SEPA and NIEA

NetRegs Awareness Survey 2020/21

Total Results

Report

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Contents

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Executive summary

Background and objectives

SEPA, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, is a public sector agency that acts as the environmental regulator and flood warning authority in Scotland. In partnership with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), SEPA provides the NetRegs website, NetRegs.org.uk, and NetRegs e-newsletter, which offer free guidance to businesses in Scotland and Northern Ireland on corporate environmental responsibility, applicable key environmental legislation and economic benefits related to adopting a responsible environmental approach to business. Throughout 2020, the website has also included information to help businesses keep informed on the current situation surrounding Coronavirus. The website provides guidance for all businesses but is targeted mainly at small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Progressive was commissioned to conduct research in 2020 among SMEs in Scotland and Northern Ireland, to provide an up-to-date picture of current attitudes and awareness in relation to the NetRegs website and environmental issues. The research aimed to measure:

- Awareness of existing environmental legislation
- Internal systems, policies and/or behaviours relating to environmental management
- Attitudes towards respondents' own companies' environmental impact
- Perceived benefits attached to improved environmental performance
- Previous interactions with external organisations regarding environmental information and issues
- Awareness and use of the NetRegs website
- Benefits of using the NetRegs website

Previous surveys have been run to assess awareness of NetRegs and estimate the benefits of using the site, most recently by Progressive in 2016. The research therefore aimed to draw comparisons with previous waves where feasible. Comparisons are summarised in Appendix 1.

Method and sample

In total, 895 interviews were conducted during October 2020 to February 2021; 447 with SMEs based in Scotland and 448 with SMEs in Northern Ireland. This sample size is somewhat less than the target of 1,000. The fieldwork was constrained by the coronavirus restrictions: many target businesses were operating under restrictions throughout, with staff working from home, and/or their premises closed for some or all of the fieldwork period.

The survey was conducted by Progressive's telephone interviewers using Computer-Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI). The questionnaire was largely based on the 2016 version, although it was amended slightly to include new areas of interest to SEPA and NIEA. The CATI fieldwork was supplemented by an online survey, which was designed to support respondents not in their workplace and/or who were time limited. In total, 67 of the 895 responses were received through the online route.

The sample was designed to ensure a reasonable spread of SMEs were included in relation to industrial sector and business size. The survey script also ensured that interviewers spoke to the person in the

business who deals with environmental issues and decisions, such as waste management or water and energy use. The sample was designed to focus on Agriculture, Construction, Healthcare, Hotels and Restaurants, and Transport, in line with previous surveys; however, other sectors, such as Education, Financial Services and Food and Drink Manufacturers, were also included to ensure the sample was broadly representative of all SME businesses in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Full details of the sample profile are included in the main body of this report.

Key Findings

Measures to address environmental issues

The vast majority of SME businesses have taken some action to reduce harm to the environment. When asked what, if any, practical measures their organisation had ever introduced aimed at preventing or reducing harm to the environment, the majority of respondents (74%) spontaneously mentioned at least one measure, and this figure rose to 93% when respondents were prompted with a list of possible measures. The most common measures implemented were cutting down business waste (mentioned by 65%), improving energy efficiency or water reduction (60%) and reducing the use of single-use plastics (55%).

Respondents from the largest organisations (50+ employees) were most likely to report undertaking nearly all of the harm reduction measures.

Hotels and Restaurants were the most likely to have undertaken a range of measures, including cutting down business waste, reducing single use plastics and making improvements in energy efficiency or water reduction. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Construction and Transport companies were the most likely to mention reducing transport emissions and transport costs. Construction companies were also most likely to mention making someone responsible for environmental matters and reducing use of raw materials. Agriculture businesses were the most likely to report carrying out a programme of environmental improvements and putting in place measures to adapt to change in the climate.

Very few respondents reported that they had **never** introduced any measures to reduce harm to the environment. However, among those who had not the most common reason given was that it was not applicable to them.

Implementation of an Environmental Management System (EMS) or an Environmental Policy

Across the sample as a whole, one in five (19%) said their company had an Environmental Management System (EMS), such as an ISO 14001, BS 8555 or Green Ticks/Green Dragon standard. The proportion with an EMS in place was far higher, however, amongst the larger companies (47%), while the smallest organisations were least likely to have an EMS (10%). Respondents working in the Construction industry were the most likely to report having an EMS (35%). Over three quarters (77%) of those with an EMS consider it to be very effective/effective.

Those respondents who reported that they did not have an EMS were asked if they had an environmental policy. In total, 48% of these organisations reported having an environmental policy. Overall, 58% of businesses had either an EMS or environmental policy in place. The larger organisations were most likely to have an EMS or environmental policy. Hotels and Restaurants, Healthcare and Construction businesses were most likely to have an EMS/environmental policy.

The most common reasons given for taking steps to improve environmental performance were compliance with a mandatory requirements (mentioned by 23%), financial pressures (16%), protecting

the environment (14%), suggestions from within the business (12%) and simply because it's the right thing to do (12%).

