



Employer attitudes towards, and skills for, sustainable development

Kim Croasdale

Sustainability project officer – curriculum & healthcare

Background – employer facing research

Senior leadership (n=50)

Organisation size:

18 respondents – 1-24 employees
21 respondents – 25-499 employees
11 respondents – 500+ employees

Organisation type:

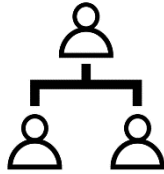
31 respondents – Limited company
5 respondents – Academia
4 respondents – Charity / NGO
4 respondents – Public limited company/ Incorporated company

Organisation sector:

15 respondents – Professional and business services
12 respondents – Education
10 respondents – Manufacturing
2 respondents – Media and creative services
2 respondents – Construction

Examples:

Asthma UK, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Wilmott Dixon



HR and Recruitment (n=29)

Organisation size:

10 respondents – 25-499 employees
16 respondents – 500+ employees

Organisation type:

14 respondents – Limited company
4 respondents – Government body
4 respondents – Public limited company / Incorporated company

Organisation sector:

7 respondents – Education
4 respondents – Professional and business services
3 respondents – IT and telecommunications services
3 respondents – Wholesale
2 respondents – Retail, hire and repair

Examples:

Marks and Spencer, Freshfields, Waterstones Ltd, Royal Navy, CB&I Ltd



Background – student facing research

Annual study since 2010

6 years of data
Developing longitudinal data on trends and demands

Wide variety of respondents

All years of study
All disciplines
All across UK
No reference to sustainable development in promotion of research

Huge numbers of respondents

Over 30,000 overall
FE: 5% entry-level, 22% level 1, 14% level 2, 59% Level 3
HE: 44% 1st year, 29% 2nd year, 22% 3rd year, 4% 4th year, 1% 5th year+

Sustainability skills and understanding

To help assess respondent experiences of teaching and learning, the survey includes questions linked to a number of skills that can be associated with achievement of sustainable development. The skills include:

Using resources efficiently to limit the impact on the environment and other people

Looking at global problems from the perspective of people from around the world

Planning for the long term, as well as the short term

The causes of inequality in the world

Understanding how to create change

Understanding how human activity is affecting nature

Considering ethical issues linked to your subject

Solving problems by thinking about whole systems – including different connections and interactions

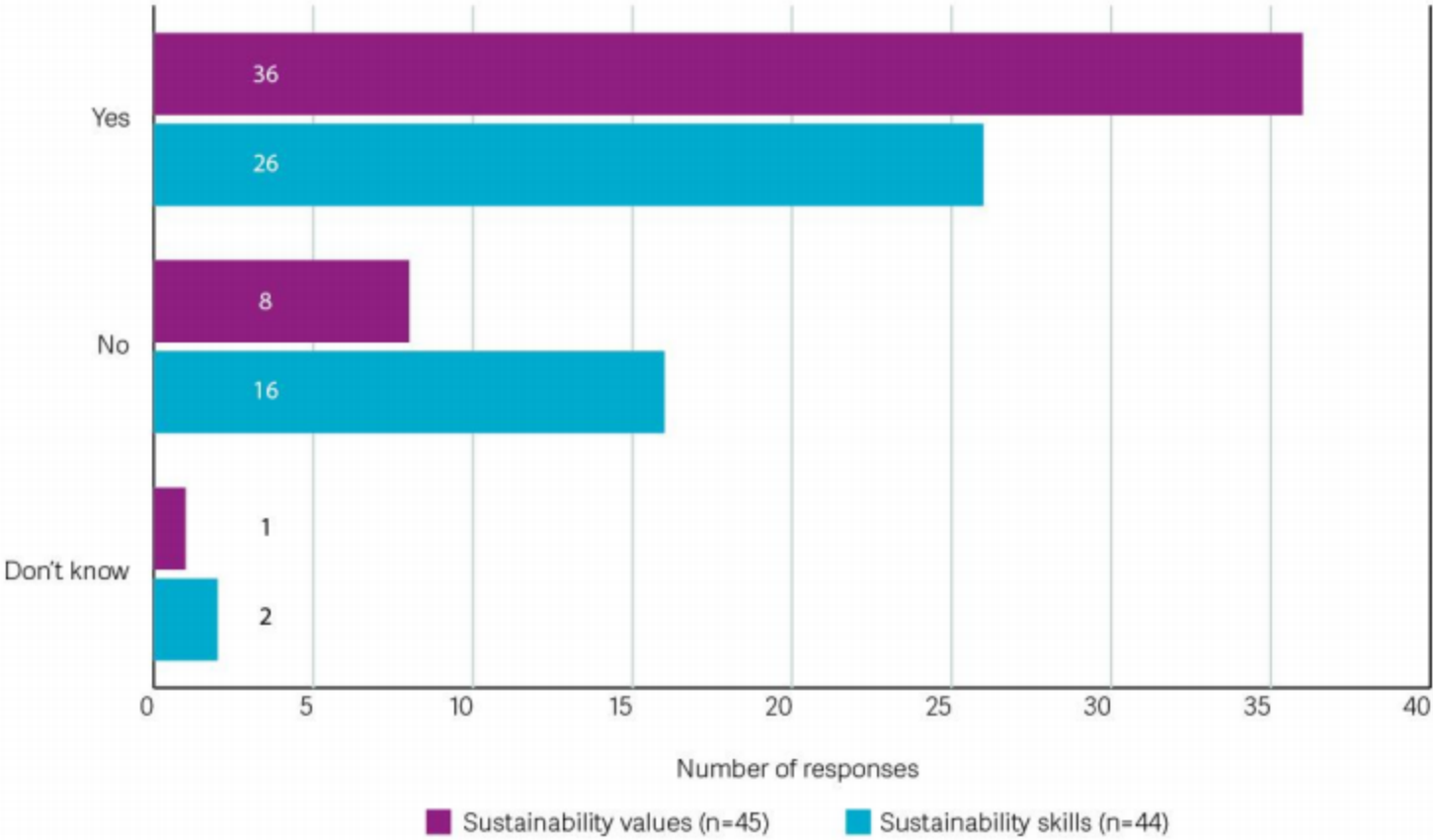
Communicating complex information clearly and effectively to different types of people

