



SUPPORT THE GOALS
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HOW ARE THE UK'S LARGEST COMPANIES SUPPORTING THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

A STUDY OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE SDGS
IN FTSE350 COMPANIES BETWEEN 2018-2020

MARCH 2021



Foreword

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreed to by the United Kingdom and 192 other Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for a more equitable and sustainable world, now and into the future.

At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are an urgent call to action to address the eradication of hunger and poverty, enhancement of peace and prosperity, and the protection of the planet amongst much more.

If these goals are to be achieved, businesses need to get behind them. While governments undoubtedly have an important role to play in creating mandates and guidance, only businesses have the scale and agility to drive the required action over the next decade.

For the past three years, Support the Goals has been researching and rating industry leaders, innovators, and everyday businesses on their public support for the goals.

This report focuses on industry leaders - specifically the FTSE350, the 350 largest companies listed on the UK Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) by market capitalisation.

By using the Support the Goals SDG rating system, the research looks to understand which businesses have published plans, commitments, actions, and progress towards the goals, and how this has changed over the past three years.

Crucially, it also looks at which businesses are encouraging their suppliers to get involved - a key step in raising awareness of the goals at scale.

All research for this report has been undertaken by a team of talented university undergraduates, graduates, and postgraduates from a range of academic disciplines over a period of three years. We are incredibly grateful for their diligence, passion, and teamwork which is not only responsible for this report, but also continues to raise awareness of the goals within corporate supply chains.

These talented young researchers are the driving force behind Support the Goals. Their passion for ensuring the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved is an inspiration, and should provide us all with hope that our future is in safe hands.

I would like to thank Lancaster University for their excellent support of our research. Finally, I would also like to thank our Strategic Advisory Board for their invaluable ongoing advice.

Colin Curtis
Founder and Director of Support the Goals



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If we are to achieve the goals, I would urge all business leaders to draw on the passion and talent of young people to understand how we can truly make the next ten years a ‘Decade of Action’. After all, it is to them that the future belongs.
- Colin Curtis, Founder and Director

Background



The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a shared blueprint for a more equitable and sustainable world, now and into the future. The Agenda includes 17 goals and 169 targets, which comprise an urgent call to action to address the world's greatest problems. Whilst the goals set the aspiration of what the SDGs are trying to achieve, the 169 targets highlight the specific areas of change that need to be reached in order to achieve the 17 goals. These goals and indicators are key to monitoring the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Support the Goals is an initiative that utilises those goals and indicators in order to rate and recognise the businesses that support the UN Global Goals. The key aims of the initiative are to:

- **Raise awareness of the Global Goals in the business community**
- **Promote a structured approach to planning, target setting, and reporting in respect of the goals**
- **Give young people work experience in corporate sustainability, so they understand how businesses can contribute to a better world**

By building positive publicity, encouraging gentle competition and promoting the scaling of activities across supply chains, Support the Goals is working towards each of its aims. In doing so, it is also creating the world's largest research database of business support for the goals, and encouraging more than 1,000,000 businesses to get involved.

“Everything we do during and after this crisis [COVID-19] must be with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change, and the many other global challenges we face.”

António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations

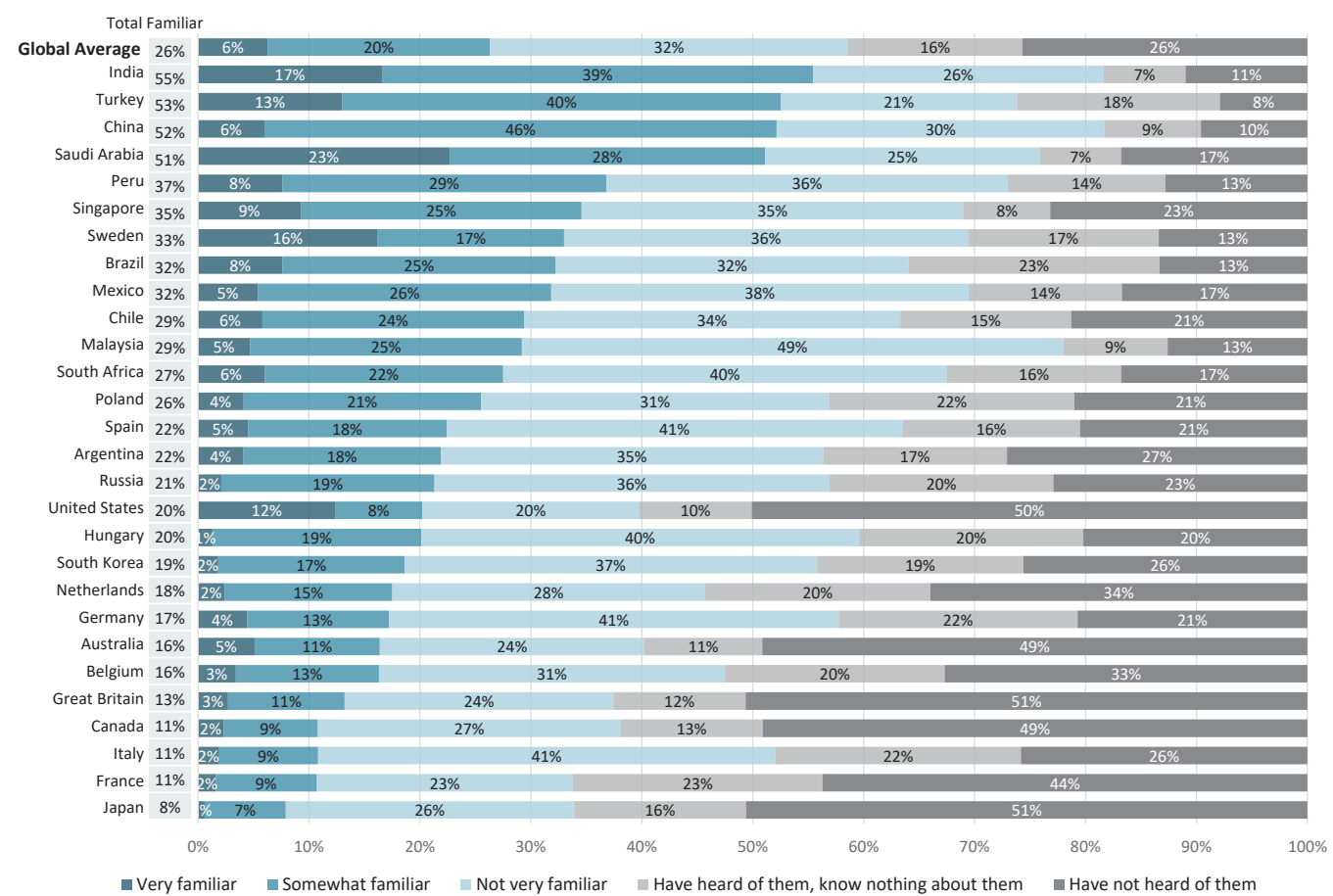


SDG Awareness

Great Britain ranks lowest in terms of familiarity with the SDGs with 51% having never heard of them.

