# Sustainability in Education 2018-19

Survey research by the EAUC, National Union of Students, University and College Union, Association of Colleges and the College Development Network
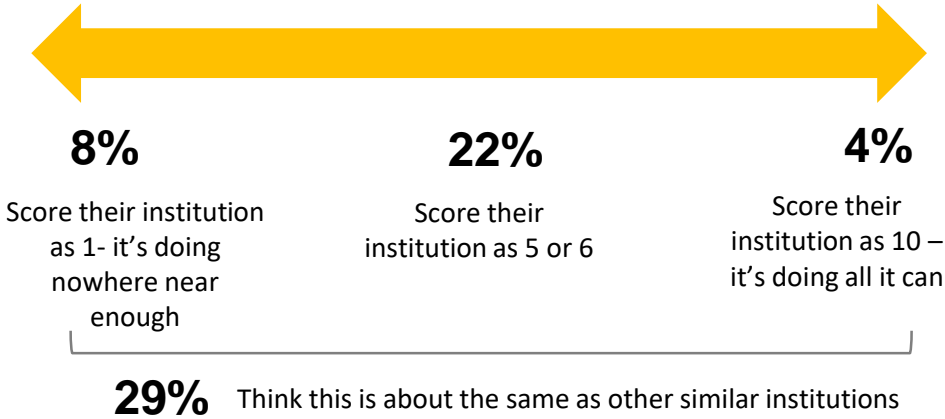
March 2019

# Contents

# HEADLINE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the annual **Sustainability in Education** survey conducted in 2018 for the fourth time. **566 staff members from universities, colleges and students' unions completed the survey,** of which 139 had a formal remit or responsibility for sustainability, 234 do so on an informal basis and 193 have no remit or responsibility for sustainability.

## Respondents' perception of their institution's efforts to progress environmental sustainability and social responsibility show…

**8%**

Score their institution as 1- it's doing nowhere near enough

**22%**

Score their institution as 5 or 6

**4%**

Score their institution as 10 – it's doing all it can

**29%** Think this is about the same as other similar institutions

## Considering their institution's commitment to addressing a range of environmental sustainability and social responsibility issues, respondents perceptions of areas scored as 4 or 5 where 5 is 'very good' are…

Highest 'good' scores

**58%** Recycling and waste

**51%** Community engagement and partnerships

**44%** Sustainable travel

Lowest 'good' scores

**33%** Ethical procurement

**33%** Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

**21%** Ethical investments / unethical divestment

## Stakeholders within institutions who are seen as placing the greatest importance on addressing sustainability…
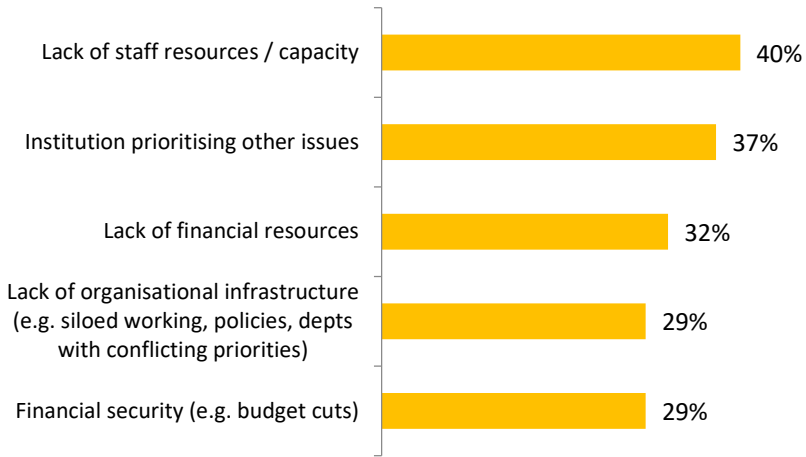
**1.** Students – **68%**

**2.** Vice-chancellor / Chief Executive – **63%**

**3.** Students' union officers – **62%**

## Respondents see their institution's overall approach to environmental sustainability and social responsibility as…

A strategic priority for the institution 22%

A way to enhance reputation 16%

An issue for all parts of the institution 18%

An estates / facilities issue 10%

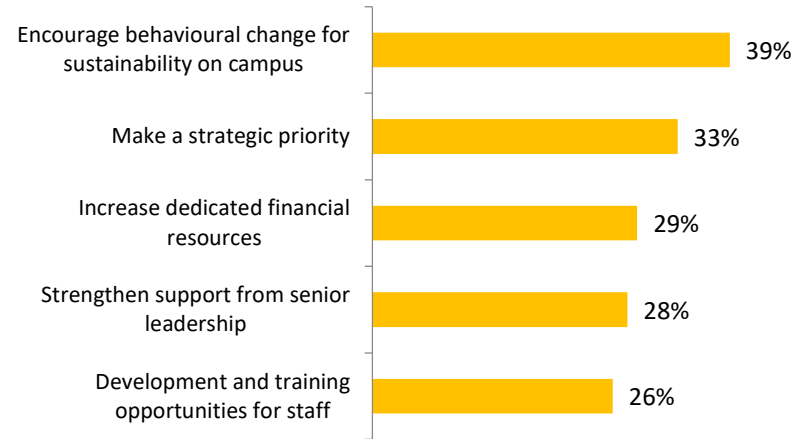Part of the core business for the institution 10%

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This report presents the findings of the annual **Sustainability in Education** survey conducted in 2018 for the fourth time. **566 staff members from universities, colleges and students' unions completed the survey,** of which 139 had a formal remit or responsibility for sustainability, 234 do so on an informal basis and 193 have no remit or responsibility for sustainability.
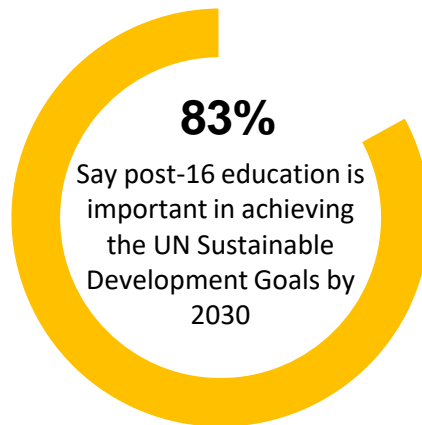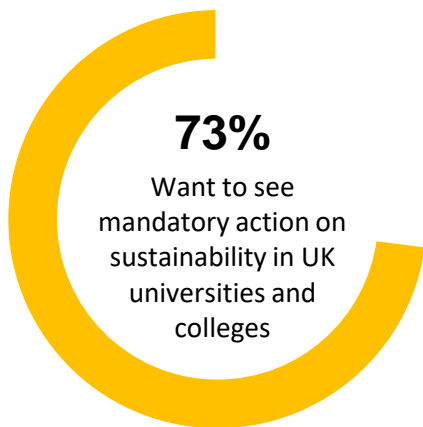
**Respondents outline the following barriers to progressing environmental sustainability and social responsibility at their institution…**

| | |
|---|---|
| Lack of staff resources / capacity | 40% |
| Institution prioritising other issues | 37% |
| Lack of financial resources | 32% |
| Lack of organisational infrastructure (e.g. siloed working, policies, depts with conflicting priorities) | 29% |
| Financial security (e.g. budget cuts) | 29% |

**Respondents outline the following aspects they believe would help to progress environmental sustainability and social responsibility at their institution the most…**

| | |
|---|---|
| Encourage behavioural change for sustainability on campus | 39% |
| Make a strategic priority | 33% |
| Increase dedicated financial resources | 29% |
| Strengthen support from senior leadership | 28% |
| Development and training opportunities for staff | 26% |

**Across the sector, respondents…**

**73%** Want to see mandatory action on sustainability in UK universities and colleges

**83%** Say post-16 education is important in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030

**93%** Think it is important that students leave their time in formal education with the knowledge and skills required to address environmental sustainability and social responsibility challenges

# CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

# Objectives and methodology

This report presents the findings of the Sustainability in Education survey conducted in 2018.

A final sample of **566 staff members from universities, colleges and students' unions** was achieved.  Of these, 139 had a formal remit or responsibility for environmental sustainability and social responsibility, 234 do so on an informal basis and 193 have no remit or responsibility for environmental sustainability and social responsibility.   Throughout the report, the data is presented for all respondents, with any statistically significant differences (at 99% confidence level) between respondents with different characteristics highlighted.

**Objective:** To understand, and track on an annual basis, the perceptions of environmental sustainability and social responsibility performance within HE, FHE and FE institutions.

In 2018, a significant review of the survey was completed.  Previous versions of the research have included an assessment of capacity and resources within institutions devoted to environmental sustainability and social responsibility (e.g. financial budgets, number of staff, policy coverage).  The survey this year focused on perceptions of staff of environmental sustainability and social responsibility within their institution, however where the questions mirror those asked in the previous three year's of research, all four years of data are presented.

A prize draw of a ticket to the Green Gown Awards, £100 John Lewis voucher and a £250 donation to charity was offered to encourage completion.

The survey was promoted amongst students' unions and institutional representatives by the EAUC, NUS, UCU, AoC and College Development Network.

# CHAPTER 2: THE RESPONDENTS

# Over two thirds (69%) of respondents are based in higher education institutions, and the majority work in the university or college itself.
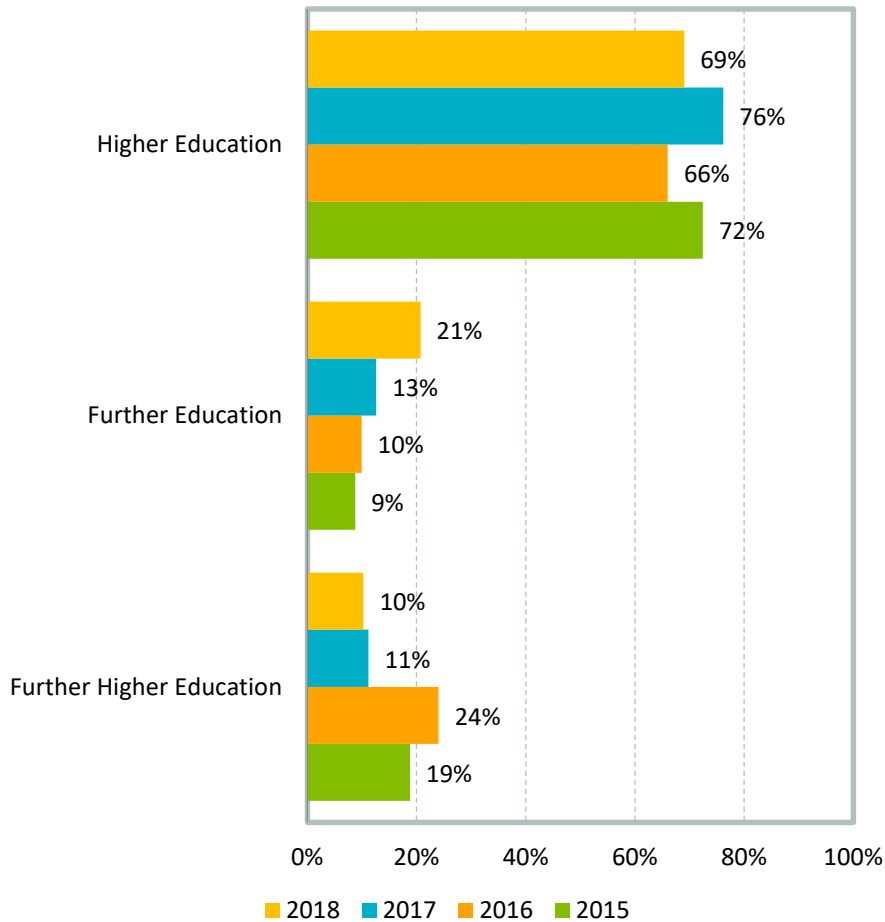


