

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Balancing or prioritising for sustainable development? Perceptions of sustainability integration among professionals

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Abstract

The effective integration of the environmental with the economic and social dimensions of sustainability will only succeed when the core problem perceptions of professionals in these fields adjust as well. Yet, while sustainability integration in general has been thoroughly researched, few studies have analysed the specific role of subjective understandings among professionals. This article bridges this gap by asking how professionals understand and operationalise sustainability integration. Which factors shape their perceptions and practices? We present the results of an online survey that was circulated to a diverse sample of professionals and then analysed using statistical methods. Responses from 508 participants show that sustainability integration is mostly perceived as a balance across all three sustainability dimensions rather than a hierarchy with the environment at its basis. However, perceptions also vary significantly across professional and geographical contexts. This signifies the need to better account for how individual circumstances affect processes of integration.

KEYWORDS

perceptions, survey, sustainability governance, sustainability integration

1 | INTRODUCTION

The recognition of the anthropocene, defined by the unprecedented impact of human practices on the earth system (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000), entails a profound paradigmatic shift towards the reconceptualisation of the planet as an interdependent and integrated social-ecological system. Since the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as Brundtland Report), the dominant understanding of sustainable development has been that it consists of three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental (Purvis et al., 2019; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Overcoming the “silosation” of these three

dimensions of sustainable development and their integration has since then been a central governance challenge and political priority (Bhaduri et al., 2015; Raworth, 2017; Tosun & Lang, 2017; van Soest et al., 2019; Vijge et al., 2020). Many terms for overcoming the silos of environmental, economic and social policies are used, often with overlapping meanings, ranging from “environmental policy integration” to “mainstreaming”, “nexus” approaches, “policy coherence”, or “integrative environmental governance” (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2022; Visseren-Hamakers, 2015). After the launch of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 (UNGA, 2015), these new goals have become the central global normative framework for sustainable development, or “sustainability” (Biermann et al., 2022); they are also

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presented as a new mechanism to integrate the three dimensions of sustainability (Tremblay et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2022). We use here the concept of “sustainability integration”, which we define as “the simultaneous and interdependent consideration and operationalisation by actors of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental” (Montesano et al., 2021, p. 1).

The notion of sustainability integration has found many divergent interpretations and operationalisations in both public and academic debate (Bhaduri et al., 2015; Boas et al., 2016; Lafferty & Hovden, 2003; Raworth, 2017; Tosun & Lang, 2017; van Soest et al., 2019; Vijge et al., 2020). Yet despite these different views, few scholars have so far examined how professionals in the field actually perceive and operationalise sustainability integration. We define professionals here as individuals who work in an organisation and whose perceptions are hence likely to influence that organisation's policies and programmes, including on sustainability integration. Perceptions inform the political and institutional context, where subjective ideas gradually evolve into norms and then practices (Alger & Dauvergne, 2019; Hay, 2006; Montesano et al., 2021; Schmidt, 2008). In other words, whether and how sustainability integration is to inform governance depends on perceptions about the relationship between the three sustainability dimensions. This is the focus of our paper. While the study of perceptions is part of a widening study programme in both constructivist international relations research (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999; Müller, 2012; Nielson et al., 2006; Park & Vetterlein, 2010, p. 3; Yee, 1996) and broader sustainability research (Salovaara et al., 2021; Vogel et al., 2020), in the study of sustainability governance, this process has barely started (see e.g., Montesano et al., 2021).

This article contributes to this research field by asking: how do professionals understand and operationalise notions of sustainability integration? Which factors shape their perceptions and practices?

We address these questions drawing on a comprehensive global survey that we conducted among over 500 professionals in different sectors, at different levels, and in different geographical regions. The article proceeds as follows. In Section 2, we outline the main theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the survey design. In Section 3, we explain our methodology, survey design, distribution and response, and analysis protocol. In Section 4, we present the key findings about how respondents' perceptions and operationalisation of sustainability integration vary. Section 5 reflects on these variations. Section 6 concludes and discusses the wider implications of our findings for (the future of) sustainability governance.

2 | RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 | Conflicting conceptualisations of sustainability

We first discuss different conceptualisations of sustainability that we expect to find, to different degrees, in the perceptions of professionals. The relationship between the economic, social and

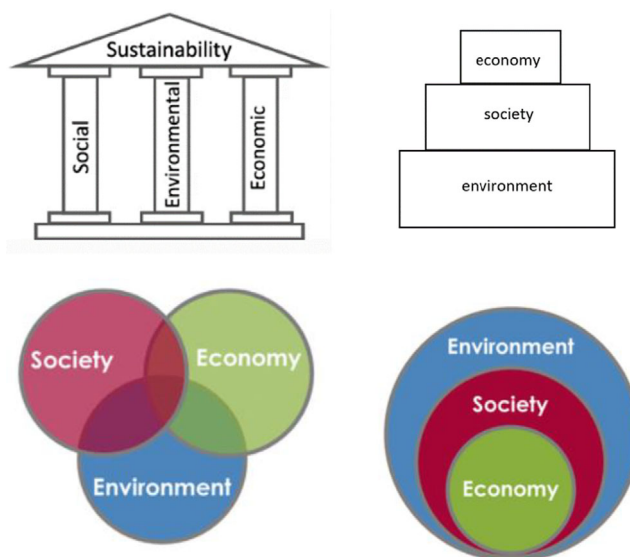


FIGURE 1 Horizontal (top) and vertical (bottom) visualisations of the balanced (left) and hierarchical (right) models of sustainability integration

environmental dimensions of sustainable development has been subject to different interpretations, most of which can be ascribed to one of two models.