In 2019, The World Economic Forum commissioned Ipsos, the world’s third largest market research company, to conduct a global survey on awareness of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Encouragingly, it discovered that three out of four adults (74%) globally have at least some awareness of the SDGs.

After surveying more than 19,000 adults from 28 countries about the SDGs, they found that awareness and familiarity with the SDGs tends to be significantly higher in emerging countries than they are in economically advanced countries.



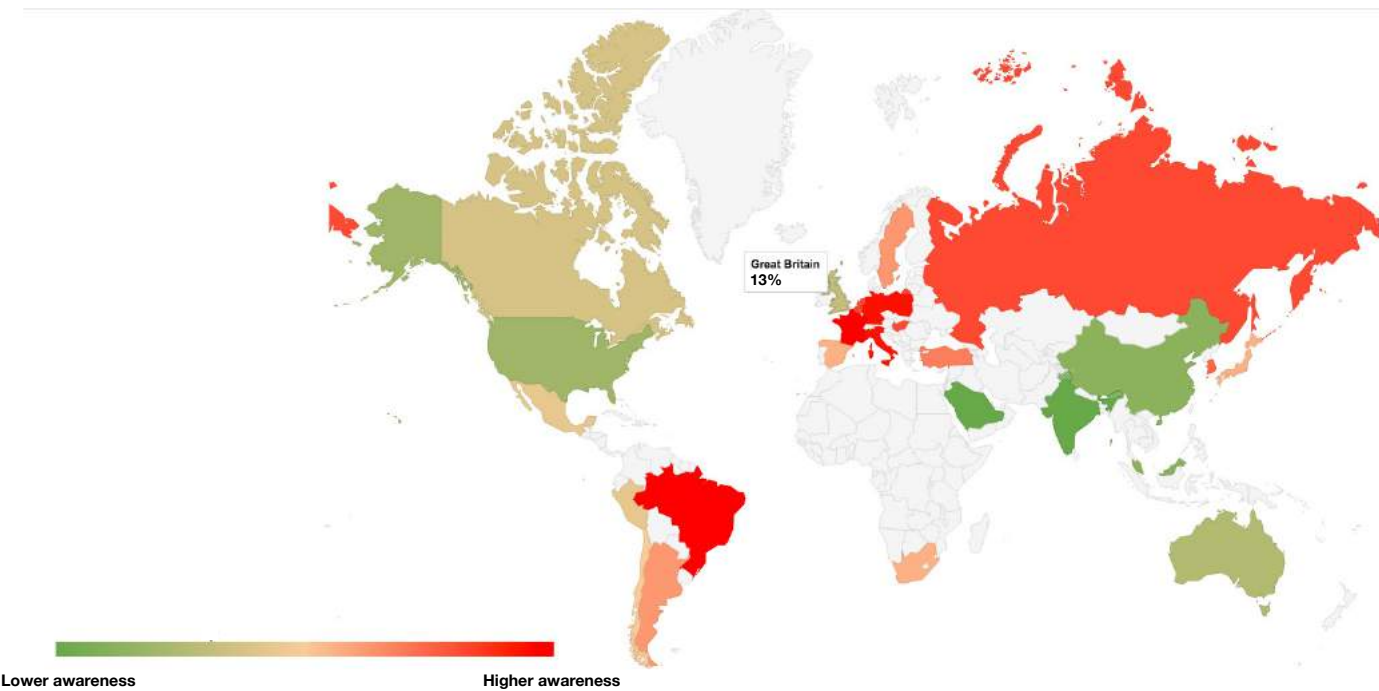
Base: 19,517 online adults aged 16-74 across 28 countries

‘Familiarity with and Perceived Importance of UN SDGs among the Global Public,’ IPSOS, 2019

Raising Awareness of the Goals

Awareness was highest in Turkey (92%), mainland China (90%), followed by India (89%) along with Brazil, Malaysia and Sweden (87% in all three). However, less than half of adults in Great Britain (49%) have awareness of the SDGs, falling far behind the vast majority of other countries included in the survey. In fact, while those who say they are somewhat or very familiar with the SDGs make up one quarter of all adults globally, only about one in ten of people surveyed in Great Britain report being familiar with the SDGs. Furthermore, the SDGs were ranked in terms of importance by all individuals surveyed, with responses varying greatly from country to country. In the UK, the SDG deemed most important was Affordable and Clean Energy (Goal 7), followed by Zero Hunger (Goal 2) and Clean Water and Sanitation (Goal 6).

In order to address the multitude of challenges the world is currently facing, and build a more sustainable future for all, we believe that everyone should improve their knowledge on sustainable development. After all, one of Support the Goals’ key aims is to raise awareness of the Global Goals within the business community, and our rating focuses explicitly on assessing a business’ public communication of the SDGs. Undoubtedly, the biggest obstacle to achieving the Goals is a lack of awareness, both among the public and businesses. With the UK falling behind the vast majority of the world in its awareness of the SDGs, public support of the SDGs by the FTSE350 will significantly impact overall perception and no doubt inspire others to work towards a better future, for the UK and beyond.



Familiarity with the Global Goals (UK is lacking)

Research Overview



Our rating system initially comprised four criteria. In 2020, a fifth criteria was introduced - suppliers. The 'suppliers' criteria was introduced to emphasise the importance of the supply chain in the achievement of the Goals. With more than 80% of a company's greenhouse gases, and more than 90% of the impact a company makes on air, land, water, biodiversity and geological resources coming from their supply chain, it was vital that we integrated the supply chain into our rating system.

Our criteria are as follows:

- Plans** refers to statements of support by the company.
- Commitments** refers to the setting of measurable social and environmental targets by the company.
- Actions** refers to the activities being undertaken by the company to contribute towards the advancement of the Global Goals.
- Progress** refers to the publication of data to reflect on the achievement of the social and environmental targets set.
- Suppliers** refer to how the company involves its supply chain in the achievement of the Goals.







Rating Criteria

If we're to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, we need businesses to get behind them. Our simple rating system helps organisations understand how to effectively build and communicate their support for the Goals. Support the Goals uses a simple, objective 'traffic light' rating to show progress towards completing five key steps: **planning, commitments, actions, progress, and suppliers.**

A star is awarded for each step for which we find public evidence.