**Q. Which of the following types of institution do you currently work at?**

| | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Higher Education | 69% | 76% | 66% | 72% |
| Further Education | 21% | 13% | 10% | 9% |
| Further Higher Education | 10% | 11% | 24% | 19% |
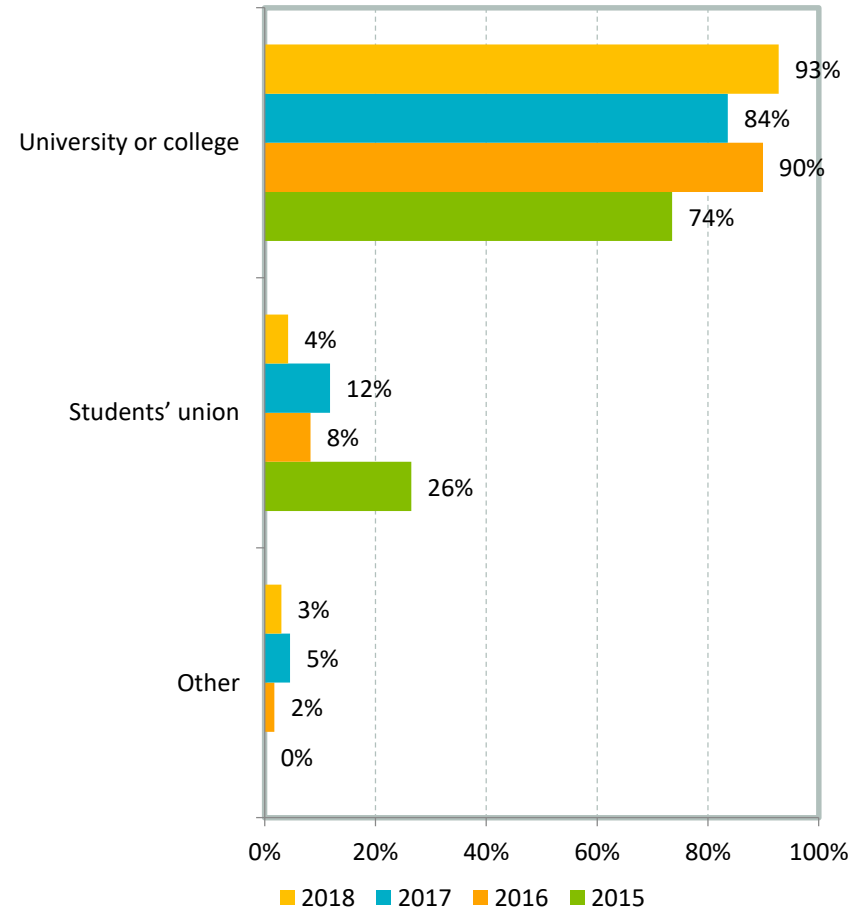
Base: 565 (2018), 500 (2017), 504 (2016), 548 (2015) respondents

**Q. What kind of organisation do you work for?**

| | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| University or college | 93% | 84% | 90% | 74% |
| Students' union | 4% | 12% | 8% | 26% |
| Other | 3% | 5% | 2% | 0% |

Base: 566 (2018), 500 (2017), 504 (2016), 548 (2015) respondents

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# 25% of respondents say they have a formal remit or responsibility for environmental sustainability and social responsibility. 42% say they have an informal responsibility for doing so. 34% have no responsibility for delivering on environmental sustainability and social responsibility.



**Yes - formal remit or responsibility (e.g. included within job description)**
- 2018: 25%
- 2017: 59%
- 2016: 40%
- 2015: 45%

**Yes - informal remit or responsibilty**
- 2018: 42%
- 2017: 29%
- 2016: 35%
- 2015: 34%

**No**
- 2018: 34%
- 2017: 13%
- 2016: 25%
- 2015: 20%

Legend: ■ 2018 ■ 2017 ■ 2016 ■ 2015
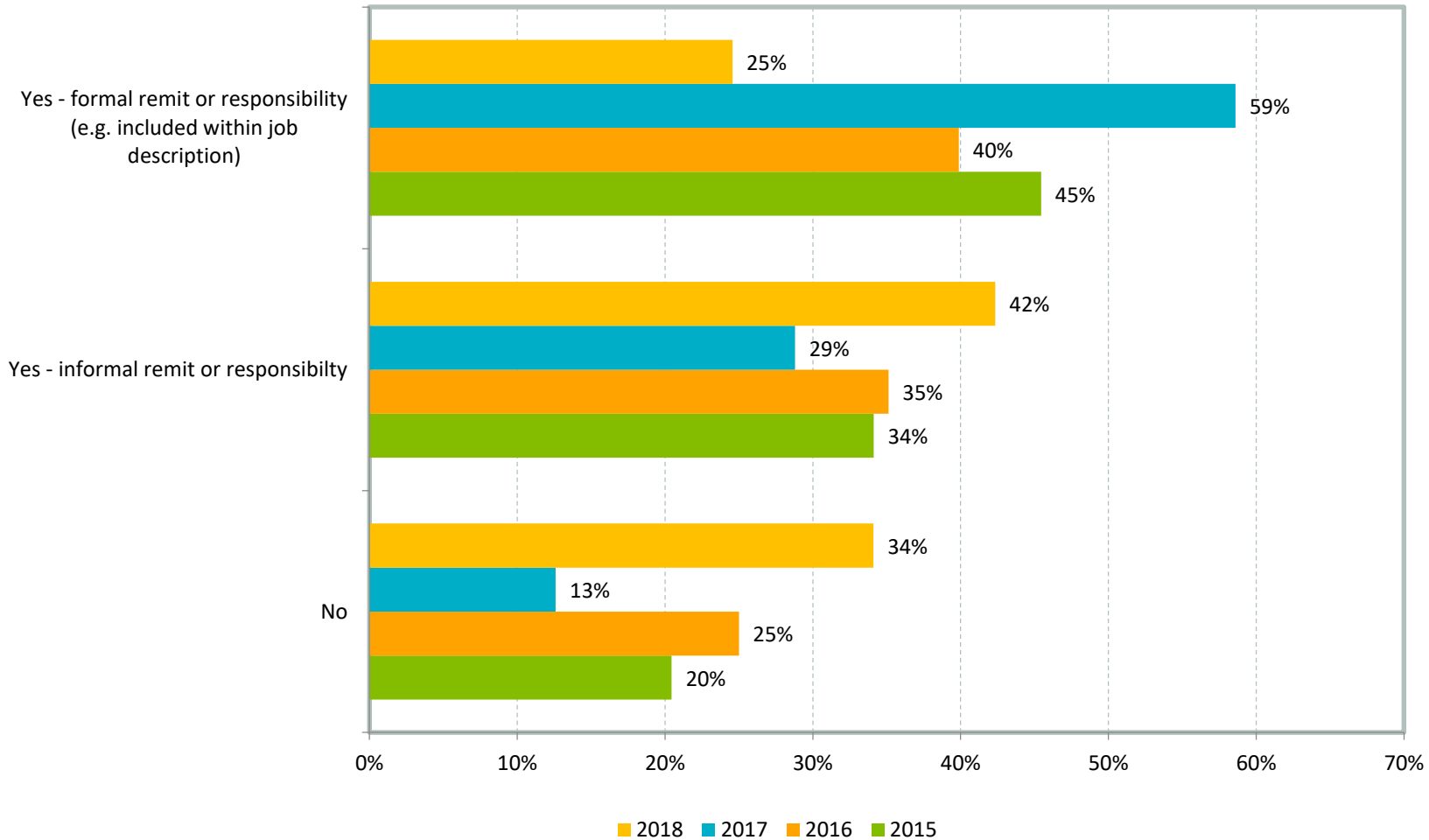
Base: 566 (2018), 500 (2017), 504 (2016), 548 (2015) respondents

**Q. Do you have a remit or responsibility for delivering on environmental sustainability and social responsibility within your institution on a formal or informal basis?**

Respondents who work within higher education are most likely to be a member of a team of staff working on environmental sustainability and social responsibility (70%).  Respondents who work in FE or FHE are most likely to have an interest in sustainability but are not involved in delivery.

**Higher education**

I am a member of a team of staff delivering on environmental sustainability and/or social responsibility
- 70%
- 65%
- 67%
- 62%

I am the lead member of staff for environmental sustainability and/or social responsibility
- 22%
- 33%
- 28%
- 35%

None of these
- 8%
- 3%
- 4%
- 4%

**Further education and Further Higher education**

I'm interested in sustainability but not involved in delivery
- 45%
- 15%
- 42%
- 31%

I'm involved in delivering on sustainability at my institution
- 30%
- 45%
- 28%
- 34%

I have been identified as the sustainability representative for my institution
- 9%
- 35%
- 15%
- 26%

None of these
- 16%
- 5%
- 15%
- 9%

Legend: ■ 2018  ■ 2017  ■ 2016  ■ 2015

Base : Q4 86 (2018), 196 (2017), 138 (2016), 133 (2015) respondents. Have a remit or responsibility for delivering on environmental sustainability and social responsibility within your institution on a formal or informal basis?
Base : Q5 172 (2018), 116 (2017), 165 (2016), 128 (2015) respondents. Have a remit or responsibility for delivering on environmental sustainability and social responsibility within your institution on a formal or informal basis?

**Q. Which of these options best describes your role in relation to delivering on environmental sustainability and/or social responsibility?**

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# 20% of respondents say they are a University and College Union representative at their institution, and 4% are a UCU Green Rep.

