

The 2019 Sustainable Business Leadership Survey



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edie Insight reports are published by edie, the year-round resource providing energy, sustainability and resource efficiency professionals with the practical information, insight and intelligence they need to make their businesses more sustainable and profitable.

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THE 2019 SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP SURVEY: AN INTRODUCTION



George Ogleby
Insight Editor
edie

The need for truly sustainable business leadership has never been greater. Today, the world faces immense resources depletion and alarming levels of climate change, and in this context, only those who assume responsibility – and inspire others to do the same – will survive and thrive.

The warning signs could not be clearer. Seventeen of the 18 warmest years on record have all been during this century, while spiraling food prices, soaring energy costs and water shortages are all reaching life-critical levels. These shifts, alongside other global megatrends such as globalisation, population growth and rapid advances in technology and innovation, are causing fundamental changes to our society.

In these unprecedented times, a radical rethink is needed in the way business operates; away from a sole focus on maximising shareholder dividends towards a future in which organisations both communicate and act as a genuine force for good.

From investment in innovation and engagement with stakeholders through to proactive and effective supply chain management, the hallmarks of business leadership in the 21st Century are fundamentally progressive and forward-thinking.

It is with this forward-thinking mindset that edie decided to launch the **Sustainable Business Leadership Survey*** in association with energy company ENGIE. We want to define

what 'good business' looks like from the perspective of our core audience of sustainability, CSR and energy professionals from across the country. And, more importantly, we want to know just how far business needs to travel to reach this essential state of environmental and social sustainability.

Alongside the exclusive survey results, this report includes a variety of 'in action' case studies, key facts and stats and pull quotes from business leaders representing all major industry sectors – which together provide an end-to-end overview of sustainable business leadership in 2019.

This will be the first in a series of annual surveys of corporate sustainability and energy professionals – several of the survey questions asked for 2019 will be asked in the same way next year, allowing for year-on-year comparisons and key sustainability trends to be identified.

* ABOUT THE SURVEY

Developed by the edie editorial team, the 2019 Sustainable Business Leadership Survey was conducted online via edie.net between November 2018 and January 2019.

The survey, comprising 19 questions, received exactly **250 responses**. The respondent-base primarily consisted of individuals working in in-house sustainability/CSR/environmental management roles (69% of all respondents), along with chief executives (10%) and energy/facilities managers (5%).

In total, 88% of all respondents were UK-based, and in terms of business size, a combined total of 74% of respondents worked for large (250-999 employees), very large (1,000-4,999 employees) or extremely large (5,000+ employees) organisations.

All of the UK's major industries were represented among the respondent-base: construction/the built environment made up 21% of all respondents, the public sector accounted for 12%; and the manufacturing and retail sectors each represented 8% of respondents. The remaining respondent-base was a relatively even spread of professionals working across the likes of hospitality & leisure, transport & logistics, financial services, IT and the media.

** ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY LEADERS FORUM

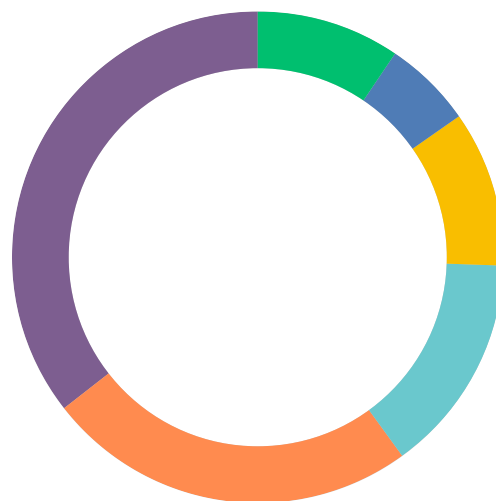
The results of the report are being discussed at the [Sustainability Leaders Forum**](#) in London on 6 February through an on-stage panel discussion with business leaders.

The Sustainability Leaders Forum is edie's flagship sustainability event of the year, bringing together business leaders, sustainability practitioners, government representatives, NGOs and investors – all with a common goal: to transform business, for good.

The two-day event combines high-level panel debates, with 'ask us anything' sessions, live podcast discussions, challenge-based workshops and purpose-driven thinkathons to give delegates the most immersive and interactive experience possible. [Find out more about the Sustainability Leaders Forum here.](#)

SURVEY RESULTS: AT A GLANCE...

