

State of the Profession 2022

John Davies

SVP and Senior Analyst,
GreenBiz Group

GreenBiz
group

W#G

WEINREB GROUP
Sustainability Recruiting
ESG Recruiting

Table of Contents

01

Executive Summary

02

Introduction

03

The Great Expansion

04

The Organization and
Its Leaders

05

The Right Profile: Jobs
in Sustainability

06

The Great Reshuffle

07

Show Me the Money!

08

Conclusion

Appendix A: Profile of
Survey Respondents

Appendix B: Industry Sectors

Credits

01

Executive Summary

GreenBiz Group's seventh biennial State of the Profession report once again looks at the evolution of the role of the sustainability leader in today's business world. As in years past, we conducted an in-depth survey to find out how much they earned, where they worked and what they did in the course of their job, along with key trends in the profession.

It almost seems banal to use the word "unprecedented" to describe the two years since our last report. That overused word has mostly been used negatively, whether it's the number of COVID-related deaths, an increase in political divisiveness or the ballooning wealth gap. But the word can also be used to describe the increased focus on corporate sustainability. This is indeed an unprecedented moment for the profession, one that may come to be referred to as The Great Expansion.

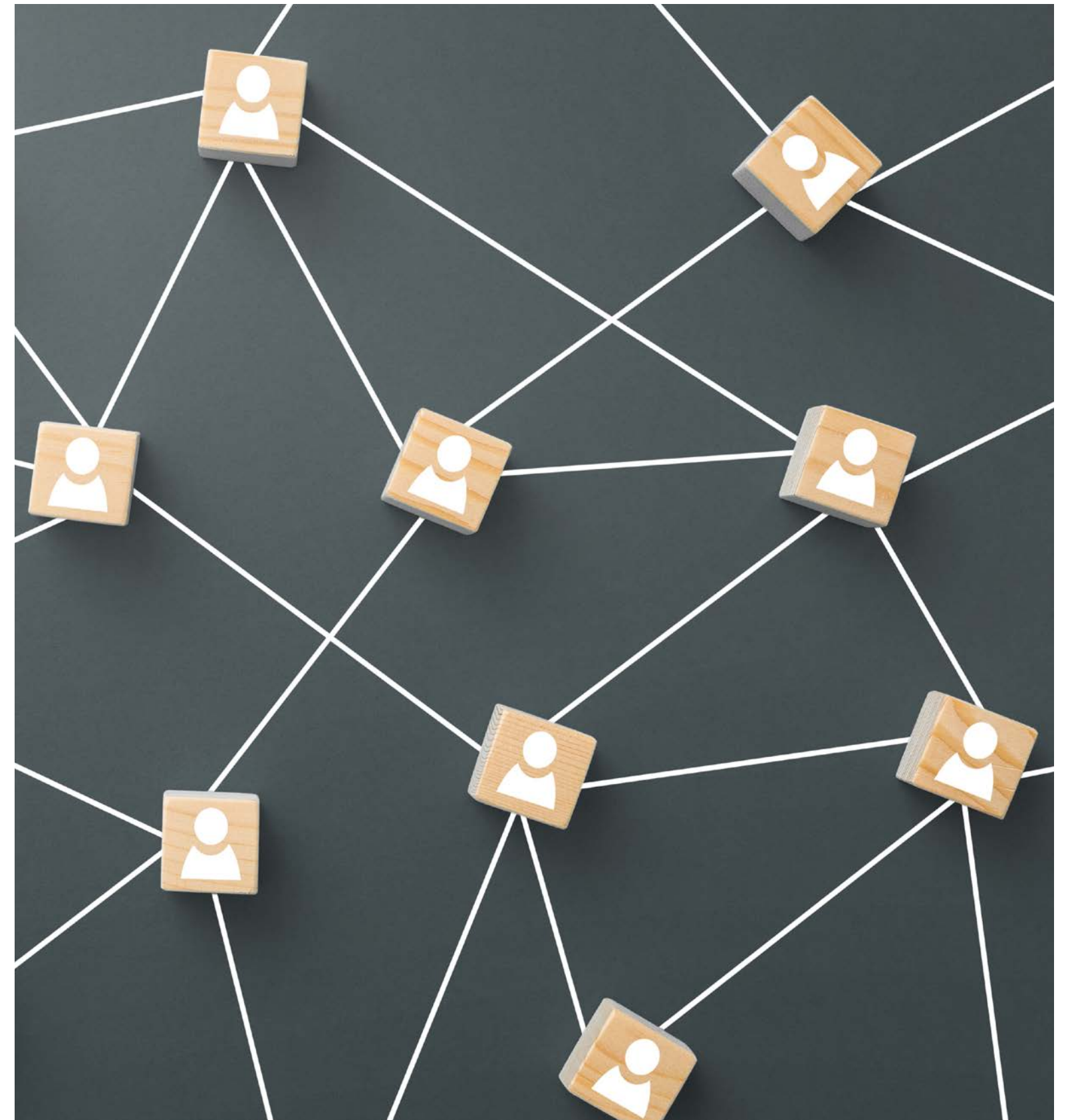
In early 2020, as COVID-19 began to spread globally, it became clear that this pandemic would not be short-lived. What wasn't clear was whether the pandemic would negatively affect corporate sustainability efforts in the same way as during the 2008 - 2009 financial crisis, often referred to as The Great Recession. Two years into the pandemic we knew anecdotally that this was not a repeat of that era. What we didn't know was that our survey results would show the profession to be stronger than ever.

Seventy-six percent of respondents from large companies reported an increase in headcount. This 18-point increase from 2019 is a strong indicator of sustainability's importance within the largest companies. Part of this growth is due to increased investor pressure. That pressure is also likely to account for an increase in CEO engagement noted by those surveyed.

With added pressure has come added resources. For example, 76 percent of respondents reported that their budgets had increased, a 24-point increase from 2019, a year that itself had seen a 15-point increase over 2017. Gender diversity has also improved as the number of women in sustainability leadership roles has expanded by close to 20 percentage points in every category since our first survey in 2010.

But challenges remain. Large companies are making net-zero greenhouse gas commitments for their own operations, but there is insufficient work to decrease emissions across their value chains. More companies are publishing sustainability reports, but investors seek a more consistent framework to evaluate corporate ESG performance. Women are rising up the ranks, but the sustainability profession lacks racial diversity.

Nowhere are the ups and downs of the sustainability profession expressed so clearly as GreenBiz Group Chairman and Co-founder [Joel Makower's opening keynote](#) at GreenBiz 22. It's a poignant take on the duality of being a sustainability professional: highs and lows, successes and frustration, optimism and terror — sometimes, all in a given day.



02

Introduction

This year, we partnered with [Weinreb Group Sustainability Recruiting](#), the [Global Reporting Initiative](#) and the [Environmental Defense Fund](#) to expand our reach of those surveyed. We also partnered with LinkedIn to gain insights into the job postings and the skills required for those in the sustainability profession.

Before we present our results and analysis, there are a couple of points to make about the data presented in this report. Most of the charts, statistics and conclusions refer to companies with revenues greater than \$1 billion, unless otherwise noted. One reason for this is that more than 60 percent of the firms with revenues of less than \$1 billion in our survey are either professional services firms, NGOs or educational institutions. An in-depth profile of survey respondents is presented in Appendix A. All monetary data has been converted to U.S. dollars.

circularity

MAY 17-19, 2022 • ATLANTA, GA

As the leading convening of professionals building the circular economy, Circularity 22 offers thought-provoking keynotes, informative breakouts, a solutions-oriented expo and engaging networking opportunities. Join the growing community of visionaries and practitioners to move beyond individual action, catalyze systems change and accelerate the circular economy.

Use discount code C22SOTP to save 15% on your registration.

[LEARN MORE](#)



The Great Expansion

Budget Increase

More Women in Leadership Roles

Headcount Increase

ESG Resources Increase

More Leaders with Higher Ranking Title

Team Size Increases

CEO Engagement

03

The Great Expansion

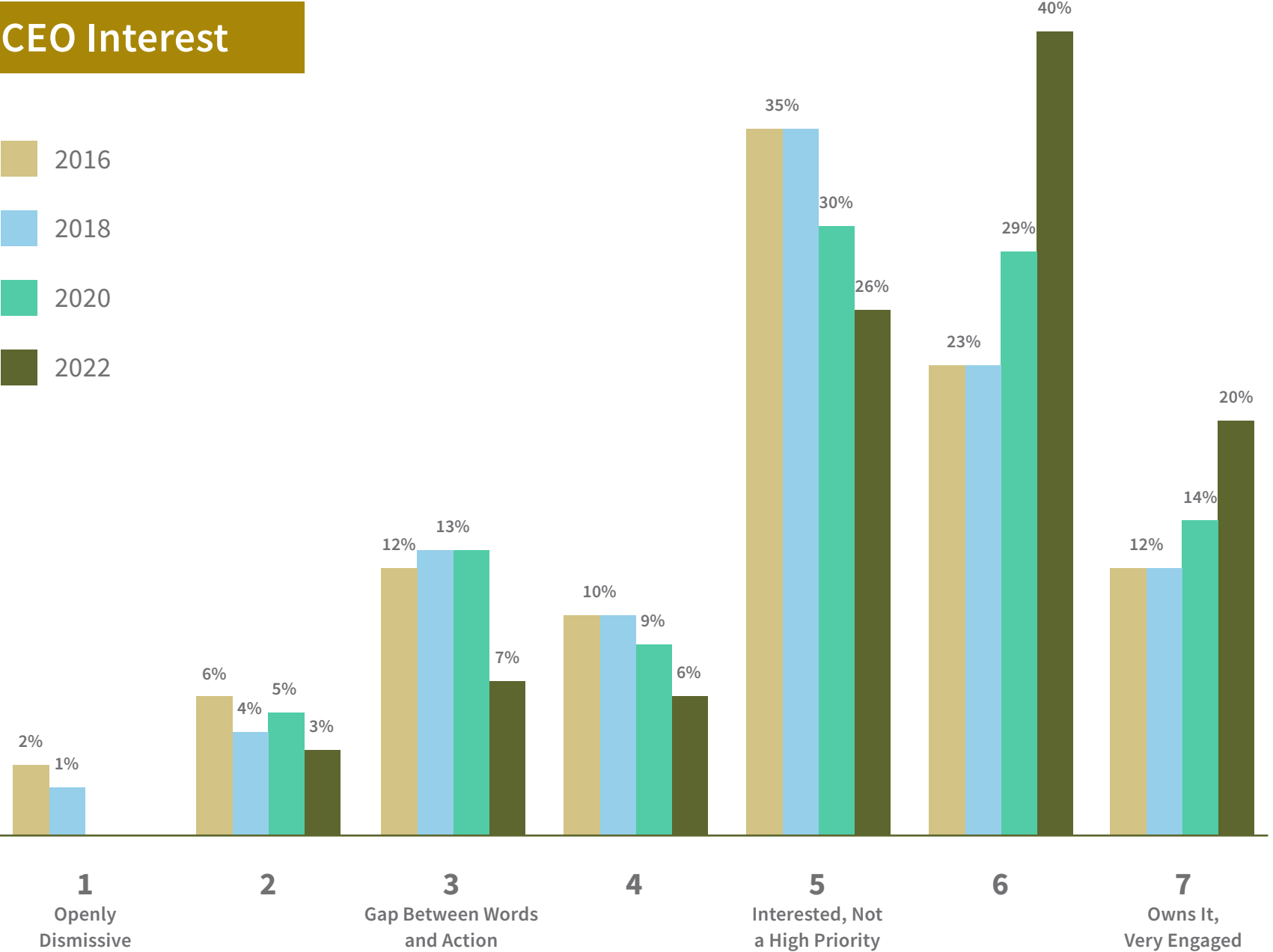
It almost seems banal to use the word “unprecedented” to describe the two years since our last report. That overused word has mostly been used to comment on failures, whether it’s the number of COVID-related deaths, an increase in political divisiveness, or the ballooning wealth gap. But the word can also be used positively to describe the increased focus on corporate sustainability. This is indeed an unprecedented moment for the profession, one that may come to be referred to as The Great Expansion.

The Great Expansion is reflective of a mounting climate crisis that requires increasingly bold action. CEOs are more engaged, more companies are expanding their sustainability efforts and the size of their teams, and more commitments are being made to reduce GHG emissions. But as recent reports from the IPCC, CDP and others show, these increased efforts are still not enough. The following section presents a few areas of progress as well as a few of the myriad challenges facing the sustainability professional.