**University and college staff only**



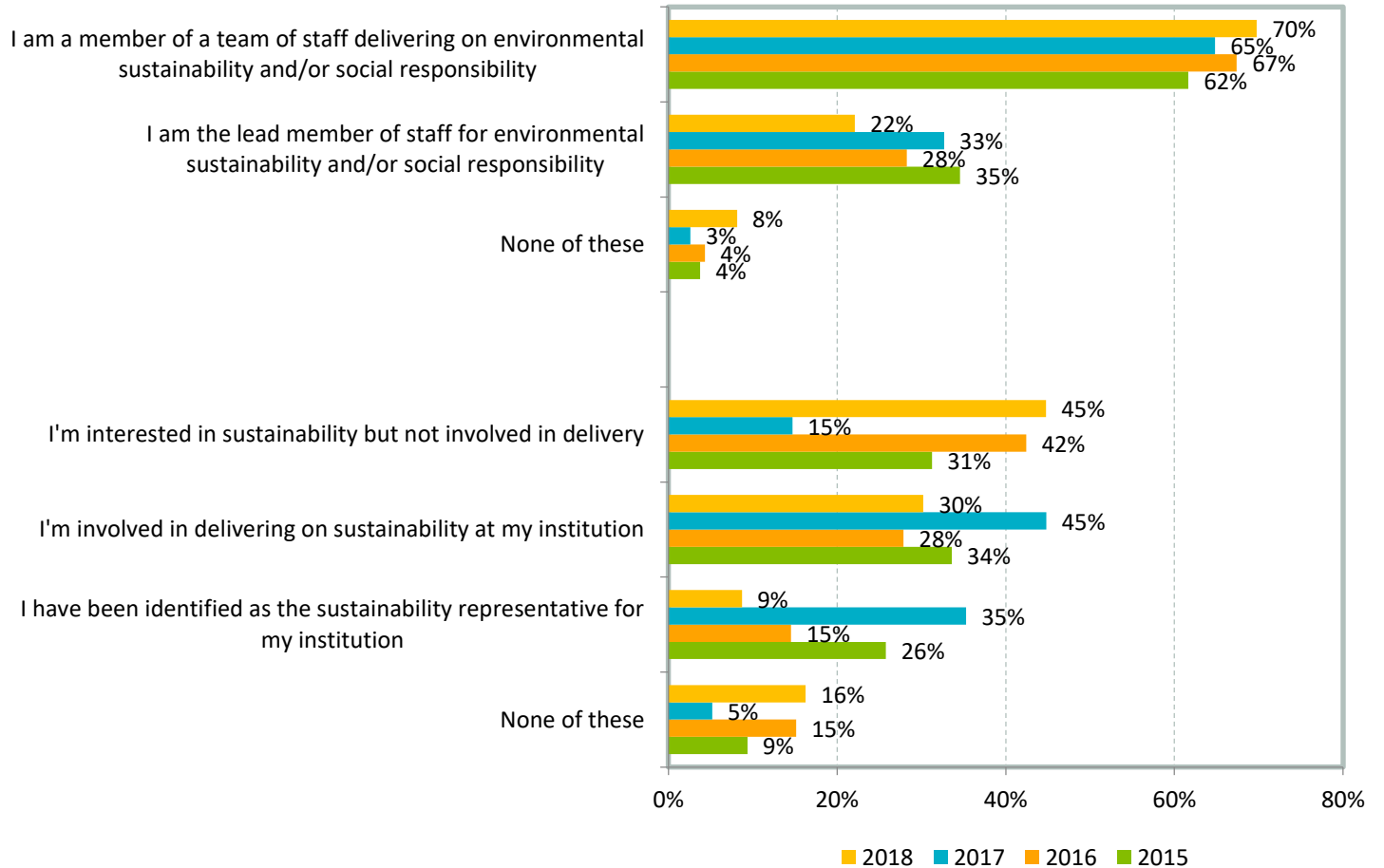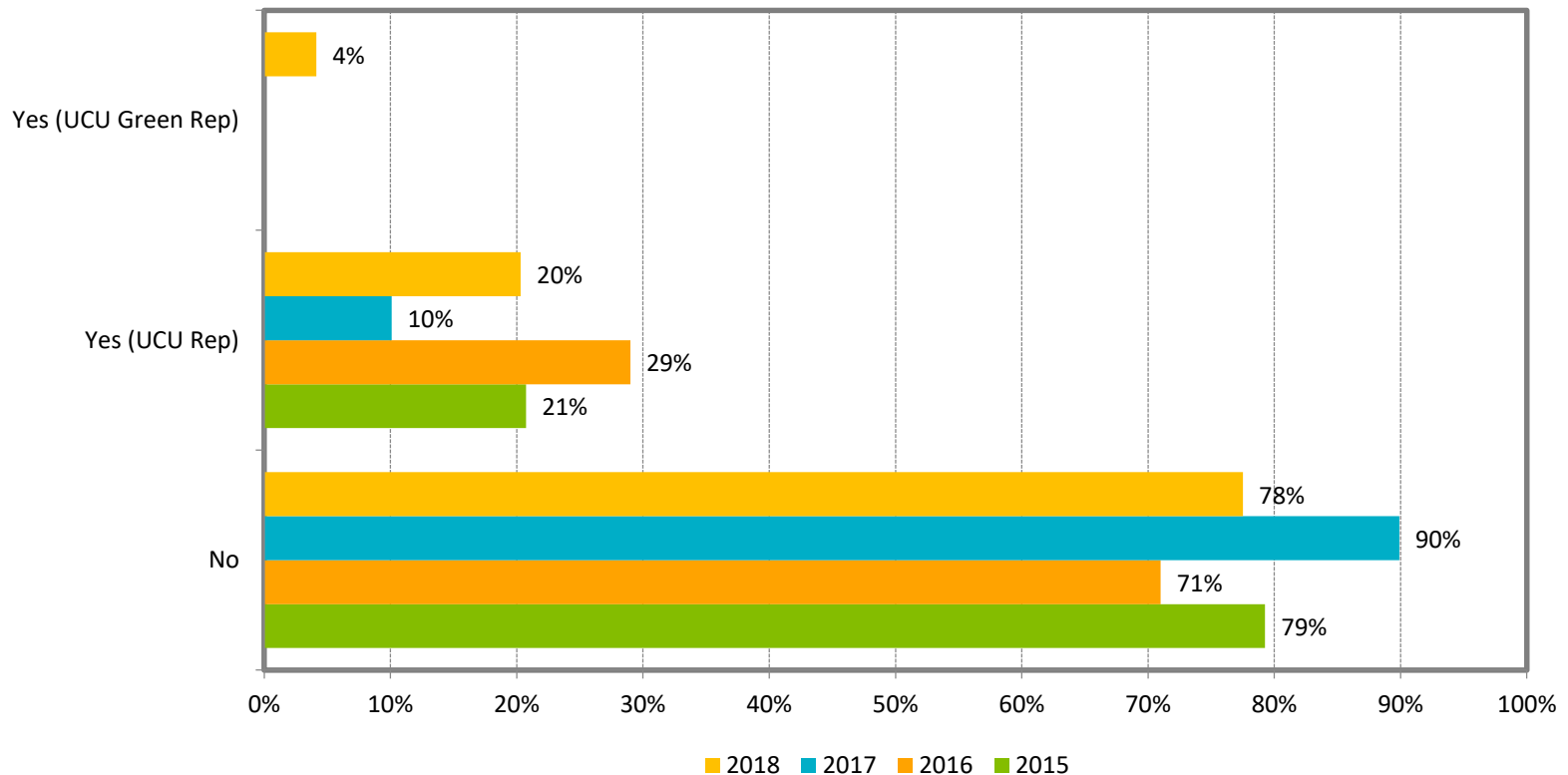Base: 507 (2018) 356 (2017), 415 (2016), 357 (2015) respondents. Work at university or college.

**Q. Are you a University and College Union representative at your institution?**

# Overall 10% are sustainability professionals. A quarter of respondents are in teaching roles.



Sustainability professional: 10% (2018), 29% (2017), 19% (2015), 21% (2015)
Teaching: 26% (2018), 14% (2017), 31% (2016), 15% (2015)
Student support: 5% (2018), 5% (2017), 5% (2016), 9% (2015)
Manager of department: 7% (2018), 7% (2017), 8% (2016), 11% (2015)
Support staff: 15% (2018), 6% (2017), 5% (2016), 8% (2015)
Estates: 5% (2018), 11% (2017), 9% (2016), 9% (2015)
Research: 9% (2018), 6% (2017), 8% (2016), 4% (2015)
* Student / student officer: 5% (2017), 2% (2015)
Student: 10% (2018), 5% (2015)
Student officer: 3% (2018)
Senior management / executive: 4% (2018), 9% (2017), 6% (2016), 9% (2015)
Finance and procurement: 0% (2018), 4% (2017), 2% (2016), 3% (2015)
ICT: 1% (2018), 1% (2017), 1% (2016), 1% (2015)
Other: 4% (2018), 3% (2017), 4% (2016), 6% (2015)

Legend: 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015

Base: 565 (2018), 500 (2017), 504 (2016), 547 (2015) respondents.

**Q. Which of the following job types most closely matches your current role?**

*In 2018, the category of 'student/student officer' was separated to 'students' and 'student officer'*

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# The majority of respondents say taking action to reduce negative impacts on and improve things for the environment and other people locally and around the world is important to them.

**"It is important to me to take action to reduce negative impacts on and to improve things for the environment and other people locally and around the world."**



Legend: ■ 1 – Not at all like me  ■ 2  ■ 3  □ 4  □ 5  □ 6  □ 7  □ 8  ■ 9  ■ 10 – Very much like me  ■ Don't know

Bar values: 3% | 2% | 7% | 17% | 14% | 57%
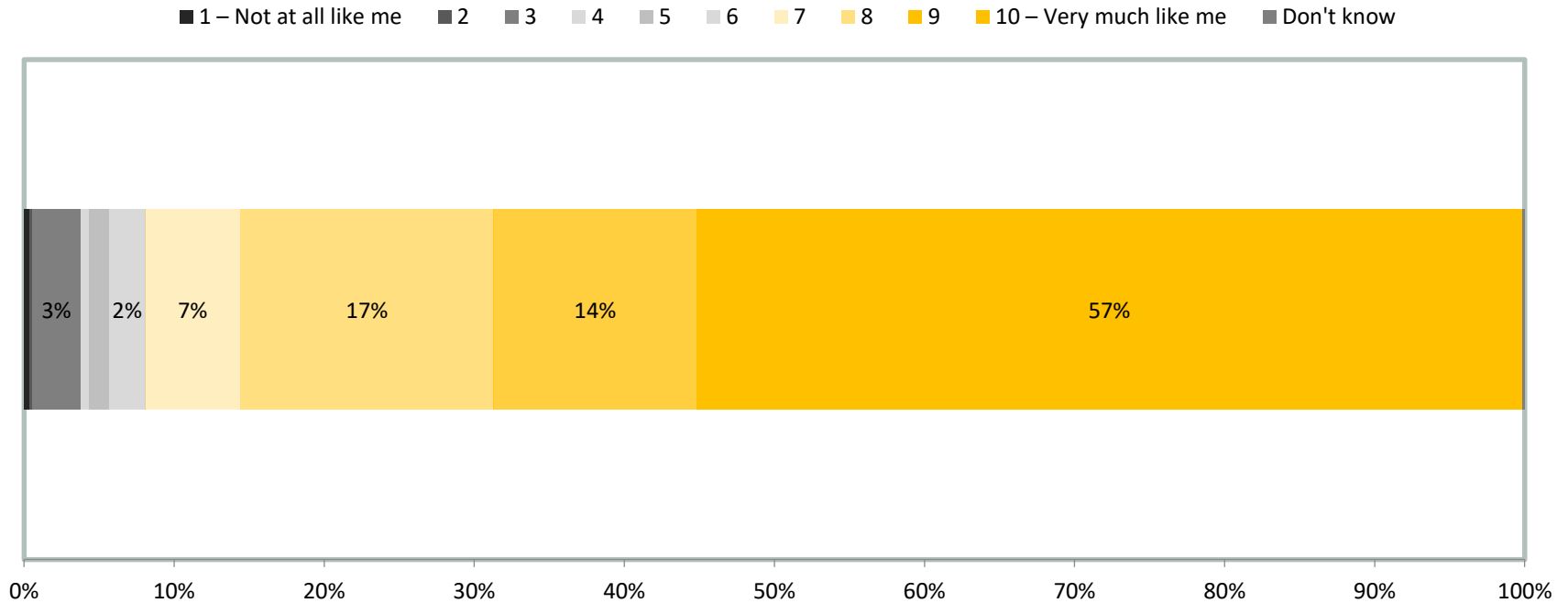
Base: 566 (2018) respondents.