Looking at a problem using information from different subjects or disciplines

Challenging the way we do things now (like business, politics, education) work now

11. Are employers engaged in sustainable development?

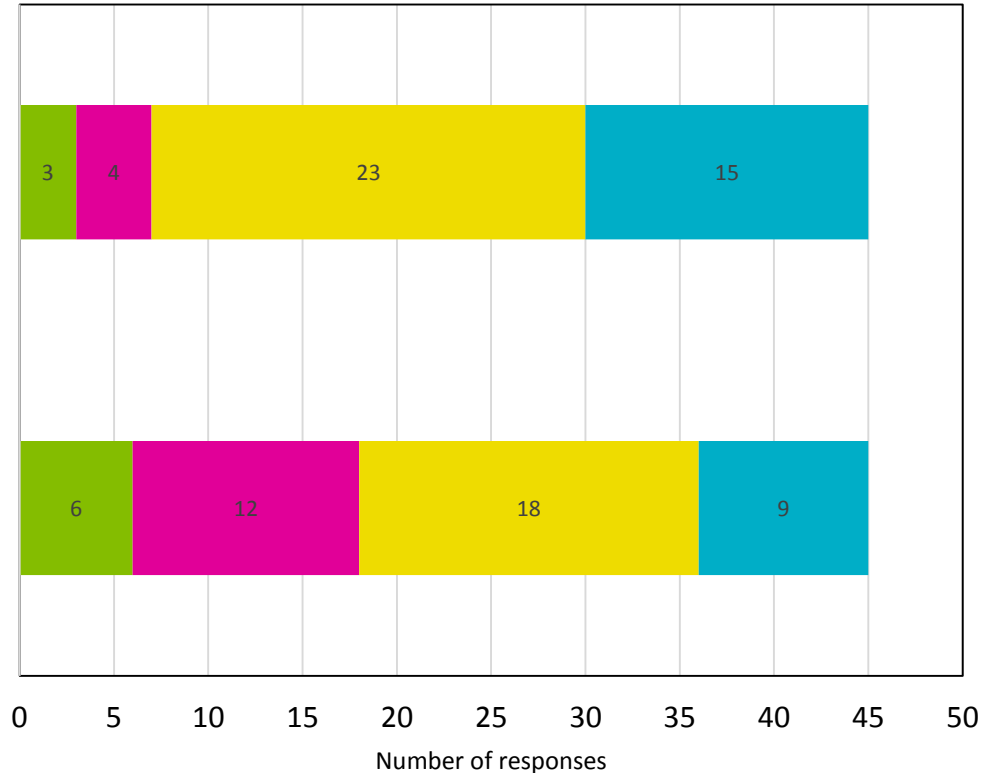
Figure 11.1 | Has your organisation identified the specific skills and values needed to participate in a sustainable economy? [EMPLOYERS RESEARCH]



Incorporation of SD skills is less common than incorporation of SD values

Sustainability values are incorporated into the business strategy for my organisation (n=45)

