuade and influence colleagues in other functions, along with experience in project management and policy development. Managers may be specialists or generalists. People in this category report to a more senior individual with overarching responsibility for sustainability.



Leadership

Individuals in the leadership category typically report directly to the organisation's most senior sustainability practitioner (defined in this report as the Executive). Less often, they themselves may be the top sustainability expert, reporting into a different department or function – this is more likely to be true in smaller businesses or those which are earlier in their sustainability journey. Their job titles are diverse, commonly including Director, but they may also hold positions such as Head of, or Senior Manager. They play a significant role and responsibility within the organisation's approach to sustainability, leading on the development of strategy, or on elements of it.



Executive

Individuals in the executive category typically occupy the highest-ranking sustainability roles within their organisations. These senior practitioners often have extensive careers centred around sustainability. However, this category also encompasses professionals who have transitioned into sustainability roles after developing their careers in other business areas. Their titles vary, including Director, Vice President (VP), and Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO). CSOs in large organisations, particularly those with advanced and highly committed sustainability programmes, are generally positioned at the upper end of this range, often exceeding the 75th percentile shown in our salary range. As well as owning the over-arching sustainability strategy, they are often their organisations external face of sustainability often with a focus on investor relations, lobbying and representing their organisations in the most important global forums.



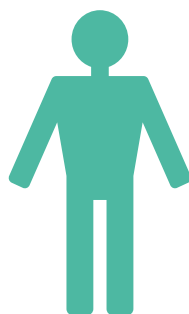
Job Levels Represented

For Consultancy Role Types



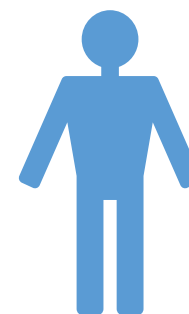
Junior

Individuals in the junior category are typically new to the sector and occupy entry level roles. The vast majority will have a master's in a subject related to sustainability. Their work will involve research, data analysis, preparing presentations and administrative tasks – particularly, in smaller consultancies. They will be expected to have a basic understanding of key sustainability issues and, ideally, more developed knowledge of a particular aspect of this agenda. They will be expected to have good communication skills and comfortable working with data. They will need to be adept at managing competing timescales and have a strong commitment to personal development. The ability to assimilate complex information quickly is a prerequisite. Job titles include trainee/junior consultant and analyst.



Manager

Individuals in this category will have in-depth knowledge of a particular area of sustainability or be generalists. They will have day-to-day responsibility for liaising with clients – probably across several small to medium sized accounts or one to two large ones – and ensuring that work is completed according to content requirements, timescales and fees. This means they require strong interpersonal and project management skills. They will also manage more junior colleagues, overseeing the quality of work to ensure it is client-ready and providing advice and support to them when required. Finally, they will be adept at keeping more senior colleagues informed of progress and involving them when necessary. Job titles include manager, partner (non-Big Four) and senior consultant.



Leadership

Individuals in this category will have responsibility for a number of client accounts (including their growth and profitability) and be heavily involved in identifying and winning new business. They will contribute to the overall management of the business in areas such as strategic and operational planning, recruitment, and marketing. They will either have knowledge and experience across the wide range of sustainability issues or be subject matter experts in areas like climate change, reporting, human rights and EDI. They typically have 10+ years of experience and an extensive network of contacts in corporates, NGOs and academia. Their technical expertise will be complemented by excellent communication, relationship building and influencing skills. They will be adept at supporting and developing more junior colleagues. Job titles include director, senior partner (non-Big Four) and managing consultant.



Executive

Individuals in this category oversee the strategic direction of the consultancy with responsibility for financial performance. They will have extensive business experience at a senior level either in the sustainability sector or, less commonly, elsewhere. In some cases, they will have an equity stake in the business. They will play a key role in managing relationships with major clients. They will have an important role in representing the organisation externally, raising its profile and contributing to the development of the broader sustainability agenda and its implementation. They will be effective communicators and possess a high degree of gravitas that brings credibility to their engagement with C-suite clients. They will be adept at identifying trends within the sector and the business opportunities that may arise. This category includes CEO and other senior directors, partners (Big Four and similar), and founders/owners.



Salary Overview for In-House Roles

Asia (SGD)

In our Asia salary comparison, we primarily focus on Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, China, and Oceania, due to the stark differences in living costs across the Asian continent. These regions exhibited similar compensation trends. We opted to present salaries in Singapore dollars (SGD) because Singapore accounted for the largest share of our Asian data set, representing 40% of the total sample. This choice provides a consistent and relevant benchmark for our analysis.