Summary of Findings

FTSE100







	2018	2019	2020	Insights
Number of companies stating support for the Goals	70%	73%	83%	By now, the vast majority of FTSE100 companies are sharing their support of the Goals
3 most common Goals				"Responsible consumption and production" is consistently the most widely reported on
3 least common Goals				"Zero hunger" is consistently the least reported on
Companies stating which Goals are most relevant to their business	53%	63%	73%	The majority of companies have defined the Goals that are priorities for their business
Companies making measurable commitments to the Goals	25%	42%	54%	More than half of FTSE100 companies now have measurable commitments to support the Goals
Companies reporting on progress towards the Goals	19%	30%	47%	Almost half of FTSE100 companies are reporting their progress against the Goals

There is extremely strong support for the Goals in FTSE100 companies, though reporting practices are inconsistent



FTSE250

Summary of Findings

	2018	2019	2020	Insights
Number of companies stating support for the Goals	13%	36%	13%	There was a sharp increase in companies highlighting their support of the Goals in 2019, though the number in 2020 is still low
3 most common Goals				"Responsible consumption and production" is consistently the most widely reported on
3 least common Goals				"Peace, justice and strong institutions" is consistently the least reported on
Companies stating which Goals are most relevant to their business	10%	18%	33%	The number of companies sharing a plan with prioritised Goals has almost doubled every year
Companies making measurable commitments to the Goals	2%	0%	18%	The number of companies making measurable commitments to the Goals rose steeply in 2020
Companies reporting on progress towards the Goals	2%	5%	17%	The numbers of companies reporting progress against the Goals rose steeply in 2020

Support for the Goals in FTSE250 companies is worrying low, though it is increasing year on year



Breakdown by Rating Criteria

FTSE100

PLANS

73%

of the companies listed on the FTSE100 were awarded a star

In 2020, 73 of the companies listed on the FTSE100 were awarded a green rating for their statement of support for the Goals. This marks a 10% increase since 2019 in the number of FTSE100 companies explicitly stating which of the Goals are a priority for their business, which mirrors the increase from 2018 to 2019.

To date, 83% have clearly indicated their awareness of, and support for, the SDGs. Although 17 FTSE100 companies are yet to express any statement in support of the Goals, the current trend indicates that by 2022 every company listed on the Index can be expected to promote the Goals and receive either an amber or green rating for their plans.

COMMITMENTS

54%

companies listed on the FTSE100 received a star

54 companies listed on the FTSE100 received a green rating for their measurable commitments to support the Goals, a 12% increase compared to 2019. This means that the number of FTSE100 companies explicitly linking their environmental and social targets to the SDGs has more than doubled since 2018.

Of the remaining companies, 13 received an amber rating for their commitments and 13 received a red rating for their lack of measurable targets. Positively, the number of red-rated companies has decreased every year since 2018.

Breakdown by Rating Criteria

FTSE250

PLANS

33%

companies listed on the FTSE250 were awarded a star

In 2020, 82 companies listed on the FTSE250 were awarded a green rating for their statement of support for the SDGs. This marks an increase of 20% since 2018 in the number of companies explicitly stating which of the Goals are a priority to them.

Despite this improvement, there remains a greater number of FTSE250 companies receiving a red rating for their plans than companies receiving amber and green ratings combined.

COMMITMENTS

18%

of companies listed in the FTSE250 received a star

46 companies listed on the FTSE250 received a green rating for their measurable commitments to support the Goals. This is a significant increase from 2019, when no companies were awarded a green rating.

While the number of companies receiving an amber for commitments has remained consistent over the same period, the number of red-rated FTSE250 companies - those with no environmental or social commitments at all - has decreased every year since 2018.



Breakdown by Rating Criteria

FTSE100

ACTIONS

59%

of the FTSE100 companies have evidenced their actions

59 of the FTSE100 companies have evidenced their actions to support the SDGs, focussing on particular Goals. As such, the number of companies awarded a green rating has increased by 13% in the last year, and 20% since 2018.

A further 40 received an amber rating for their actions to address environmental and social issues, leaving just 1 red-rated company listed on the FTSE100 Index who failed to evidence that it has taken any action to contribute to the Goals' realisation.

PROGRESS

47%

FTSE100 companies were awarded a star for their progress

In 2020, 47 FTSE100 companies were awarded a green rating for their progress. That is, 47 companies produced measurable data to evidence the actions they have taken to support the Goals, and linked this data to specific SDGs. This marks a 17% increase in a year.

Similarly, 47 companies were awarded an amber rating for their progress towards environmental and social actions, without an explicit link to the Goals. The number receiving a red rating for progress is 6; this is only 1 fewer than 2019. This data demonstrates that the increase in the number of green ratings in 2020 comes from a fall in the number of amber-rated companies. Those previously awarded an amber are increasingly aligning their progress with the Goals, whereas red-rated companies are making limited progress.

Breakdown By Rating Criteria

FTSE250

ACTIONS

24%

of FTSE250 companies have evidenced their actions

60 of the FTSE250 companies have evidenced their actions to support the SDGs and focus on specific Goals. This represents 24% of all those listed on the FTSE250 Index, meaning the number of companies awarded a green rating has increased tenfold since 2018.

A further 133 received an amber rating, which means almost 80% of FTSE250 companies are taking actions that work towards environmental and social targets. Meanwhile, the number of red-rated companies has only fallen by 1 in the last year, indicating that the remaining 20% of FTSE250 companies are making little progress to support the Goals.

PROGRESS

17%

of FTSE250 companies were awarded a star for their progress

The number of green ratings for progress in the FTSE250 has increased at a similar rate to green ratings for actions. With 43 companies awarded a green rating for progress in 2020, there has been a tenfold increase in the number of FTSE250 companies publishing data about their targets to support the Goals in the last two years.

A further 139 FTSE250 companies were awarded an amber for progress in 2020. In total, this means that 73% of the FTSE250 companies are taking and sharing data linked to their environmental and social targets. Even if those targets are not yet linked explicitly to the SDGs, it is positive that the majority of FTSE250 companies are considering and measuring their sustainability and impact.



Breakdown by Rating Criteria

FTSE100

SUPPLIERS

1%

of companies listed
in the FTSE100
received a star

Only one of the FTSE100 companies received a green rating for involving their supply chain in the achievement of the SDGs. However, 95 companies were awarded an amber rating, signalling that most of the FTSE100 work with their supply chains on environmental and social issues. More work is undoubtedly needed to engage the suppliers to FTSE100 companies in supporting the Goals.



“Our research has been incredibly thought-provoking, especially due to the number of companies who are making real efforts to incorporate sustainability into their everyday functioning, whether this may be through a drastic or minor change to their operations.

It has been a fantastic opportunity to read about how large and small companies view their role within the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It would be even better to see more involvement of supply chains in sustainability initiatives!”