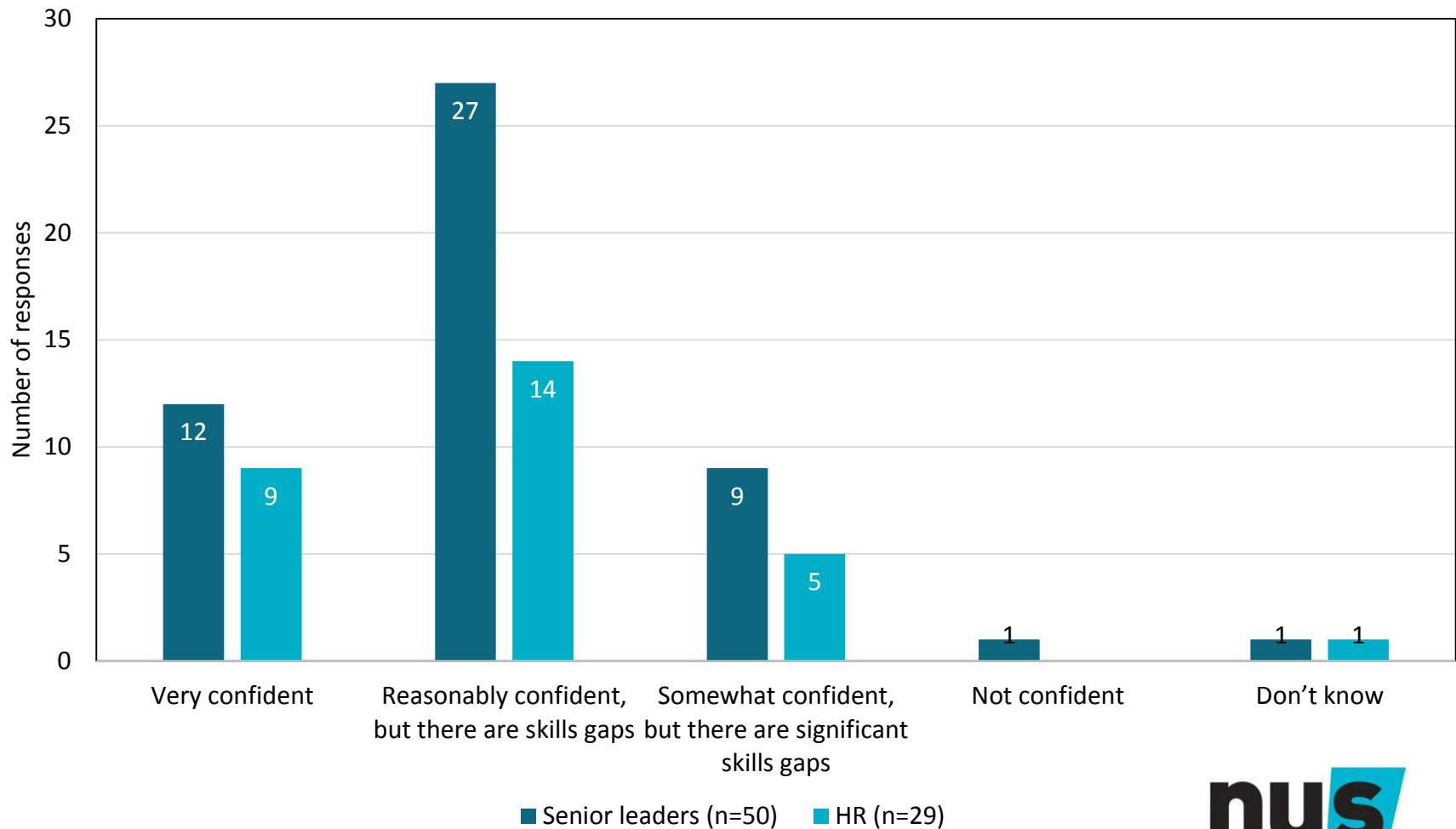
Sustainability skills are incorporated into the business strategy for my organisation (n=45)