**Q. How much does the following statement reflect your views?**

# CHAPTER 3: PERCEPTIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN INSTITUTIONS

2018 respondents have a more positive impression of their institution's action on sustainability compared to 2016. 52% of respondents see their institution as ranking as 7 or above, compared to 46% in 2017 and 36% in 2016, however it is important to remember the broader range of respondents taking part in the 2018 survey.



Respondents from FE and those with no remit for sustainability more likely to rank their institution as not doing enough on sustainability

Legend:
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018

| Rank | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1 - Nowhere near enough | 3% | 9% | 4% | 8% |
| 2 | 6% | 9% | 6% | 3% |
| 3 | 9% | 11% | 11% | 7% |
| 4 | 10% | 9% | 8% | 7% |
| 5 | 15% | 10% | 11% | 9% |
| 6 | 15% | 17% | 14% | 13% |
| 7 | 23% | 21% | 24% | 23% |
| 8 | 13% | 12% | 16% | 17% |
| 9 | 4% | 2% | 5% | 8% |
| 10 - Doing all they can | 1% | 1% | 1% | 4% |
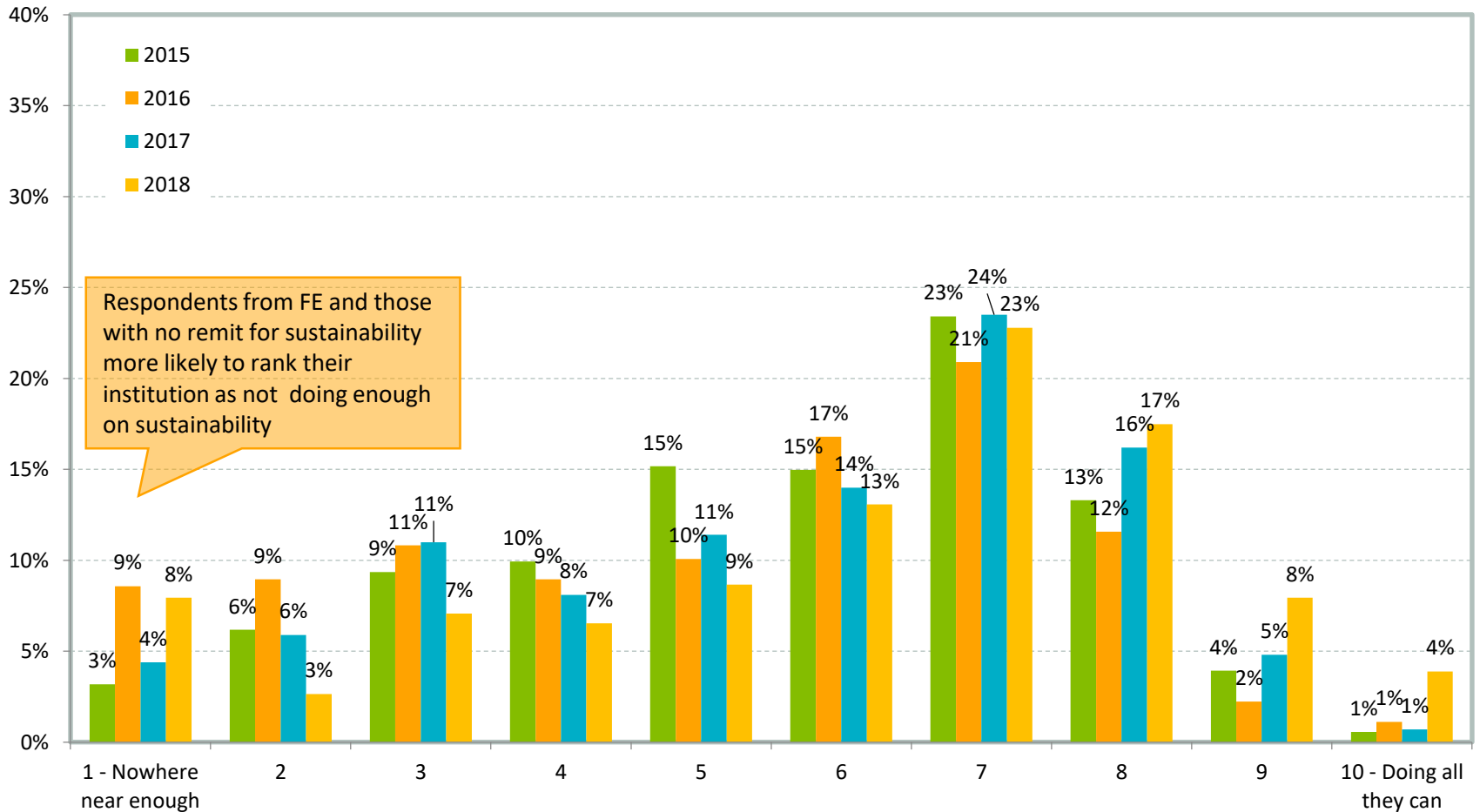
Base: 566 (2018), 272 (2017), 268 (2016), 534 (2015) respondents.

**Q. Overall, do you think your institution is doing enough to progress environmental sustainability and social responsibility? Please click the scale below, where 1 is nowhere near enough, and 10 is doing all that the institution can.**

Compared to similar institutions in the sector, almost half (42%) rate their institution to be better than others when it comes to taking action on environmental sustainability and social responsibility. 29% feel they are about the same. There were no significant differences by level of education.



Much better than other similar institutions
- 14%
- 16%
- 9%

Respondents with a formal remit for sustainability within their job role are more likely to say this

A bit better than other similar institutions
- 28%
- 34%
- 29%

About the same as other similar institutions
- 29%
- 25%
- 28%

A bit worse than other similar institutions
- 8%
- 14%
- 15%

Much worse than other similar institutions
- 1%
- 5%
- 5%

Don't know
- 19%
- 6%
- 15%

Legend:
- 2018
- 2017
- 2016

X-axis: 0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40%

Base: 566 (2018), 497 (2017), 500 (2016) respondents. Not asked in 2015.

Q. And, how do you think this compares with other similar institutions in the sector?

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**22% say their institution treats environmental sustainability and social responsibility as a strategic priority, however those with formal remits for sustainability within their role are significantly more likely to say this. 16% see it as way for the institution to enhance its reputation.**



Respondents with a formal remit for sustainability and those from HE are most likely to say it is a strategic priority for the institution

Respondents from HE most likely to say that sustainability is seen as a way to enhance the institution's reputation

Respondents from FE most likely to say that sustainability is seen as an opportunity to save money

| Category | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A strategic priority for the institution | 22% | 30% | 23% | 26% |
| An estates / facilities issue | 10% | 16% | 18% | 16% |
| An issue for all parts of the institution | 18% | 18% | 17% | 22% |
| Comply with legislation | 8% | 6% | 10% | 11% |
| Part of the core business for the institution | 10% | 12% | 7% | 7% |
| A way to enhance reputation | 16% | 6% | 6% | 7% |
| An opportunity to save money | 4% | 3% | 6% | 5% |
| Don't know | 6% | 2% | 5% | 4% |
| Other | 2% | 3% | 4% | 2% |
| A teaching and learning issue | 3% | 3% | 3% | 1% |
| A research issue | 1% | 1% | 1% | 0% |

■ 2018 ■ 2017 ■ 2016 ■ 2015

Base: 566 (2018), 500 (2017), 503 (2016), 547 (2015) respondents.

**Q. Which of the following options best describes your institution's overall approach to environmental sustainability and social responsibility?** 18

In 2018, recycling and waste ranked most positively when considering institutional commitment to action on a range of topics – 58% rank as good or very good. A fifth also rate their institution's action on carbon reduction as good or very good (42%). On the whole, respondents with a formal remit for sustainability are more likely to rank commitment to action as 'very good' compared to those with an informal or no remit for sustainability.

## 2015    2016    2017    2018

Legend: ■ 1 to 2   ■ 3   ■ 4 to 5   ■ Don't know

**Recycling and waste (n=540/499/494/556)**
- 2015: 13% | 21% | 64% | 2%
- 2016: 21% | 23% | 53% | 3%
- 2017: 9% | 25% | 66%
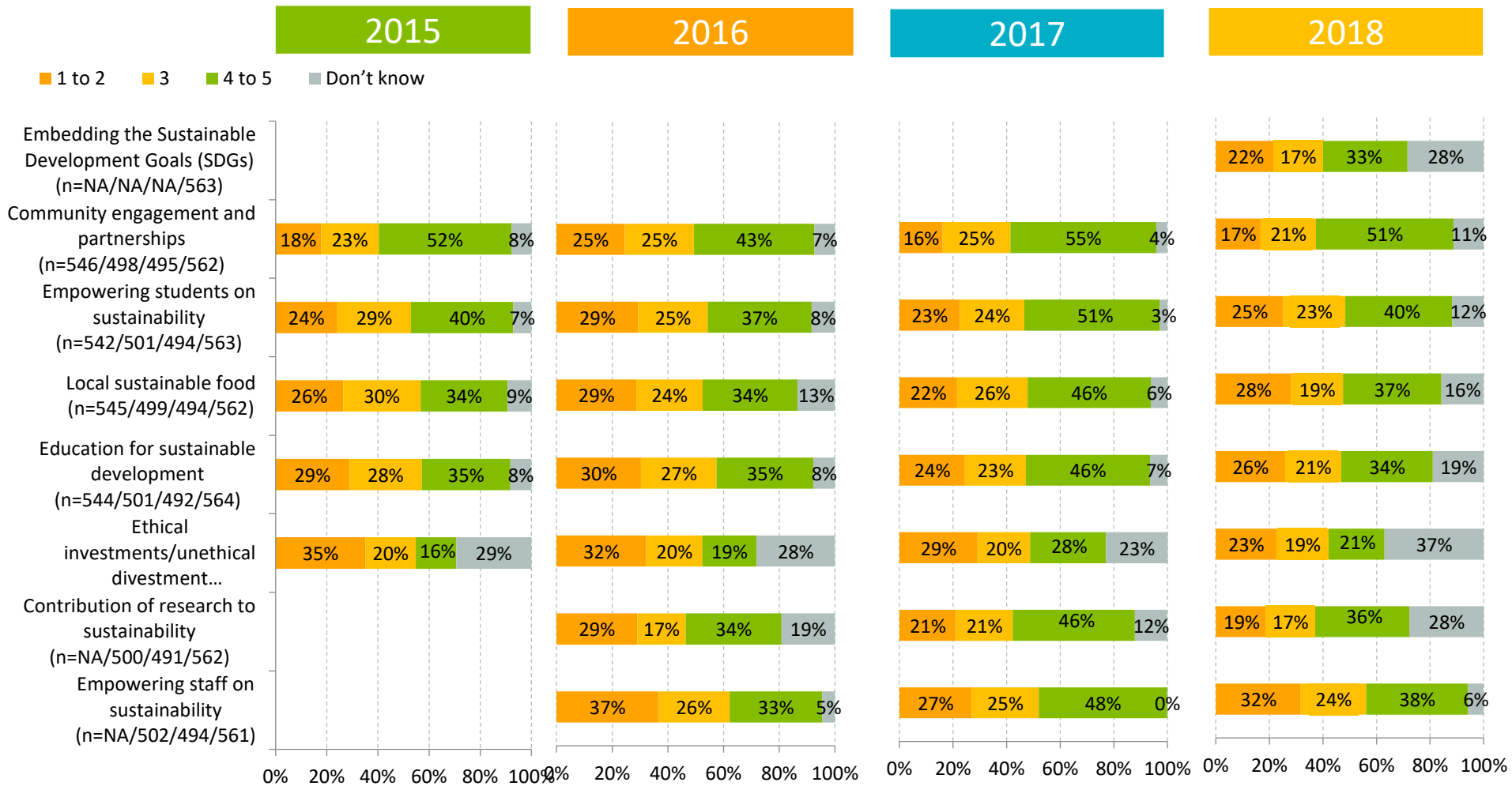- 2018: 17% | 22% | 58% | 3%