CEO Engagement

We're seeing an expansion of CEO interest in sustainability. One of the questions we've been asking since 2016 is for respondents to rate on a scale from 1 to 7 how involved their CEO is in the company's sustainability program. In the past we've seen minor increases in CEO interest and almost none openly dismissive. In our most recent survey, 60 percent rated CEO interest either a 7 (20 percent) or 6 (40 percent).

CEO Interest



It would be great if we could attribute this to activism associated with the 2019 announcement by the Business Roundtable's CEO members [committing to lead their companies for the benefit of all stakeholders](#) — customers, employees, suppliers, communities and shareholders. But it could just as easily have more to do with the success of activist investor Engine No. 1's campaign against Exxon Mobil. This new type of activist investor focused on financial underperformance coupled with the oil giant's reluctance to take the energy transition seriously and led to a successful campaign to replace three board candidates.

The investment firm has since launched the Engine No. 1 Transform 500 ETF, a fund that will invest in 500 of the largest U.S. public stocks. The firm seeks to make passive, or index, investors active owners, holding companies accountable for their environmental, social and governance commitments while driving long-term economic value. This is the type of announcement that makes CEOs, and the boards that govern them, sit up and pay attention.

It's the Supply Chain, Stupid

In 1992, political strategist James Carville coined the mantra, “It’s the economy, stupid,” to highlight what he saw as the most important issue for Bill Clinton’s presidential campaign. When it comes to corporate action on climate change, it’s the supply chain — Scope 3, in sustainability jargon — where more than 80 percent of most company’s impacts reside. Clearly, there needs to be a much greater expansion of Tier 1, 2 and 3 suppliers participating in GHG emissions reductions. It’s encouraging that more than 2,000 businesses and financial institutions are working with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) to reduce their emissions in line with climate science and the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement. But those efforts alone will not be enough.

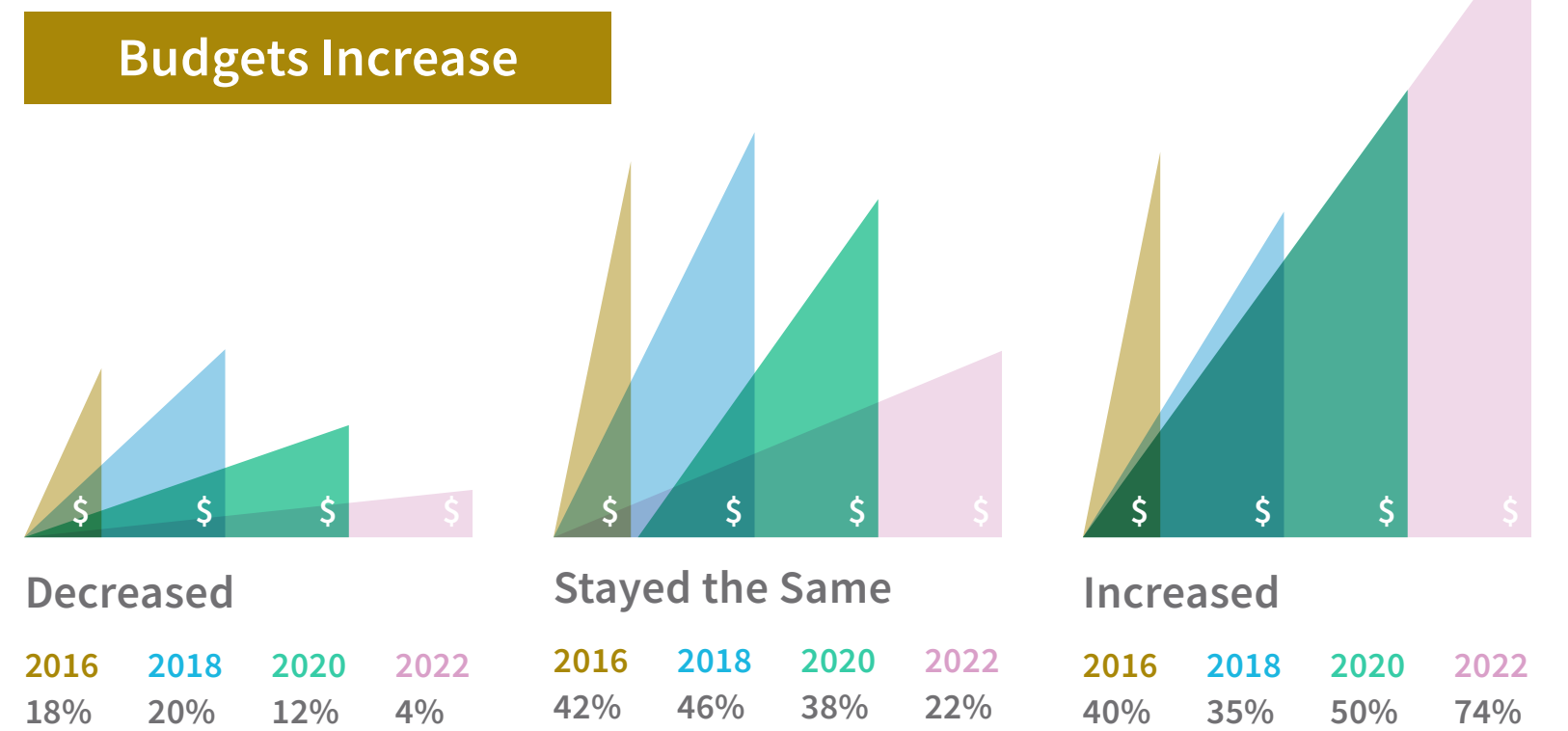
According to CDP, corporate ambition is lacking when it comes to the impact of supply-chain emissions. Most companies are insufficiently tracking Scope 3 emissions, despite these emissions being more than 11 times greater than those resulting from their own operations. Getting suppliers to take meaningful action will take more than asking them to fill out a survey. It will take a mix of carrots and sticks, and a few firms are leading the way.

As part of Walmart’s [Project Gigaton](#), a partnership with HSBC provides suppliers with improved financing access and terms in exchange for reduced GHG emissions. Cloud-based software company Salesforce [notified its thousands of suppliers](#) that it will include language in all future procurement contracts requiring them, among other things, to set science-based targets to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. And it set financial penalties for those that don’t.

Expanding Budgets and Teams

COVID-19 did not destroy the sustainability profession as budgets and teams expanded over the past two years. The number of organizations increasing their budgets has been dramatic. When asked whether the sustainability budget in large organizations has increased or decreased in the past two years, 76 percent of respondents replied that budgets had increased, a 24-point increase from

2019, a year that itself had seen a 15-point increase over 2017. For 96 percent of those respondents, budgets either increased or stayed the same. Only 4 percent saw their budgets decrease.

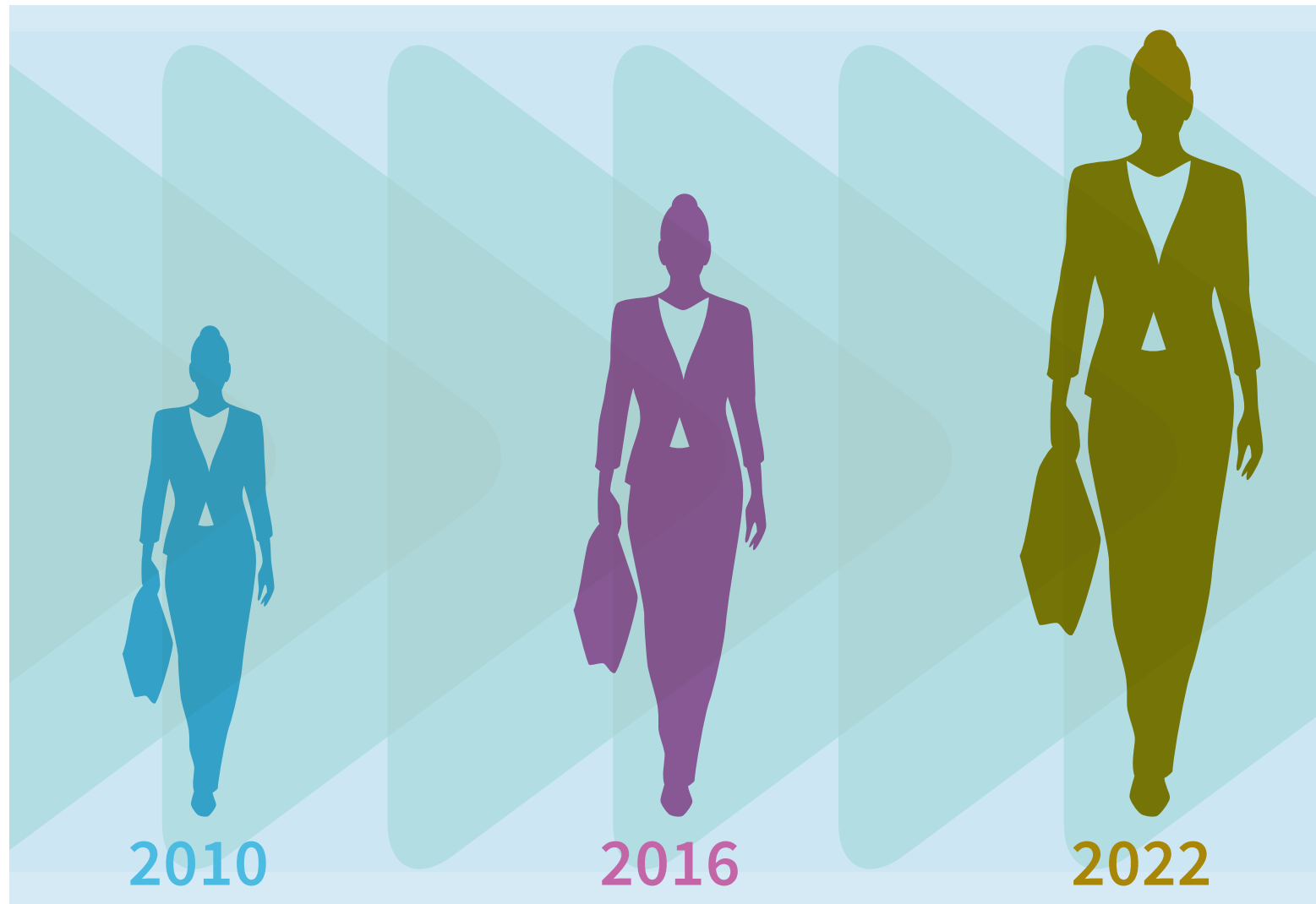


Those budgets have led to a hiring spree within the profession. Seventy-six percent of respondents from large companies reported an increase in headcount. This 18-percentage point increase from 2019 is a strong indicator of sustainability’s seat at the table at the world’s largest companies.

As sustainability headhunter Ellen Weinreb notes elsewhere in this report, investor pressure has led to calls for increased ESG transparency. When we asked if large organizations had added staff or consultants due to this increased pressure, 20 percent added one full-time equivalent (FTE) and 30 percent added two or more FTEs. Another 35 percent reported hiring more consultants. Staffing levels are increasing, but based upon job boards and executive search activity, the growth of opportunities for sustainability professionals is continuing.

Women Rise Up

One positive change over the past 12 years has been an increase in gender diversity in the profession. The number of women in sustainability leadership roles has expanded by close to 20 percentage points in every category since our first survey in 2010.



The growing number of women in sustainability is not necessarily reflected in their compensation, however. While female managers make slightly more than their male counterparts and compensation for vice presidents is at par, there is a major compensation gap at the director level.

An Expansive and Just Transition

Until recently, environmental justice was a phrase most likely associated with activists, but the past few years has seen the movement grow in prominence when it comes to climate change and the clean energy transition. It is rapidly becoming an issue for mainstream companies.

The authors of the most recent IPCC [report](#) stress there should be a greater focus on equity and justice because the effects of climate change are exacerbating inequality and hitting especially hard for low-income people, marginalized communities and developing countries. President Biden has pledged to use every lever at his disposal to advance environmental justice and spur economic opportunity for disadvantaged communities through the establishment of the [Justice40 Initiative](#).

Central to these types of initiatives is an expansion of who gets to be part of the conversation. In corporate America, sustainability is sorely lacking when it comes to racial or ethnic diversity. Unfortunately, not much has changed over the years. More than 80 percent of those working in sustainability are white.

There are growing efforts to change that. For example, at each of our GreenBiz conferences we have instituted the Emerging Leaders program, which sponsors students and early-career professionals to attend our events to find mentorship, insights and career opportunities. The scholarship program offers all-expenses-paid trips and conference passes to young sustainability leaders whose voices wouldn't necessarily be represented in the room. We have also launched [GreenBiz.org](#), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization working to nurture and empower BIPOC professionals to accelerate a just transition to a clean economy.