The first model is what we call the “balanced” one. In this view, the three dimensions of sustainability are not hierarchically related. This view thus falls within the “weak” paradigm of sustainability with a less principled defence of natural capital (Arias-Maldonado, 2013). This model is optimistic about the mutual influence of dimensions, highlighting win-win dynamics rather than trade-offs. It prioritises the achievement of an overarching balance, whereby shortcomings in one dimension can be compensated by stepping up efforts in another. For example, “responsible” or “green” economic growth, often backed up by the ecological modernisation paradigm (Mol, 2002), is seen here as a powerful tool to improve social and environmental conditions. This model is also closely related to the so-called triple bottom line, an accounting framework that expands corporate reporting to consider not only financial sustainability, but also contributions to social welfare and environmental protection (Elkington, 1997). This “balance sheet” approach has also long been the mainstream in global sustainability governance, as evident from the United Nations' own definition of the SDGs as “integrated and indivisible and balanc[ing] the three dimensions of sustainable development” (UNGA, 2015, p. 3).

The second, alternative model is what we call the “hierarchical” one. The conceptual foundation is here rooted in a “stronger” paradigm of sustainability, whereby environmental protection is seen as necessary for social and economic sustainability (Giddings et al., 2002; Milne, 1996). Hierarchical integration therefore moves from a principled prioritisation of ecological integrity and the preservation of natural capital over socio-economic progress (Arias-Maldonado, 2013; Kim & Bosselmann, 2015), which also has roots in the intrinsic valuing of the natural world typical of the deep ecology philosophy

(Devall & Sessions, 1985). The hierarchical model is sometimes depicted as a wedding cake with the environment acting as the foundational layer (Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2016) (see Figure 1). Given its subordination of human activities to the finite carrying capacity of the planet, this model is often seen as a critique of the mainstream, growth-friendly win-win interpretation of sustainability integration.

2.2 | The importance of perceptions to advance integration

In light of these two contrasting integration models, the question arises how professionals relate to either model, and whether this relationship has changed over time.

This question is not only a practical one, but also one of broader theoretical relevance. In political science, constructivist and discursive scholars have been spearheading a “turn to ideas” stressing the importance of perceptions to analyse institutional changes that are poorly explained by traditional rationalism. Scholars have highlighted the bidirectional links between subjective and intersubjective understandings, on the one hand, and the institutional and policy context on the other (Blyth, 2003; Schmidt, 2008). Perceptions are thus no longer seen as mere reflections of contextual circumstances or—at most—predictors of future perceptions (Arts & Buizer, 2009; Schmidt, 2008). Rather, they also actively shape current politics and institutions (Geels, 2004; Gofas & Hay, 2009; Hay, 2006; Montesano et al., 2021; Williams, 2004).

Perceptions are therefore an essential explanatory concept to understand decision-making processes and policy changes (Khamkaji & Radaelli, 2022; Swinkels, 2020), and the complex interplay between different perceptions has been shown to affect how organisations engage with innovations and transitions (Häggman, 2009). Awareness of the impact of perceptions on policies and governance, including in the field of sustainability, is also starting to underpin more quantitative research into practitioners' perspectives (Haroon et al., 2021). By focusing here on professionals, we emphasise the link between individual perceptions and the operationalisation and implementation of sustainability integration at the organisational level. In other words, ideas about sustainability integration affect the politics of and the policies for sustainability integration.

We derive two further important conceptual premises. First, by emphasising that change is a complex layered process where perceptions can trigger deeper and more widespread normative and institutional developments, our perception-based investigation allows us to shed light on the levels of change. These levels do not only apply to intersubjective dynamics, but also to subjective perceptions, as professionals can form different views about the different layers of change. To investigate this, we identify three levels of such subjective perceptions: descriptive, focusing on how professionals perceive the actual state of sustainability integration; normative, whereby a prescriptive element is added about how professionals see the scope and desirability of certain behaviours or processes towards sustainability integration; and operational, about their views on the concrete

implementation of sustainability integration principles. Second, the need to focus on the interplay between context and perceptions led us to include further independent variables, such as the impact of demographics and professional affiliations and priorities on perceptions of sustainability integration.

In short, we expect that the development and institutionalisation of sustainability integration, as well as its form, are also dependent on how and to what extent it is engrained in contextualised individual and collective perceptions among professionals.

3 | METHODOLOGY

In order to study the perceptions of professionals we developed a comprehensive online survey as our primary methodological tool. All respondents to this survey were professionals, identified and contacted through their affiliation to a particular organisation or professional network; the survey thus focused on perceptions of individuals in their professional capacity. As evident from the SDG negotiations, representatives not only from governments and international organisations, but also from all sectors of civil society, business, and academia have been increasingly active in trying to advance their version of sustainability. Given the ever-expanding playing field of sustainability debates across multiple settings, our focus on how professionals position themselves regarding the meaning of sustainability integration and the ensuing sampling criteria were deliberately very wide.

Surveys are widely used to investigate perceptions and preferences in the field of sustainability (Feola & Nunes, 2014; van der Hel, 2018). The turn to ideas in political science has also led to surveys being increasingly valued as a tool to investigate the role of perceptions in environmental and sustainability politics (Prakash & Bernauer, 2020).

3.1 | Survey design

Our survey consisted of 35 statements. Most statements required respondents to indicate their (dis)agreement using a five-point Likert scale; we also used yes/no, multiple choice, and ranking questions. Following a first set of statements (Q 1–8) that helped to cluster respondents based on their professional affiliation, seniority, geographical location, and whether they were more affiliated with environmental, economic or social activity fields, we offered three further sets, drawing here on a framework designed to analyse competing discursive paradigms (Pal, 1995).

The three sets of statements were as follows.

1. First, we offered statements that simply defined the state of sustainability integration in a descriptive manner (Q 25–30).
2. Second, we included normative statements that solicited views by respondents on how they think integration should be pursued (Q 31–35), as well as “role” statements focused on how respondents see their role when it comes to integration (Q 9–11).

3. Last, operational statements focused on whether and how respondents and their organisations do something to pursue integration at the operational level, that is, on perceptions on the evidence of integration. This includes the SDGs as the most prominent integrated sustainability framework (Q 12–24).

For each of the above categories, the statements aimed at investigating whether perceptions align with balanced or more hierarchical integration. See Appendix A for an overview of the 35 statements.

The questionnaire was fine-tuned following tests among colleagues and experts outside academia. Further tests were conducted by automatically generating answers and conducting simulated analyses in the qualtrics environment.