Sarah Tobin, Corporate Sustainability Research Team Leader

Breakdown By Rating Criteria

FTSE250

SUPPLIERS

0%

of companies listed
in the FTSE250
received a star

Only one of the FTSE250 companies received a green rating for involving their supply chain in working towards the SDGs. However, 209 companies were awarded an amber rating, signalling that most of the FTSE250 work with their supply chains on environmental and social issues. More work is undoubtedly needed to engage the suppliers to these companies in supporting the Goals.



“There is a clear dichotomy between companies stating their support for tackling social and environmental issues and their actual actions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. However, some industry leaders are genuinely paving the way for a brighter future and this sustainability related company competition is highly encouraging to see.”

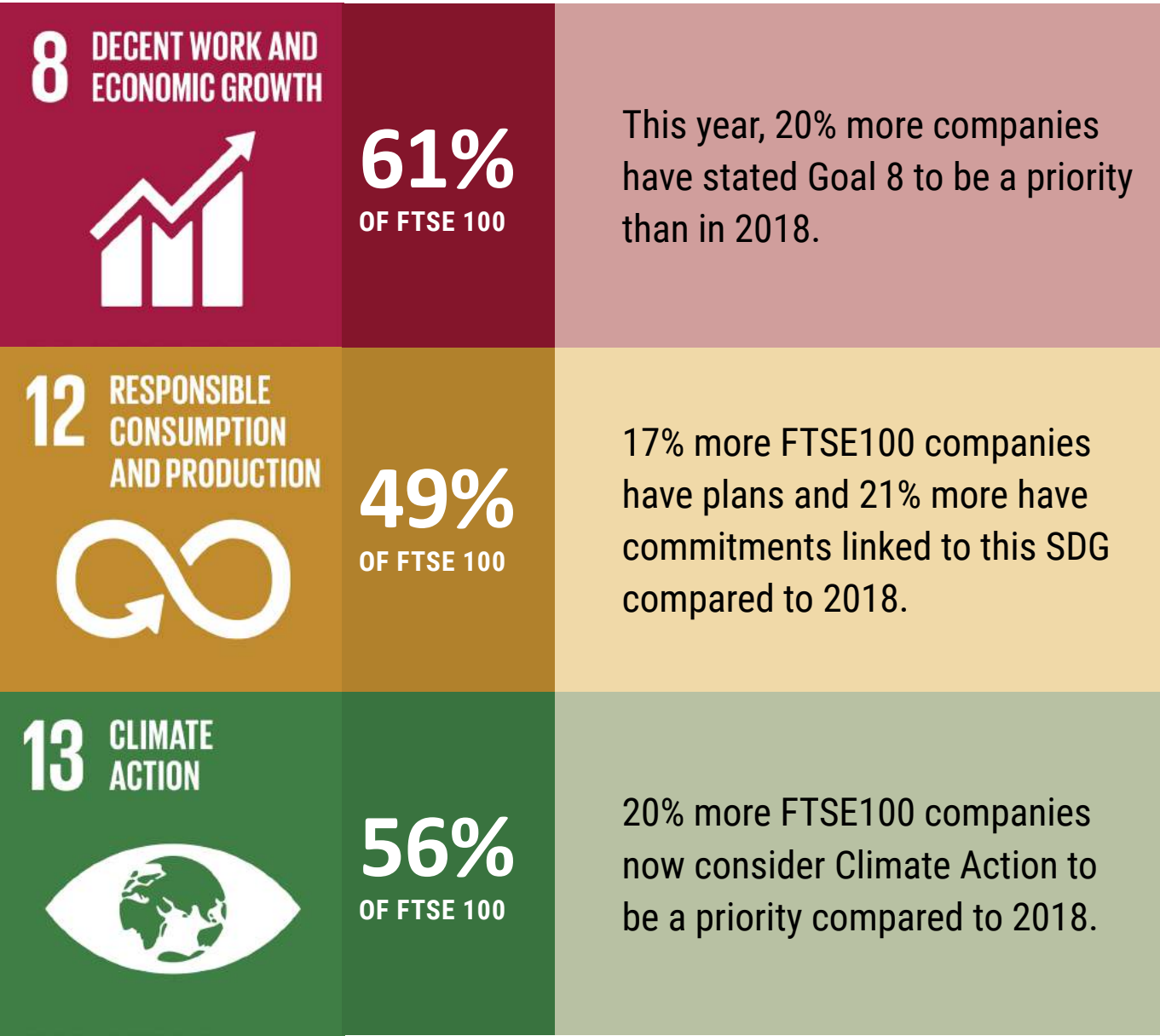
Catherine Purkiss, Corporate Sustainability Research Team Leader



Breakdown of Performance by Goal

FTSE100

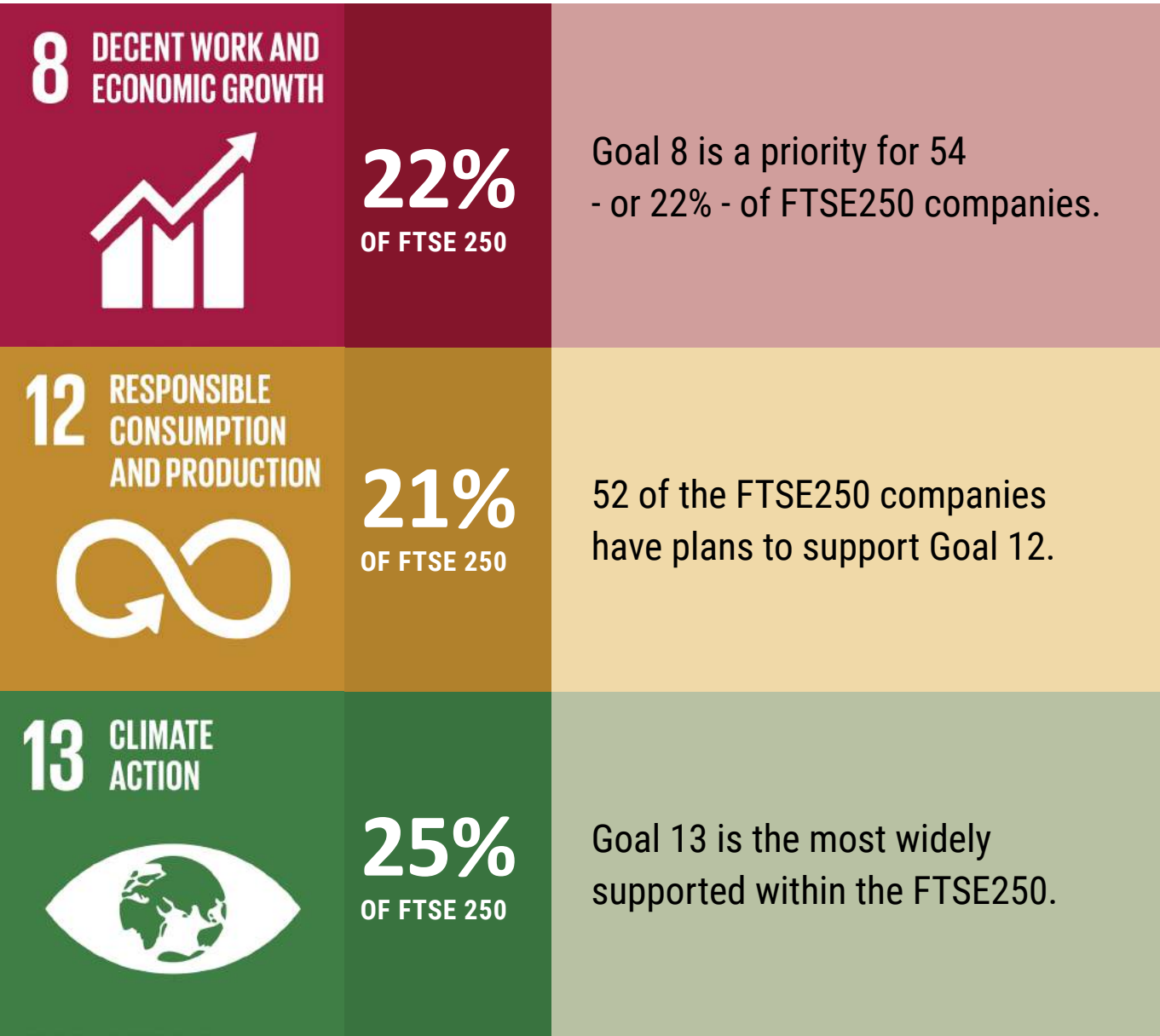
Companies listed on the FTSE100 Index have plans and commitments to support all of the SDGs. The 'Top 3' Goals, supported by the highest number of companies, were SDGs 8, 12 and 13.