Our analysis reveals that in South Asia, which in our sample includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, the upper quartile (top 25%) of earners had an average income of \$134,900 SGD. Notably, a significant majority of this group were categorised under the 'Leadership' segment. Salaries in South Asia generally skewed towards the lower end of the spectrum.

Bonus 10%

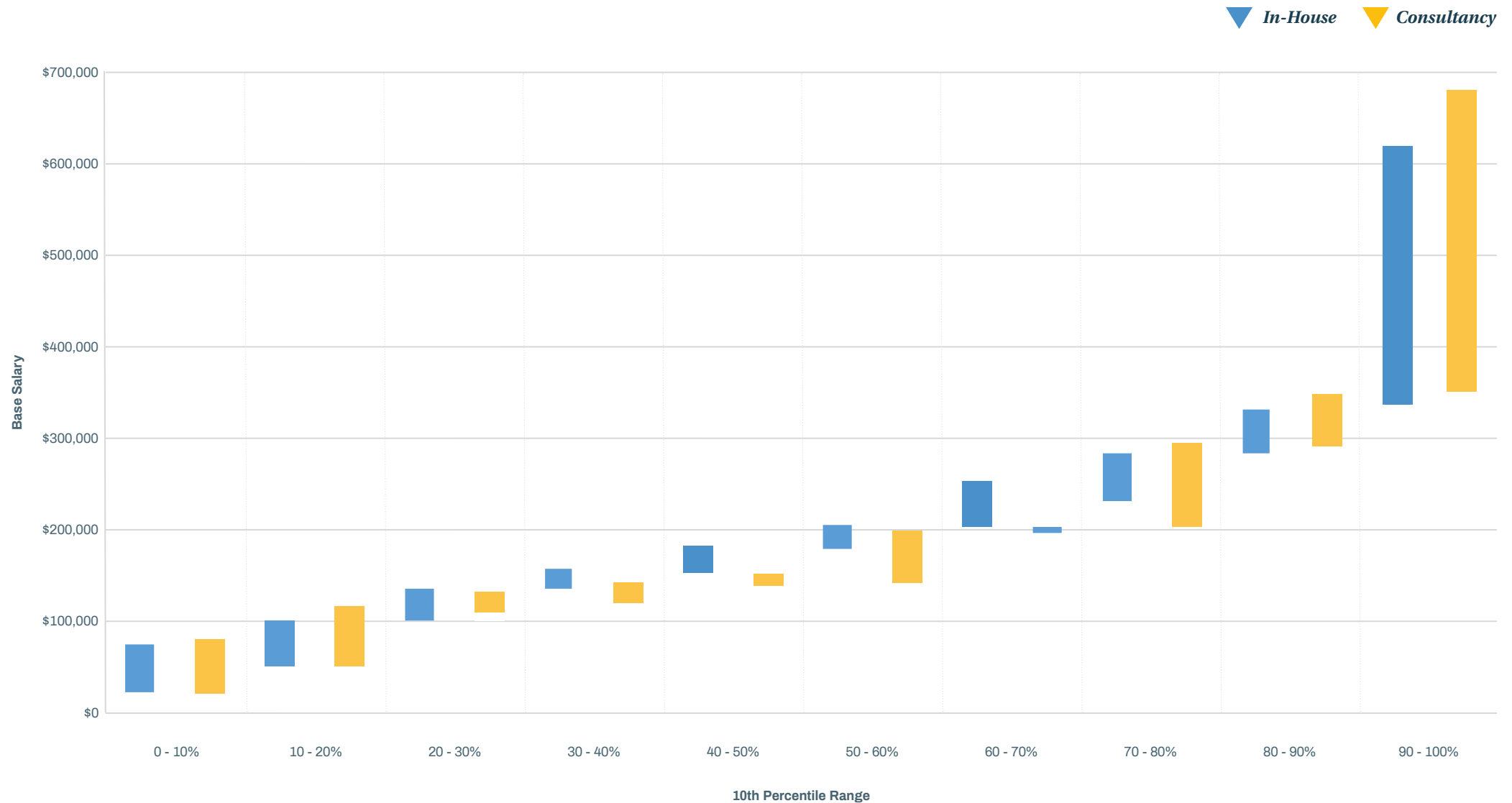
Employer's Retirement Plan Contribution (e.g. pension) 5%