3.2 | Distribution of responses

The survey was conducted online between 22 June and 1 October 2021. Requests to participate in the survey were sent to over 5000 professionals working for a wide range of organisations, relying on snowballing techniques through access points in various national and international networks. In line with our broad definition of professionals, as well as with the cross-cutting nature of sustainability integration debates, the selection of access points was not restricted to organisations with an explicit sustainability mission. Given our network, most of those who participated to the survey via academic access points are likely to be professionals with an explicit focus on sustainability. This also applies to respondents whom we invited via access points in the UN Major Groups, the UN Global Compact and other stakeholders. Other access points we found in networks not expressly dedicated to sustainability, but still including professionals in fields that are relevant to sustainability. Examples include the integrated Civil Society Organisations (iCSO) system, as well as government officials from ministries, consultants and public affairs professionals, and education professionals.

A total of 531 professionals participated in our study, which we reduced to 508 after data cleaning. In terms of respondents, our survey sample—while statistically not representative—was very diverse. We had a strong prevalence of respondents from civil society

(41.1%) and academia (22.2%), which is probably due to our use of the public database of the iCSO system with more than 4000 members and to our professional network. In terms of seniority, a large majority of the respondents (almost 78%) were either senior officers or executives. This high presence of leaders adds weight to the expert nature of our survey and, given their managerial tasks, increases the generalisability of our findings to the broader organisational level. Geographically, despite a strong European bias (43.3%), the overall distribution of respondents was reasonably even, with about 57% coming from the Global North (Europe, North America, and Australia and Oceania) and 43% from the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Central and South America). Australia and Oceania are included in the Global North as manual checks revealed that a vast majority of those respondents came from Australia or New Zealand. The detailed distribution of the sample is provided in Table 1.

3.3 | Analysis protocol

To reduce measurement errors and total survey error (Groves & Lyberg, 2010), we cleaned survey data by removing duplicates and incomplete (<80% answered questions) questionnaires. We scanned the responses to identify possible interpretation problems and developed edit rules to correct for cases of clear misinterpretation or mistakes by the respondents. An edit rule is a restriction of the values in a data file, or a form of “deductive correction”, that is, data that does not satisfy an edit rule will likely contain errors (UNECE, 2008).

New aggregate variables were created to refine the respondents' priorities according to the economic, social and environmental classifications of Rockström and Sukhdev (2016). For instance, we created a new overarching environment variable which included “Life on land”, “Life below water”, “Climate action” and “Clean water and sanitation”. We also aggregated the priority variables based on the three dimensions of sustainability with the SDG-based ones to create “strengthened” priority dummy variables. Respondents were assigned a “1” only when they indicated the same priority in both variables.

We quantitatively analysed the survey responses in several steps with SPSS Statistics 28. We first conducted a frequency analysis to gain an overall understanding and to identify potentially interesting trends. The second step consisted of cross-tabulations and chi-square

TABLE 1 Survey response

Main professional affiliation		Role within organisation		Geographical location	
Government or public administration	23	Entry-level/junior staff	30	Africa	73
International organisation	49	Mid-career staff	69	Asia	93
Civil society organisation	209	Senior staff	156	Australia and Oceania	16
Academia	113	Executive, owner or head of organisation	234	Central and South America	30
Business or private company	87	No answer	19	Europe	220
Other	25			North America	71
No answer	2			No answer	5
				Total	508

tests. A chi-square test is a well-established method to measure the association between two categorical variables (Ugoni & Walker, 1995). This sought to distinguish the associations between our different categories. The third step was to conduct an Analysis of Variance and independent samples t-tests between pairs of variables, in order to examine the statistical significance (with $p \leq .05$) of the difference between two independent population means (Connelly, 2021; Liu & Wang, 2021). See Appendix B for an overview of the results of the t-tests.

3.4 | Limitations

As any large-n study, ours also has methodological limitations. First, the study is based on a non-representative sample of respondents. Although we made considerable effort to obtain a diverse sample, professionals who are more concerned about sustainability issues may have been more inclined to participate. This might have led to an overrepresentation of outspoken perspectives on integration, particularly regarding perceptions about professionals' own role in the pursuit of sustainability. Some categories are also overrepresented in our sample, such as European and highly educated professionals working in academia or civil society organisations. On the other hand, businesses are relatively underrepresented, whereas—especially in contexts where governance structures are weak—businesses often play a shaping role in issues of sustainability. These biases do not take away from the validity of the findings, but do impact their generalisability. Future research into the more underrepresented categories would help correct the bias. The diversity of our sample is also prone to “lumping” criticism, as perceptions of professionals are all assigned the same weight whereas they might in fact have very different influence on both other perceptions and future developments. However, the impact of this on our aims and conclusions is limited, given our focus on mapping links between perceptions rather than on ascertaining their actual impact (which a survey cannot do). Furthermore, it is true that not all perceptions might be equal in terms of direct impact on sustainability integration. What the executive of a big multinational company thinks about sustainability is likely to wield greater short-to-medium term influence than what an intern at an NGO does. However, as evident from countless discussions, initiatives, and regulations, sustainability has become a very broad and urgent item on the agendas of virtually all sorts of actors.

Our survey approach was also less likely to reach subaltern and marginalised groups, which might lead to a bias in favour of mainstream approaches to integration. We did not collect information about the gender of respondents; but given the overrepresentation of senior professionals in our sample it is probable that the perceptions we measured also contain a “male bias”. Furthermore, the survey was available only in English, which might have discouraged professionals with limited skills in that language. Second, the survey approach necessarily reduced complexity. Multifaceted normative and political questions had to be translated to simple statements to be included in the survey. Also, the approach and the types of questions we asked

prevent causal inferences. Finally, surveys capture only perceptions and do not offer evidence of actual changes in the actions of respondents. Complementary qualitative research would thus be needed to add a layer of complexity and causality to the picture we sketch.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Perceptions on sustainability integration

We first sought to identify how professionals perceive sustainability integration, focusing on mapping the prevalence of the two models of integration at different perception levels.