**Carbon reduction (n=546/500/494/562)**
- 2015: 19% | 24% | 50% | 7%
- 2016: 22% | 24% | 47% | 8%
- 2017: 12% | 25% | 61% | 3%
- 2018: 20% | 21% | 43% | 17%

**Sustainable travel (n=545/501/494/561)**
- 2015: 22% | 31% | 43% | 4%
- 2016: 28% | 29% | 39% | 5%
- 2017: 19% | 34% | 45% | 2%
- 2018: 25% | 24% | 44% | 6%

**Encouraging wildlife/biodiversity (n=544/501/495/560)**
- 2015: 30% | 24% | 40% | 7%
- 2016: 32% | 24% | 36% | 7%
- 2017: 22% | 26% | 48% | 4%
- 2018: 26% | 20% | 43% | 11%

**Resource efficiency (n=543/501/493/561)**
- 2015: 20% | 32% | 41% | 8%
- 2016: 25% | 31% | 36% | 8%
- 2017: 17% | 30% | 49% | 4%
- 2018: 21% | 30% | 38% | 11%

**Ethical procurement (n=544/501/494/563)**
- 2015: 24% | 29% | 33% | 15%
- 2016: 26% | 26% | 29% | 20%
- 2017: 22% | 26% | 42% | 10%
- 2018: 19% | 21% | 33% | 26%

Base: (in brackets 2015/2016/2017)

**Q. How would you rate your institution's commitment to addressing each of the following issues? Please pick one only for each option, where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good**
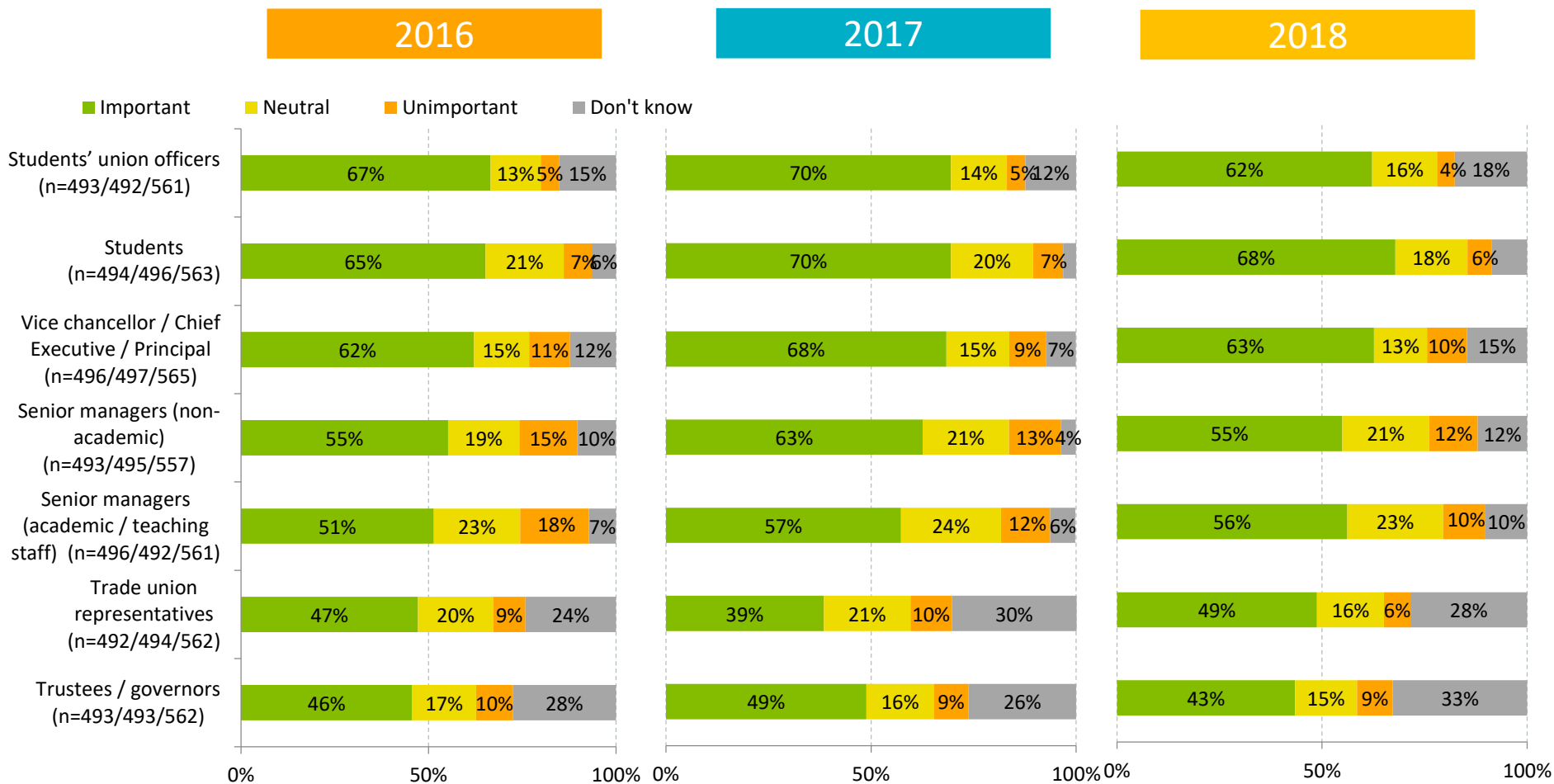
Performance on ethical investments also presents a significant unknown for staff, with 37% saying they don't know how committed their institution is to addressing unethical investment. Respondents are also unaware of the level of commitment at their institution to addressing the issue of the contribution of research to sustainability or to embedding the Sustainable Development Goals within their institution (28% respectively).

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Legend: ■ 1 to 2  ■ 3  ■ 4 to 5  ■ Don't know

**Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (n=NA/NA/NA/563)**
- 2018: 22% | 17% | 33% | 28%

**Community engagement and partnerships (n=546/498/495/562)**
- 2015: 18% | 23% | 52% | 8%
- 2016: 25% | 25% | 43% | 7%
- 2017: 16% | 25% | 55% | 4%
- 2018: 17% | 21% | 51% | 11%

**Empowering students on sustainability (n=542/501/494/563)**
- 2015: 24% | 29% | 40% | 7%
- 2016: 29% | 25% | 37% | 8%
- 2017: 23% | 24% | 51% | 3%
- 2018: 25% | 23% | 40% | 12%

**Local sustainable food (n=545/499/494/562)**
- 2015: 26% | 30% | 34% | 9%
- 2016: 29% | 24% | 34% | 13%
- 2017: 22% | 26% | 46% | 6%
- 2018: 28% | 19% | 37% | 16%

**Education for sustainable development (n=544/501/492/564)**
- 2015: 29% | 28% | 35% | 8%
- 2016: 30% | 27% | 35% | 8%
- 2017: 24% | 23% | 46% | 7%
- 2018: 26% | 21% | 34% | 19%

**Ethical investments/unethical divestment…**
- 2015: 35% | 20% | 16% | 29%
- 2016: 32% | 20% | 19% | 28%
- 2017: 29% | 20% | 28% | 23%
- 2018: 23% | 19% | 21% | 37%

**Contribution of research to sustainability (n=NA/500/491/562)**
- 2016: 29% | 17% | 34% | 19%
- 2017: 21% | 21% | 46% | 12%
- 2018: 19% | 17% | 36% | 28%

**Empowering staff on sustainability (n=NA/502/494/561)**
- 2016: 37% | 26% | 33% | 5%
- 2017: 27% | 25% | 48% | 0%
- 2018: 32% | 24% | 38% | 6%

Base: (in brackets 2015/2016/2017)

**Q. How would you rate your institution's commitment to addressing each of the following issues? Please pick one only for each option, where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good**
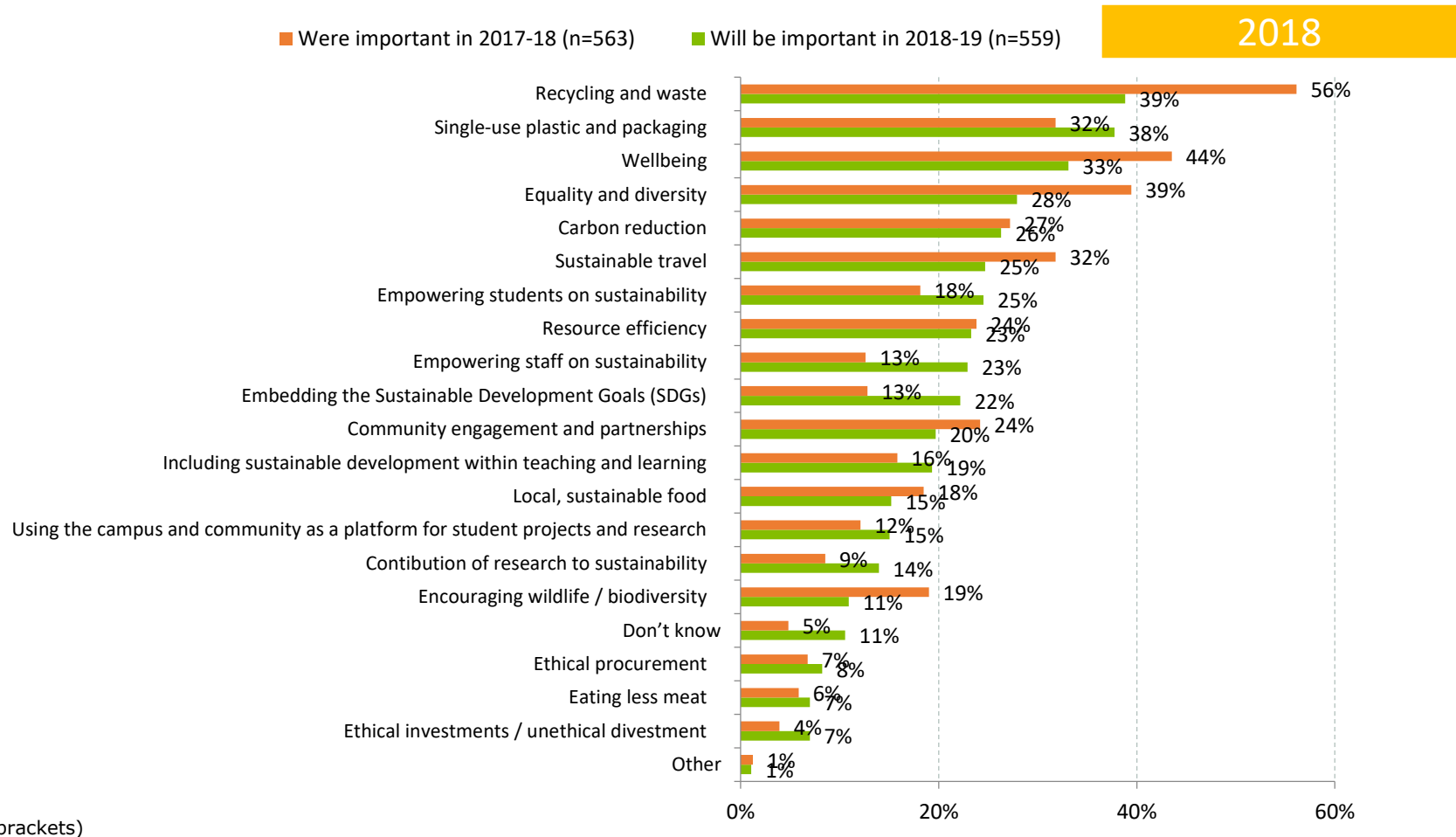
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Assessing different groups within their institution, students and students' union officers are seen as most likely to believe that addressing environmental sustainability and social responsibility is important, followed by institutional leaders and senior management.