	Junior	Manager	Leadership	Executive
Base Salary ►	\$31,000 - \$54,000 <i>Median: \$45,000</i>	\$105,000 - \$182,600 <i>Median: \$141,200</i>	\$169,000 - \$300,000 <i>Median: \$220,000</i>	\$229,600 - \$480,000 <i>Median: \$324,500</i>
Total Cash Compensation ►	\$34,500 - \$57,350 <i>Median: \$47,000</i>	\$129,700 - \$216,000 <i>Median: \$175,200</i>	\$191,100 - \$401,400 <i>Median: \$280,000</i>	\$405,000 - \$710,800 <i>Median: \$540,900</i>



Salary Distribution for In-House & Consultancy Roles

Asia (SGD)





Salary Overview for In-House Roles

Europe (EUR)

Our European sample is derived from 25 different countries. The Netherlands (23%), France (15%) and Spain (14%) make up the largest portion of our sample. Our sample reflects individuals who live both in European Union and non-European Union countries.

Bonus **10%**

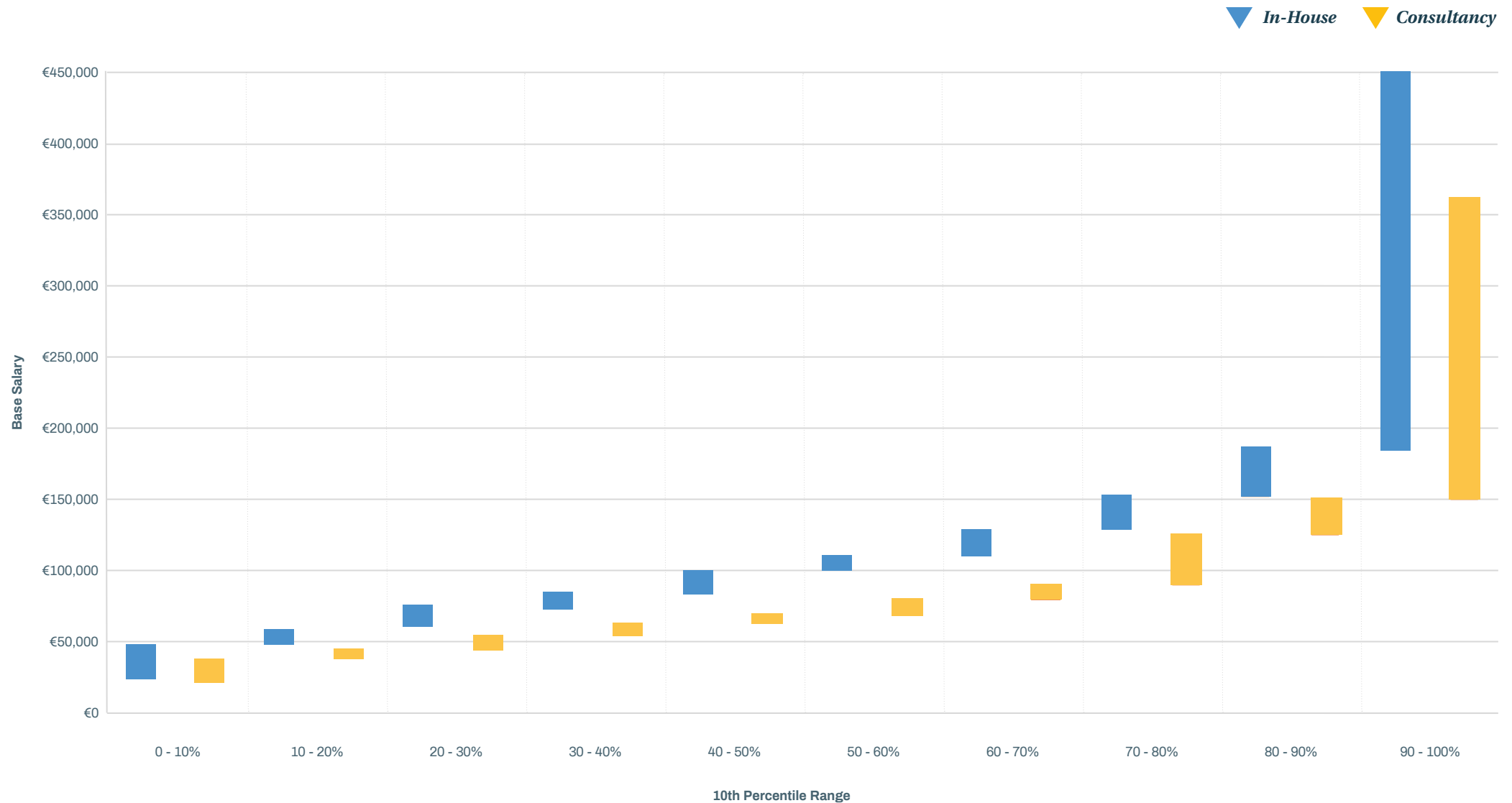
Employer's Retirement Plan Contribution (e.g. pension) **4%**