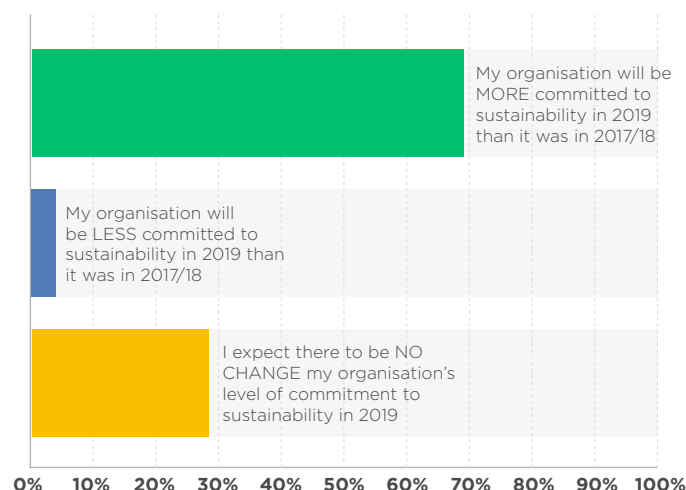
Despite a turbulent geopolitical backdrop, the results of this survey are broadly encouraging: businesses are seemingly more committed to sustainability than ever before; while sustainability and CSR professionals are beginning to see increased engagement from investors and consumers alike.



"HOW MANY EMPLOYEES DOES YOUR ORGANISATION HAVE (FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS)?"

Micro - fewer than 10.....	9.6%
Small - 10 to 59.....	5.9%
Medium - 10 to 59.....	10.1%
Large - 250 to 999.....	14.4%
Very large - 1,000 to 4,999.....	24.5%
Extremely large - more than 5,000.....	35.6%

"DO YOU FEEL YOUR ORGANISATION WILL BE MORE OR LESS COMMITTED TO TAKING ACTION ON SUSTAINABILITY IN 2019 COMPARED WITH 2017/18?"



2018: THE YEAR OF...

Last year was, in many ways, a landmark year for the UK's green business community. Despite extreme environmental, social and political challenges, there were countless inspiring stories of corporate action and leadership which helped to propel sustainability into the business mainstream.

But first with the bad news. Scientific experts sent shockwaves through the global corporate world in September last year with the clear and damning message that the world had 12 years left (11 years, now) to avoid some of the most devastating impacts of climate change. To do this, the [UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPPC) report claimed that the world must slash carbon emissions by 45% by 2030, and completely decarbonise by 2050.

2018 saw regions across the globe devastated by the onslaught of extreme weather events; from the 'Beast from the East' which caused arctic conditions and winds hitting 60mph in the UK, to California which suffered its biggest wildfires in history, with masses of land, homes and buildings destroyed.

All the while, the spectre of Brexit and rise of climate scepticism in the US threatened to derail climate efforts across the globe. But interestingly, these developments have served to drive enthusiasm and action to greater heights, as illustrated by the business community's unwavering message of defiance in the face of President Trump's US Paris Agreement withdrawal pledge. **Fig. 1**

Vast swathes of the business community took bold action to mitigate, and adapt to, climate change. Climate disclosure entered the mainstream in 2018 as [more than 500 companies](#) expressed support for the Task Force Climate-related Financial Disclosures' (TCFD) recommendations. In addition, companies of all sizes took advantage of plummeting prices of renewables with major

investments, as well as stating their long-term commitments through the adoption of science-based targets.

The EV revolution marched on at a terrific pace in 2018, influenced domestically by the UK Government's welcome decision to ban the sale of all new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2042. The finance sector, meanwhile, continued to view climate change and sustainability as a core value issue, with divestments from companies linked to [coal power](#) projects and [deforestation](#). Larry Fink, chief executive of Blackrock, the world's largest asset owner, encouraged longer-term thinking about environmental, social and governance issues in a strongly-worded letter to large-company bosses.

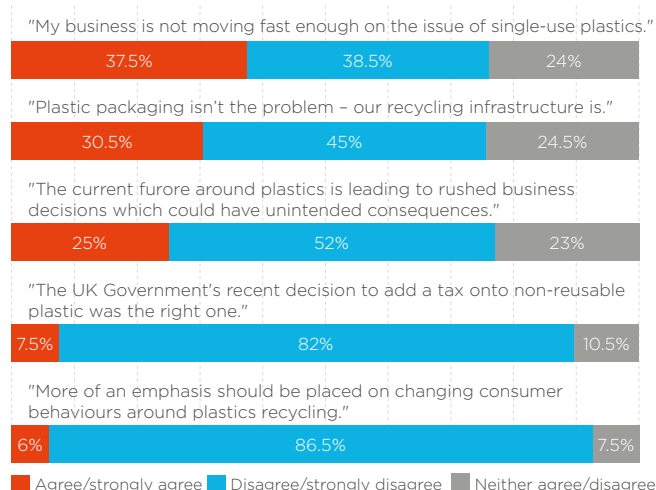
The low-carbon agenda wasn't the only area where we saw bold stances. Indeed, 2018 will most likely be remembered with fondness by sustainability and CSR professionals as the year business action on plastics reached a tipping point. Triggered by Iceland's five-year plan to [remove all plastic from its own-brand packaging](#), the sheer breadth of bold pledges made by businesses to phase-out plastic packaging and scale-up innovation was truly incredible. **Fig. 2**