These efforts are not enough. As we push ourselves at GreenBiz to find ways to create a more diverse and inclusive sustainability profession, we invite organizations large and small to consider how they can accelerate our collective just transition.

ESG vs Sustainability

How many times have you heard someone say “it’s just semantics” when debating the best language to use to describe sustainability? Corporate social responsibility, citizenship, green, blue, triple bottom line, double bottom line ... they’ve often been used interchangeably.

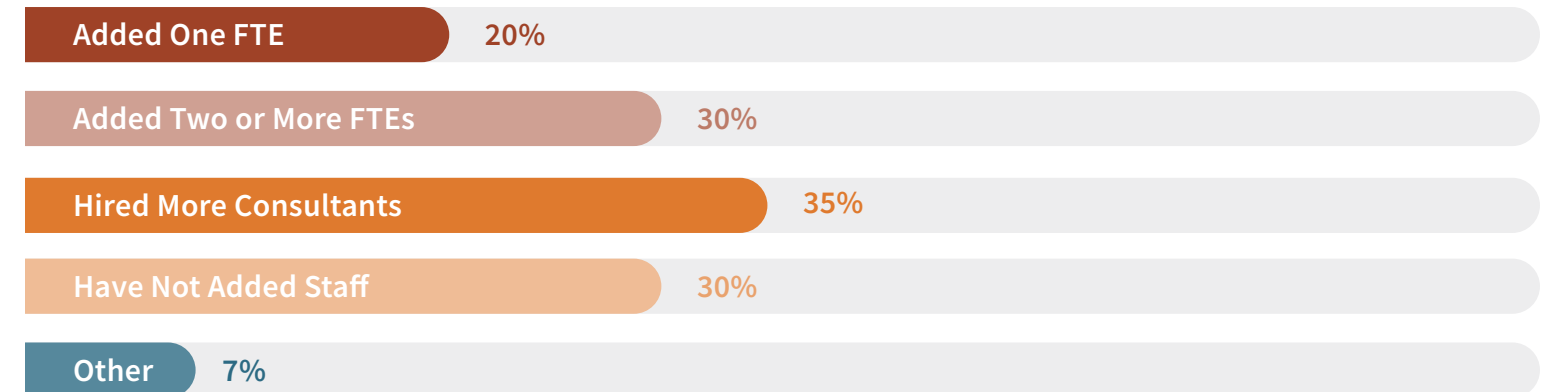
It’s easy to think you can do the same thing with the newest moniker — ESG — and on some level that’s true. Sustainability and ESG represent similarly large concepts, but there are also distinct emerging differences that are worth paying attention to, especially for people interested in careers in this space.

The concept of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues originated in the financial sector, and the moniker was designed to provide investors a clearer division among what are actually intersectional issues. By organizing goals and progress into three buckets, so to speak, the intent was to more easily and accurately evaluate the risks associated with each one. The logic of the organizational structure resonated, however, beyond just investors. ESG gives all stakeholders a shortcut to how to assess, address, communicate and measure progress in the three areas of most critical importance. The clean lines of “ESG” can suddenly make the all-encompassing mushiness of the word “sustainability” seem dated. There’s room, however, for both. And there are even some ways to distinguish them.

ESG has crossed over to non-financial service companies. In some cases, ESG replaces sustainability, a simple language change; or the terms are used interchangeably with no distinction. In most cases, ESG refers to the reporting, disclosures and investor relations side of the house. Hiring for ESG professionals requires experience measuring, reporting and aligning with an increasing number of standards and frameworks such as the Science Based Targets

initiative, NetZero, GRI, SASB and the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures — to name a few. This position can sometimes report into investor relations with dotted to sustainability or vice versa. There is the potential for ESG functions in investor relations to diverge and take a separate path from sustainability reporting into other functions such as corporate affairs or operations.

Has Your Organization Added Staff or Consultants as a Result of Increased Investor Pressure Related to ESG Disclosures?



Whatever you call it, reporting used to be a “0.5 FTE” — meaning half of a person’s full-time employment. This person would write the report for about half the year and then find something else to do for the other half of the year. Today, there are likely at least two people — one person on the communications/storytelling side and another person on the data/dashboard sides. As the data here shows, companies are adding headcount, and they are adding it to support the ESG reporting responsibility.

Ellen Weinreb



04

The Organization and Its Leaders

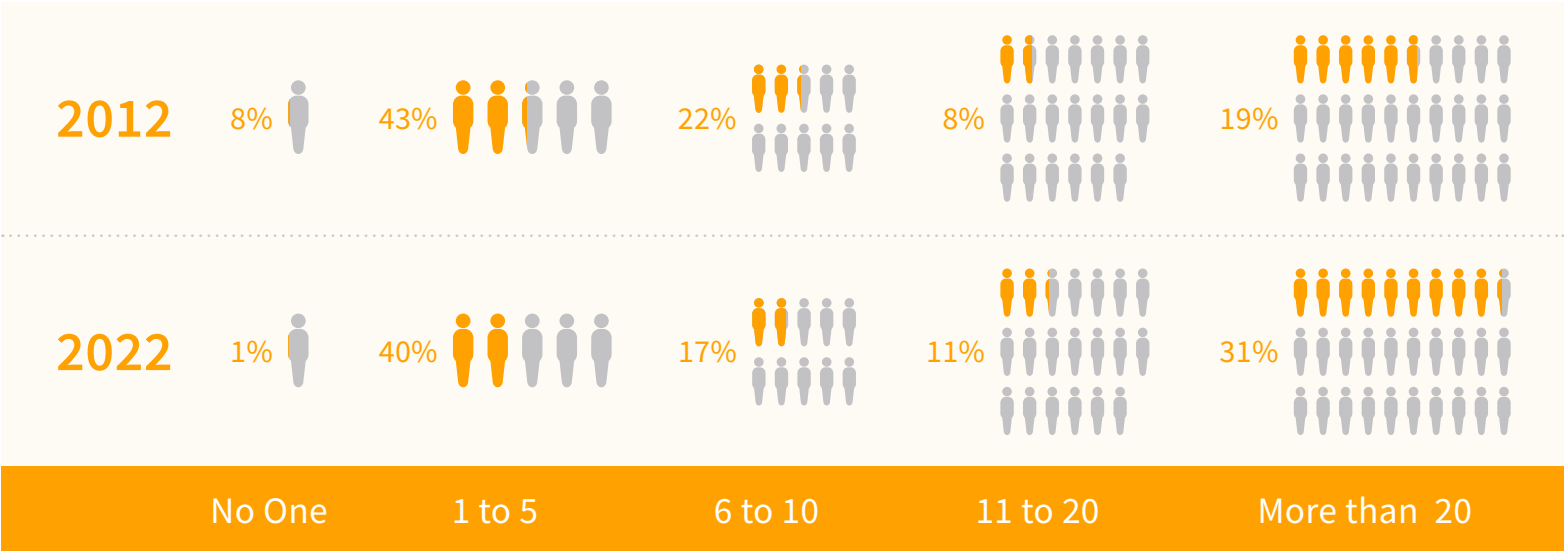
The architect Louis Sullivan is credited with coining the phrase “form follows function,” but he certainly wasn’t the first to express that philosophy. In this regard, companies can be viewed as “living” organisms as they grow, evolve and eventually die. According to Statista, the average lifespan of a company on the 2020 Standard & Poor’s 500 Index was just over 21 years, compared with 32 years in 1965.

When it comes to corporate sustainability, there is no right structure that applies to every company. The Conference Board and McKinsey have both published reports that describe organizational models that set up a company for success in corporate sustainability ([here](#) and [here](#), respectively). We reached out to members of the GreenBiz Executive Network (GBEN), our member-based, peer-to-peer learning forum for sustainability professionals, to understand how they structured their teams and how the greater corporate structure supports their efforts. Several members shared their org charts and how they’re seeking to drive success at their companies.

One question we are often asked, and that we have researched for the past 12 years, is how many people are dedicated full-time to a company’s sustainability initiatives. While this seems a simple enough question, the answer can be complicated. For example, in a highly regulated industry, environmental compliance requirements could encourage a sustainability director to answer with a large number. Similarly, in industries such as apparel or technology, including factory auditors could increase team sizes to double digits.

We also received some reports of GBEN members searching on the word sustainability in their corporate employee directories. They were surprised to see hundreds of results where employees had the term in their title and yet were unknown to the core sustainability team.

Teams Grow



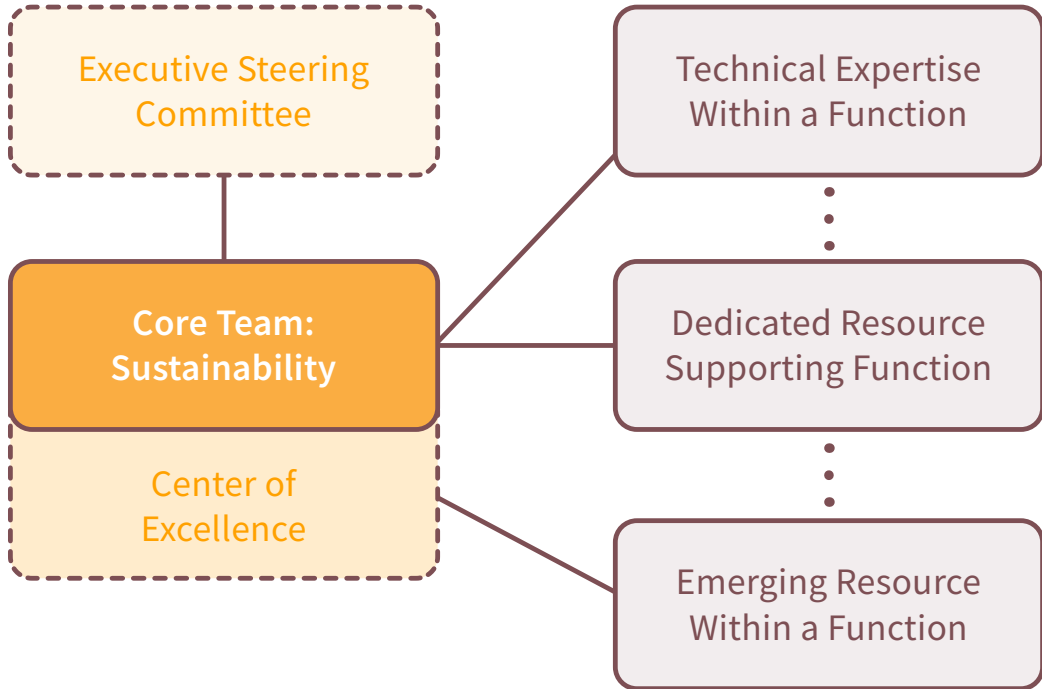
In our most recent survey, 31 percent of respondents are part of a team of 20 or more, an increase of 12 percentage point from 10 years ago. Another 28 percent are in teams of six to 20 individuals. As several GBEN members shared, teams tend to be organized thematically around public-facing goals. The environmental theme may

focus on energy, compliance, water, sustainable design, etc. There may be an ESG reporting theme as well as a social theme. The people responsible for these themes form the core of the sustainability team.

Hubs and Spokes

While organizational consultants can debate the applicability of various structural models, sustainability by its very nature is based upon a hub-and-spoke model as much of the work is done by other functions within the company.

The core sustainability team (or hub) is most often responsible for strategy. They are tasked to identify and assess the impact of issues (often documented in the form of a materiality matrix), establish the company’s commitments in response to those issues, identify who plays a role in delivering on those commitments (the spokes), and facilitate the development of multi-year plans to deliver on those commitments. The core team may include members who are part of a center of excellence, and it may interact closely with an executive steering committee. The interaction between hub and spokes can vary based upon the needs of a particular functional group or initiative.



There are three primary ways in which the core team interacts with others in the company. The goal for all these models is to eventually embed resources in those functional groups, but it can take steps to get there.

There are times when a commitment is made but it requires the technical expertise that sits in a specific function. For example, the core team may have established a science-based target that requires a change in technology to achieve. The core team is often most successful when reframing a challenge through a sustainability lens that engages existing expertise in new ways.

There are other instances where a core team member becomes a dedicated resource supporting a function where they teach the function “how to fish.” One GBEN member shared how they established a dedicated resource focused on sustainable brand development. This person sits in all the brand strategy sessions as well as R&D innovation team meetings. This brings a sustainability lens to the groups to help them identify relevant issues and opportunities. Ultimately, this person should work themselves out of a job because the brand and innovation teams should be doing this work instinctively.