	Junior	Manager	Leadership	Executive (<1,000)	Executive (+1,000)
Base Salary ►	€32,400 - €51,500 Median: €42,500	€70,000 - €103,100 Median: €82,500	€99,000 - €160,000 Median: €129,000	€131,800 - €178,250 Median: €155,000	€158,300 - €212,800 Median: €185,000
Total Cash Compensation ►	€32,400 - €60,000 Median: €43,800	€74,000 - €121,611 Median: €92,000	€110,000 - €195,800 Median: €152,250	€145,600 - €238,500 Median: €207,400	€169,000 - €318,500 Median: €232,500



Salary Distribution for In-House & Consultancy Roles

Europe





Salary Overview for In-House Roles

North America (USD)

The global average (mean) for individuals with the title Chief Sustainability Officer (or a derivative) in large companies was a basic salary of £192,200 with a total cash reward of £283,800.

However, CSOs in the USA sat at the top of the sample with an average basic salary of \$316,000 (circa £250k) and an average total cash reward of \$503,000 (circa £400,000). At the top echelons of reward, many different job titles are still used. At this level there is no substantial difference in the frequency of the title CSO, Vice President or Director.

Bonus 12%

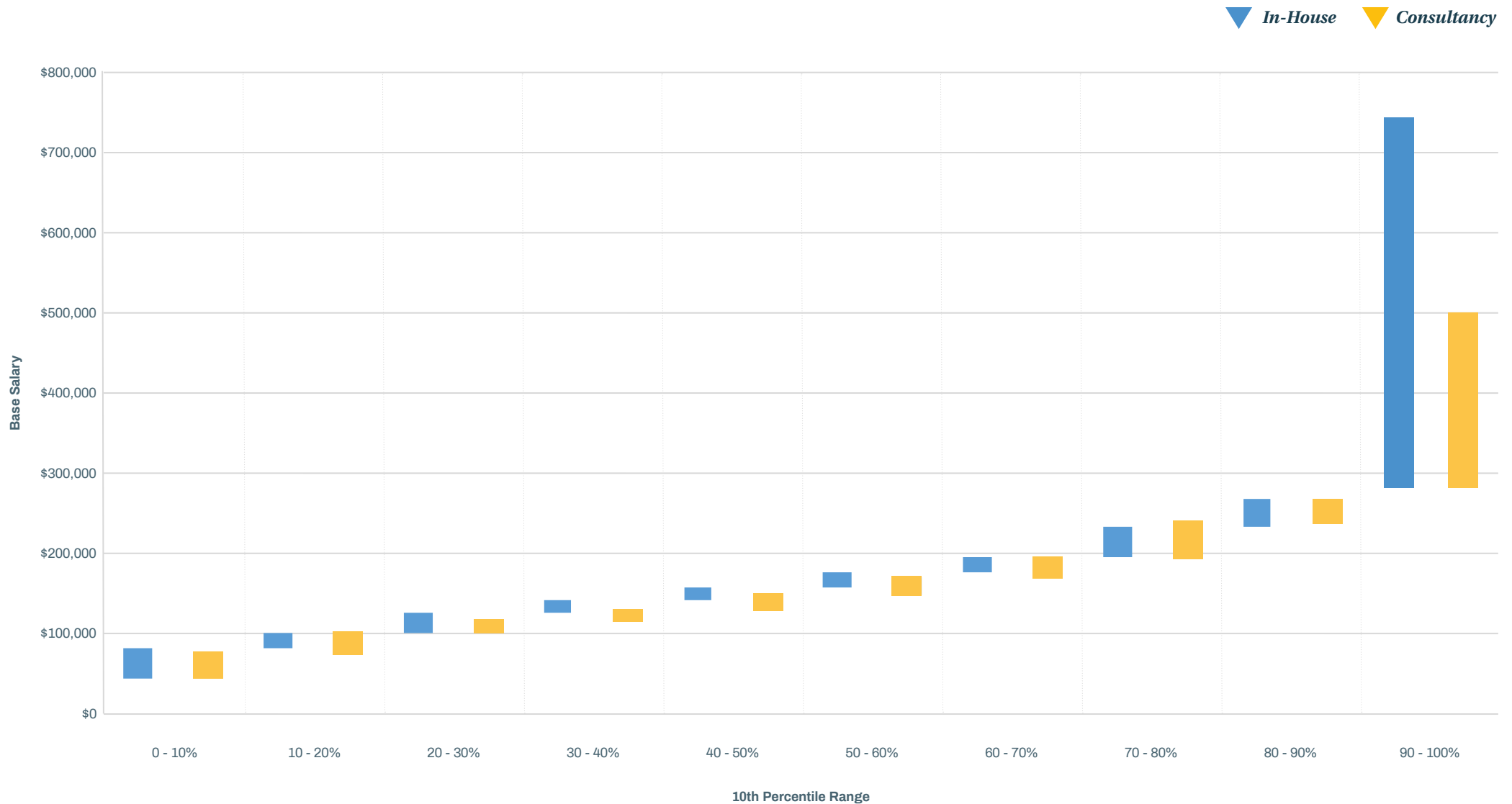
Employer's Retirement Plan Contribution (e.g. 401K) 3%