Breakdown of Performance by Goal

FTSE250

Not only do these Goals receive the most support now, they have also received the biggest increase in support since 2018, compared to the other 14 Goals.

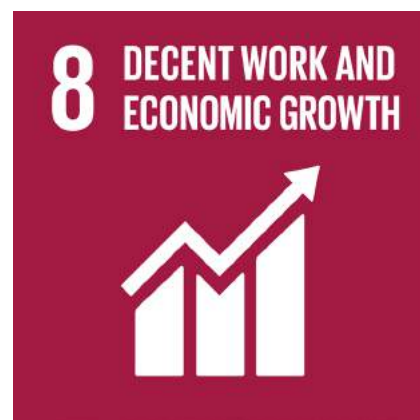




Breakdown of Performance by Goal

FTSE100

Most common Goals



Decent Work and Economic Growth

The most widely supported SDG amongst FTSE100 companies in 2020 is Goal 8. 61 companies have evidenced their plans to support the Goal, highlighting that Decent Work and Economic Growth is a priority for their business. Of this 61, 38 companies also set out measurable targets to work towards this Goal. Since 2018, Goal 8 has always received one of the highest levels of support, compared to other SDGs, and that support continues to grow.

This year, 20% more companies have stated Goal 8 to be a priority than did in 2018.



Responsible Consumption and Production

Almost half of the companies listed on the FTSE100 also clearly demonstrate their plans to support Goal 12, and 34 companies have commitments to work towards its realisation. This marks a clear increase in support for Goal 12 since 2018, when it would not have been considered a 'Top 3' Goal.

Now, 17% more FTSE100 companies have plans and 21% more have commitments linked to this SDG compared to two years ago.



Climate Action

56 FTSE100 companies have clear plans to support Goal 13, and 39 have set out their measurable commitments on Climate Action. Like Goal 8, support for Goal 13 has remained high over the last two years. Crucially though, 20% more FTSE100 companies now consider Climate Action to be a priority.

If this pattern continues, almost all those listed on the FTSE100 can be expected to support Goal 13 by 2025.

Breakdown of Performance by Goal

FTSE250

Most common Goals



Decent Work and Economic Growth

Receiving a similar level of support to Goal 12, Goal 8 is a priority for 54 - or 22% - of FTSE250 companies. In 2019, this SDG was the most widely supported across the FTSE250 Index, but the huge increase in support for SDGs 13 and 12 over the last year has resulted in Decent Work and Economic Growth slipping from the top position.

Despite making the 'Top 3', only 8% of FTSE250 companies have clear commitments relevant to Goal 8.



Responsible Consumption and Production

52 of the FTSE250 companies have plans to support Goal 12, representing a fifth of all those listed on the Index. However, only half of those with plans have established measurable commitments to work towards the Goal.

Responsible Consumption and Production has been a consistently popular Goal since 2018, and the number of FTSE250 companies prioritising this Goal has doubled in the last year.



Climate Action

Goal 13 is the most widely supported within the FTSE250. 60 companies (nearly a quarter of all those listed) have made Climate Action a priority, and 28 have set out their commitments. Not only has Goal 13 received consistently high support from the FTSE250, compared to the other Goals, it has also received the biggest increase in support since 2018.

The number of companies with plans to prioritise Goal 13 has increased fourfold over the last two years.



Breakdown of Performance by Goal

FTSE100

Least common Goals



Zero Hunger

Only 11 FTSE100 companies have demonstrated that achieving Zero Hunger is a priority for their business. This marks a fall in the level of support for this Goal since 2019.

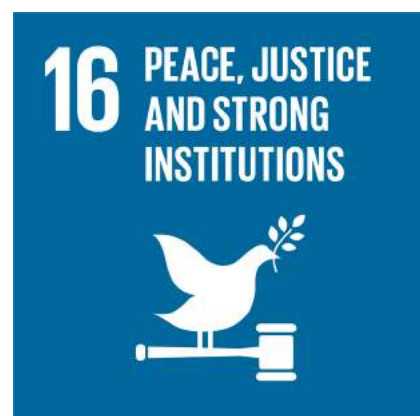
Crucially, however, this group of 11 has also set out clear commitments to work towards the Goal. SDG 2 is the least supported of all the Goals amongst FTSE100 companies.



Life Below Water

Goal 14 is a priority for just 11 FTSE100 companies, whilst 15 have demonstrated their measurable targets to support Life Below Water and protect the ocean.

The number of companies with clear plans to support SDG 14 has not fluctuated since 2018, however the number of FTSE companies with commitments has doubled in this time.



Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Goal 16 is also not a priority for the majority of companies listed on the FTSE100 Index. 13 have evidenced their plans to support the Goal in 2020, and 11 have measurable commitments to contribute to its realisation.

Despite its low levels, there has been a marginal increase in support for Goal 16 since 2018.