## 2016

## 2017

## 2018

■ Important   ■ Neutral   ■ Unimportant   ■ Don't know

| Group | 2016 | | | | 2017 | | | | 2018 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Important | Neutral | Unimportant | Don't know | Important | Neutral | Unimportant | Don't know | Important | Neutral | Unimportant | Don't know |
| Students' union officers (n=493/492/561) | 67% | 13% | 5% | 15% | 70% | 14% | 5% | 12% | 62% | 16% | 4% | 18% |
| Students (n=494/496/563) | 65% | 21% | 7% | 6% | 70% | 20% | 7% | | 68% | 18% | 6% | |
| Vice chancellor / Chief Executive / Principal (n=496/497/565) | 62% | 15% | 11% | 12% | 68% | 15% | 9% | 7% | 63% | 13% | 10% | 15% |
| Senior managers (non-academic) (n=493/495/557) | 55% | 19% | 15% | 10% | 63% | 21% | 13% | 4% | 55% | 21% | 12% | 12% |
| Senior managers (academic / teaching staff) (n=496/492/561) | 51% | 23% | 18% | 7% | 57% | 24% | 12% | 6% | 56% | 23% | 10% | 10% |
| Trade union representatives (n=492/494/562) | 47% | 20% | 9% | 24% | 39% | 21% | 10% | 30% | 49% | 16% | 6% | 28% |
| Trustees / governors (n=493/493/562) | 46% | 17% | 10% | 28% | 49% | 16% | 9% | 26% | 43% | 15% | 9% | 33% |

Base (in brackets)

**Q. In your opinion, how important is addressing environmental sustainability and social responsibility to the following groups within your institution?**
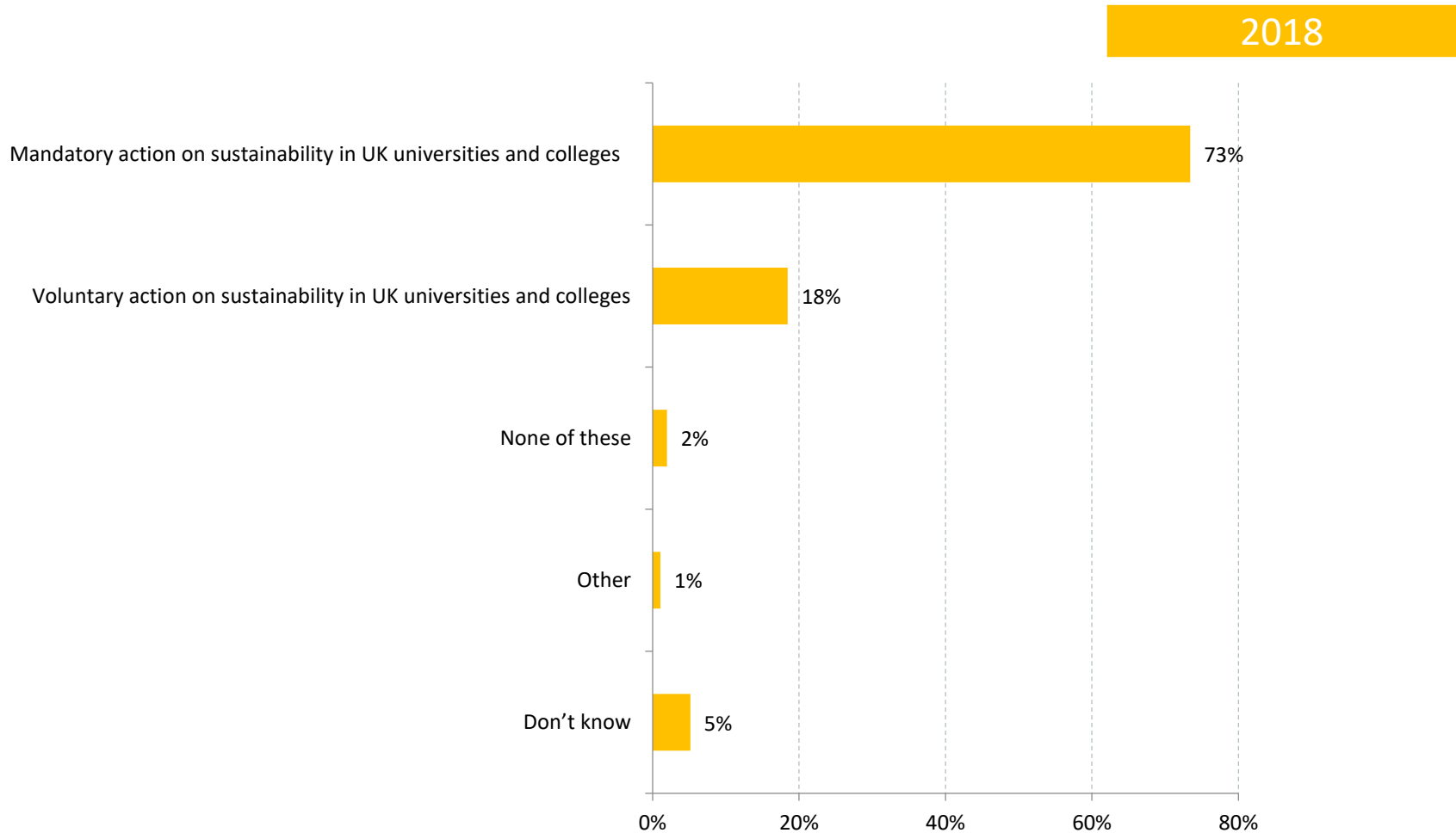
21

The issues identified as having been most important in 2017-18 are recycling and waste, wellbeing and equality and diversity. Recycling and waste, specifically single-use plastic and packaging, and wellbeing are identified as key issues for 2018-19.



■ Were important in 2017-18 (n=563)    ■ Will be important in 2018-19 (n=559)

**2018**

| Issue | 2017-18 | 2018-19 |
|---|---|---|
| Recycling and waste | 56% | 39% |
| Single-use plastic and packaging | 38% | 32% |
| Wellbeing | 44% | 33% |
| Equality and diversity | 39% | 28% |
| Carbon reduction | 26% | 27% |
| Sustainable travel | 32% | 25% |
| Empowering students on sustainability | 25% | 18% |
| Resource efficiency | 23% | 24% |
| Empowering staff on sustainability | 23% | 13% |
| Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | 22% | 13% |
| Community engagement and partnerships | 24% | 20% |
| Including sustainable development within teaching and learning | 19% | 16% |
| Local, sustainable food | 18% | 15% |
| Using the campus and community as a platform for student projects and research | 15% | 12% |
| Contibution of research to sustainability | 14% | 9% |
| Encouraging wildlife / biodiversity | 19% | 11% |
| Don't know | 11% | 5% |
| Ethical procurement | 8% | 7% |
| Eating less meat | 7% | 6% |
| Ethical investments / unethical divestment | 7% | 4% |
| Other | 1% | 1% |

Base (in brackets)

**Q. Which of the following issues within environmental sustainability and social responsibility have been of most interest within your institution over the last academic year (2017-18) at your institution?**

**Q. And which of the following issues within environmental sustainability and social responsibility do you think will be important going forward this academic year (2018-19) at your institution?**

Almost three quarters of respondents say they would support the introduction of mandatory action on environmental sustainability and social responsibility for universities and colleges across the UK. Support for mandatory action is universal across staff with a formal, informal or no remit for sustainability, and across further and higher education.

**2018**



| | |
|---|---|
| Mandatory action on sustainability in UK universities and colleges | 73% |
| Voluntary action on sustainability in UK universities and colleges | 18% |
| None of these | 2% |
| Other | 1% |
| Don't know | 5% |

Base (in brackets)

**Q. Which of the following options, if any, would you like to see introduced by governments across the UK in relation action on environmental sustainability and social responsibility by universities and colleges?**

Prior to answering the survey, 59% of respondents say they had heard of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Respondents whose job includes a formal remit for sustainability are most likely to say they have heard of the Goals, as are those working in higher education.