■ Don't know ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

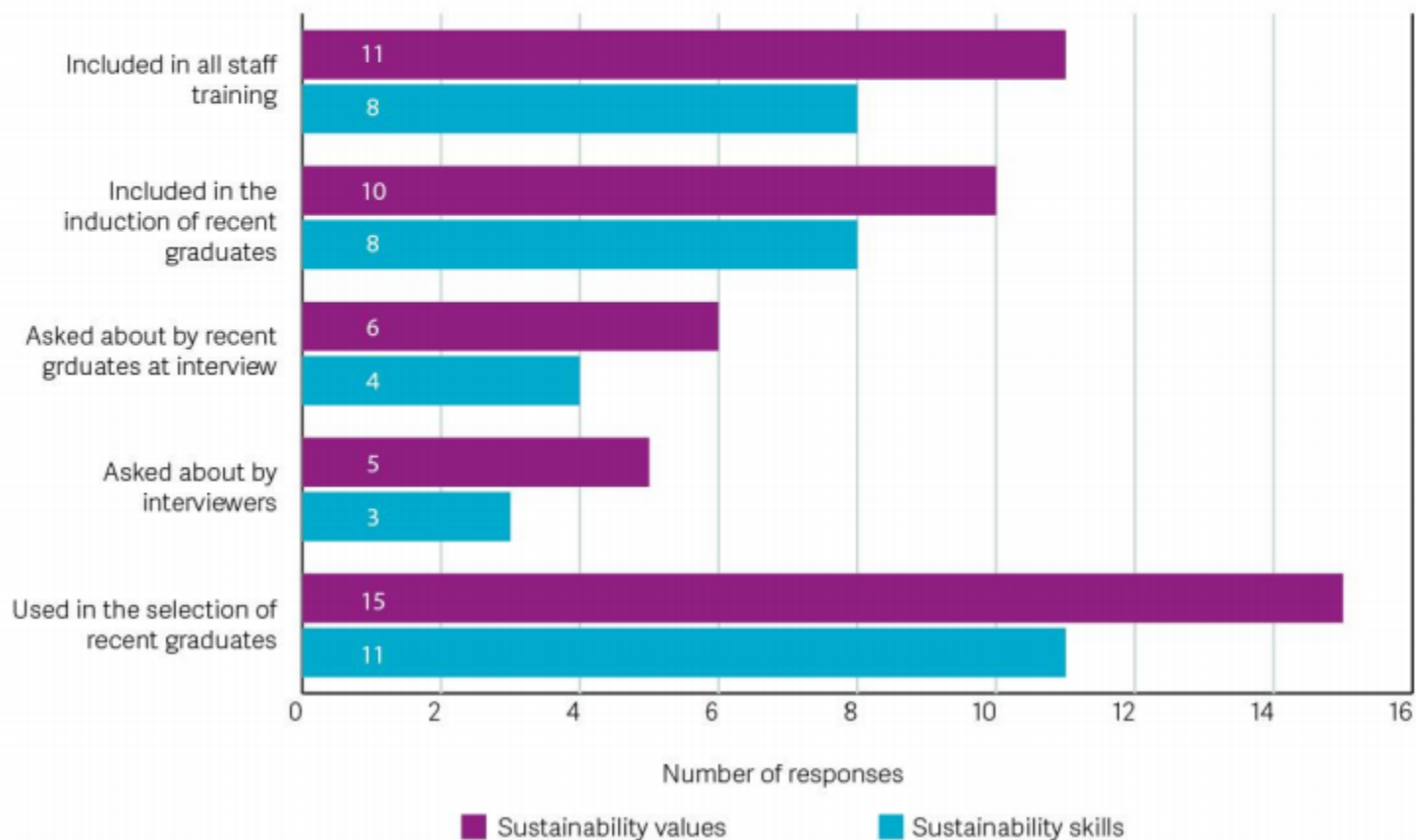


Respondents are reasonably confident their organisation has the skills to compete in a sustainable economy, though there are some with significant concerns