Breakdown of Performance by Goal

FTSE250

Least common Goals



No Poverty

Goal 1 is a priority for just 13 of the companies listed on the FTSE250, and only 3 have set targets to achieve No Poverty. Two years ago, SDG 1 was not listed in the 'Bottom 3'; however, a dip in support for this Goal in 2019 has resulted in it making slower progress than many other SDGs among FTSE250 companies.

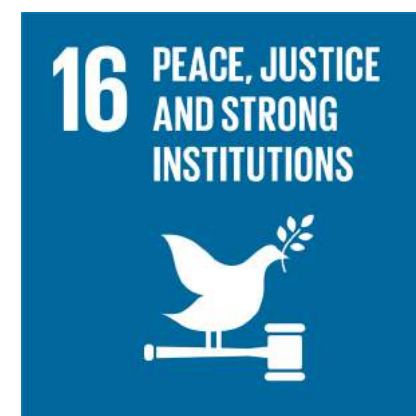
Goal 1 is a priority for just 13 of the companies listed on the FTSE250.



Zero Hunger

SDG 2 is the least supported of all the Goals amongst FTSE250 companies. Just 10, representing 4%, have made abolishing hunger a priority, whilst 4 have set out their measurable commitments to realise this Goal. Although Goal 2 has received a marginal increase in support since 2018, it has been repeatedly overlooked by most FTSE250 companies.

SDG 2 is the least supported of all the Goals amongst FTSE250 companies.



Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Although the number of FTSE250 companies listing Goal 16 as a priority has doubled since 2018, this still only totals 12 businesses evidencing their plans to support Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions in 2020. Meanwhile just 4 have measurable commitments to contribute to its realisation.

FTSE250 companies listing Goal 16 as a priority has doubled since 2018.



Breakdown of Performance by Goal

Observations

It is interesting that the top priority Goals for both **FTSE100** and **FTSE250** companies are **Goals 8, 12** and **13**: Decent Work and Economic Growth; Responsible Consumption and Production; and Climate Action.



Meanwhile, according to an Ipsos survey conducted in 2019 for the World Economic Forum, the top-ranking Goals in perceived importance around the world are SDG 2, Zero Hunger; SDG 6, Clean Water and Sanitation; and SDG 3, Good Health and Well-Being.

Ipsos also found that the list of the lowest-ranked SDGs globally included Goal 12, which is prioritised by FTSE100 and FTSE250 companies according to our research.

Comparing the findings of the Ipsos survey to Support the Goals' research into the FTSE350, suggests that the FTSE companies are out of touch with public opinion about which SDGs to prioritise.

Indeed, Zero Hunger is the least supported of all the Goals by FTSE350 companies in 2020, yet this Goal was the most important to populations of the 28 countries surveyed in 2019.

Goals Gaining Support



Partnerships for the Goals

Two years ago, SDG 17 was the third least supported of all the Goals. With just 2 FTSE100 companies demonstrating their commitments, it was a race to the bottom against Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). According to our 2020 research, however, a quarter of all FTSE100 companies now consider Goal 17 to be a priority and, of this group, the majority have established clear commitments.

Showing plans and commitments to support Goal 17 is increasingly important for the FTSE100 companies now that Support the Goals is investigating how businesses engage their supply chains in conversations about the SDGs.

Showing plans and commitments to support Goal 17 is increasingly important for the FTSE100



Good Health and Well-being

One Goal receiving a noticeable increase in support over the last two years is Goal 3. In 2018, 14 FTSE250 companies had established Good Health and Well-Being to be a priority, and just 3 had measurable targets to achieve this Goal. Despite such low levels of support, SDG 3 was the top, most widely supported Goal among the FTSE250 for that year, alongside Goals 12 and 13. According to our 2020 research, however, a fifth of the FTSE250 now have plans to prioritise Goal 3 and, of this group, 20 companies have established clear commitments.

The story of Goal 3 reflects the broader increase in awareness and support for the SDGs among FTSE250 companies over the last two years. Though not listed in the 'Top 3' for 2020, it will be interesting to analyse how the importance of Goal 3 changes in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Clear support for Good Health and Well-Being is likely to continue to increase among both FTSE250 and FTSE100 companies.



Industry Performance



“Contributing to research such as this has been an incredibly valuable opportunity. It is important to identify those who are making commitments and taking actions on the challenges covered by the Global Goals, but this research plays a vital role in

creating an entity to hold companies accountable for their actions or lack thereof.

It is promising to see some brilliant activity being carried out by some of the world’s biggest companies and I hope this continues and becomes widespread across different industries.”

Orla Duffey, Corporate Sustainability Research Manager



“Working on the FTSE 250 companies has been enlightening, and has helped me to understand how companies are aiming to improve their progress towards the SDGs. However this has also been educational, as many companies state their support yet could improve upon their actions toward the Goals. It has been thought-provoking to research these

companies and is encouraging to see how actions are being taken to support social development.”

Anna Gniwotta, Corporate Sustainability Researcher



Industry Performance

FTSE100

Plans

Since 2018, all industries have seen increases in the proportion of the industry being awarded a star for their plans, with the exception of Energy, Real Estate and Telecommunications who all sustained 100% stars throughout the three years.

It is also promising to see that over 50% of companies within almost all industries achieved a star for sharing the plans to support the SDGs.

A particularly significant improvement was seen in the Financials industry, where the proportion of stars increased from 36.84% to 70% between 2018 and 2020. Healthcare and Utilities also did very well increasing from 50% to 100% in the same time period.

Commitments

Overall, the majority of industries saw an increase in the percentage of companies offering measurable targets in support of the SDGs between 2018 and 2020. The Telecommunications and Healthcare industries were both successful in achieving a 67% increase in gaining a second star, meaning that over half of the companies within each industry had improved since 2018.

Over 50% of companies within almost all industries achieved a star.

Actions

All industries either sustained or increased the percentage of companies recording actions in support of specific SDGs between 2018 and 2020. By 2020, three industries succeeded in having 100% of companies within the industry being awarded a star. These industries include: Consumer Staples, Energy and Telecommunications.

Over 50% of companies within almost all industries (except for two) achieved a star.

Progress

Whilst significant improvements have been made in the other ratings criteria, this has not necessarily translated into the progress criteria. This could be for several reasons, such as newly implemented policy changes or targets that have not had the chance to be fully integrated to deliver the change in metrics or the procedures to measure these metrics not being fully operational.

It is important to acknowledge that the industries of the FTSE100 have displayed some positive reporting in this area. For example, the Basic Materials industry increased the proportion of stars awarded for progress from 0% in 2018 to 63.64% in 2020. The Healthcare industry has also improved its progress reporting, increasing the proportion of stars from 33.33% in 2018 to 75% in 2020.

