

# Majority of UK organisations remain committed to sustainability and ESG, says new research

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More than 80% of organisations say that sustainability is important to them, according to new research from the University of Nottingham, supported by UK and Ireland law firm Browne Jacobson.

The research, completed in spring 2025, captures the views of organisations following the US presidential election and the recent gains of Reform in UK local government elections. The findings reveal that issues associated with ESG, DEI or sustainability are not being sidelined, despite global political rhetoric.

The research project, '[ESG and sustainability: Rethinking communications and credibility](#)', has revealed the growing importance of environmental, social and governance responsibility to an overwhelming majority of private and public sector bodies in the UK. The detailed research findings taken from almost 250 UK organisations identified how private and public sector companies can improve communications to enhance their credibility and effectiveness in ESG and sustainability.

More than 80% of respondents advocated that sustainability was important to them, with nearly three-quarters willing to risk income or profits to meet their ESG goals. There is significant impetus to reassess supply chain contracts, and even customer relationships. Whilst some organisations are careful to take legal advice on DEI and related HR issues, organisations are currently less alive to legal risks in addressing other ESG issues.

Key recommendations include more robust use of terminology that reflects the understanding and intentions of relevant audiences, including employees, customers, investors and regulators. The research demonstrates how more effective language use around sustainability makes for greater credibility in discussing ESG objectives, methodologies and outcomes.

## Comments from the project leads

Ben Standing, Partner and Head of Browne Jacobson's Sustainability Strategy, said *"ESG is fundamentally about sustainable organisations, attracting the best talent, reducing costs and driving growth. The report identifies the variety of approaches taken in different sectors, and how much organisations can learn from each other."*

Jeremy Irving, Partner and Head of the Financial Services Regulatory team at Browne Jacobson, said: *"The findings on appropriate language make for more effective management of the reputational, legal, and other risks associated with sustainability strategies. These risks are increasing as regulators, investors and third parties take a more active approach to their own ESG-related priorities, such as a greater willingness to pursue allegations of 'greenwashing'."*

Professor Louise Mullany, Director of Linguistic Profiling for Professionals at the University of Nottingham, added: *"If organisations want to succeed in bringing about serious, long-term change in sustainability and ESG, then ensuring they use language that genuinely reflects their commitments and organisational cultures is a crucial step. Vague language, or strategies that over-exaggerate, run the risk of becoming meaningless in an ever-changing landscape, where accountability and governance are becoming increasingly important components to organisational success."*

Dr Victoria Howard, Project Lead at Browne Jacobson and the University of Nottingham commented: *"Our research shows how UK organisations are standing firm in their drive to operate responsibly. However, there are so many terms, with inconsistent meanings, used to talk about ESG, sustainability, DEI and 'green' initiatives, that key messages get lost or misinterpreted. Our recommendations support organisations to communicate more effectively about their current social and environmental impact, as well as the steps they are taking to*

*achieve future sustainability goals. The steps we propose will ensure that accurate messaging reflects organisational values and demonstrates credibility.”*

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