This action - accelerated in the wake of the seminal BBC's Blue Planet II series - showcased the great potential for sustainability professionals to grasp the mantle of leadership within business. With the term 'single-use' being named Collins Dictionary's word of the year for 2018, it will be exciting to see which sustainability topics - from fashion to meat & dairy - capture the imaginations of individuals and organisations in the year ahead and help build upon today's sustainable business leadership. ●

Fig. 1 "PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING GLOBAL MEGATRENDS/DEVELOPMENTS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE TO YOUR BUSINESS IN 2019, WITH 1 BEING THE MOST IMPORTANT AND 5 BEING THE LEAST IMPORTANT"

	High importance	Medium importance	Low importance
Climate change & resource scarcity	50%	20%	30%
Population growth, urbanisation & social change	26%	16%	58%
Technology/innovation	48.5%	26%	25.5%
Globalisation/economic growth	32.5%	15%	52.5%
Health, wellbeing & equality	42.5%	23.5%	33.5%

Fig. 2 "'SINGLE-USE' WAS NAMED COLLINS DICTIONARY'S WORD OF THE YEAR FOR 2018. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT SINGLE-USE PLASTICS?"



TIMELINE OF KEY DATES

2019**5-6 February**

edie Sustainability Leaders
Forum 2019 (survey launch)

22 March

UN World Water Day

29 March

UK set to leave the EU

30 March

WWF Earth Hour

5 April

Our Planet documentary series
narrated by David Attenborough
released on Netflix

21-22 May

edie Live 2019

5 June

UN World Environment Day

8 June

UN World Oceans Day

9-18 July

Meeting of the High-Level Political
Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable
Development

23 September

UN Climate Change
Summit 2019

November

Green GB Week

11-22 November

COP25 Summit in Chile

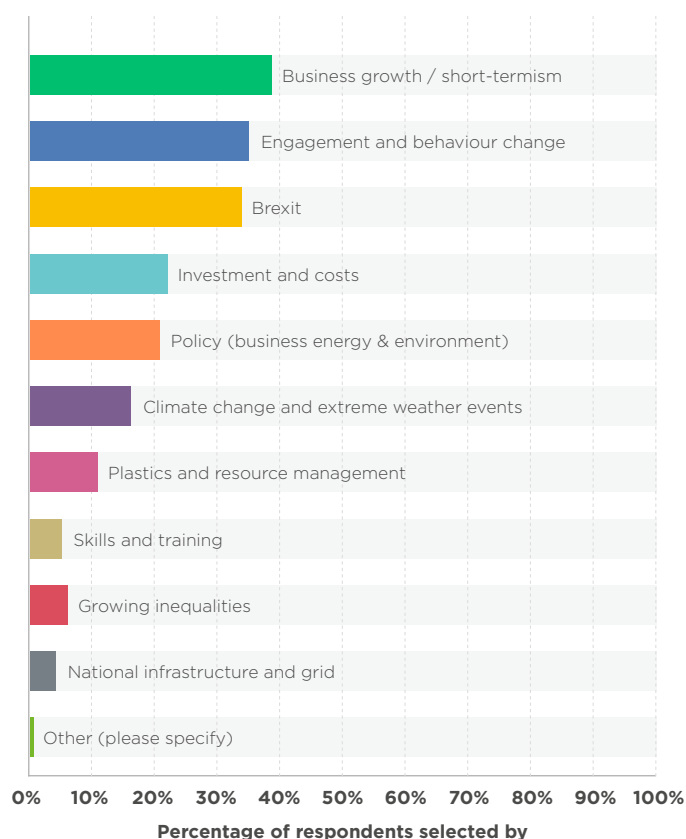
THE CHALLENGES IN 2019:

From Brexit to plastic, the Sustainable Business Leadership survey has unveiled an interesting array of institutional, operational and personal challenges facing sustainability and energy professionals in 2019.