We observed, first, overwhelming support among professionals for the general descriptive proposition that the three dimensions are interdependent, thus demonstrating support for the balanced model. Over 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed on the interdependence between the three dimensions of sustainable development, and over 72% added that new global sustainability governance frameworks such as the SDGs have been fostering this integrated understanding. Regarding possible adversarial relations between the three dimensions, only when asked about the negative effects of economic growth on environmental protection did a majority of respondents (58%) agree or strongly agree that this is the case. When asked about the negative effects between all other possible combinations, no more than 18% agreed, indicating the strong prevalence of agreement that the win-win balanced model is feasible.

Second, in terms of normative objectives, balancing was again the most preferred integration model. Over 79% of respondents stated that all three dimensions of sustainability are equally important, and over 92% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that all three dimensions should be promoted simultaneously, thereby indicating very strong convictions regarding the feasibility of balanced integration. Some hierarchical views, however, were also present. Most respondents (64.5%) agreed that environmental protection must be promoted even if this negatively affects economic growth, but only 29% said the same about prioritising the environment over social welfare. This shows again that the clear-cut hierarchical approach to integration is less widely spread.

More professionals believed that they have a role in the general promotion of sustainability (94%) than in the promotion of environmental protection (85%). This suggests that a “broader”, more balanced understanding of integration is more prevalent than one that prioritises the environmental dimension, although a vast majority of professionals are committed to both. This response was evenly spread across professional priorities, and differences between respondents regarding their economic, social or environmental priorities were not statistically significant. That environmental concerns were far from exclusive to environmental actors further suggests, again, that most respondents prefer the balanced model of integration.

Third, we assessed the extent to which professionals perceive that there is balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainability in their work environment, that is, whether environmental,

economic and social aspects are balanced in operations of their organisations. Over 88% of respondents agreed here that balanced integration is indeed occurring in their organisation, and over 82% suggested that such internal integration has even increased over the past 5 years. As for the external integration with other organisations, a large majority (81%) claimed to work regularly or very often with other organisations on sustainability matters. Only 57% stated that they are stepping up their engagement with professionals outside their field. In light of the influence of context on perceptions discussed in the conceptual framework, but also given the findings in both the cognitive psychology and organisational studies literature on how exposure to different views and interprofessional collaboration helps understanding and solving complex problems (Green & Johnson, 2015; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013), we can expect external interactions to be relevant in how professionals form their views on sustainability integration. Hence, this comparatively lower value is likely to add to the challenges of overcoming siloisation. Table 2 below provides an overview of the responses.

Studying the links between internal and external integration and other variables, a few trends emerge. First, respondents who stated that integration of the three dimensions of sustainability is occurring within their organisation were significantly more likely to also agree with the normative need to pursue such balancing. However, while respondents who reported an increase in internal integration were significantly more likely to agree with the need for balancing, this was not the case when they were asked whether environmental protection is more important than growth. Interestingly, organisational and international factors were both significantly linked to variations in internal integration, while national policies were not. This might hint at the role of both supra- and sub-national factors in promoting sustainability integration beyond “traditional” government initiatives.

Second, the picture is more complex when it comes to external integration, that is, sustainability integration in collaboration with external organisations. Here, variations in respondents' professional interactions with other organisations hardly related to different perceptions of integration. The only significant exception was that external integration correlates with greater internal integration. A variation in respondents' interactions with professionals working in different fields was more often linked to diverging perceptions on balanced integration. At the descriptive level, having such interactions was linked with more negative understandings of both the impact of social welfare on environmental protection and of environmental protection on economic growth, and thus closer to a hierarchical model of integration. However, respondents who strongly agreed with the statement that they have more external interactions, also had more affinity with balanced integration. Respondents who reported more external interactions outside their field also showed greater support for balanced integration; yet they also expressed more often hierarchical views about the specific need to prioritise the environment over social welfare. Perceptions of their role in promoting sustainability were also significantly stronger, and they also indicated a significantly stronger role in advancing environmental protection.

This ambivalence between balanced and hierarchical integration is in line with the even distribution of environmental concerns across professional priorities. In operational terms, respondents who had growing interactions outside their field also reported more balanced integration within their organisation. They also reported significantly greater engagement with other organisations, while respondents indicating greater engagement with other organisations did not report significantly higher levels of interactions outside their field. Furthermore, the more professionals engaged with actors outside their field, the more they held positive views about balanced integration frameworks such as the SDGs. Overall, we find that engagement with other fields influences the understanding of sustainability integration more than engagement with organisations in the same field.

4.2 | How deep are perceptions on integration?

To further understand how professionals perceive sustainability integration, we also examined the depth of such perceptions, that is, whether (differences in) professionals' perceptions change as they move from descriptive towards more normative understandings of integration.

We found here that diverging normative views about how integration should look like do indeed influence how professionals perceive and operationalise integration. Professionals agreeing on the importance of balancing had different views on other levels of integration compared to others. This finding is reinforced by the fact that correlations between normative and operational perceptions were more significant than those between descriptive and normative ones. This not only hints at how questions aimed at investigating concrete change drew more varied responses and were less prone to socially desirable answers. By underscoring the significance of the link between normative and operational perceptions, these findings further validate our conceptualisation of change as a layered process, where perceptions influence concrete institutional developments (see Section 2.2).