	Junior	Manager	Leadership	Executive (<1,000)	Executive (+1,000)
Base Salary ►	\$63,500 - \$86,800 Median: \$77,500	\$110,000 - \$170,000 Median: \$140,000	\$160,400 - \$250,000 Median: \$200,000	\$175,000 - \$300,000 Median: \$220,000	\$243,100 - \$328,900 Median: \$286,000
Total Cash Compensation ►	\$64,400 - \$101,000 Median: \$84,800	\$123,000 - \$198,000 Median: \$157,500	\$191,200 - \$394,700 Median: \$266,800	\$288,000 - \$352,000 Median: \$275,000	\$332,400 - \$449,700 Median: \$391,000



Salary Distribution for In-House & Consultancy Roles

North America (USD)





Salary Overview for In-House Roles

United Kingdom (GBP)

Bonus **10%**

Employer's Retirement Plan Contribution (e.g. pension) **4%**

	Junior	Manager	Leadership	Executive (<1,000)	Executive (+1,000)
Base Salary ►	£29,500 - £54,300 Median: £35,000	£52,000 - £85,000 Median: £66,350	£82,000 - £150,000 Median: £112,000	£100,000 - £161,000 Median: £120,000	£150,000 - £200,000 Median: £175,000
Total Cash Compensation ►	£30,500 - £68,800 Median: £37,000	£55,600 - £100,000 Median: £74,800	£94,400 - £191,800 Median: £132,000	£103,000 - £210,000 Median: £146,800	£202,500 - £312,000 Median: £254,000