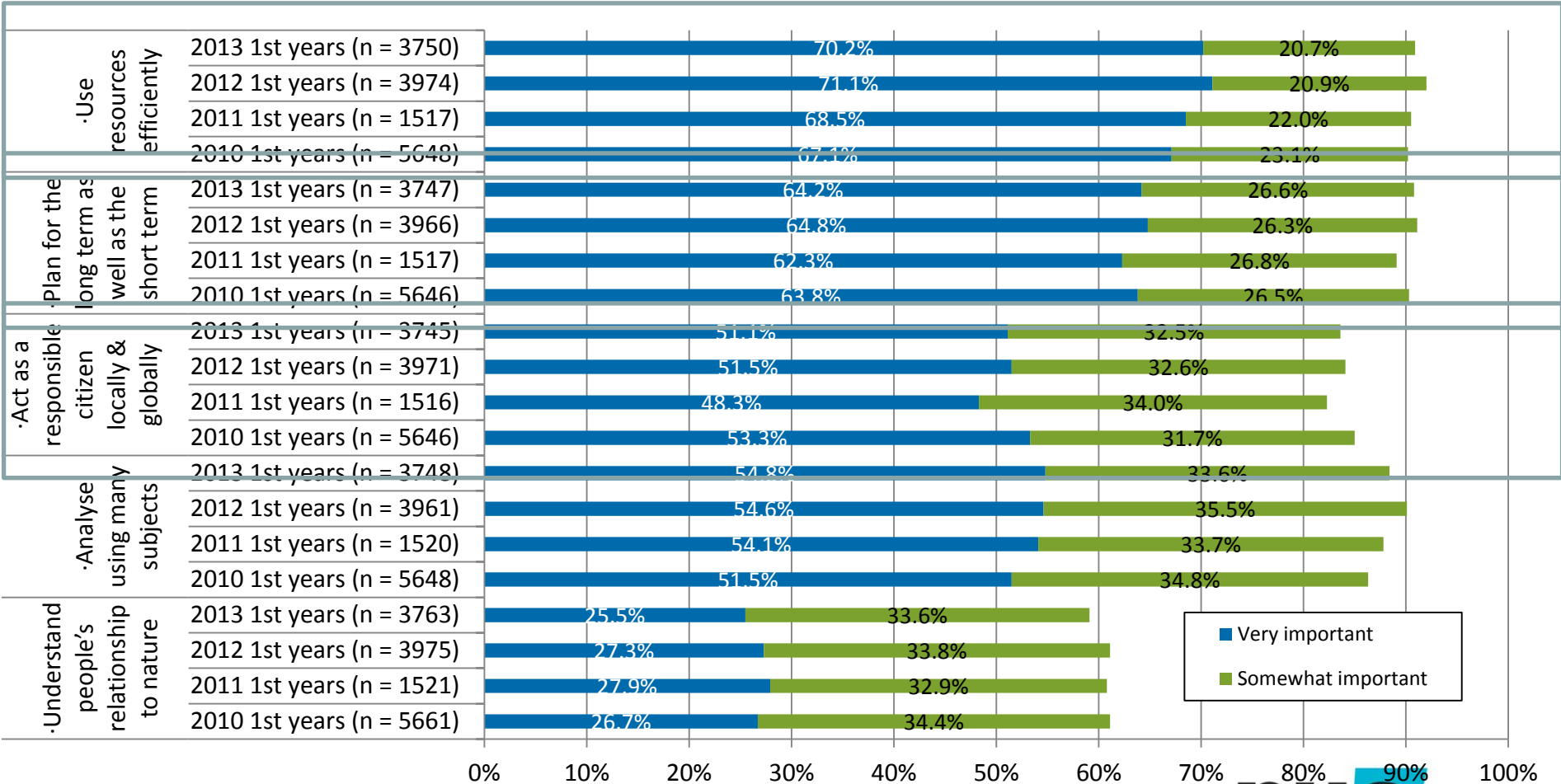


13. How do employers secure recent graduates with sustainability skills and values?

Figure 13.1 | Within your organisation, are sustainability skills or values... [EMPLOYERS RESEARCH]



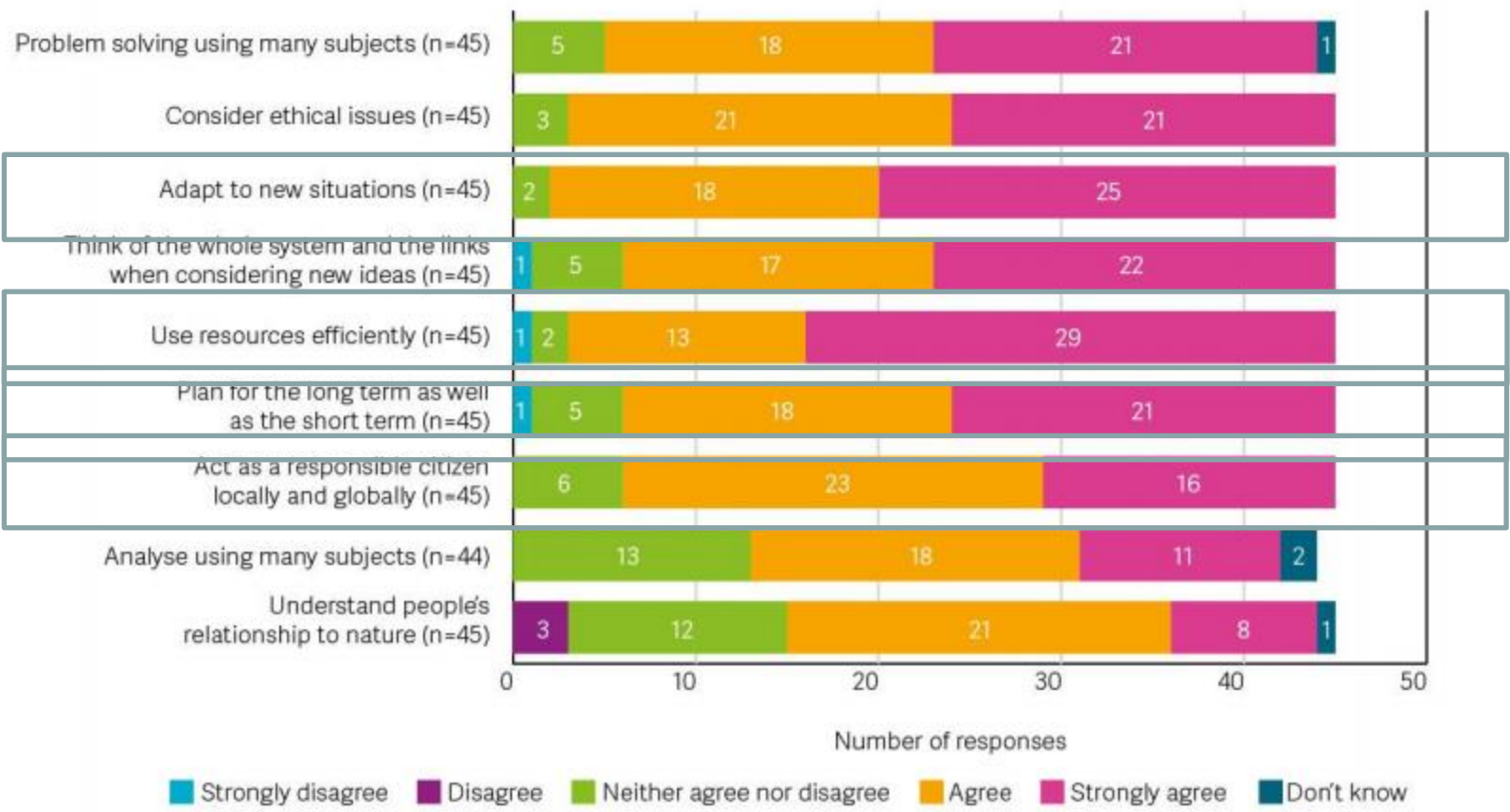
SD skills are perceived to be highly valued by employers