At the descriptive level, significant differences in bivariate response patterns were consistent only regarding respondents' general understanding of integration, that is, whether all three dimensions of sustainability are interdependent. Respondents who strongly agreed with this idea also tended to agree normatively more with the importance of integration. This was supported by statements about their active role in the promotion of integration, and more frequent mentions of organisational change in the direction of integration and in line with the SDGs. We observed the same patterns also with respondents who ‘merely’ agreed with the interdependence of the three sustainability dimensions. However, differences between them and the rest of our sample were insignificant. We also found a correlation between greater confidence in the role of the SDGs in promoting a balanced understanding of integration and more balanced perceptions at all levels. Furthermore, responses about how one sustainability dimension affects another were not correlated with more hierarchical perceptions elsewhere. Overall, this corroborates our

TABLE 2 Overview of perceptions on sustainability integration

STATEMENTS	RESPONSE (%) ^a				
	1	2	3	4	5
Descriptive perceptions					
Economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection are interdependent: each one influences the other two.	66.1	26.2	2.0	1.6	0.8
Economic growth often has a negative influence on environmental protection.	20.3	35.2	21.5	13.4	4.9
Social welfare policies often have a negative influence on environmental protection	3.5	10.6	28.5	37.8	14.4
Environmental protection often has a negative influence on economic growth	4.1	13.2	19.5	40.4	18.9
Environmental protection often has a negative influence on social welfare	2.2	7.5	20.7	39.6	25.0
The Sustainable Development Goals help my organisation understand how economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection are interdependent.	27.4	39.8	16.9	5.9	2.2
Normative perceptions					
Economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection are all equally important.	44.5	31.9	6.1	11.4	2.2
We must promote environmental protection together with economic growth and social welfare.	59.1	30.3	3.1	3.5	0.8
We must promote environmental protection even at the cost of economic growth	29.7	32.1	17.9	14.2	2.0
We must promote environmental protection even at the cost of social welfare	9.3	18.5	26.2	34.3	7.3
The Sustainable Development Goals incentivise my organisation to promote environmental protection	25.8	38.4	19.9	5.9	1.2
It is my organisation's responsibility to promote sustainability	63.4	29.7	3.5	1.4	0.8
It is my organisation's responsibility to promote environmental protection.	53.3	30.7	8.9	3.7	1.4
It is my organisation's responsibility to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.	64.0	26.0	4.7	2.4	0.8
Operational perceptions					
My organisation integrates economic, social and environmental considerations into its objectives and initiatives.	49.6	39.0	7.3	1.4	1.0
In the last 5 years, my organisation has increasingly integrated economic, social and environmental considerations into its objectives and initiatives	48.0	34.6	10.8	2.2	0.0
In your work, how often do you interact with people from other organisations? ^b	56.9	23.6	12.2	5.1	1.2
In the last 5 years, I have interacted more frequently with people working in a field different from mine	24.4	32.7	23.6	14.0	2.6

^aResponse: strongly agree (1); agree (2); neither agree nor disagree (3); disagree (4); strongly disagree (5).

^bResponse: very often (1); regularly (2); occasionally (3); rarely (4); never (5).

previous findings about the prevalence of the balanced model among respondents' perceptions.

The higher significance of normative perceptions is evident when we look at the role that professionals saw for themselves. Professionals who agreed on the importance, rather than merely the

existence, of balanced integration were significantly more likely to see a strong role for themselves in promoting sustainability. The same applies to their perceived role in promoting environmental protection and the SDGs. Once again, we observe here the ambivalence between overarching support for balancing sustainability as opposed to

prioritising environmental concerns. Professionals who agreed on the existence of balanced integration were often not significantly more likely to engage in internal integration or to ascribe greater impact to the SDGs. This was instead the case with respondents who normatively argued in favour of pursuing balancing.

We also found that professionals who feel that a balanced integration of the sustainability dimensions is important were significantly more likely to see a role for themselves in also promoting such integration. In most cases, however, respondents' ranking of the three sustainability dimensions did not significantly affect their views on other integration issues. For example, respondents who agreed with the prioritisation of environmental protection over economic growth or over social welfare were not significantly more likely to also agree about having a role in the promotion of sustainability. This suggests that the balanced integration model has a stronger normative relevance than the hierarchical one, and—in line with our framework—is therefore more likely to inform institutional and organisational change.

We also observed paradoxical dynamics between the balanced and the hierarchical models of integration. For example, professionals who perceived economic growth as harmful for environmental protection were more likely to value balanced integration, and professionals who actively argued for the need to prioritise environmental protection over economic growth were equally more likely to favour balancing. In other words, perceptions in favour of a stronger (greener) approach to integration are not necessarily incompatible with combining this approach with balanced elements.

4.3 | Explanatory factors

We now report on the factors that correlate with the variation that we found in the perceptions of professionals, and we further investigate the bidirectional link between perceptions and context. We have two main observations here: first, the organisational affiliation, professional seniority and geographical location of professionals matter, and second, sustainability priorities matter less.

4.4 | Demographics matter

We found, first, that the types of affiliation of respondents mattered. Business professionals, for example, argued significantly more often than others that there are win-win relationships between the three dimensions of sustainability. Differences were larger when respondents were asked to assess the impact of economic growth and social welfare on environmental protection than the other way round, thus indicating that opinions tend to be stronger when the environment is “at stake”. Conversely, while academic professionals felt most often that the three dimensions of sustainability are interdependent, they also seemed to favour a more hierarchical normative approach to integration, agreeing the least with questions on whether the three dimensions of sustainability are equally important and should be

jointly promoted. Professionals from international organisations, civil society and businesses were here the most positive about win-win balancing.

Somewhat surprisingly, when asked whether the environment should be prioritised over the economic and social dimensions of sustainability, government officials tended to agree more than others. Conversely, when it came to the question of whether the environment is more important than social welfare, professionals from government and international organisations were significantly less hierarchical than civil society, businesses and academia. It is also interesting to note that businesses reported a significantly stronger role for themselves in promoting environmental protection compared to other categories. This, given their strong belief in the win-win relationship between economic growth and environmental protection, further indicates their affinity for balanced integration. The trends mentioned above were also visible in terms of concrete evidence of change towards integration. Academics appeared to be less engaged with balanced integration than international organisations, civil society, and businesses. When asked about which factors incentivise their institution to integrate, international factors were mentioned significantly less often by academics than by international organisations and civil society. Academics and government officials also perceived the influence of balanced tools such as SDGs on integration, communications and other tangible changes as less significant than businesses and international organisations (and in some instances civil society).