edie's survey shows that a volatile economic and political environment could have a knock-on effect on business efforts to display sustainability leadership over the next 12 months. Among the 32% of respondents who claimed they expect their organisation to show the same or lower level of commitment to sustainability in 2019, factors cited ranged from challenges with Brexit to increasing pressures to remain competitive. It is extremely indicative that **'business growth/short-termism'** was ranked in edie's survey as the biggest challenge (39%) for sustainable business in 2019. **Fig. 3**

More than a third (36%) of edie's survey respondents selected the **UK's proposed exit from the EU** as one the of two biggest challenges for sustainable business in 2019. At the time of this report's publication, fast-paced developments in Westminster have left the Government's pledge to deliver a 'Green Brexit' – including proposals to strengthen environmental protections – hanging in the balance. Organisations across every sector have already suffered months of deferred investment decisions and recruitment freezes, and the green business community

Fig. 3 "WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE WILL BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS IN 2019? PLEASE SELECT TWO FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST"



will most-likely be unanimous in opposition to a 'no-deal', which could see existing environmental standards traded off to secure better terms of trade with new partners.

When asked to provide the biggest challenge currently faced as an individual in their role, around one-in-10 respondents mentioned terms such as **'behaviour change', 'employee engagement' and 'awareness-raising'**. According to the survey findings, sustainability professionals find it difficult to gain support for projects from their colleagues in finance departments – 23.5% of respondents said that their finance team was either 'somewhat disengaged' or 'not at all engaged with sustainability', with only IT teams seemingly less engaged with sustainability. **Fig. 4**

It is telling that the **Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)** was ranked lowest in edie's survey question which scored the priority level of different areas of energy and sustainability – just 4.5% claimed it would be 'business-critical' while 39.5% said it was either a 'low priority' for their business or 'not at all a priority'. Indeed, separate industry research suggests there is still a disconnect in the business sphere between awareness of climate risks and actions to tackle them, particularly at the boardroom level.

Sustainability and energy professionals have fairly mixed opinions about the world's chances of limiting global warming to 1.5C – in fact, just over half (53%) now no longer believe that this target is still achievable.



"Degradations accumulate and it is now critical for us to act, as one-by-one we reach our planet's boundaries and the Earth struggles to absorb our pollution and waste or provide us with the services which we freely use and abuse."

Philippe Joubert, Founder and Chief Executive, [Earth on Board](#)

Fig. 4 "PLEASE RATE THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT THAT EACH OF THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONS WITHIN YOUR BUSINESS HAS WITH THE SUSTAINABILITY FUNCTION"

	Not At All Engaged With Sustainability	Somewhat Disengaged With Sustainability	Neither Engaged Nor Disengaged With Sustainability	Somewhat Engaged With Sustainability	Very Engaged With Sustainability
IT	12.30% 23	11.23% 21	41.18% 77	27.81% 52	7.49% 14
Finance	11.35% 21	12.97% 24	35.14% 65	30.81% 57	9.73% 18
HR	8.20% 15	8.20% 15	34.97% 64	32.79% 60	15.85% 29
Legal	6.59% 12	12.64% 23	40.66% 74	30.22% 55	9.89% 18
Operations	6.56% 12	6.56% 12	13.66% 25	48.09% 88	25.14% 46
R&D/Product development	4.95% 9	6.04% 11	28.57% 52	37.36% 68	23.08% 42
Chief executive	3.19% 6	6.91% 13	13.83% 26	35.64% 67	40.43% 76
Corporate board	3.24% 6	6.49% 12	12.43% 23	53.51% 99	24.32% 45
Corporate communications	2.76% 5	3.87% 7	16.02% 29	40.33% 73	37.02% 67
Marketing	2.69% 5	8.60% 16	18.28% 34	43.01% 80	27.42% 51
Supply chain/procurement	1.62% 3	2.70% 5	19.46% 36	51.89% 96	24.32% 45

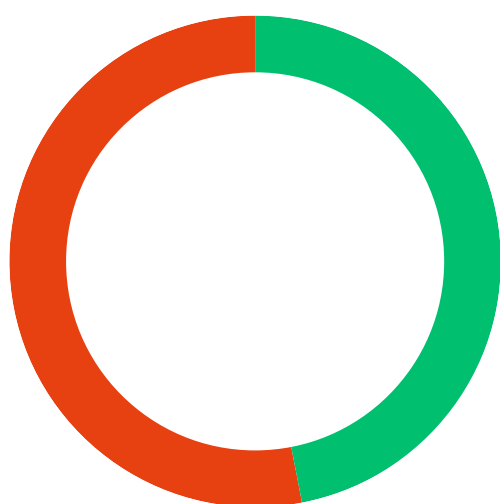


Fig. 5 "IN LIGHT OF THE IPCC'S SPECIAL REPORT ON THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, DO YOU BELIEVE LIMITING GLOBAL WARMING TO 1.5C ABOVE PRE-INDUSTRIAL LEVELS IS STILL ACHIEVABLE?"