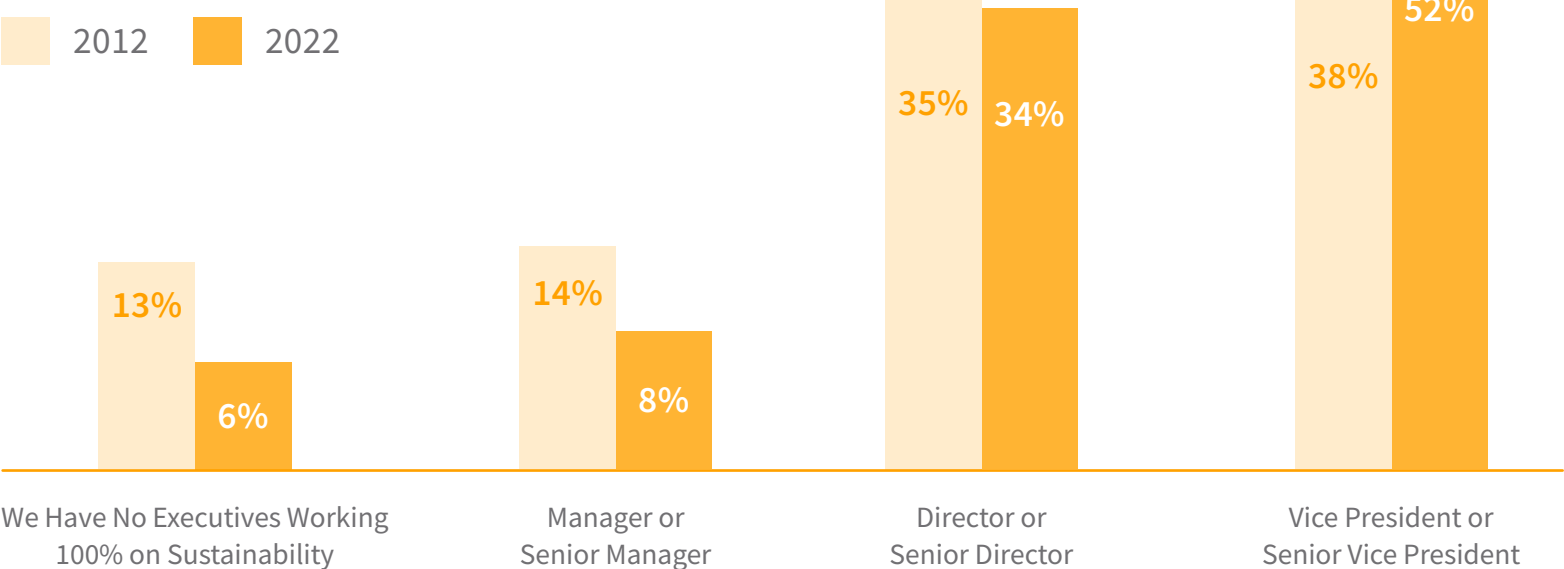
For emerging issues where there is little institutional knowledge, the core sustainability team may establish a center of excellence that can provide research, training and support for a very specific issue or initiative.

Sustainability Leadership

Since we launched our first survey in 2010, we’ve asked respondents to identify the highest-ranking executive whose job is 100 percent focused on the company’s sustainability efforts. Over those 12 years, we’ve seen a 13-percentage-point decrease of large companies having no executives working full-time on sustainability and a 15-point increase in the number of vice presidents or senior vice presidents in the role. Showing momentum for more senior executives leading the function, there’s been a 5 percentage-point increase of SVPs and VPs just since our last survey in 2020.

Only 6 percent of large organizations lack a full-time sustainability leader. Ten percent

Highest Ranking Title Dedicated to Sustainability



of smaller firms report no one dedicated full-time, which is a significant decrease from a reported 27 percent just two years ago. Thirty-seven percent of small firms have a vice president focused on sustainability, up from 24 percent two years ago. What hasn’t changed is that half of the sustainability leaders in small firms report directly to the CEO (52 percent in 2022 and 51 percent in 2020).

It is often said that the key to supercharging a company’s sustainability program is based upon the sustainability leader reporting directly to the CEO, but that isn’t yet the norm. Fewer than a quarter of the leaders we surveyed (22 percent) report to the CEO whereas almost half (47 percent) report to an executive who reports to the CEO. In discussions with GBEN members, the real key is reporting to someone who champions the sustainability team’s efforts.

The question we’re asked most often from an organizational point of view is where the sustainability function reports. Year over year, the results are the same: There is no consistent home within large or small organizations. While our survey lists 15 different functions to choose from, the leading choice — “other” — is selected by 37 percent of

large organizations and 50 percent of smaller ones. Next on the list is corporate affairs, selected by 18 percent of large and 13 percent of small organizations. No other function ranks in double digits for any size organization.

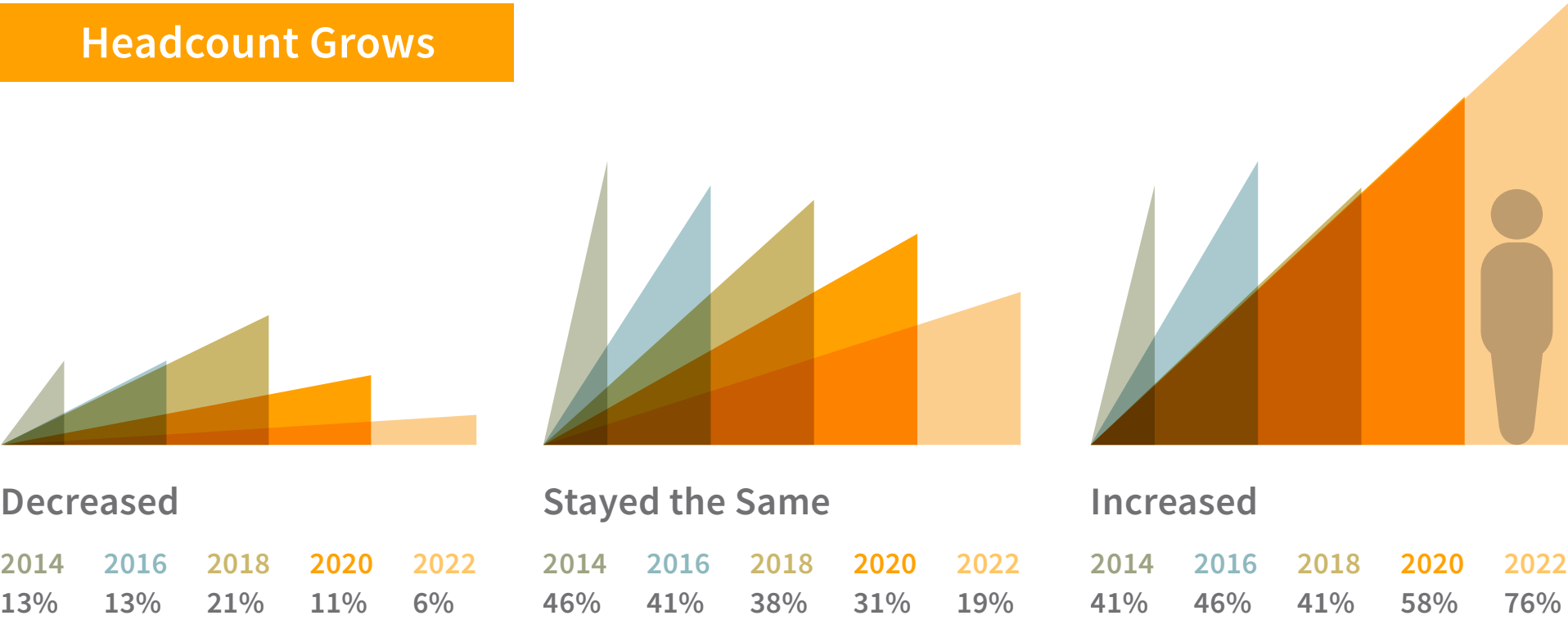
As one GBEN member shared, “My team sat in legal for a while, then reported to the CEO, then up through supply chain, and then back to legal. We like sitting in legal because if they’re OK with our initiatives no one else pushes back.”

Headcount and Budgets

In early 2020, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) began to spread globally. In the first three months after COVID-19 emerged, nearly 1 million people were infected and 50,000 died. By six months, the number of cases exceeded 10 million and there were more than 500,000 deaths.

It became clear that this pandemic was not to be short-lived. What wasn’t clear was whether the pandemic would negatively affect corporate sustainability efforts in the same way as the 2008–09 financial crisis, often referred to as The Great Recession. In 2008, GreenBiz conducted a survey of hiring plans for sustainability and Environmental, Health & Safety roles. Only 8 percent of respondents had open requisitions and were adding headcount whereas 27 percent had a hiring freeze, 6 percent had reassigned or eliminated headcount and 59 percent had no open requisitions and did not plan to add any during the year.

The results of our late-2019 survey were encouraging. We asked whether the headcount number had increased or decreased for sustainability departments in large companies in the past two years, and 58 percent of respondents noted an increase. This



reflected a 17-percentage-point increase from our 2017 survey. Two years into the COVID pandemic, we didn’t know exactly what to expect.

The good news is that 76 percent of respondents from large companies reported an increase in headcount. This 18-percentage-point increase from 2019 is a strong indicator of sustainability’s importance at the largest companies. Smaller firms saw a less significant change where 57 percent indicated that headcount had increased in the past two years, a five-point increase from 2019.

The number of organizations increasing their budgets is even more dramatic. When asked whether the sustainability budget in large organizations has increased or decreased in the past two years, 76 percent of respondents replied that budgets had increased, a 24-point increase from 2019, which itself had seen a 15-point increase over 2017. For 96 percent of those respondents, budgets either increased or stayed the same. Only 4 percent lost some of their budget.

A similar result holds true for smaller firms, although not quite as dramatic. Fifty-six percent of those firms say their budgets increased, up from 45 percent in 2019 and 37 percent in 2017. Only 6 percent replied that their budgets had been cut.

GREENFIN

JUNE 28-29, 2022 • NEW YORK, NY

GreenFin 22 will convene an invitation-only audience of sustainability, finance and investment leaders to share insights, improve communication, address the key challenges and showcase leading sustainable financial products and services.

Those interested in participating must request an invitation and be approved in order to register. If your request is approved, use code GF22SOTP to save 15% on your registration.

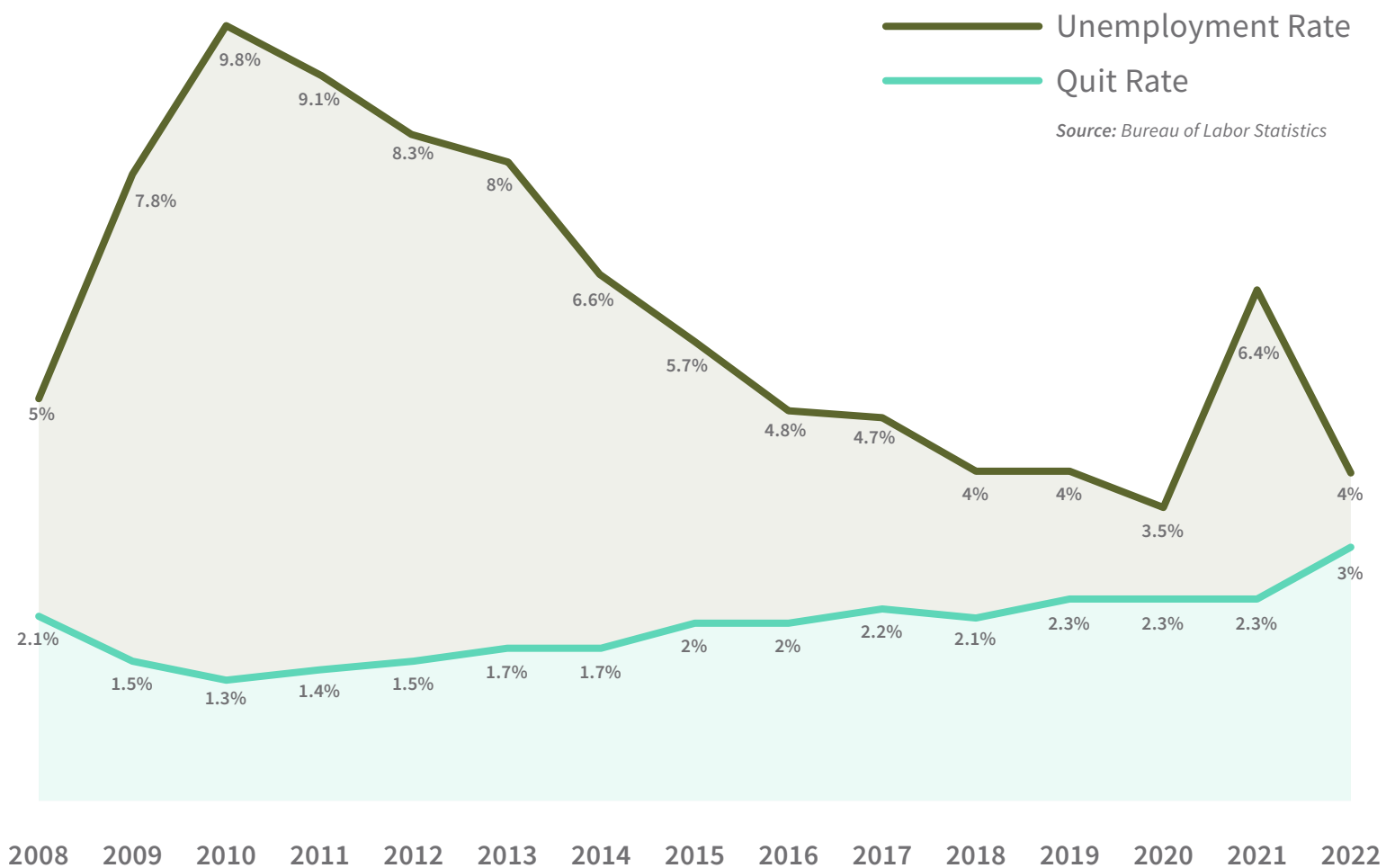
[LEARN MORE](#)

05

The Right Profile: Jobs in Sustainability

The big news story during the pandemic has been the Great Resignation, but sustainability jobs are seeing a Great Expansion. The unemployment rate rose dramatically at the height of the pandemic, but it proven to be relatively short-lived and was not a factor for sustainability professionals.