Second, we found that respondents' seniority within their organisation influenced their perceptions and operationalisation of sustainability integration. Mid-career respondents were significantly more negative than senior ones about the impact of economic growth on environmental protection, thereby displaying a less optimistic view on win-win integration. Differences were even starker in normative questions, which also corroborates our earlier findings on the higher impact of normative perceptions vis-à-vis descriptive ones. Senior and executive respondents were significantly less hierarchical than their junior and mid-career counterparts with regard to the importance of simultaneously promoting the three dimensions of sustainability. Adding to these less hierarchical views, more senior respondents also tended to disagree more with the idea that environmental protection should be pursued even if this damages economic growth. Mid-career respondents also tended to consider themselves less responsible for promoting sustainability and environmental protection, as well as for contributing to the achievement of balanced tools such as the SDGs. This degree of responsibility was—rather strikingly—not only lower vis-à-vis the more senior respondents, but also vis-à-vis the junior respondents. Follow-up research would be needed here to ascertain the potential factors behind these trends—for example about whether mid-career professionals tend to be more pessimistic about change than either junior or senior staff.

Third, respondents' location influenced the way they perceive sustainability integration. In particular, there were significant differences between respondents from the Global North (North America, Europe, and often Australia/Oceania) and those from the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Central and South America). To begin with,

North American professionals were the least likely to support that the three dimensions of sustainability are interdependent. Respondents from Australia/Oceania and North America were also more negative than others about the impact of economic growth on the environment, while respondents from the Global South were more negative about the environmental impact of social welfare policies.

Normatively, professionals from the Global South agreed significantly more often than those from the Global North that the three sustainability dimensions are equally important and that they should be pursued simultaneously, and that the SDGs have a role in fostering more awareness of sustainability integration. However, professionals from Asia also argued that environmental protection should be pursued even at the expense of economic and social objectives, which appears to contradict their stated more balanced approach. Then again, professionals from Asia also saw environmental protection as a top priority relatively less often than respondents from other regions. This aligns with our previous findings about greening as a possible form of balanced integration (see Section 4.1). On the other hand, respondents from the Global North perceived the role played by balanced tools such as the SDGs in promoting environmental protection as significantly less impactful than those from the South.

What these seemingly contradicting findings have in common are the generally “weaker” opinions expressed by respondents from the Global North about both balanced integration in general and about the pursuit of “green” sustainability in particular. This adds to the overall impression that professionals in the Global North have weaker preferences than those in the South.

As for their own role, professionals from the Global South seemed to see a significantly higher responsibility for promoting sustainability and environmental protection than those from the Global North (and particularly North America), and they report more efforts towards balanced, win-win integration. There were significant differences not only in (progress towards) internal integration but also in external interactions. While Europeans and North Americans reported more frequent interactions outside their organisations, Africans and Asians indicated more often that their interactions outside their field increased in the last 5 years. Coupled with the fact that respondents from the Global South indicate international factors more often as integration triggers, this seems to indicate that global balanced integration frameworks such as the SDGs might be more influential in those regions. Despite this rather complex preference distribution, professionals in the Global South seem to value environmental protection at least as much as the other two dimensions. Considering that historically some of the staunchest opposition to revising the traditional model of economic development in favour of more environmentally-oriented interventionism came from the Global South, the perceptions we observe here are remarkable.

4.5 | Sustainability priorities matter less

We also found that the priorities of professionals regarding the three dimensions of sustainability are fairly evenly distributed, with social

priorities scoring only slightly higher (31.3%) than environmental (27%) and economic (25%) ones. The lowest priorities were even more equally distributed, ranging from 28.1% (social) to 29.3% (environmental).

The distribution among priorities around the 17 SDGs offers some interesting insights: climate action was by far the most recurring priority, while the other “environmental” SDGs ranked at the bottom: life below water and life on land, respectively scored lowest and second-lowest, and clean water and sanitation was a priority for just over one tenth of the sample. The other priorities, however, were fairly evenly distributed across the three dimensions. There thus seems to be a relative disconnect between general priorities and more specific priorities, with balance in the former but stronger opinions about environmental concerns in the latter. Yet environmental concerns are not exclusive to environmental actors, and this distribution confirms this. Additionally, given the stark difference in prioritisation between climate action and the two environmental goals, it also appears that the former is interpreted as more of an “umbrella” capturing environmental sustainability in general, while the other two are seen as more mission-specific and have therefore been prioritised by fewer organisations.

Overall, their professional priorities around the three dimensions of sustainability did not significantly affect how professionals perceive the need for sustainability integration, with the exception of professionals who prioritised the social dimension but were less enthusiastic about integration. For example, these professionals are less likely to support balanced interdependence in sustainability, to be incentivised by the SDGs and to see their role as the promotion of environmental protection. Generally, they see also less organisational change towards balancing, in terms of both internal and external integration.

In terms of SDG-specific prioritisation, respondents who indicated at least one environmental SDG headline as a main priority said more often to have a role in the promotion of both sustainability in general and environmental protection more specifically than those who did not. They also reported greater internal integration, and in general were significantly more positive about the influence of the SDGs than respondents who did not indicate any environmental headline as a top priority. This alignment with balanced integration from professionals with environmental priorities points further in the direction of possible “green balancing”, whereby environmental concerns are not exclusive to environmental actors and environmental actors are open to non-hierarchical integration. Respondents who indicated at least one social SDG headline as a main priority also agreed more often to have a role in the promotion of sustainability. They also gave balanced integration more prominence at the normative level. Particularly given the size difference between the two samples (462 respondents with social priorities vs. 46 without), these results could also be reverse-interpreted, thus highlighting how professionals with no social priorities tend to be less positive about integration and about the role of the SDGs in promoting it. This appears to partially contradict our findings related to priorities in the three sustainability dimensions, where respondents with social priorities tended to be less engaged in integration, though differences there

were considerably less broadly significant. Social priorities therefore offer a mixed picture: they are linked to some significant differences, but the “sign” of their relationship with either model of integration is not consistent—at times balanced and at times hierarchical.