Yes **47.2%**
No **52.8%**

Economic hostility between major international powers was cited by several respondents as a major hindrance to the world's ability to confront climate change – a view supported by the January 2019 report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), which revealed that the capacity to implement collective international action is now at “crisis levels”. **Fig. 5** Elsewhere, whilst great strides have been taken to address the business community's often toxic association with single-use plastics, edie's survey illustrates a general consensus among sustainability professionals that efforts must be redoubled in the year ahead.

Almost four in 10 (40%) respondents claimed that their business was “**not moving fast enough on the issue of single-use plastics**”, while a staggering 86% believed that “**more of an emphasis should be placed on changing consumer behaviours around plastics recycling**”. Respondents were overwhelmingly in favour of policy intervention in this area, with 82% stating that “**the UK Government's recent decision to add a tax onto non-reusable plastic was the right one**”.

More than half (52%) believed “**the current furore around plastics is leading to rushed business decisions which could have unintended consequences**”. Some respondents highlighted plastic's ability to extend the shelf-life of food products and reduce food waste, while others warned about the risk of investing in solutions which have negative environmental repercussions. ●

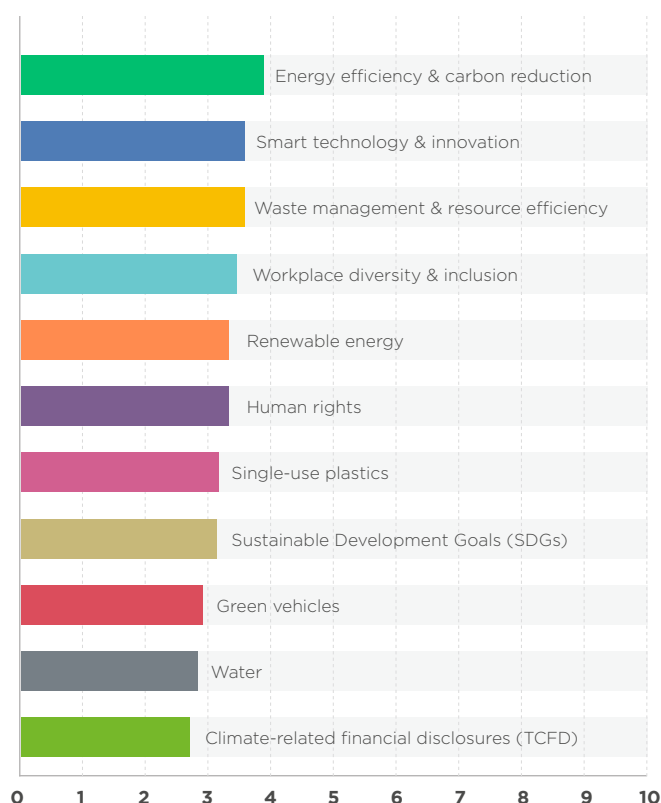
THE OPPORTUNITIES IN 2019

From smart tech to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sustainability and energy professionals are increasingly turning to new opportunities that can help their organisation achieve a sustainable future, today

While some large corporates have already achieved the so-called “quick-wins” associated with energy efficiency, the survey indicates that many organisations – particularly SMEs – are yet to reap opportunities to slash energy bills and reduce carbon footprints through onsite technologies and system upgrades. It comes as no surprise, then, that the top priority for sustainable businesses in 2019 **‘energy efficiency & carbon reduction’**, ranked as a ‘high priority’ by 43.5% of respondents and a ‘business-critical’ priority by a further 27%.

Advances in technology meant that exciting solutions such as blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) began to gain real momentum in 2018, and many businesses are seeking to capitalise on the benefits of the associated technologies for their energy and resource efficiency strategies in the year ahead. Indeed, a combined three-fifths (59%) of edie’s Business Leadership survey respondents cited **‘smart technology & innovation’** as either a ‘high’ or ‘business-critical’ priority for their organisation in 2019. Meanwhile, **the low-carbon vehicle transition** holds a major opportunity for businesses with large commercial fleets in 2019 – a

Fig. 6 “HOW MUCH OF A PRIORITY DO YOU EXPECT YOUR BUSINESS TO BE PLACING ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN 2019?”



“We really want everybody in the company to live our purpose, which is to make sustainable living commonplace. While we do have people with areas of expertise in fields such as sustainable agricultural practices, supply chains or energy efficiency – these people are catalysts to drive bigger change across the business.”