The Great Resignation did not affect all industries equally. In December 2021, about 6.1 percent of those working in accommodations and food services and 5.8 percent in leisure and hospitality sectors quit while only 1.7 percent of those working in finance left their jobs. Given that job satisfaction has remained high for sustainability professionals as measured in previous surveys, they are not swept up in the Great Resignation as much as they are seeing greater opportunities in their existing jobs and careers.



Rules of Attraction

For companies looking to staff up their sustainability department, the past 10 years have shown a marked increase in bringing in talent from outside the enterprise. A decade ago, 45 percent of new team members were hired from the outside whereas for the past six years at least two-thirds have been brought in from the outside. This is true for all industries and even smaller companies see 71 percent of sustainability hires coming from the outside.

We looked at how companies were finding these new hires. While it's a legal requirement, posting open positions on your own company's website is the least effective means to attract talent. Online job boards are most effective for recruiting individual contributors and managers (41 and 39 percent respectively). At the other end of the spectrum, executive recruiters were responsible for the hiring of 12 percent of directors and 17 percent of vice presidents.

One common thread across all job levels is a lack of racial diversity. More than 80 percent of survey respondents are white even though companies are more focused on diversity, equity and inclusion than ever before. Correlation is not necessarily causation but for directors and vice presidents, 39 and 45 percent respectively say they got their position because someone from the company contacted them. This can often lead to confirmation bias in stocking the talent pool.

This is the first year we tracked job movement, so we can't comment whether job changes occurred at a higher rate than in previous years. Only 19 percent of managers and 18 percent of directors moved from one company to another. According to our friends at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the typical employee stays at a job for just over four years so the amount of movement we're seeing doesn't seem out of line with historical trends.

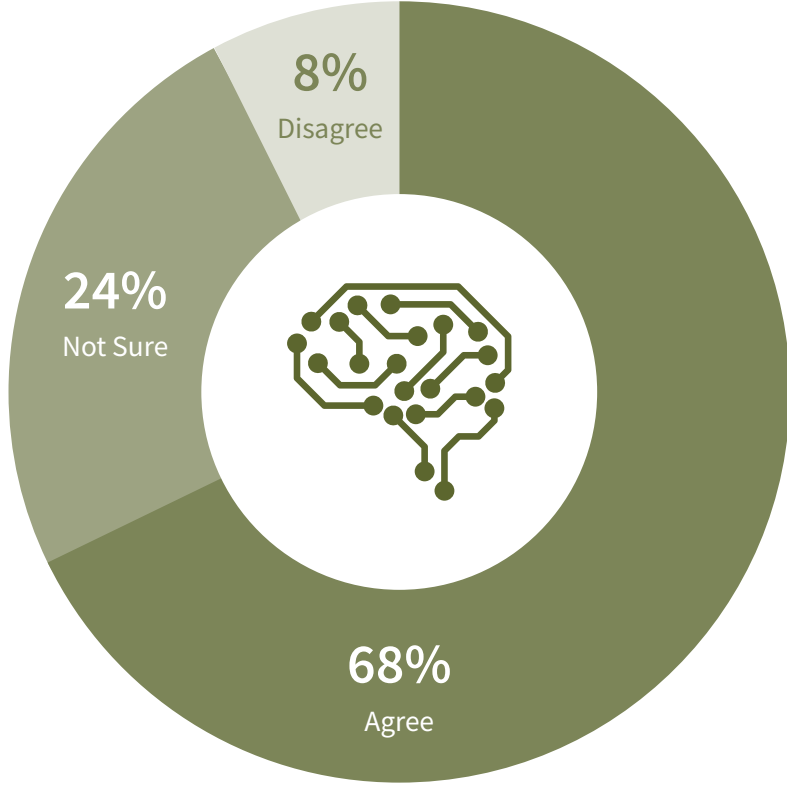
We also asked about employee expectations regarding the reopening of their offices. Thirteen percent of respondents from large companies and 26 percent from smaller companies say they have always worked from home and will continue to do so. The big question will be how companies accommodate the 68 percent of employees at large companies that plan to work in a hybrid arrangement.



One of the ways in which companies are trying to increase the number of diverse candidates is using artificial intelligence (AI). According to research conducted by [Tidio](#), about 68 percent of recruiters surveyed believe using AI in the recruitment process will remove unintentional bias by focusing solely on the skills and experiences of candidates. That said, AI is only as good as the data upon which it makes decisions and there are examples of unintentional bias discriminating against women applicants for positions historically taken by men.

Will Introducing AI to the Recruitment Process Remove the Unintentional Bias?

Source: Tidio



Another Brick in the Wall

University programs are graduating students with degrees in sustainability — be it business, environmental or other sustainability-focused or adjacent majors — at an ever-increasing rate. Those students have more options than ever before to join a consultancy or NGO, become an entrepreneur or begin their climb up the corporate ladder.

Those working in sustainability tend to be well-educated. Seventy-two percent of managers have a master’s degree as do 76 percent of directors and 74 percent of vice

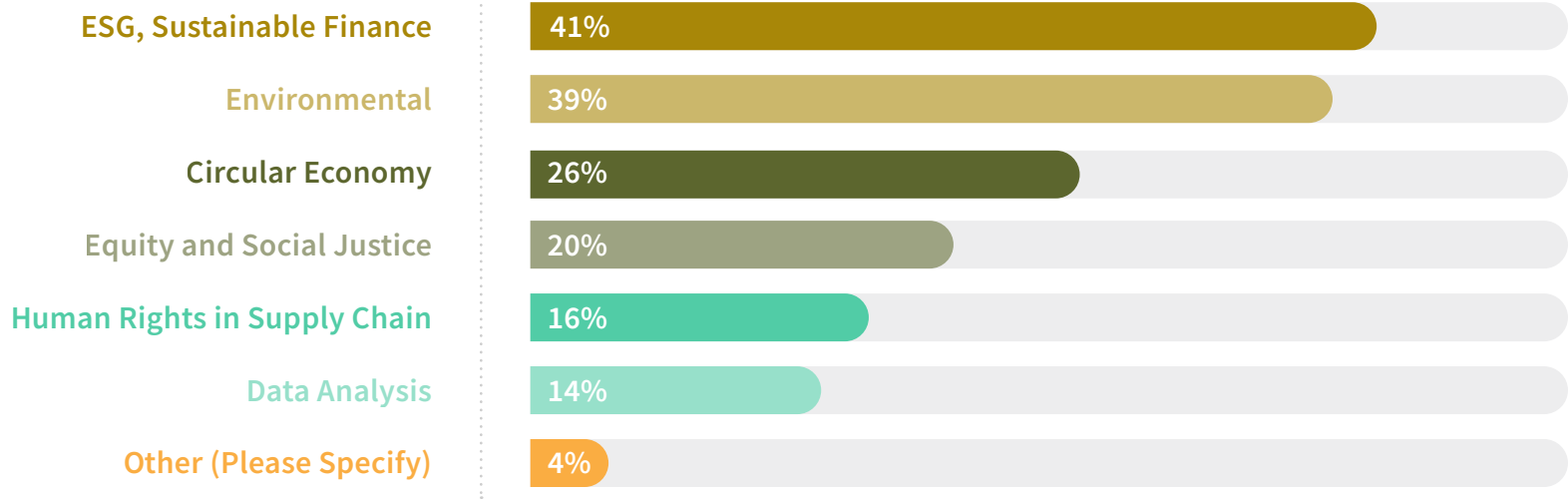
presidents. As to what those advanced degrees are, 40 percent of VPs and directors surveyed have MBAs as do 30 percent of managers. Of those who went on to get an MBA, the majority did not pursue a sustainability-specific degree. Nineteen percent of VPs matriculated with an MBA with a sustainability focus as did 30 percent of directors and 40 percent of managers.

As for education beyond college, we asked about training programs for sustainability professionals in specific frameworks.

The Global Reporting Initiative is second only to CDP in terms of disclosure frameworks, and 46 percent of large company respondents have received training in the framework. More than 50 percent of directors and VPs have received GRI training, and it is recognized as an important skill within most industries. The next-highest-ranked frameworks were LEED Green Associate and LEED AP certifications (23 and 20 percent respectively) and that was mostly in the construction, real estate and retail industries.

We also sought to understand what additional education, training and certifications sustainability professionals are seeking to help their sustainability career. Training in ESG and finance top the list for managers, directors and VPs (43, 42 and 34 percent respectively). Environmental education with a focus on climate, carbon, waste and water was second.

Seeking More Education



06



The Great Reshuffle

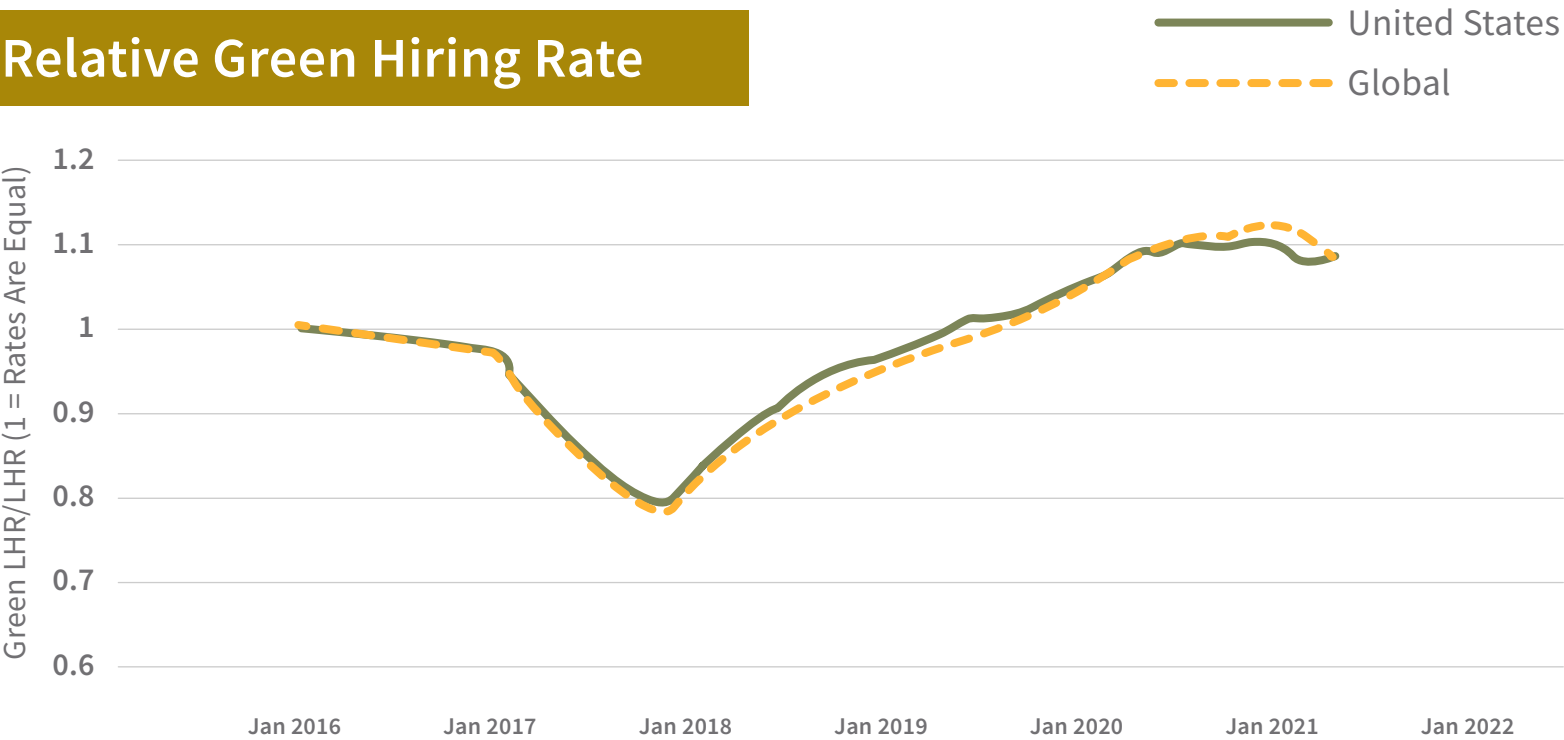
We are in a time of great upheaval around the world. We are experiencing an unprecedented moment in history where we are reimagining the future of work. Governments are assessing policies, programs and how to support constituents amid the pandemic. Business leaders are reimagining their entire working models, cultures, and company values. Employees are rethinking what they do, where they do it and what it means. At LinkedIn, we call this the Great Reshuffle.