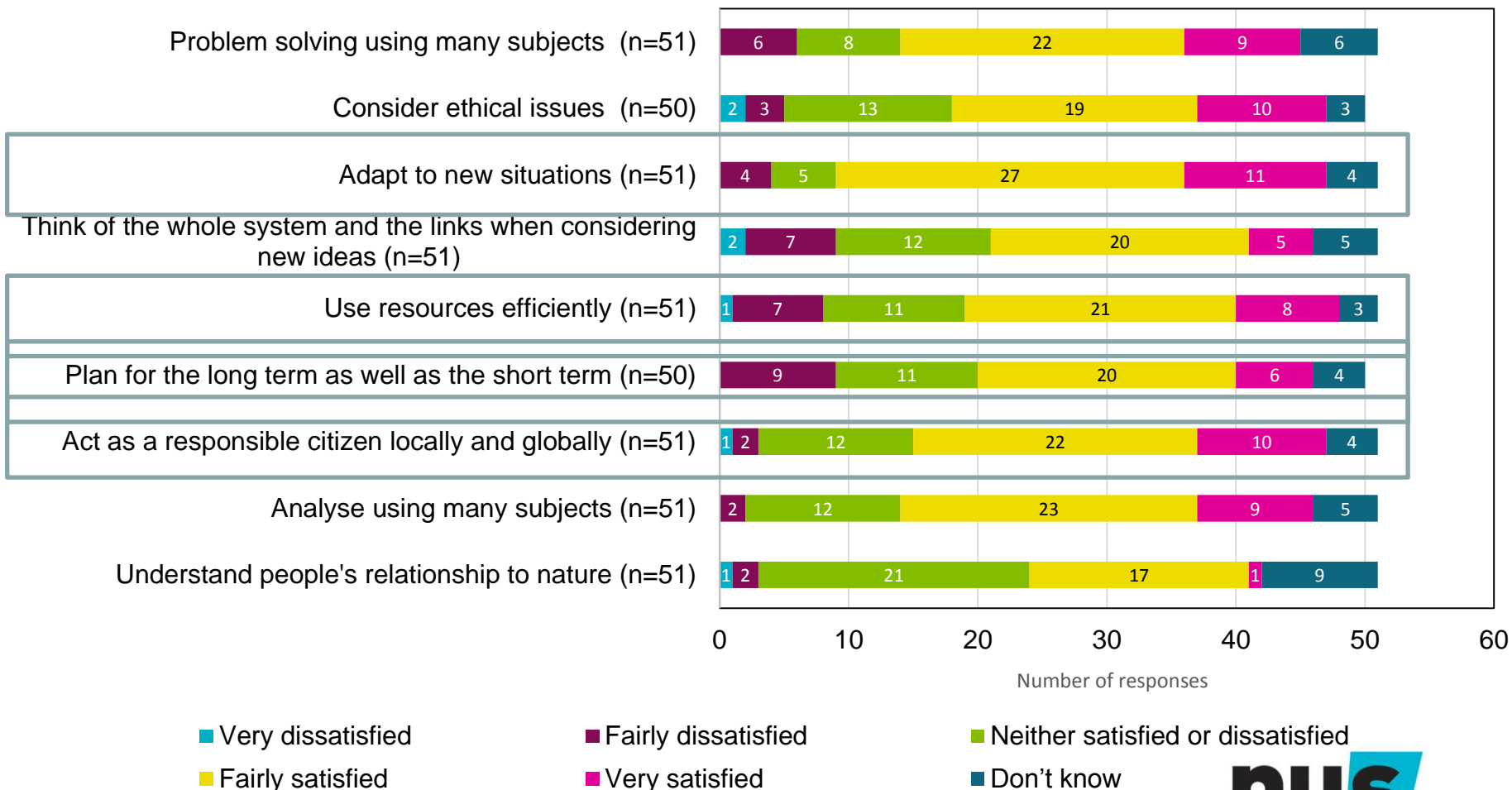
Q. How important do you think the following skills are to your future employers? Balance: No response