Karen Hamilton, Global VP for Sustainable Business, Unilever

quarter (24%) of respondents cited green vehicles as a ‘high priority’ for their organisation. Some organisations are exploring the option to switch to vehicles powered by [alternative fuels such as biomethane](#) and hydrogen, but the biggest sustainable mobility trend in 2019 will most likely be the fast-moving electric vehicle (EV) revolution. Car manufacturers are set to compete intensely over the next 12 months to offer consumers the newest EV models with the longest ranges at the lowest prices, while the widespread installation of public charging infrastructure across towns and cities will continue to alleviate concerns around range anxiety.

Encouragingly, edie’s survey indicates that **sustainability is becoming a more centrally held value within business**. Chief executives – more than any other individual function in the business – are increasingly on-board with the CSR agenda, according to the survey, with 41% of respondents claiming that their CEO is ‘very engaged with sustainability’. This suggests that the business case for a sustainability-first mindset is finally starting to filter through to the boardroom. Other respondents highlighted that the agenda is also starting to become **more understood by the wider workforce**. These findings suggest that a growing number of in-house sustainability teams will have the buy-in to replicate similar behaviour change initiative successes enjoyed by the likes of [banking firm RBS and supermarket Tesco](#) over the past 12 months.

Employee engagement could unlock the key to turning business ambition into action in many areas, and in particular around business alignment with **the SDGs**. [Reports](#) suggest that as much as \$12trn and 380 million jobs could be generated by 2030 if the SDGs are placed at the heart of global economic strategies, and businesses and investors alike are starting to sit up and take notice. More than a third (36%) of edie survey respondents stated that the SDGs would either be a ‘high’ or ‘business-critical’ priority for their organisation in 2019. But, with a quarter (26%) stating the SDGs would remain a ‘low-priority’ this year, it is clear that there is still work to be done in convincing businesses to take meaningful actions towards the Goals, with just 11 years left to achieve them. ●

WHAT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE: BUSINESS ACTION IN 2019

What are the most important attributes of sustainable businesses? Where should the sustainability function sit within business? And which businesses stand out as the most inspirational among respondents? edie's survey revealed all....

When it comes to the future of business leadership, there are three key traits which sustainability and energy professionals believe are the most important, according to edie's survey findings. The most widely selected trait from the list provided was **'an alignment between core business values and purpose'**, selected by 35.5% of respondents.

In this regard, several respondents cited the positive actions of companies such as US-based outdoor-wear brand [Patagonia](#), which has reaped the financial and reputational gains of moving beyond 'traditional' CSR models to develop a holistic brand purpose in which sustainability is naturally embedded.

The second key business-leadership trait chosen by respondents focuses on partnership-building; almost a third (32.5%) selected **'collaborating with others – even rivals – on sustainability'**. Whether it be through finding [solutions for hard-to-recycle plastics](#) or [creating an industry-framework for net-zero buildings](#), it was noted by respondents that some of the biggest companies are seeking to tackle challenges such as increasing inequality,

climate change and resource scarcity by making sustainability a pre-competitive issue.

Lastly, one in three (31%) CSR practitioners highlighted the importance for business leaders to **'build sustainability credentials into products and services'**. Unilever provides a perfect example of the business case for sustainable products being demonstrated, with the FMCG firm's 'Sustainable Living' brands accounting for a record [70% of its turnover growth](#) last year, and growing 46% faster than the rest of the business.

Asked which organisation most inspire them when it comes to driving sustainability forward in 2019, many survey respondents mentioned high-profile organisations such **Unilever, Patagonia, Marks & Spencer (M&S) and Interface**, all widely considered as long-term sustainability forerunners. Others highlighted small, disruptive companies such as **Beyond Meat, Bioregional and Pukka Herbs** – the latter of which recently became the smallest UK company to have its science-based emissions targets approved. ●

Fig. 7 "WHEN IT COMES TO THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CORPORATE ATTRIBUTES DO YOU BELIEVE TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT? PLEASE SELECT TWO FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST"

	Responses
An alignment between core business values & purpose	35.40%
Collaborating with others – even rivals – on sustainability	32.30%
Sustainability credentials built into all products and services	30.43%
Actively engaging with consumers around sustainability	18.63%
Effectively communicating and reporting on sustainability throughout the business	18.01%
Advocacy to promote a more sustainable and ethical business environment	16.15%
Setting ambitious, long-term targets	15.53%
Full transparency, disclosure and accountability	13.66%
Proactive and effective supply chain management	12.42%
Investing in innovation / R&D	7.45%



"I have become a strong supporter of the corporate leadership that can be generated through multi-stakeholder initiatives. Change cannot and will not happen without this corporate leadership, or without all the right players sat around the table, enabling progress through authentic partnership." **Jonathon Porritt, Founder-Director, [Forum for the Future](#)**

WHAT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE: THE SUSTAINABILITY PROFESSION IN 2019



What skills and traits are most important for sustainability and energy professionals to take their business strategy forward in 2019? And who are the most inspirational people for this core audience of sustainability and energy professionals?