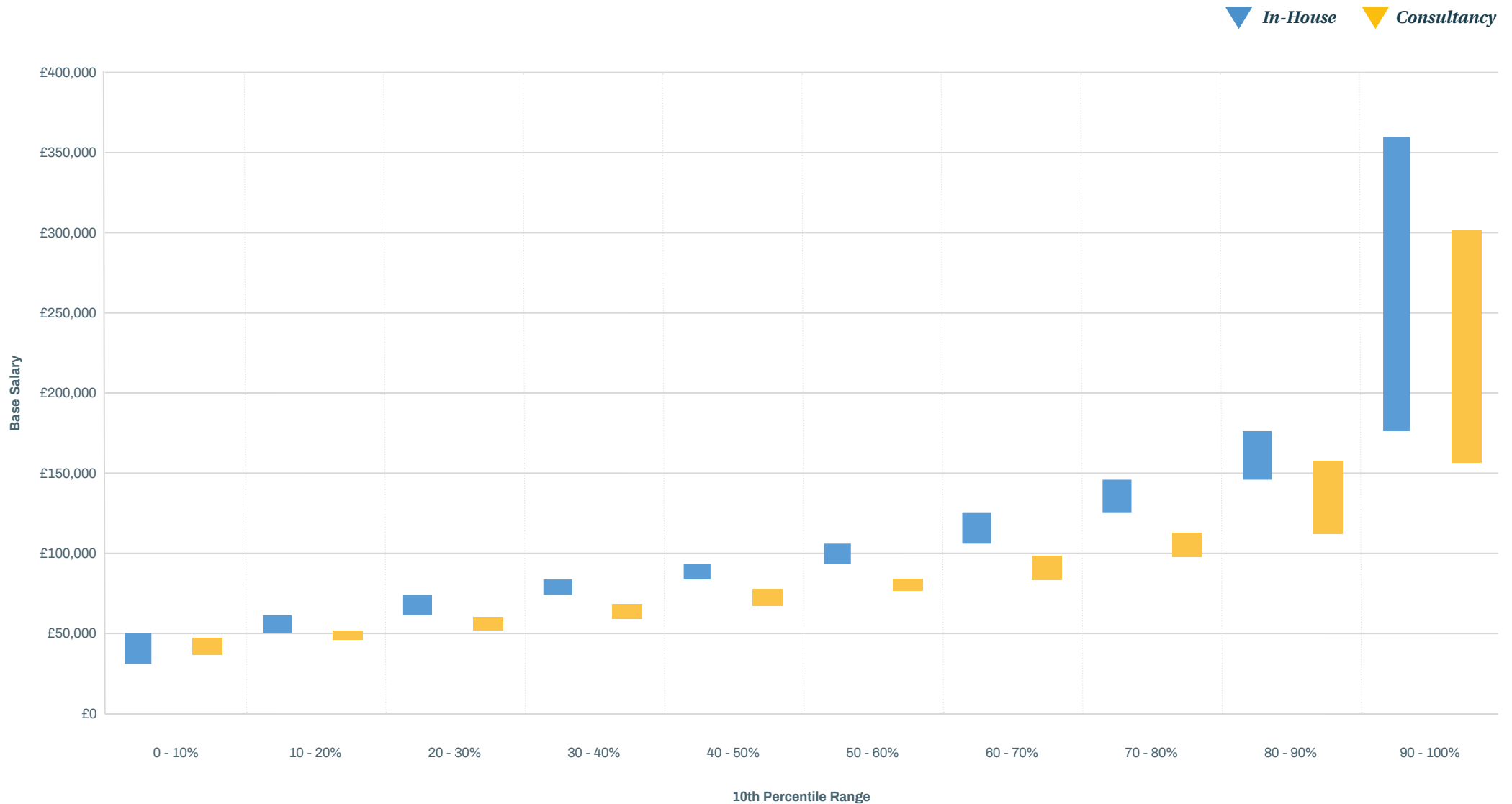
Salary Overview for Consultancy Roles

	Junior	Manager	Leadership	Executive (<1,000)	Executive (+1,000)
Base Salary ►	£27,800 - £34,900 Median: £31,750	£55,000 - £77,700 Median: £64,400	£75,000 - £125,000 Median: £95,000	£80,800 - £150,000 Median: £105,000	£144,000 - £176,000 Median: £160,000
Total Cash Compensation ►	£30,480 - £43,313 Median: £36,398	£58,000 - £87,500 Median: £68,400	£82,500 - £141,450 Median: £106,250	£90,920 - £173,950 Median: £123,096	£204,000 - £225,000 Median: £183,600



Salary Distribution for In-House & Consultancy Roles

United Kingdom (GBP)





Bonus Breakdown

Overall, 76% of respondents received a bonus (vs. 62% in the 2020 CR&S Salary Survey).

Where in-house roles are concerned, specific sustainability/ESG targets factored into bonus rewards 11% of the time.

This varies based on seniority and sector.

	% of Sample Who Receive a Bonus	% of Sample Who Do Not Receive a Bonus	% of Sample Whose Bonus Includes Sustainability Targets
In-House	79%	21%	11%
Consultancy	67%	33%	3%
Combined	76%	24%	9%





Contract & Interim *At a Glance*

Evidence suggests that organisations are increasingly turning to freelance support, and a factor driving this trend is the simultaneous growth of sustainability teams and their workloads.

The freelance market has undergone a notable transformation, adopting a project and technical lens. Independent consultants are now more likely to supplement technical expertise within a team or project rather than simply covering headcount.

In the meantime, individuals are increasingly opting for freelance roles. This may be because:

- The onset of the pandemic catalysed a shift away from traditional employment, with interim positions offering a newfound flexibility.
- The rise of hybrid working further expands the horizons for freelancers, presenting increased opportunities on both national and international scales, thereby establishing freelancing as a viable and reliable income source.
- Since 2020, significant pockets of burnout in the job market have also driven some individuals to embrace interim roles in pursuit of a better work-life balance.