Generally, however, in terms of respondents' aggregate and SDG-specific priorities, significance levels were very low, with few exceptions. Professionals who prioritise environmental protection were more likely to see the three dimensions of sustainability as interdependent, and indicated at the same time economic growth as a greater danger to environmental protection. They also reported a stronger perceived role in the pursuit of sustainability and environmental protection. However, strengthened environmental priorities were not linked with significant normative preferences for either balanced or hierarchical integration. In terms of the evidence of integration, respondents with strong environmental priorities were also more likely to indicate higher internal but not external integration. Professionals who prioritise social welfare, however, were less likely to agree on a balanced understanding of integration, while respondents with economic growth as a strengthened low priority displayed more hierarchical normative perceptions, particularly with regard to the need to prioritise environmental protection over economic growth.

5 | DISCUSSION

We now discuss the most striking trends emerging from our study, as well as theoretical and policy implications.

First, we often observed contradictory dynamics between the two main models of either balanced or hierarchical sustainability integration. Importantly, whether professionals prioritise any of the three sustainability dimensions of environment, social or economic does not correlate with whether they support balanced or rather hierarchical integration. Additional evidence points at what we could refer to as a bidirectional environmental balancing, where environmental concerns are not exclusive to environmental actors and environmental actors on their part are open to balanced integration. Given the overall prevalence of the balanced model among professionals, this appears to further strengthen the mainstream, win-win interpretation of sustainability integration against more critical perspectives that call for stronger environmental priorities. More cynical observers might also see this trend as yet another catalyst of greenwashing.

Second, the high degree of variation in perceptions associated with demographic factors underscores the importance of context. Although our research design does not allow for strict causal inferences, perceptions and operationalisation of different models of sustainability integration appear to be at least partially affected by the circumstances in which professionals work. In turn, different perceptions also affect the implementation of different models of integration, which will impact the future context of the professionals themselves. That most Global South professionals seem supportive of balancing and engaging more with balanced governance frameworks such as the SDGs, further stresses the importance of simultaneously probing the black box from two sides—that is, context and

perceptions—for the success of global sustainability agendas. This bidirectional approach would be valuable to further explore questions of governance effectiveness.

Third, our findings illustrate the layered and bidirectional nature of processes of change. We found that how professionals perceive and operationalise sustainability integration differs strongly, and that this is considerably more frequent when we look at their normative rather than merely descriptive views. This attests to the importance of understanding and mapping the origins and distribution of norms (Alger & Dauvergne, 2019). Whether the more prevalent balanced model of integration is to be further implemented, or whether its hierarchical counterpart is to make headway, also depends on which descriptive understandings on the relationship between the three dimensions are going to gain an “ought” element (Florini, 1996).

This shows the need of more research on the role of perceptions in sustainability governance. More specifically, it underscores the importance of refining the understanding of subjective perceptions by looking at their different levels: perceptions about the state of something can differ from their views about how something should be and about how they should engage with it, as well as about how they are concretely dealing with something. Our findings also have implications for the concept of sustainability integration. The interplay between perceptions and contextual factors points towards much greater complexity in how people view integration than that offered by the juxtaposition of the two “standard” balanced and hierarchical models. This study could therefore serve as a steppingstone towards more in-depth research into how different kinds of actors conceptualise and operationalise sustainability concerns.

Fourth, our findings have implications for the prospects of sustainability governance. The prevalence of the balanced model of sustainability among professionals suggests that the mainstream of current global sustainability governance is still strong, and tools such as the SDGs are influential on people's views at all levels. Hence, those advocating a more hierarchical approach to sustainability integration would need to find a way to make this model more visible and more capable of shaping perceptions and policy. A tall order, to say the least. On the other hand, the lack of a linear binary relationship between the two models could complicate the overcoming of siloisation and any form of further integration. Furthermore, the aforementioned divergences in perceptions and operationalisation of sustainability integration highlight how sustainability itself remains a contested concept, which in turn underscores the challenges to designing and implementing effective policy tools for sustainability integration. The criticism attracted by the SDGs, as well as the sluggish progress in their implementation (see e.g., Allen et al., 2018; Horton, 2015), suggest that more effort is needed to devise governance solutions that fit with how perceptions emerge and diffuse.

6 | CONCLUSION

We studied here how professionals understand and operationalise sustainability integration, as well as which factors are linked to these perceptions.

First, it became clear that among professionals, a balanced model of sustainability integration, which weighs the three dimensions of sustainability as equally important, is more prevalent than a hierarchical one that prioritises one dimension. This seems to reflect the mainstream in global sustainability debates. Future developments in sustainability integration and governance are therefore more likely to move from confirmation or contestation of the balanced model rather than the hierarchical one. We also find more variation in the normative and operational perceptions of integration among professionals—how integration should happen—than what they see as actual integration in their daily lives. This is in line with our discursive conceptualisation of change as a layered process; descriptive ideas about the state of the world affect the emergence of more prescriptive perceptions that may then result in concrete institutional change. The more homogeneous distribution of descriptive perceptions we observed is thus not only expected, but also a precondition for any future normative and operational developments.

Second, our study shows how context and perceptions are intertwined. For one, there is a strong link between where professionals are based and what type of work they do, and their perceptions of sustainability integration. Professionals in academia are less aligned with the balanced model than other professional categories; members of the business community, on their part, were most favourable about balanced integration. Mid-career professionals were least favourable about balancing, while respondents from the Global South tended to be less hierarchical than those from the Global North, as well as more open to balanced sustainability frameworks such as the SDGs.

Finally, despite the prevalence of balancing, we also find a complex interplay between balanced and hierarchical understandings of sustainability integration. Professional priorities are rather ambivalently linked to perceptions, and environmental concerns are not exclusive to environmental actors while environmental actors were open to non-hierarchical integration. This highlights the importance of mapping and understanding how people think to better grasp the dynamics and outcomes of policy processes in the sustainability domain and beyond.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Francesco S. Montesano upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE OVERVIEW

1. What is your main professional affiliation?
 - Academia (e.g., university, research institute or think tank).
 - Government or public administration.
 - Civil society organisation.
 - Business.
 - International organisation.
 - Other (specify)
2. Which organisation do you work for (OPTIONAL)?
3. What is your role within your organisation?
 - Entry level/junior staff.
 - Mid-career staff.
 - Senior staff.
 - Executive, owner or head of organisation.
 - Other/prefer not to say
4. Where are you based?
 - Africa.
 - Asia.
 - Australia and Oceania.
 - Central and South America.
 - Europe.
 - North America
5. I am familiar with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - Never heard of them.
 - Unfamiliar.
 - Neither familiar nor unfamiliar.
 - Familiar.