5. Employers: How important are skills for sustainable development?

Figure 5.1 | The following are skills that specifically relate to environmental and social responsibility. To what extent do you agree or disagree that recruiting recent graduates with the following skills would enable your organisation to participate in a sustainable economy? [EMPLOYERS RESEARCH – SENIOR LEADERS]

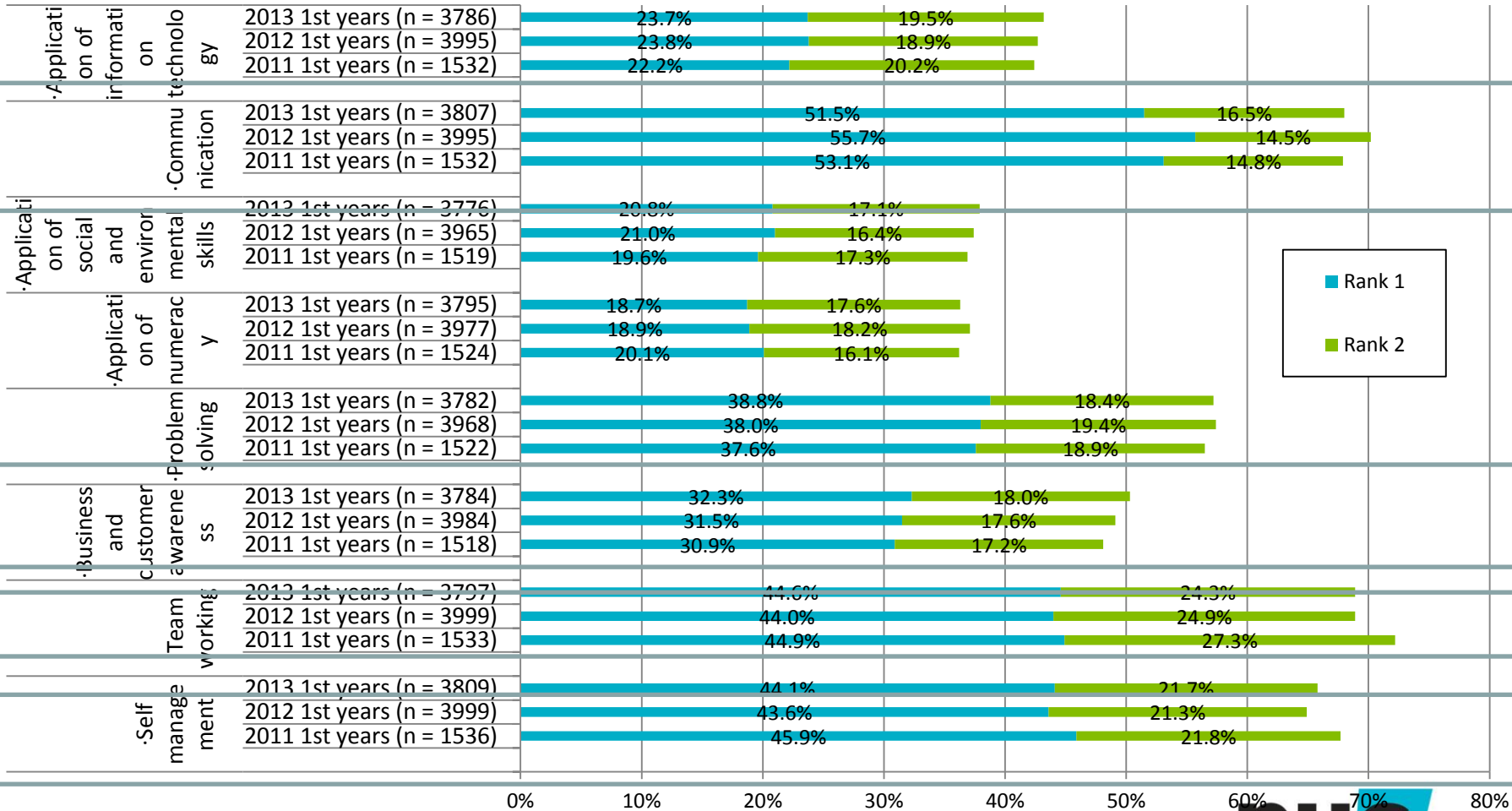


Respondents show less certainty when asked about sustainability skills but are most satisfied with the adaptability of recent graduates and least satisfied with their ability to understand people's relationship to nature