The Great Reshuffle presents us with an opportunity. We can harness this moment of change to redirect human talent to rise to the most urgent challenge facing humanity: the green transition. We cannot wait any longer to address climate change. We must green the economy and activate the jobs, companies and policies that will power it. By capitalizing on this unprecedented moment of change to redirect human talent to accelerate the green transition, we will have a fighting chance of meeting the climate challenge. But achieving this requires moving toward an economy that transitions workers into jobs beyond those currently considered green. New workers need to enter green and greening potential jobs, bolstered by green skills and more opportunities from employers.

In 2019, the hiring balance tipped towards green talent, as the green hiring rate accelerated ahead of the overall hiring rate globally and in United States. This means that green workers were hired at a higher rate than non-green workers. The trend continued throughout the pandemic, suggesting that green talent was more resilient to the economic downturn than non-green talent.

Still, the hard truth is that right now we are nowhere close to having sufficient green talent, green skills, or green jobs to deliver the green transition. Based on the current trajectory of green skills growth in the labor market, we are not going to have sufficient human capital to meet our climate targets. While more workers are transitioning into green and greening jobs than are leaving, the total number of workers transitioning into those jobs is falling behind.

Relative Green Hiring Rate

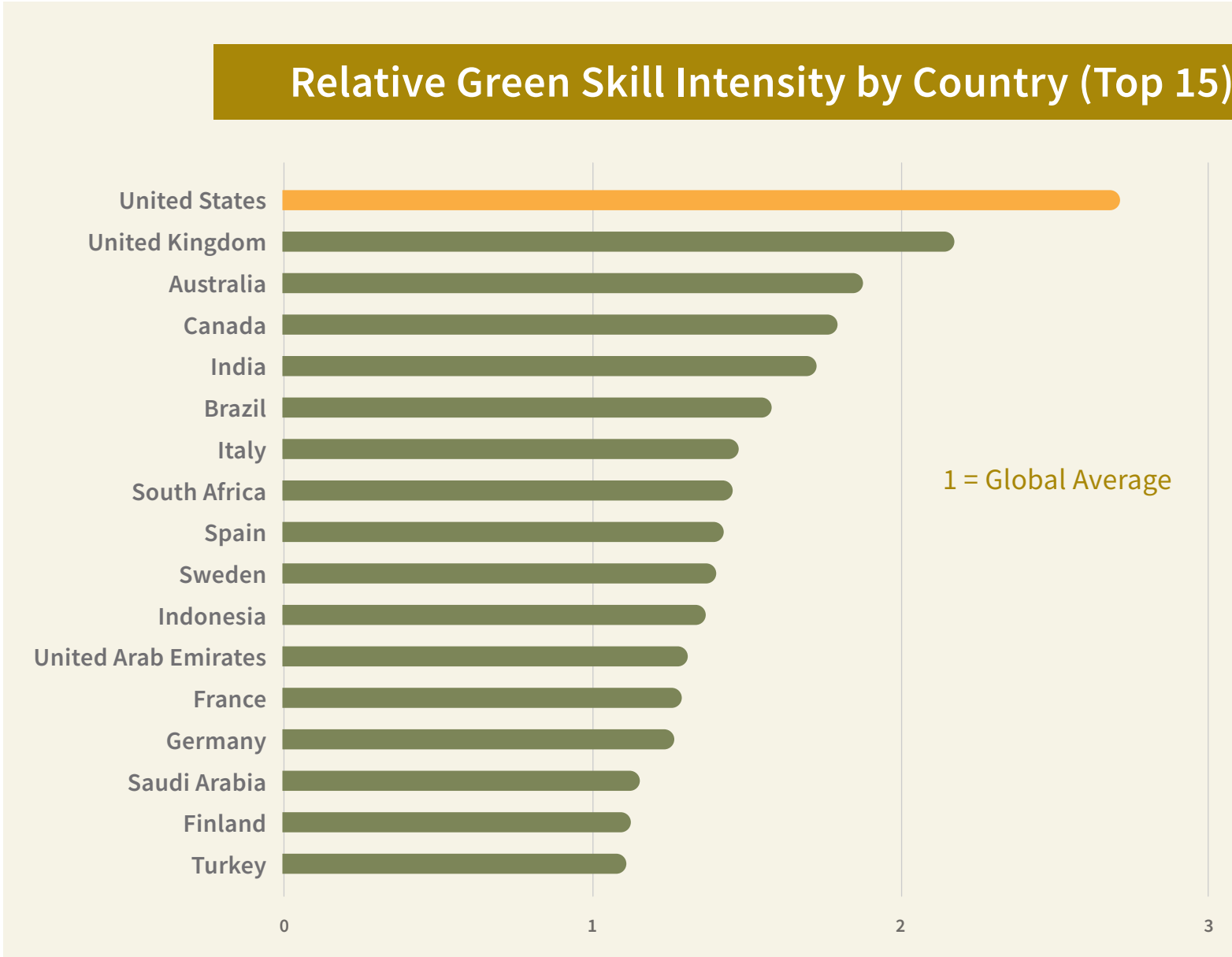


Green skills are the building blocks of the green transition and the key to unlocking the human capital that will power it. We need more opportunities for those with green skills. We need to upskill workers who currently lack those skills. And we need to ensure green skills are hardwired into the skillset of future generations.

To measure the status and the evolution of green skills, we use LinkedIn’s green skill taxonomy to quantify the extent to which different countries, sectors and jobs use these skills. We call this green skill intensity.

Green skills intensity is a helpful metric to understand how workers in different countries are applying green skills in their jobs. The average job in the United States uses almost three times more green skills than the average job globally (out of 50 leading economies surveyed).

Relative Green Skill Intensity by Country (Top 15)

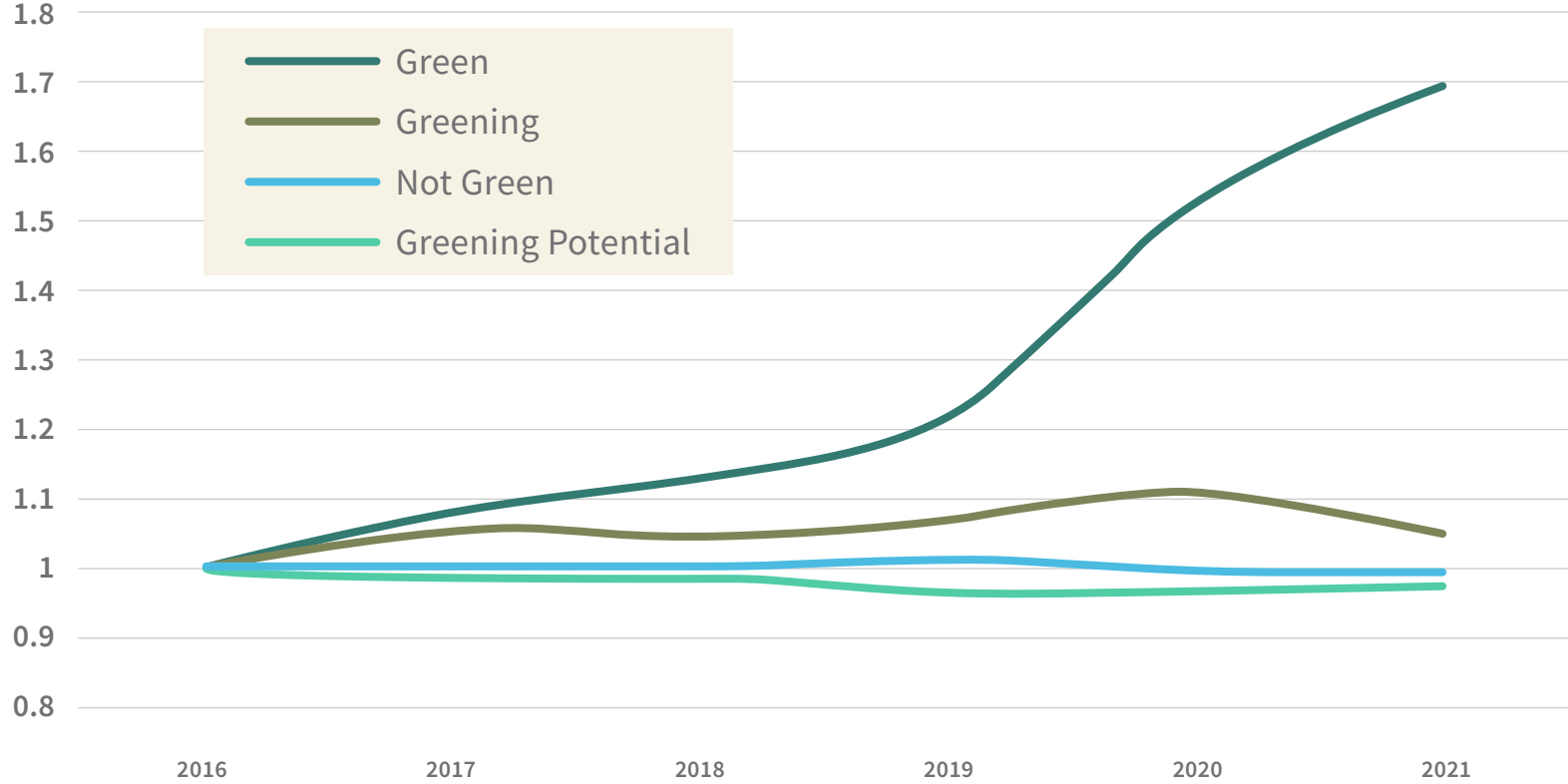


Hiring of green jobs in the workforce in the United States is rising faster than any other category.

Traditionally green jobs, such as sustainability managers and environmental coordinators, witnessed a steady increase in the United States over the past five years.