- Very familiar.
- Do not know/prefer not to say.

This survey includes statements about whether and how economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection influence each other.

Economic growth refers to activities that aim at increasing the Gross Domestic Product, including the fields of trade, industrial production, job creation, financial services, and general business activities.

Social welfare refers to the promotion of equality, inclusiveness, labour protection, culture and education policies, civil and political rights, and healthcare.

Environmental protection refers to the protection of climate, natural resources, biodiversity, air, soil and water quality.

6. With which of the following objectives does your organisation's main mission mostly align with? **Rank** the options from most to least relevant.
 - Economic growth.
 - Social welfare.
 - Environmental protection
7. My organisation works the *most* on the following objectives. Select (up to) **three** options.
 - No poverty
 - Zero hunger
 - Good health and well-being
 - Quality education
 - Gender equality
 - Clean water and sanitation
 - Affordable and clean energy
 - Decent work and economic growth
 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure
 - Reducing inequality
 - Sustainable cities and communities
 - Responsible production and consumption
 - Climate action
 - Life below water
 - Life on land
 - Peace, justice and strong institutions
 - None of the above
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
8. My organisation works the *least* on the following objectives. Select (up to) **three** options.
 - No poverty
 - Zero hunger
 - Good health and well-being
 - Quality education
 - Gender equality
 - Clean water and sanitation
 - Affordable and clean energy
 - Decent work and economic growth
 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure

- Reducing inequality
- Sustainable cities and communities
- Responsible production and consumption
- Climate action
- Life below water
- Life on land
- Peace, justice and strong institutions
- None of the above
- Do not know / prefer not to say

The following statements ask for your professional (rather than personal) opinion on how your organisation contributes to sustainability.

9. It is my organisation's responsibility to promote sustainability.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
10. It is my organisation's responsibility to promote environmental protection.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
11. It is my organisation's responsibility to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say.

The following statements ask your professional opinion on how your organisation contributes or has contributed to the integration of economic, social and environmental considerations.

12. My organisation integrates economic, social and environmental considerations into its objectives and initiatives.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
13. My organisation integrates economic, social and environmental considerations into its objectives and policies because of: (select one or more options)
 - Internal factors (management directives, changes in my

organisation's mission).

- National policies.
 - Guidelines of professional associations or networks.
 - International agreements, treaties and UN programmes.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
14. In the last 5 years, my organisation has increasingly integrated economic, social and environmental considerations into its objectives and initiatives
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
 15. In your work, how often do you interact with people from other organisations?
 - Never/Very rarely (once a year or less).
 - Rarely (a few times a year).
 - Occasionally (once a month).
 - Regularly (once a week).
 - Very often (more than once a week).
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
 16. Outside of my organisation, I interact mostly with people dealing with the fields of [Select up to three options]
 - No poverty
 - Zero hunger
 - Good health and well-being
 - Quality education
 - Gender equality
 - Clean water and sanitation
 - Affordable and clean energy
 - Decent work and economic growth
 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure
 - Reducing inequality
 - Sustainable cities and communities
 - Responsible production and consumption
 - Climate action
 - Life below water
 - Life on land
 - Peace, justice and strong institutions
 - None of the above
 - Do not know / prefer not to say
 17. In the last 5 years, I have interacted more frequently with people working in a field different from mine.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say.

The following statements ask your professional opinion on the role of the SDGs in your organisation.

18. The SDGs incentivise my organisation to integrate economic, social and environmental considerations into its objectives and initiatives.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
19. Because of the SDGs I now interact more with people working in a field different from mine.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
20. The internal communications of my organisation (e.g., memos, internal workshops, internal strategy documents) refer to the SDGs.
 - Never.
 - Rarely.
 - Occasionally.
 - Regularly.
 - Very often.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
21. The external communications of my organisation (e.g., white papers, press releases, publication) refer to the SDGs.
 - Never.
 - Rarely.
 - Occasionally.
 - Regularly.
 - Very often.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
22. My organisation's sustainability strategy refers to the SDGs.
 - Never.
 - Rarely.
 - Occasionally.
 - Regularly.
 - Very often.
 - My organisation does not have a sustainability strategy.
 - I do not know/prefer not to say
23. The budget of my organisation has been adapted to be more in line with the SDGs.
 - Yes.
 - No
 - I do not know/prefer not to say
24. At least one employee within my organisation has tasks specifically dedicated to the SDGs.
 - Yes.
 - No
 - I do not know/prefer not to say.

The following statements ask your professional opinion on how economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection influence each other.

25. Economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection are interdependent: each one influences the other two.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
26. Economic growth often has a *negative* influence on environmental protection.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
27. Social welfare policies often have a negative influence on environmental protection
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
28. Environmental protection often has a *negative* influence on economic growth
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
29. Environmental protection often has a *negative* influence on social welfare
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
30. The Sustainable Development Goals help my organisation understand how economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection are interdependent.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say.

The following statements ask your professional opinion on the promotion of economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection.

- 31. Economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection are all equally important.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
- 32. We must promote environmental protection together with economic growth and social welfare.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
- 33. We must promote environmental protection even at the cost of economic growth.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say

- 34. We must promote environmental protection even at the cost of social welfare.
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say
- 35. The Sustainable Development Goals incentivise my organisation to promote environmental protection
 - Strongly disagree.
 - Disagree.
 - Neither agree nor disagree.
 - Agree.
 - Strongly agree.
 - Do not know/prefer not to say.

APPENDIX B

OVERVIEW OF INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TESTS RESULTS

- Green: $p \leq .05$
- Orange: $.05 < p \leq .100$
- Red: $p > .100$

Link to high-res image:

<https://ln5.sync.com/dl/948303b90/ye5nvyex-u496t437-cnmyr5jx-n9k474nz>