It is often said by in-house CSR practitioners that if they successfully persuade executives to take responsibility for the sustainability agenda, they will work themselves out of a job. It is to this point that one of the final survey questions – which focused on the future of the sustainability function and its position within the business – provided some compelling results. When asked where sustainability should sit within business, almost two-fifths (38%) of respondents stated that **“there should be no standalone sustainability function at all”**, with a preference for the role to be fully integrated across all areas of the business. **Fig. 8**

A quarter (25%) said that **“sustainability should be a primary responsibility of the board”**, while only 16% claimed that **“it should be a standalone, central business department”**. Some respondents went as far to suggest that sustainability should be embedded in every job description, with KPIs set for all department managers.

Others suggested that most businesses are a long way off from not requiring any dedicated sustainability strategist or guidance, and there should still be sustainability managers to provide oversight, continual training and development, reporting and internal consultancy.

Fig. 8 **“IN ORDER FOR YOUR BUSINESS TO BECOME TRULY SUSTAINABLE IN THE FUTURE, WHERE DO YOU BELIEVE THE SUSTAINABILITY/ CSR FUNCTION SHOULD SIT?”**

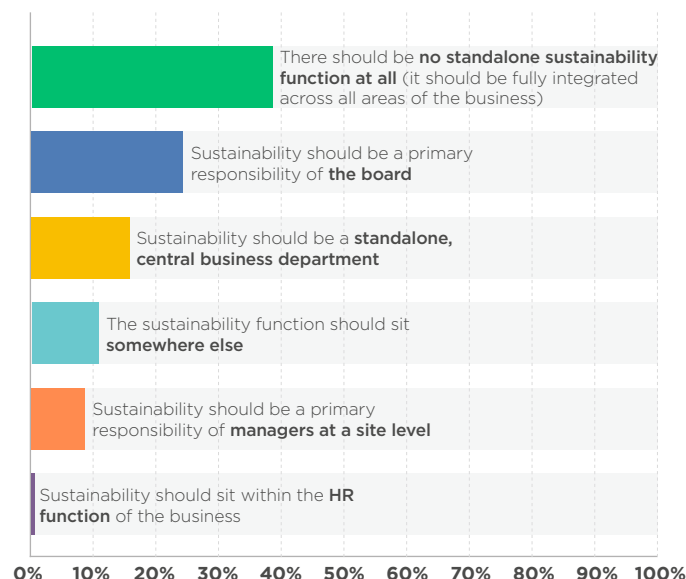


Fig. 9 "WHEN IT COMES TO THE EVOLUTION OF THE SUSTAINABILITY FUNCTION WITHIN BUSINESS, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SKILLS AND TRAITS DO YOU BELIEVE TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT? PLEASE SELECT TWO FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST"



With the latter point in mind, it comes as no surprise that 42% of respondents said that **'collaborating, networking and knowledge-sharing'** is one of the most important skills when it comes to the evolution of the sustainability function within business in 2019. Other key skills highlighted by survey respondents include **'motivating and empowering'** (34%), **'communicating, listening and storytelling'** (26%) and **'negotiating and influencing'** (23%). **Fig. 9**

A combination of these 'soft skills' are crucial for sustainability professionals to effectively lead a CSR team and drive positive change within their organisation and beyond. And in fact, many of these characteristics are synonymous with the likes of **David Attenborough, Elon Musk, Mike Barry, Paul Polman and Jonathan Porritt** – each of whom were name-checked on several occasions by respondents when asked to list the individuals that inspire them the most when it comes to driving sustainability forward in 2019. ●



"Everything from day-to-day business practices to more energy-efficient ways of designing, building, and delivering products or services should be under review. Why? Because it's not only the right thing to do, but sustainability can be a business driver and differentiator."

Nick Lazaridis, President for Europe, HP INC



EXPERT'S VIEWPOINT: SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS DEMANDS LONG-TERM VISION



Jamie Quinn, Corporate Responsibility and Environment Director for ENGIE, analyses edie's 2019 Sustainable Business Leadership survey and explains how sustainable success demands a long-term vision.

The findings of the 2019 Sustainable Business Leadership survey provide a fascinating snapshot of the attitudes of business towards sustainability, and their priorities for the future. It's a picture that mirrors our own view of the sustainability landscape.