Change in the Share of Hiring, Indexed to 2016



These were the fastest growing green and greening jobs in the United States from 2016 to 2021:

Job	Job Type	Rank	CAGR (2016-2021)
Environmental Health Safety Engineer	Green	1	30%
Agronomist	Green	2	27%
Solar Consultant	Green	3	24%
Distribution Engineer	Greening	1	34%
Epidemiologist	Greening	2	27%
Power System Engineer	Greening	3	26%



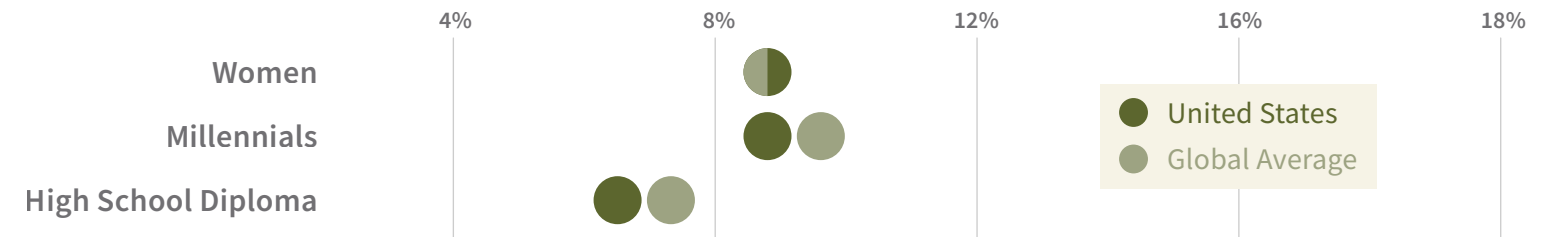
While these trends are promising, green and greening jobs together accounted for only 10% of hiring in 2021 in the United States. Moving toward a green economy will require workers to upskill in green and enter green greening potential jobs. These are some of the fastest growing green skills between 2016 and 2021 in the United States:

Skill Name	Green Skill Category	Skill Growth
Sustainable Fashion	Pollution Prevention	90.6%
Environmental Services	Ecosystem Management	82.5%
Oil Spill Response	Environmental Remediation	80.4%
Climate	Ecosystem Management	68.7%
Sustainable Growth	Environmental Auditing	67.2%
Surface Water	Ecosystem Management	64.5%
Occupational Safety and Health Advisor (OSHA)	Environmental Policy	57.9%
Sustainable Business Strategies	Pollution Prevention	56.6%
Solar Systems	Renewable Energy Generation	55.5%
Sustainable Landscapes	Ecosystem Management	52.9%

Finally, the green transition offers an opportunity to ensure not only a sustainable future for the planet but an equitable and resilient one for workers too. Our data shows that we have inequities emerging among gender and educational lines in the United States:

- **Gender Gap:** There are 55 women for every 100 men considered green talent in the United States.
- **Education Gap:** Talent in the United States with a formal degree is more likely to be green talent than those with a high school diploma.

Share of Green Talent and Percentage of Each Group





VERGE

OCTOBER 25-27, 2022 · SAN JOSE, CA

VERGE 22 is the leading climate tech event accelerating solutions to the most pressing challenges of our time. Use discount code **V22SOTP** to save 10% on your registration.

[LEARN MORE](#)



GreenBiz²³

FEBRUARY 14-16, 2023 · SCOTTSDALE, AZ

GreenBiz 23 is the premier annual event for sustainable business leaders.

[LEARN MORE](#)

07

Show Me the Money!

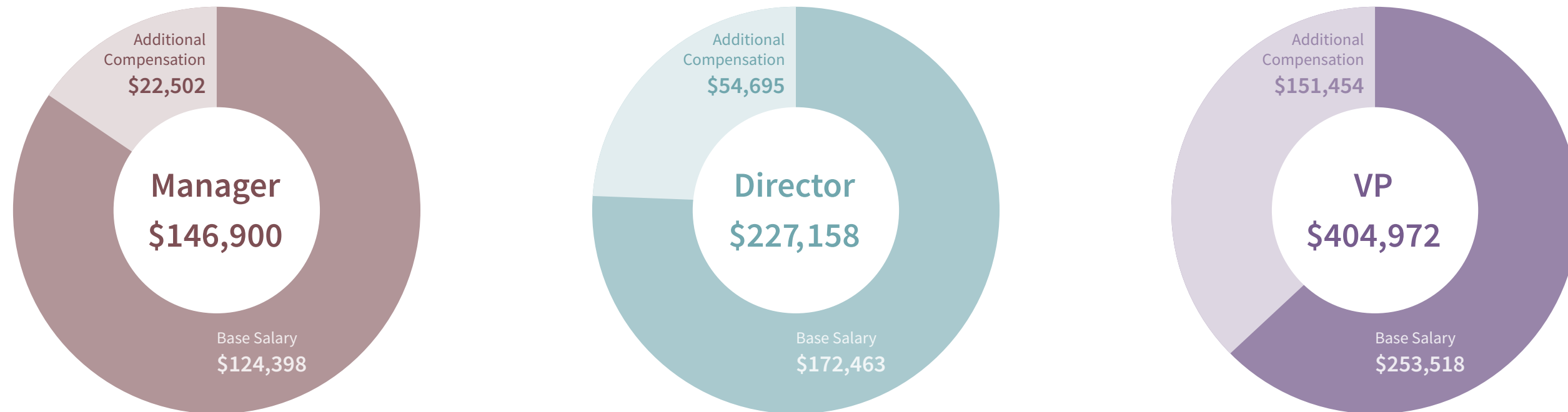
The State of the Profession report has become the go-to benchmark for compensation trends for those working in the sustainability profession. It's not a perfect science — titles and salary structures can vary across geographies and even within industries. But after 12 years of collecting and reporting data, our findings are consistent.

The exciting development for this year's report is the growth in the number of respondents. More than twice as many directors (235 percent) shared their compensation details, with similar increases for managers and VPs (176 and 168 percent respectively). This lends greater credence to the accuracy of our data and allows us to provide a deeper dive into differences across regions and industries.

The Big Reveal

The ability to benchmark compensation is likely the primary incentive for sustainability professionals to devote their time to answering yet another survey. We wouldn't even be surprised if you, dear reader, opened to this section of the report first, so let's get right to it.

The average total compensation (base salary plus additional compensation such as bonus, exercised options, etc.) for managers is \$146,900. For directors, it's \$227,158 and for vice presidents, \$404,972.

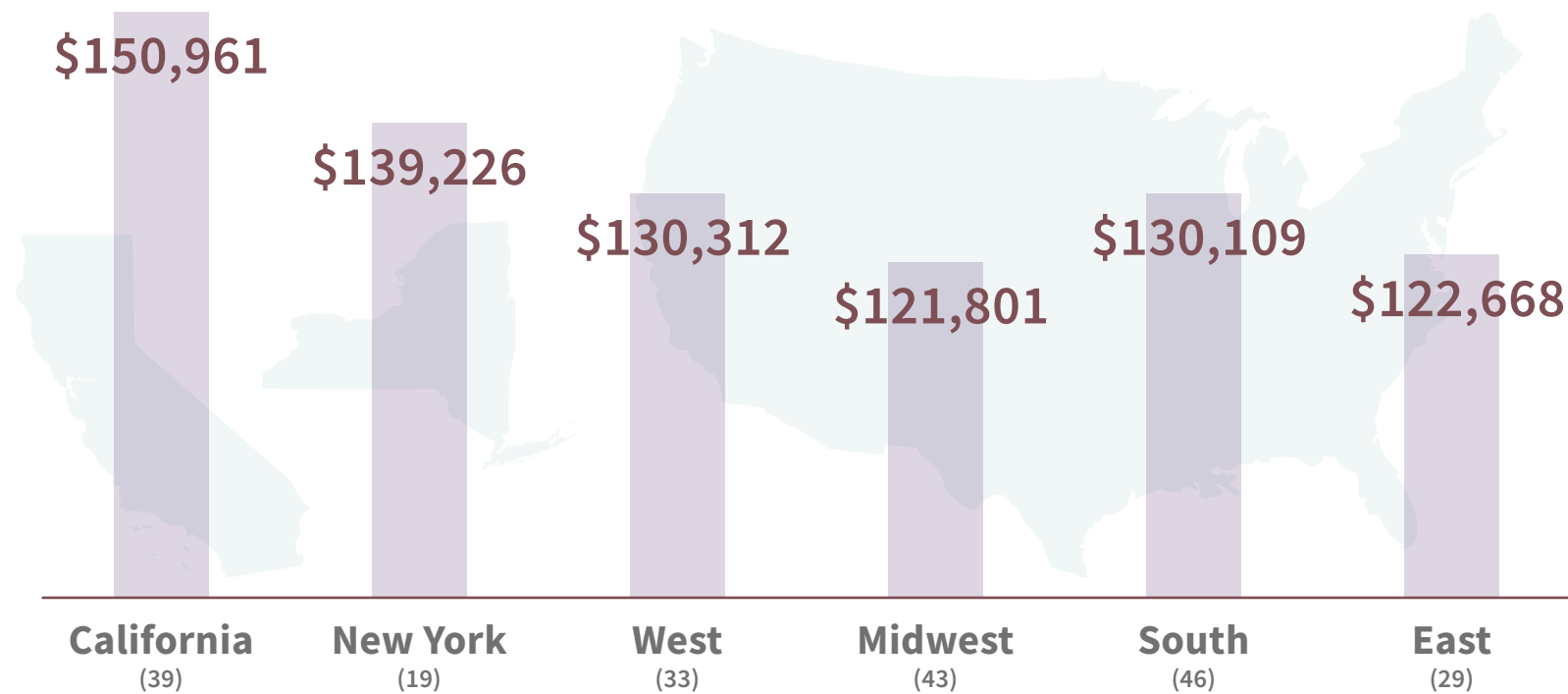


Now that we've gotten that out of the way, let's break this down starting with base salaries. The average and median salaries for managers and directors are only a couple thousand dollars apart. While there's a larger gap of \$13,000 between average and median for VPs, base salary is less an indicator of total compensation.

The base salary for managers and directors tracks a standard bell curve, but the range of base salaries for vice presidents looks more inverted with 32 percent having a base below \$200,000 and 18 percent having a base between \$300,000 and \$400,000, and another 9 percent with a base greater than \$400,000.

With 81 percent of respondents based in the United States, U.S. base salaries were higher for managers and directors (approximately \$9,000 and \$7,500 respectively) than those from other countries. The increased response rates for this year's survey allowed us to explore regional differences in the U.S. as well. We separated California from the West and New York from the East and saw those two states pay managers significantly more than any other region. Managers in California averaged \$150,961 and their counterparts in New York averaged \$139,226. That's between \$10,000 and \$30,000 more than elsewhere in the country.

Base Salary for Managers by Region



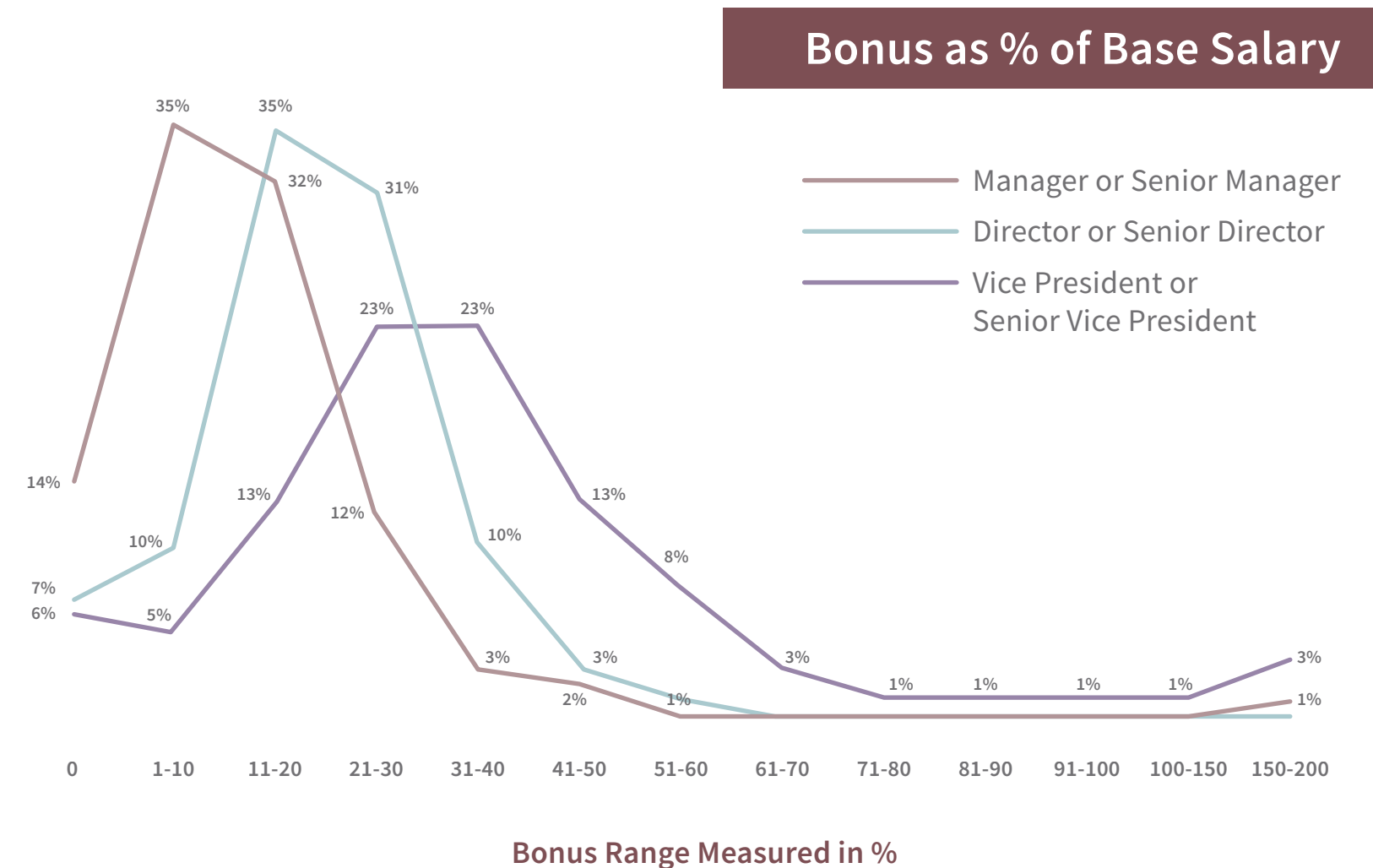
The difference in base salary for directors is less pronounced, although Californians make \$35,000 more than their counterparts elsewhere in the West. New Yorkers make close to \$13,000 more than their peers in the East.