Suppliers

Only one FTSE100 company achieved a star, however the majority of companies received an amber rating.

Industry Performance

FTSE250

Plans

Since 2018, nearly all industries have seen a year-on-year increase of stars awarded for this criteria. This is promising to see that sustainability is not only becoming a strategic priority, but that many are aligning their efforts with an internationally recognised agenda.

Notable industries include Consumer Discretionary who made significant improvements, increasing the percentage of stars for this criteria from 7.69% in 2018 to 37.84% in 2020 and the Energy industry, who increased the percentage from 22.22% in 2018 to 100% in 2020 - one of only two industries to achieve this. The improvement by the energy sector is promising evidence that we could see the transformational changes needed to deliver in the decade of action, as the energy industry is crucial for fundamental change.

Commitments

All industries bar three saw year-on-year increases in the percentage of green ratings being awarded. This is extremely promising as the public reporting of targets is key to holding companies accountable and to align those against specific goals shows consideration for the areas that they can help deliver in.

Some positive examples of this improvement by the FTSE250 include Consumer Staples who went from 0% green in 2018 to 66.67% green in 2020 and Energy, who went from 0% to 80% in the same time frame.

Actions

All industries saw an increase in the proportion of stars awarded for their actions compared to 2018. This is extremely positive as it is one thing to report a strategy and targets and align them with the Goals, but it is also important to report the actions being taken to support those and ensure consistency by linking them to the SDGs.

Both Consumer Discretionary and Consumer Staples have made significant improvements in the proportion of stars awarded for actions in 2018 compared to 2020, with the former increasing from 5.13% to 27.03% and the latter from 0% to 41.67%. The Utilities industry has also made substantial progress in this criteria, increasing from 0% to 66.67% of stars between 2018 and 2020.

Progress

Similar to FTSE 100 companies, whilst significant improvements have been made in the other ratings criteria, this has not necessarily translated into reporting on progress against the Goals.

Nevertheless, some industries have made substantial improvements. For example, the Basic Materials industry increased the proportion of stars awarded for progress from 7.14% in 2018 to 27.27% in 2020. The Utilities industry also performed well, increasing their proportion from 0% to 33% in the same time frame.

Suppliers

Only one FTSE250 company achieved a star, however the majority of companies received an amber rating.



Top Performing Companies

Our research has identified top performing companies with a rating of at least 4 stars. We have also identified companies that are most improved, going from a rating of 0 to 4 stars between 2019-2020.

Special mention should be made to Smurfit Kappa and Softcat as the only companies to achieve a 5 star rating in the FTSE100 and FTSE250 respectively.

This excellent rating can inspire other key players within the business world to instigate action on the SDGs, whilst also demonstrating to their customers and consumers that they are conscious of their impact on the world, something individuals are increasingly looking for in companies they engage with.

Top Performing Companies

Companies that have progressed from 0 to 4 stars from 2019-2020:

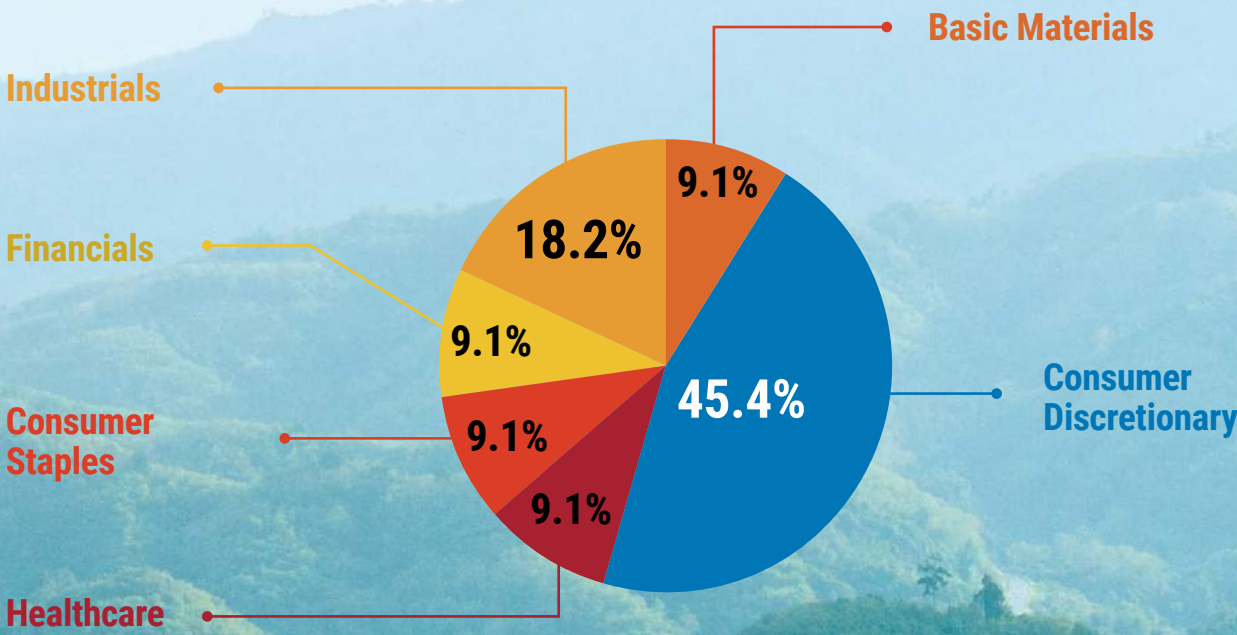
FTSE100

- Hargreaves Lansdown
- Imperial Brands
- Persimmon
- Smith DS

FTSE250

- Dechra
- Dunelm
- Ibstock
- National Express
- Pets at Home
- SSP
- Synthomer

9.1% of the companies classified as most improved are within the Basic Materials Industry, 45.4% within the Consumer Discretionary, 9.1% within the Consumer Staples Industry, 9.1% within the Healthcare Industry, 9.1% within the Financials Industry, 18.2% within the Industrials Industry and none in the real Estate, Telecommunications, Utilities or Energy Industry categories. Consequently, the companies that have shown the most progress are those that fall under the Consumer Discretionary Industry classification on the FTSE350.