As a business, we recognise the way global trends, from climate change and population growth to technological innovations, are impacting businesses. ENGIE has positioned itself to address these growing issues, enabling us to work more closely with customers to manage their changing priorities.

The survey found that the top sustainable priorities for business remain energy efficiency and carbon reduction, while their primary concerns are climate change and resource scarcity.

Most respondents agree that they will be more committed to sustainability in 2019 than in the past, and that sustainability is the responsibility of all areas of the business. We believe this demands a blurring of departmental lines in businesses, with energy, facilities and estate managers adopting a more joined-up approach to delivering lasting and effective changes.

The need for collaboration was reinforced in the survey, with respondents rating 'working with others' as the second most important corporate attribute. The most important was seen as an alignment between core business values and purpose.

This suggests businesses realise that to truly address sustainable priorities, they need to embed sustainability in their long-term vision and to collaborate with others, both internally and externally. Our purpose is to improve lives through better living and working environments, which draws a clear connection between the activities we perform and the outcomes we create.

LONG-TERM THINKING

One of the biggest barriers we have experienced to businesses meeting their sustainable commitments is short-termism – the need for growth today. This was the biggest challenge identified by edie's survey respondents too.

The way to tackle this is to align long-term business objectives with sustainable objectives, and to make them a board-level priority. We have successfully adopted this approach at a corporate level through our Responsible Business Charter, and operationally with a number of key clients, establishing long-term partnerships that are aligned with customers' sustainable priorities.

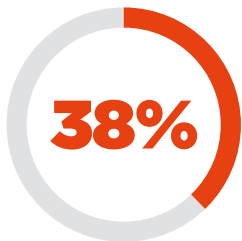
This ensures that all parties are working towards the same goals, with mutual rewards achieved through energy and carbon savings, waste reduction, sustainable business growth and improved employee health and wellbeing.

Achieving sustainable goals can be greatly assisted by new technology too. Through smart-building innovations, we are helping businesses to become increasingly efficient, with automation and AI able to assimilate vast amounts of data and trigger instantaneous actions.

For ENGIE, meeting the needs of business customers today is about much more than supplying a commodity or a service. It's about taking a long-term approach to energy and building management and working collaboratively to address impacts ranging from climate change, resource depletion and air quality to employee welfare and productivity. ●

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP IN 2019: AN INFOGRAPHIC

edie's 2019 Sustainable Business Leadership Survey has revealed a surge of fresh CSR challenges and opportunities that are now facing large corporates. Here are the key facts, stats and developments for sustainability professionals to be aware of in 2019...



of survey respondents believe "there should be no standalone sustainability function at all"

68%

of survey respondents believed that their organisation will be more committed to sustainability in 2019 than it was in 2017/18



Global clean energy investment was

£257.6bn in 2018



Two-thirds

OF UK BUSINESSES ARE SET TO INCLUDE CLIMATE RISKS IN THIS YEAR'S FINANCIAL REPORTS

'BUSINESS GROWTH/SHORT-TERMISM' WAS RANKED IN EDIE'S SURVEY AS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

39%

FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS IN 2019

The new business-led Alliance to End Plastic Waste has committed more than

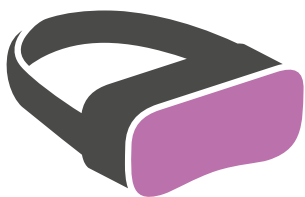
\$1bn (£777m)

to eliminate plastic pollution in the environment



48%

59%



OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS CITED 'SMART TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION' AS EITHER A 'HIGH' OR 'BUSINESS-CRITICAL' PRIORITY FOR THEIR ORGANISATION IN 2019

41%

of survey respondents claimed that their chief executive is 'very engaged with sustainability'

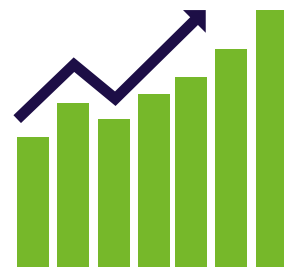


MORE THAN

160

COMPANIES HAVE HAD SCIENCE-BASED TARGETS VERIFIED

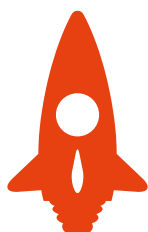
of survey respondents said that 'collaborating, networking and knowledge-sharing' is one of the most important skills for business leaders



The UK's electric vehicle (EV) market grew by a record-breaking

19%

in 2018



B CORP COMPANIES ARE GROWING

28 times faster

THAN THE UK NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH OF **0.5%**