Four industry sectors provided enough responses to highlight salary trends for their industries: consumer goods, technology, professional services and financial services (17, 14, 11, and 10 percent of large company respondents respectively). Managers in the technology and professional services industry were paid more than \$139,000 while those in financial services averaged \$127,225, and consumer goods \$116,142.

Directors in the technology industry took home an average \$207,527, far outpacing their peers in professional services (\$183,149), financial services (\$179,336) and consumer goods (\$170,670). Average salaries for vice presidents in technology led the way again (\$289,267) with those in consumer goods (\$284,500) outpacing professional services (\$273,700) and financial services (\$224,454).

The Bump

The delta in base salaries hasn't changed that much year over year, with a slow and steady progression noted in each of our previous reports. That prompted us to ask more specifically about raises and additional compensation. The good news is that last year more than 80 percent of people working in sustainability received a raise.



The flip side of the story is that the range of raises approximates an inverted bell curve. Thirty-five percent of managers received a raise of 3 percent or less while 24 percent received a raise of more than 10 percent. The same holds for directors and VPs, where

some received a raise of 3 percent or less (39 and 28 percent respectively) while others received raises of 10 percent or more (25 and 30 percent respectively).

In the past, we have struggled to capture the total compensation picture for those working in sustainability. This year, we came much closer as we inquired as to total compensation as well as what percent of their base salary was awarded as a bonus. It's no surprise that the higher the title, the bigger the bonus.

Two-thirds of managers and directors received bonuses within a relatively tight range. Thirty-five percent of managers received a bonus of 10 percent or less while another 32 percent received a bonus of between 11 and 20 percent. For directors, 35 percent received a bonus between 11 and 20 percent and 31 percent received a bonus between 21 and 30 percent. The range is wider for vice presidents with 4 percent of them doubling or even trebling their salary.

Other Considerations

There are other factors that can influence the salary and total compensation package for those working in sustainability.

Age. It shouldn't be a surprise that the average salary tends to increase as one gets older. The demographics associated with each title shouldn't be a surprise, either. Sixty-six percent of managers are under 40 whereas 60 percent of directors are over 40. One change we've noted since 2020 is that then almost half (48 percent) of VPs were over 50 whereas now only 35 percent are in that age group; 34 percent of VPs are under 40.

Gender. We noted earlier the increasing number of women in sustainability leadership positions — now 60 percent of those working in sustainability. At the manager and vice president levels there is very clear compensation parity, with female managers making \$3,420 more on average than their male counterparts and male vice presidents making only \$483 more on average than their female counterparts. The biggest disparity is at the director level where men average \$180,646 while women make significantly less — \$166,950.

Education. It's difficult to say if education plays a role in salary level as more than 70 percent of those working in sustainability have some sort of advanced degree beyond their bachelor's.

Experience and Tenure. Surprisingly, newer entrants into the sustainability profession are doing better, salary-wise, than their elders. Five percent of directors have fewer than three years of experience in sustainability and yet are rewarded with a higher salary than their more experienced peers. Managers with fewer than three years of experience have a higher salary than their peers with four to 10 years' experience. This is more than likely more supporting evidence for the Great Expansion given the current competition for talent. While starting salaries for directors are on par with those in 2019, those for managers with three years or fewer in the workplace have risen from an average of \$108,916 to \$125,553.



08

Conclusion

The next eight years are critical if we are to prevent irreversible damage from climate change and create opportunities for a more just transition. Corporate commitments and efforts have increased, but there's a need to go further faster — by investing in the people who can make them happen.

The sustainability profession is expanding more than any other time in history. Companies are beginning to embed sustainable practices throughout the organization. Now is the time for boards and senior management to reward their sustainability professionals with the backing and the budgets to create even greater impact.

GreenBiz Newsletters

Keep up with the latest news, analysis and event offers by subscribing to GreenBiz's free weekly newsletters. Each newsletter is dedicated to a critical sustainability topic: the business of sustainability, climate tech, the circular economy, finance, energy, food systems and mobility.

[LEARN MORE](#)

circularity WEEKLY

CLIMATE TECH WEEKLY

ENERGY WEEKLY

FOOD WEEKLY

Green Buzz WEEKLY

GREEN FIN WEEKLY

MOBILITY WEEKLY

Appendix A: Profile of Survey Respondents

The 2022 GreenBiz State of the Profession report was based on a survey of the GreenBiz Intelligence Panel, with additional respondents reached through partnerships with this year's sponsor, the Weinreb Group Sustainability Recruiting. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) for their significant additional outreach.

Methodology

Data for the State of the Profession survey was collected during November and December 2021. The survey was conducted online and an email link was sent to the panel’s members as well as to other participants reached via partnership organizations. All responses were anonymous, and GreenBiz does not share or sell any collected information.

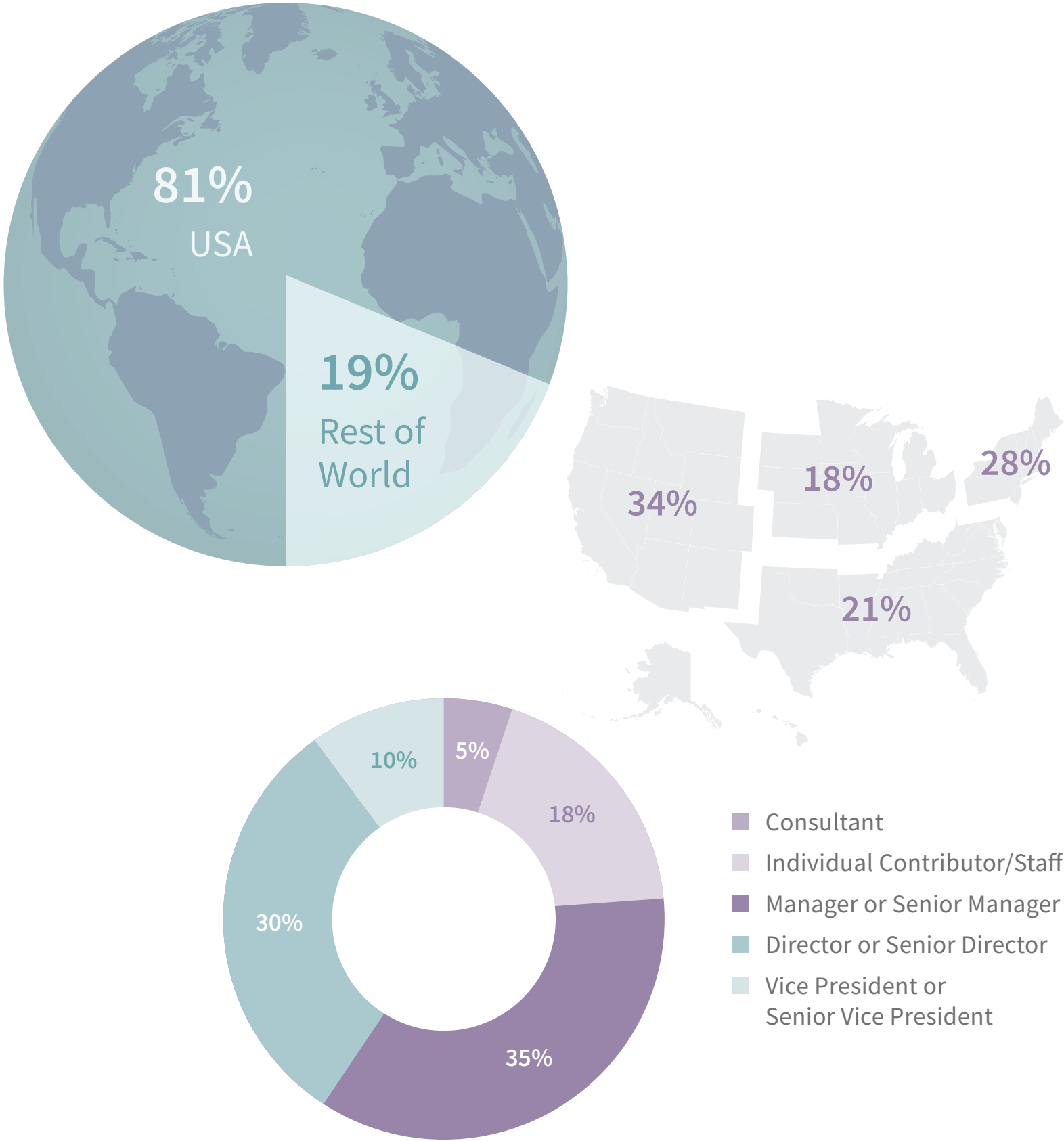
Demographics

The final tally included 1,463 usable responses. Of those, 56 percent were employed by large organizations (those with revenues greater than \$1 billion). Eighty-one percent of respondents from large organizations live and work in the United States.

Responses came from 40 of the 50 U.S. states, with the most coming from California (20.1 percent of U.S. responses) and New York (12.4 percent). The European Union accounted for 10 percent of total responses.

Responses from the survey have been analyzed based upon both company size and industry sectors. As mentioned, companies with revenues greater than \$1 billion represent 56 percent of the sample, the balance from companies with revenues below \$1 billion. Large companies are more evenly represented across major industry sectors. A description of the types of companies included in each sector and the percentage of respondents in each sector is provided in Appendix B.

In terms of individual respondents, the greatest number of responses came from those at a manager or senior manager level as well as director or senior director. The chart below presents an overview of those responding to the survey. For the purposes of our salary analysis, we primarily focused only on managers, directors and vice presidents.



Appendix B: Industry Sectors

Following is the list of industries and their descriptions presented to survey respondents for classification. The percentages in brackets below each sector identifies the percentages of respondents from large companies (revenue over \$1 billion) and smaller companies (revenue under \$1 billion) [large percent/small percent].

[17%/8%]

Consumer Goods

(Including appliances, auto parts, food & beverages, housewares, office supplies, paper products, apparel & textiles)

[14%/6%]

Technology

(Including hardware, software, telecom)

[10%/7%]

Financial Services

[11%/27%]

Professional Services

(Including accountants, architects, attorneys, business consultants)

[7%/4%]

**Construction/
Building/
Real Estate**

[4%/1%]

Industrial Goods

(Including aerospace, cement, machinery, industrial equipment, machine tools, waste management)

[7%/2%]

Retail

[3%/1%]

Basic Materials

(Including chemicals, metals, oil & gas, specialty chemicals)

[6%/2%]

**Healthcare/
Biotech/
Pharma**

[5%/8%]

**Energy/
Renewables/
Efficiency**

[3%/2%]

**Hotel/
Hospitality/
Tourism**

[3%/1%]

Transportation

[2%/2%]

Agriculture

[2%/7%]

**Education/
Training**

[2%/3%]

**Government
(Non-Military)**

[2%/2%]

**Media/
Communications**

[2%/18%]

**Nonprofit/
NGO**

[3%/1%]

Utilities

Credits

Weinreb Group is a woman-owned Sustainability and Environment, Social, Governance (ESG) executive search firm. Our clients are F500 companies in the consumer products, food, retail, consulting and financial services sector. As a boutique search firm, we have placed several hundred sustainability and ESG leaders globally. Launched 15+ years ago, Weinreb Group is a pioneer in recruiting senior sustainability and ESG heads, as well as building complete teams. We have an impressive database of Sustainability and ESG leaders plus strong relationships with Chief Sustainability Officers. Our purpose is to equip companies with the sustainability and ESG change makers they need to succeed.

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is the independent international organization that helps businesses and other organizations understand and communicate their sustainability impacts. The GRI Standards are freely provided as a public good for use by companies around the world.

GreenBiz Group is a media and events company that advances the opportunities at the intersection of business, technology and sustainability. Through its websites, events, membership network and research, GreenBiz promotes the potential to drive transformation and accelerate progress within companies, cities, industries and in the very nature of business.

State of the Profession 2022

GreenBiz[®]
group

W/H/G

WEINREB GROUP
Sustainability Recruiting
ESG Recruiting