Top Performing Companies

FTSE100

Companies with 5 stars:

Smurfit Kappa

Companies with 4 stars:

Antofagasta	London Stock Exchange Group
Associated British Foods	Mondi
AstraZeneca	Morrisons
Aviva	National Grid
Bt Group	Next
Barratt Developments	Pennon Group
Carnival Corporation	Reckitt Benckiser Group
Coca-Cola	Relx
Compass Group	Rentokil Initial
CRH	SSE
Croda International	Standard Chartered
Diageo	Standard Life Aberdeen
Evrax	Taylor Wimpey
Glencore	Tesco
Hikma Pharmaceuticals	Unilever
ITV	Vodafone
Legal and General	Wpp
Lloyds Banking Group	

FTSE250

Companies with 5 stars:

Softcat

Companies with 4 stars:

Babcock International Group
Biffa
Coats Group
Drax Group
Energean
F&C Investment Trust
Fisher James And Sons
Go-Ahead Group
Marks and Spencer
Morgan Sindall
Quilter
Rhi Magnesita
The Renewables Infrastructure
Tui
Virgin Money Uk
Wood Group
Xp Power Ltd

From this, we can see that 11.3% of the companies with 4 stars are within the Basic Materials Industry, 18.9% within the Consumer Discretionary, 13.2% within the Consumer Staples Industry, 3.8% within the Healthcare Industry, 18.9% within the Financials Industry, 16.9% within the Industrials Industry, 3.8% within the Telecommunications Industry, 5.7% within the Utilities Industry and 7.5% within the Energy Industry and none within the Real Estate Industry. Consequently, the Consumer Discretionary and Financial Industry classifications of the FTSE350 contain the highest number of top scoring companies with 4 stars.

Although at the time of publication only 2 companies have achieved a 5 star rating, those with 4 stars can easily become a 5 star role model for other businesses by helping their suppliers understand more about the SDGs.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are encouraging as the level of public communication from the FTSE350 companies regarding the SDGs has improved since last year. Indeed, it is inspiring to see significant growth in the number of companies acknowledging and prioritising the SDGs, as well as taking action on their commitments. However, whilst current trends indicate that every company listed on the FTSE100 should be expected to identify the Goals in their sustainability reports by 2022, it must be understood that for the wider FTSE350 the presence and quality of SDG reporting is still very much in its infancy. In comparison with the proportion of the FTSE350 who acknowledge the SDGs in their sustainability planning, there are significantly fewer companies who disclose measurable business performance targets related to the SDGs, and similarly very few can provide measurable data evidencing the actions they have taken to support the Goals.

Furthermore, there is little acknowledgement and integration of supply chain considerations into corporate sustainability strategy, amongst both the FTSE100 and FTSE250. It is abundantly clear that there is a need to systematically engage the suppliers of all these leading companies, to help further their support of the Goals.

The enormity of the challenge to meet the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development should not be underestimated, and neither should the role of businesses in meeting that agenda. While businesses have been continuously modifying their behaviour towards more responsible and sustainable practices, the SDGs are accelerating the need to redefine businesses sustainable priorities and their vision of the future. The burgeoning pressure for greater transparency on the SDGs is arising not only through public pressure from social movements such as Black Lives Matter and the Me Too movement, but also from increased regulatory disclosure requirements brought about by legislation such as the Modern Slavery Act 2015, as well as the UK's mandatory gender pay gap reporting.

Moreover, the focus of 2020 has undoubtedly been the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had an unprecedented impact on the global economy and has resulted in many businesses, and individuals, reassessing their priorities. We would thus predict that our 2021 report will see a growth in businesses focusing on Goal 3, Good Health and Well-Being, as well as Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, in response to the global pandemic, and subsequent recession. The global community, and businesses alike, play a vital role in recovery from the pandemic and the 2030 Agenda provides the action plan they require to create a more equitable and sustainable post-Covid world.



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Glossary

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

Corporate social responsibility is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable—to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. By practicing corporate social responsibility, companies can be conscious of the kind of impact they are having on all aspects of society, including economic, social, and environmental.

FTSE100:

The Financial Times Stock Exchange 100 Index, also called the FTSE 100, is a share index of the 100 companies by capital value, listed on the London Stock Exchange with the highest market capitalisation.

FTSE250:

The FTSE 250 Index is a capitalisation-weighted index consisting of the 101st to the 350th largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange. Promotions and demotions to and from the index occur quarterly in March, June, September, and December. The Index is calculated in real-time and published every minute.

FTSE350:

The FTSE 350 Index is a market capitalization weighted stock market index made up of the constituents of the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 index. It is a combination of the FTSE 100 Index of the largest 100 companies and the FTSE 250 Index of the next largest 250. The index is maintained by FTSE Russell, a subsidiary of the London Stock Exchange Group.

Investment Trusts:

Investment trusts are publicly listed companies that invest in financial assets or the shares of other companies on behalf of their investors.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):

Businesses whose number of personnel or turnover falls below certain limits. The limit might be different in each country and it is normally defined by law.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked goals designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. The SDGs, set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and intended to be achieved by the year 2030, are part of a UN Resolution called the “2030 Agenda”.

United Nations (UN):

The United Nations is an intergovernmental organisation promoting international cooperation. It was established after World War II, replacing the League of Nations, to prevent another such conflict. When it was founded it had 51 members, today it has 193. Its members are countries of the world.

UN Secretary General:

The Secretary General is the head of the United Nations Secretariat, which is the executive arm of the UN. They are also the leader and spokesperson of the United Nations. The UN Secretary General is sometimes abbreviated to UNSG or SG.

Sources and Notes

Notes

- 1 The companies featured in the FTSE100 are accurate as of the 04/08/2020 when the initial data was collected. The companies featured in the FTSE250 are accurate as of the 21/08/2020 in which the initial data was collected.
- 2 The following companies were researched and rated at the time of their constituency on the FTSE250. BCA Market - acquired by TDR Capital (2019).

Cobham - acquired by Advent international (2020).

CYBG - rebranded as Virgin Money PLC (2018).
Daejan Holdings - acquired by the Freshwater Group (2020).

Sirius Minerals - acquired by Anglo American in (2020).

Woodford Patient Capital Trust - came under the management of Schroders (2019).

Fidessa Group - acquired by ION Investment Group (2018).

Given their acquisition, or change in management the original ratings no longer apply. Resultantly, they have been removed from this report.



Sources and Notes

Sources

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Images

All images have been sourced from the following websites:

<https://www.pexels.com>
<https://www.shutterstock.com>

Appendix 1: Industry Performance - Number of Companies in Industry (FTSE100)

Number of Companies in each Industry

FTSE100

	2018	2019	2020
Basic Materials	11	10	11
Consumer Discretionary	21	21	20
Consumer Staples	10	11	11
Energy	3	3	3
Financials	19	20	20
Healthcare	6	4	4
Industrials	17	16	16
Real Estate	2	2	2
Technology	4	7	7
Telecommunications	3	2	2
Utilities	4	4	4

FTSE250

	2018	2019	2020
Basic Materials	14	13	11
Consumer Discretionary	19	20	17
Consumer Staples	13	12	12
Energy	9	9	5
Financials	81	86	100
Healthcare	7	6	6
Industrials	40	38	43
Real Estate	20	19	20
Technology	9	8	7
Telecommunications	3	4	5
Utilities	3	2	3



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