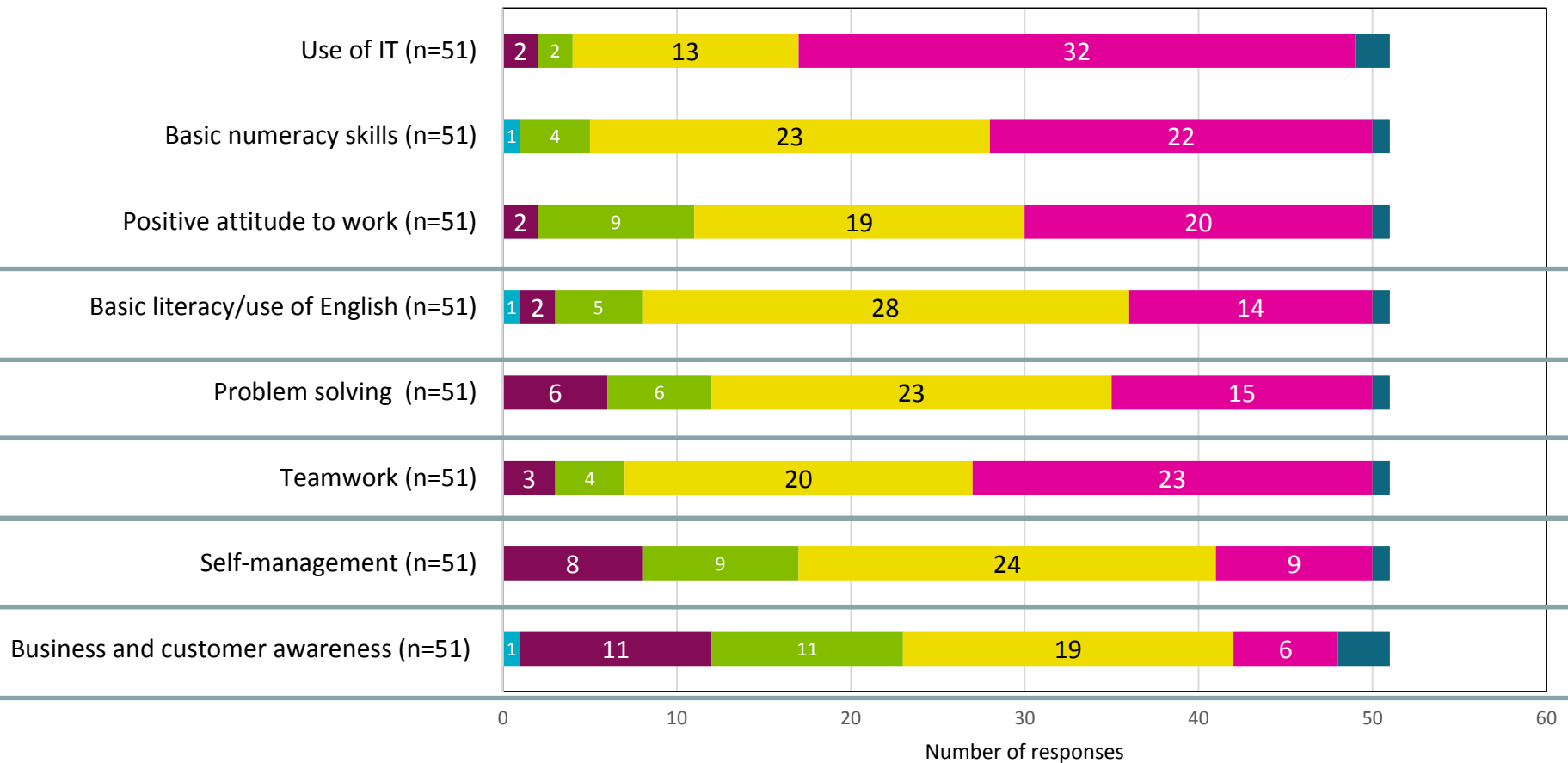
Q. To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following skills amongst graduate employees? [Senior leaders]
 Balance: No response

Communication, teamwork and self-management skills seen as most highly valued by employers



Q. How important do you think the following skills are to your future employers when compared against each other? Where 1 is the most important.
Balance: No response

Business and customer awareness skills are the least satisfactory amongst recent graduates, with IT and team work rated as the most satisfactory



■ Very dissatisfied
 ■ Fairly dissatisfied
 ■ Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
 ■ Fairly satisfied
 ■ Very satisfied
 ■ Don't know

Round up

1. Employers currently rate sustainability **values** as more important than **skills**
2. This is reflected in a **skills gap** within organisations, although some seem confident in their ability to navigate a sustainable economy
3. Organisations identify skills through **selection processes** of recent graduates
4. Using **resources** efficiently, planning for the **long-** and **short-term**, acting as a **responsible global citizen** and **adaptability** are all important SD skills for employers
5. Employers also value **communication**, **teamwork** and **self-management** – but graduates need to improve their **business and customer awareness**

Contact details

Rachel Drayson

Senior research officer – Sustainability

Rachel.Drayson@nus.org.uk

07876 860 324

Kim Croasdale

Sustainability project officer – curriculum & healthcare

Kim.Croasdale@nus.org.uk

07581 630 392

More information:

<http://sustainability.nus.org.uk/our-research/our-research/skills-and-sustainable-development>

www.nus.org.uk/sustainability