Contract & Interim

High-Level Summary

The highest reported day rate for an interim professional working at a senior management or executive level is:

£2,023

United Kingdom

\$3000

North America

€2,500

Europe

\$2,000

Asia

- ▶ The majority of sustainability professionals in the interim market work **less than 200 days a year**.
- ▶ **61%** of respondents have less than two years of experience working on a contract or interim basis.
- ▶ In Europe, 24% of respondents have engaged in contract or interim work for **more than a decade**.
- ▶ 48% of respondents have observed a surge in contract or interim opportunities, suggesting **a perception of increased opportunity in the market**.





Conclusion



Tanith Allen

*Director of Sustainable Business,
United Kingdom*

Acre



The 2023 Sustainability Census offers a snapshot in time of a rapidly evolving profession; and, since capturing this data, notable shifts have already started to unfold.

The report embraces the dynamic nature of the sustainability landscape, providing insights into progress and challenges faced by organisations, professionals and policymakers in what many would describe as a volatile market.

A standout finding from the survey is the scepticism expressed by sustainability professionals across all regions regarding their organisations' ability to achieve its sustainability objectives within committed timeframes; a reality that is echoed daily by my network.

It's crucial, however, to unpack the practical implications of this trend. As the profession matures, the challenges faced by those responsible for meeting the commitments set are only gaining in power.

Key questions emerge:

- How can organisations seamlessly integrate sustainability into their business strategy? Integration has to bring additionality, rather than be used as another word for absorption.
- Amid mounting social, environmental, and economic pressures, how can sustainability remain a priority rather than a mere '*nice to have*'? Furthermore, how receptive are businesses to seeing value creation and business continuity through sustainability, over it being another compliance issue or investor request?
- What metrics are necessary for meaningful and accurate measurement and reporting of impact?
- For businesses within complex global supply chains, how can sustainability standards be met at every stage, and how do we balance a just energy transition with the people this affects?

Amid these challenges, there is hope in the form of a shared demand from sustainability professionals and consumers alike – a call for greater transparency and an enhanced culture of trust.

Ultimately, this report aims to foster transparency and honesty. Initiating an open conversation about the current state of the sustainability profession is crucial for envisioning a better future. Having said that, a more comprehensive sample size for future research would undoubtedly strengthen our ability to draw more concrete conclusions.

As we look ahead, a resounding call to action emerges. Building on the foundation this report has set, your future participation will contribute significantly to shaping the narrative and driving positive change in the sustainability landscape."



Conclusion



Catherine Harris

*Director of Sustainable Business,
North America*

Acre

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This is the sixth sustainability census I've seen at Acre over the past 12 years. In that time, I've observed the evolution of sustainability as a profession, particularly in the USA, where I have spent the past five years. Upon my arrival, it was evident that the country lagged at least a decade behind Europe in terms of well-established and appropriately sized sustainability teams addressing issues ranging from climate and circularity to chemicals, human rights, biodiversity, and reporting.

Notably, many of these responsibilities often rested on the shoulders of a single individual, primarily focused on climate, circularity, and, at best, human rights, with limited potential for team expansion in the future — still a prevailing norm in many cases.

While US legislation and regulations continue to falter on emissions reporting, there is still the issue of European legislation, such as CSRD, which means the need to build capacity for reporting around key sustainability issues remains. Not to mention, the recent California reporting bills that require large corporations to reveal their carbon emissions by 2026 — including scope 3. California has the world's fifth-largest economy, and it will mean that

both public and private companies will be subject to these new rules.

It's also interesting to note that 21% of our North American respondents reported the highest proportion of organisations that have yet to make any internal or public sustainability commitments. This aligns with recent data from @zerotracker.net, which found that 48% of North American companies surveyed hadn't yet published any net-zero targets at all.

And so, with that, it comes as no surprise that respondents from North America expressed the highest level of satisfaction with their available resources. I can only hope or imagine that as it dawns on business just how large the problem is, so too does the impetus to invest a significant number of resources in order to meet the expectations of investors, policymakers, legislators, customers and civil society as a whole.

Another piece of data to come from the census is that North American respondents reported the largest remote workforce — interesting and unsurprising considering the country's vast geographic expanse, spanning three time zones and with 11 states larger than

the UK alone. Major business hubs, including San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and Denver, house substantial talent pools; however, businesses in sectors like heavy manufacturing, grappling with emissions challenges, are often situated in remote locations. The demand for talent exceeds supply, giving candidates leverage to negotiate remote arrangements with travel. Post-pandemic, this trend persists, posing challenges particularly for a sustainability leader whose success in many ways relies on the ability to build relationships and influence senior leaders — many of whom are based at HQ. Business leaders now confront the reality of attracting a small pool of highly specialised individuals with a relatively rare skillset in the country.