2018



Yes — 59%

Respondents with a formal remit for sustainability are most likely to say they have heard of the SDGs

No — 37%

Respondents working in higher education are most likely to say they have heard of the SDGs

Don't know — 3%

0%    10%    20%    30%    40%    50%    60%    70%
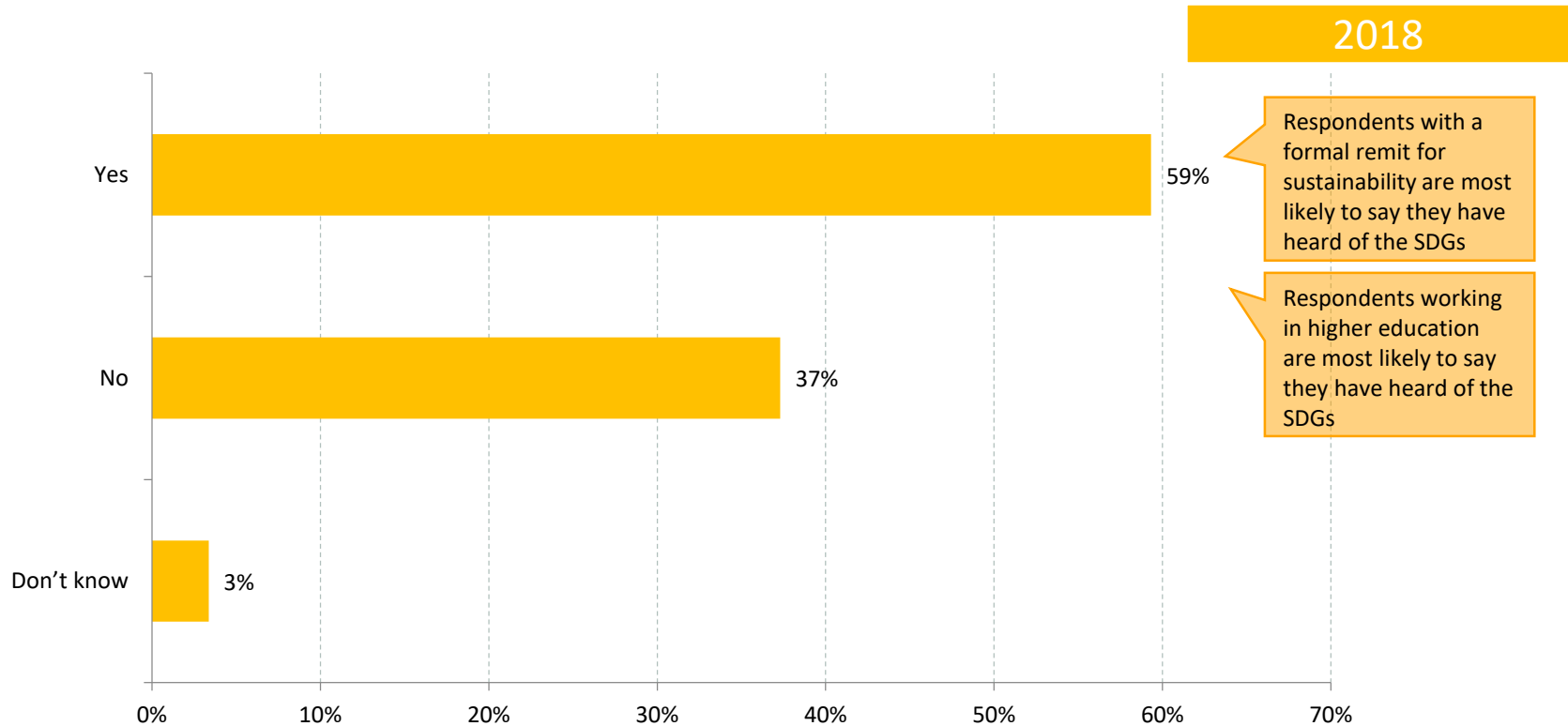
Base (in brackets)

**Q. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an internationally agreed set of 17 goals focusing on elements of sustainable development. Each government has signed up to, and are responsible for, taking action to achieve them both nationally and internationally.**

**Before this survey, had you heard of the Sustainable Development Goals?**

# 83% of respondents agree that post-16 education is important in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
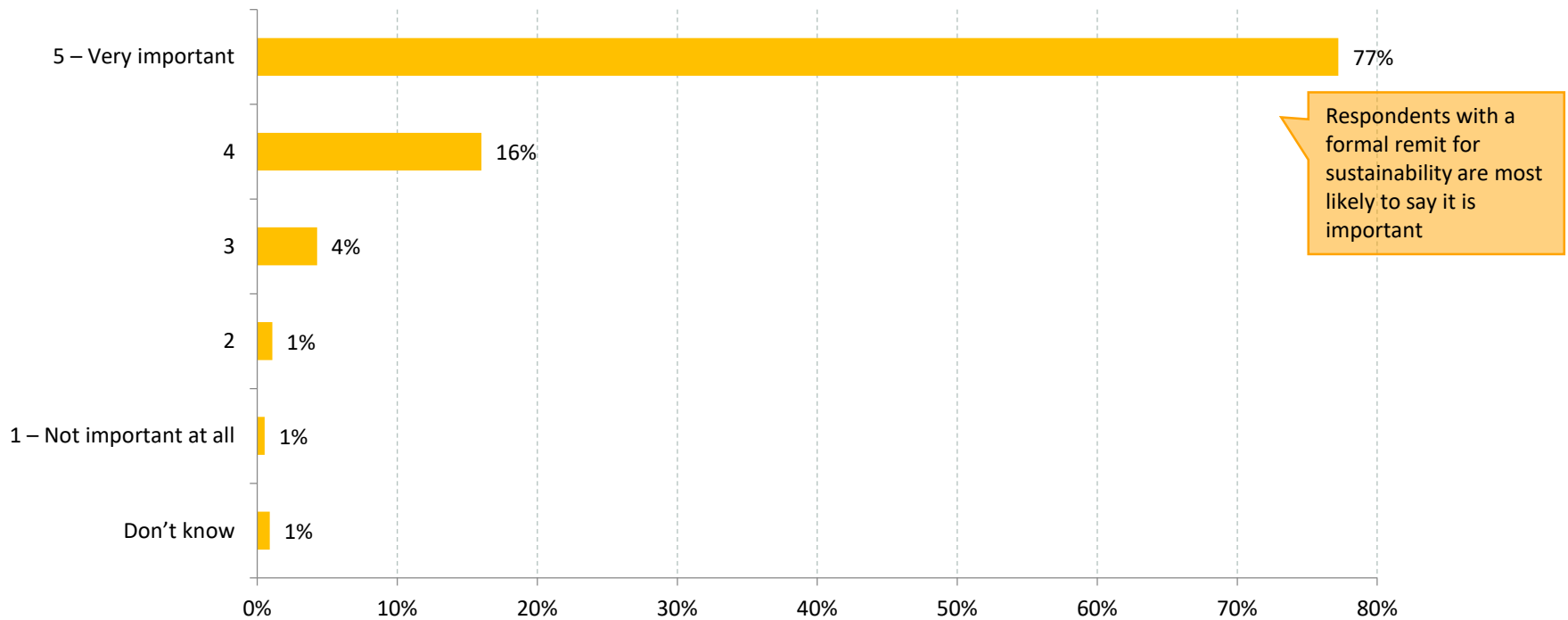
## 2018



| | |
|---|---|
| 5 – Very important | 59% |
| 4 | 24% |
| 3 | 7% |
| 2 | 1% |
| 1 – Not important at all | 1% |
| Don't know | 8% |

Respondents with a formal remit for sustainability are most likely to say post-16 education is important for achieving the SDGs
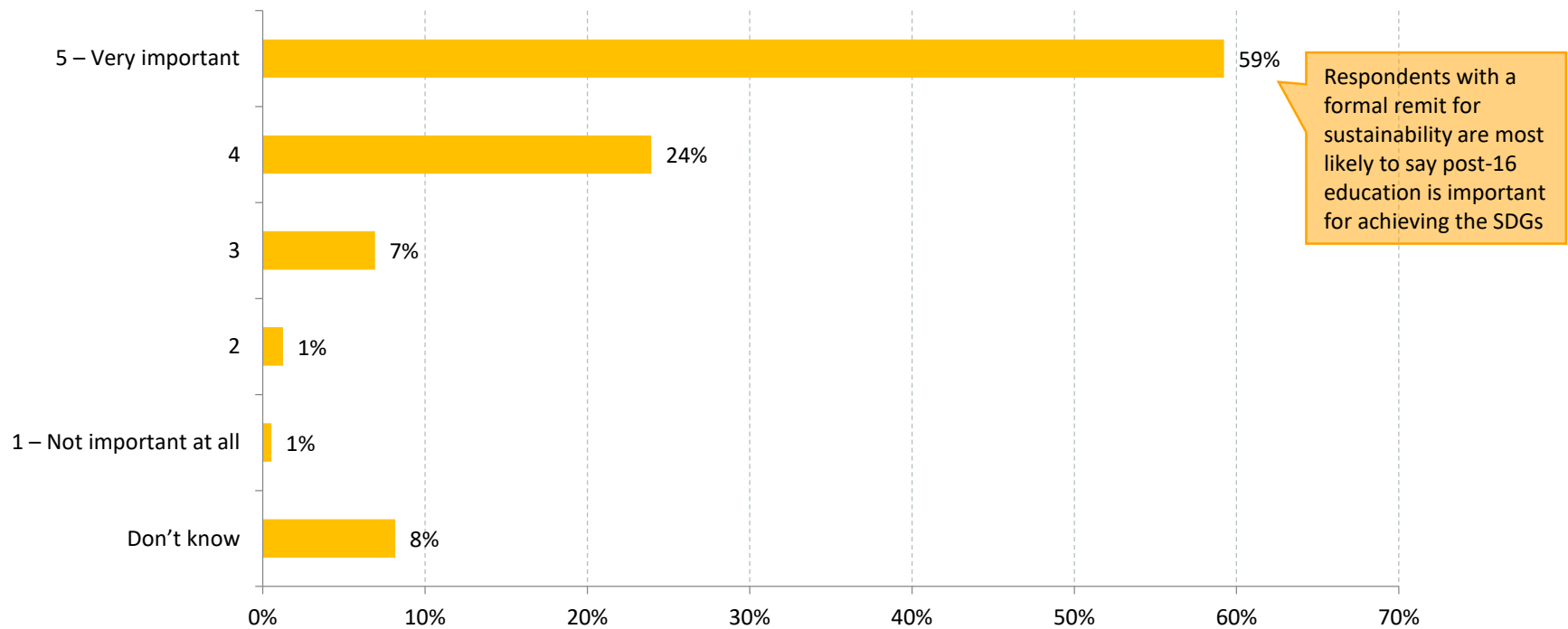
Base (in brackets)

**Q. How important, if at all, do you think post-16 education is in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030?**
*Please select one only, thinking about the goals overall as well as education-focused goals (e.g. Goal 4 – quality education)   and using the scale of 1 – not important at all and 5 – very important*

An overwhelming majority (93%) of respondents agree that it is important for students to leave their time in formal education with the knowledge and skills required to address environmental sustainability and social responsibility challenges.
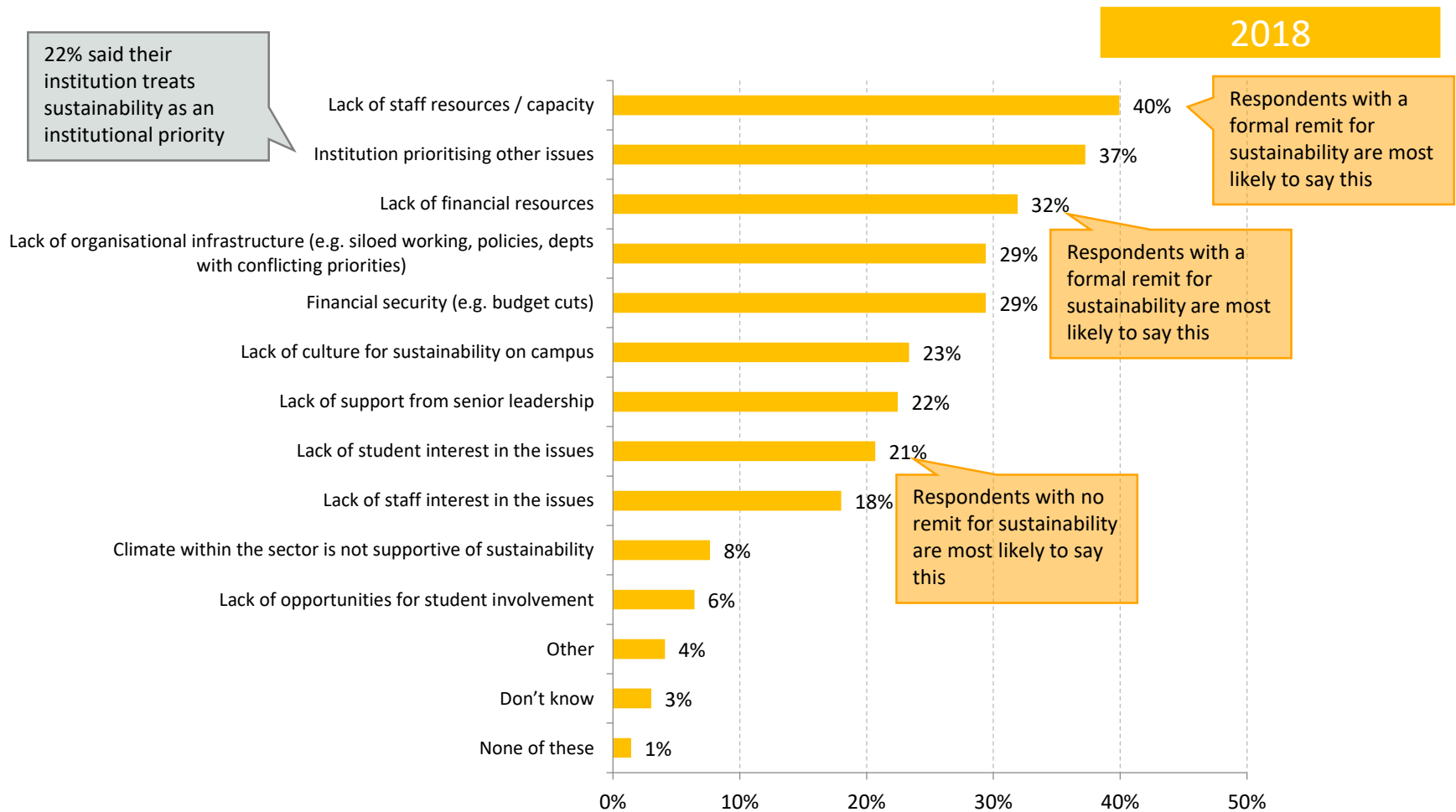
**2018**



| | |
|---|---|
| 5 – Very important | 77% |
| 4 | 16% |
| 3 | 4% |
| 2 | 1% |
| 1 – Not important at all | 1% |
| Don't know | 1% |

Respondents with a formal remit for sustainability are most likely to say it is important

Base (in brackets)

**Q. In your opinion, how important is it that students leave their time in formal education with the knowledge and skills required to address environmental sustainability and social responsibility challenges?**

Respondents highlight a lack of staff resources and capacity as the key barrier preventing their institution doing more on sustainability (40%), followed by the institution prioritising other issues (37%). Respondents with a formal role in sustainability are more likely to perceive there to be resource and financial barriers.

2018

22% said their institution treats sustainability as an institutional priority

| Barrier | 2018 |
|---|---|
| Lack of staff resources / capacity | 40% |
| Institution prioritising other issues | 37% |
| Lack of financial resources | 32% |
| Lack of organisational infrastructure (e.g. siloed working, policies, depts with conflicting priorities) | 29% |
| Financial security (e.g. budget cuts) | 29% |
| Lack of culture for sustainability on campus | 23% |
| Lack of support from senior leadership | 22% |
| Lack of student interest in the issues | 21% |
| Lack of staff interest in the issues | 18% |
| Climate within the sector is not supportive of sustainability | 8% |
| Lack of opportunities for student involvement | 6% |
| Other | 4% |
| Don't know | 3% |
| None of these | 1% |

Respondents with a formal remit for sustainability are most likely to say this

Respondents with a formal remit for sustainability are most likely to say this

Respondents with no remit for sustainability are most likely to say this

Base (in brackets)

Q. In your view, what barriers face your institution in doing more on environmental sustainability and social responsibility?

27

Respondents provided further commentary on the barriers they face at their institution on doing more on environmental sustainability and social responsibility…

**2018**

"Our management teams (at all levels) face much pressure from central government to stay within budget. They are given various priorities, none of which include environmental sustainability. This means that environmental sustainability features very low in the college's list of activities."

**Competing priorities**

"You have to get the whole workforce on board. The sustainability goals are great, but they need to be applied specifically to each individuals roles. People will be more interested in what changes they can do in their job roles to become part of a sustainable environment directly. This needs managers/seniors to get together and prioritise what is involved in each area. Lack of time is probably the biggest problem."

"Sustainability is competing with other university agendas such as entrepreneurship and mental health. it seems to me that there needs to be more external pressures placed on universities to deliver sustainability education. Staff and students are willing but their time and timetables are crowded out."

"Environmental sustainability is used as a marketing tool. There is no meaningful staff and student participation in the development and implementation of these policies. The tick boxes are therefore just that, because unless staff and student bodies own the idea of sustainability and commit to it, it will never be something that contributes to sustainable environmental change. The kite marks are too easily manipulated by management which sees itself as a business not a learning community and which does not commit to democracy in practice."

**Low leadership commitment**

"Our university has recently released an updated strategy and highlights a strengthened commitment to the environment and social equality, this included recognition of the contradiction of our business model to encourage international students and internationally renowned scholarship. Repeatedly in developing the strategy there was feedback that the University community wanted more action on sustainability and so through subsequent drafts this became more of a priority. It now remains to be seen if resources will be adequately directed this way when there are lots of budget cuts that have led to reduced manpower and lots of staff feeling 'stretched'."

"Leadership are only concerned with superficial actions that result in good PR rather than long term last changes."

"We now have a Sustainability Officer who does a fantastic job, however I feel that he is only one man and needs further support moving forward."

**Lack of staff or financial resources**

"Whilst we are moving forward with several fantastic sustainable projects the lack of finances is holding our institution back. In most cases we are applying for funding and often we receive some financial assistance, however it usually comes with fund matching requirements and the sustainability budget (that we are grateful to have) will not support all of our opportunities to grow our sustainability achievements."
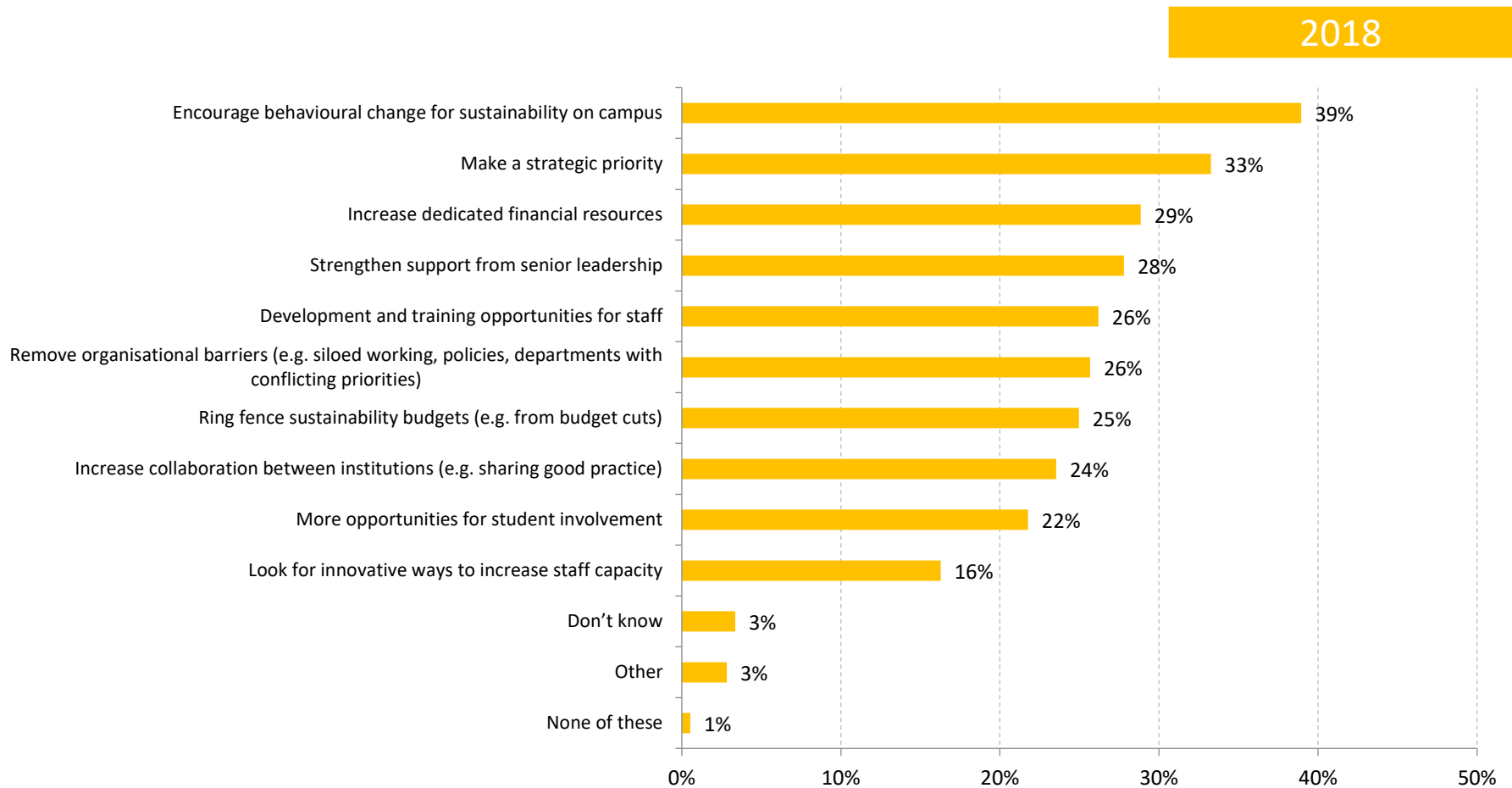
**Q. In your view, what barriers face your institution in doing more on environmental sustainability and social responsibility?**

Encouraging behaviour change on campus is seen as the activity that would most help institutions to address environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Making the issue a strategic priority and increasing financial resources are also options that are seen as being able to help institutions improve.



**2018**

| Activity | % |
|---|---|
| Encourage behavioural change for sustainability on campus | 39% |
| Make a strategic priority | 33% |
| Increase dedicated financial resources | 29% |
| Strengthen support from senior leadership | 28% |
| Development and training opportunities for staff | 26% |
| Remove organisational barriers (e.g. siloed working, policies, departments with conflicting priorities) | 26% |
| Ring fence sustainability budgets (e.g. from budget cuts) | 25% |
| Increase collaboration between institutions (e.g. sharing good practice) | 24% |
| More opportunities for student involvement | 22% |
| Look for innovative ways to increase staff capacity | 16% |
| Don't know | 3% |
| Other | 3% |
| None of these | 1% |

Base (in brackets)

**Q. In your view, which of the following would help your institution the most to address environmental sustainability and social responsibility?**

**For further information about this research please contact**:
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