In conclusion, the 2023 Sustainability Census highlights a complex and dynamic landscape where organisations are still significantly behind but starting to make commitments, invest in headcount and adapt to the evolving sustainability paradigm. The findings underscore the need for continuous efforts to enhance sustainability practices, make increasingly bold decisions and address the evolving needs of the global workforce.”



Conclusion

“

The more things change, the more they are the same.”



Paul Burke

Senior Partner

Carnstone Partners Limited

(The views expressed are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of Carnstone).

“

A constant theme throughout this report has been the upsurge in interest in sustainability and the specific topics that cluster under its broad agenda. Climate change, EDI, human rights, preservation of biodiversity and a host of other issues have commanded the attention of different stakeholders. What's more remarkable is the fact that this sharpened focus has happened against the backdrop of major political, social and economic upheavals.

One of the most noteworthy changes has been the way in which sustainability has moved from a niche or peripheral interest of a select few to something that has entered the mainstream in business, media and popular discourse. Whether this is the result of a much greater appreciation (both within corporates and among investors) of the associated risks and opportunities or has been driven by rising stakeholder expectations and regulation, is open to debate.

My personal experience, working with clients in different sectors, is that it's a combination of these and other factors

including, and this shouldn't be downplayed, a personal commitment among C-suite members to safeguard the planet for future generations. While we should celebrate this progress, we also need to be mindful of excessive and premature celebration and acknowledge some of the challenges the survey has highlighted.

First, as interest in sustainability has risen so has there been an upsurge in people studying sustainability-related subjects either at undergraduate or master's level. As has been pointed out in previous salary surveys, many of these well-qualified individuals are desperate to find roles in the sector to align their personal beliefs and careers. At the same time, as sustainability has acquired greater prominence in the corporate world, we've witnessed increased numbers of people looking to switch careers and find space aboard this particular bandwagon. Let me stress that this is not a criticism of any of these individuals – many of them will bring the enthusiasm, insights, and skills necessary to drive and implement the change. At the same time,

it's important that those looking for a career in the sector should be realistic about what and how they can contribute. The path to personal and professional fulfilment is rarely straightforward (and rapid).

Secondly, despite the ever-growing number of people seeking employment in the sector, there is a shortage of those with the right balance of knowledge and experience. This is particularly the case in areas such as climate change and sustainability/ESG reporting. How do we fill this skills gap? Given their needs are pressing, will employers be prepared to pay a premium for certain skills and become more aggressive in their hiring strategies (either by approaching people directly or through recruitment consultants)? This poses a major strategic challenge for consultants given the disparity in salaries and benefits between what they and the corporate sector offer. More flexible working practices, the variety of work and projects, and other factors will only go so far to offset the financial rewards that are available with their clients and other, potential employers.”



About the Author



The Sustainability Census is developed by its founding partner, [Acre](#) with support from Carnstone.

Acre is the global market leader for sustainability executive search and recruitment services, exclusively focused on integrating sustainability and catalysing positive change across business, finance and energy.

Operating from offices in London, New York, Amsterdam and Singapore, Acre became a certified B-Corp in 2022. This recognition was achieved through a high level of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability.

With 20 years of extensive experience, Acre's purpose is to create systemic change for our planet and society by activating people's potential. Its focus on sustainability gives Acre's team of specialists an in-depth understanding of the sectors they operate in, enabling them to consult, challenge and advise their clients to create a more sustainable future and drive impact where it is needed most. This led to the team placing more than 650 leaders in over 30 countries in 2023 alone.

*Our survey is underpinned by an extensive dataset, offering opportunities for further analyses. Along with Acre's proprietary data (derived from a network of over 200,000 professionals), **the possibilities for deeper, customised analysis are vast, catering to specific needs and interests.***

We encourage organisations interested in exploring these opportunities to reach out to us at mail@acre.com.



Our Partners

A special thanks goes out to our partners for making this report a reality.

Contributor & Partner



Carnstone is a management consultancy specialising in ESG and sustainability advising corporate clients across all sectors on a wide range of topics. It is part of SLR Consulting and has offices in London and Shanghai. Carnstone created the CR salary survey with Acre in 2007.

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