The most frequently reported benefits of taking these steps included reduced operating costs (53%) and reduced risk of prosecution or fines (48%). These benefits could be highlighted in communications encouraging businesses to implement measures to improve their environmental performance.

The survey also asked those **who did not** have an EMS or environmental policy how useful they felt such a policy would be. The majority of this sub-group did not feel an EMS or environmental policy would be useful (64% overall said it would be of no use or of little use). Only 23% felt it would be quite or very useful, although 12% said they did not know. Promoting the purpose and benefits of having an EMS or policy might help improve uptake.

As a further measure of the commitment of businesses to environmental harm reduction, respondents were asked how likely they were to invest money in improving their environmental performance over the next 12 months. Almost half (47%) reported that they were very or quite likely to invest, with Hotels and Restaurants (57%) the most likely sector to do so.

Over one third of businesses in Northern Ireland (37%) have started to think about the steps they will need to take to achieve the UK Government's target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Similarly, 41% of SME businesses in Scotland had thought about taking steps towards the Scottish Government's target of net zero emissions by 2045. Businesses in the Transport and Agricultural sectors were more likely than those in other sectors to say they have been thinking about Net Zero. Businesses in Healthcare and Hotels and Restaurants were most likely to say they have **not** been thinking about it.

Awareness of the environment and legislation

When respondents were asked to state (without any prompting) what activities, if any, their organisation undertakes which could be regarded as harmful to the environment, 46% spontaneously mentioned at least one. However, when prompted with a list of potentially harmful activities, the proportion reporting that their company undertook at least one rose to 92%. Clearly some of the harmful activities are not 'top of mind' among respondents, suggesting a need to raise awareness of these issues.

Taking the spontaneous and prompted responses together, the most commonly mentioned harmful activities were transport (mentioned by 64%), storing waste on site prior to removal (56%), storing chemicals, fuels or oils (50%) and undertaking an activity that could create noise, smell or dust (35%).

It was also important to understand how aware SME businesses are of relevant environmental legislation. When prompted with a list of regulations and legislation, the majority recognised at least one, with awareness highest for Hazardous Waste or Special Waste regulations (82% in Scotland and 78% in Northern Ireland), Duty of Care for Waste regulations (65%), and Food Waste Regulations (64%).

There was a very clear pattern in responses across business size for this question, with the largest organisations being the most aware of each of the regulations / legislation. These findings provide further evidence of a need to raise awareness of environmental issues among the smallest businesses.

It is not sufficient to have simply heard of regulations; businesses have to read and understand them. On the whole, businesses have at least a partial understanding of the regulations, but only between 10% and 26% of those aware of each regulation feel they fully understand them.

Sources of information, advice and support

Overall, half of the sample had ever been in contact with any business support organisations to discuss environmental issues – although this figure was higher among the largest organisations (66%, v 44% of the smallest organisations). The most commonly mentioned organisations were SEPA/NIEA (15%) and their local authority (14%). A wide range of other organisations were mentioned, some sector specific. There is clearly scope to increase the proportion of businesses contacting organisations for information and advice on environmental issues. In particular, smaller businesses (15% of those with <10 employees and 11% with 10-49 employees) were much less likely than the larger business (25% with 50+ employees) to contact SEPA/NIEA.

Awareness and use of NetRegs

In total, 13% of respondents reported that they were aware of NetRegs. Reflecting previous findings, awareness was higher among the larger organisations (28%, v 9% among the smallest companies). Respondents from Construction businesses were most likely to say they had heard of NetRegs (28%), while those from the Hotels and Restaurants (4%) and Transport (5%) sectors were least likely to be aware of the website. The research therefore suggests that there continues to be considerable scope to raise awareness of the NetRegs website and the benefits it can offer businesses.

Just less than half (44%) of those who had heard of NetRegs said that they had used it. This equates to 6% of the total sample of businesses interviewed. Most of those using NetRegs visit the site at least once every three months. Ratings of NetRegs in terms of usefulness and individual aspects of the website were generally very positive. The highest ratings were given for the Legislation Lists, the Website Guidance Pages and the GPP series.

Benefit of NetRegs
Those who used NetRegs were asked if the use of NetRegs had led to their company becoming more resource efficient. Over half (55%) said it has had a positive impact.

Information sources

Finally, the survey focused on information sources that respondents were likely to use to find out about environmental issues relating to their business. The most commonly mentioned information source was the internet (80%). The other main sources of information used were conversations with colleagues and briefings from subject experts (51%); information sent through the post, such as information from SEPA/NIEA (51%); email newsletters (46%); and trade magazines, journals and industry reports (45%).

Just 8% stated they would not use any information sources at all. Any action that NIEA can take to ensure a good web presence when searching for relevant terms will help organisations find them as a source of advice.

Conclusions

SME businesses in Scotland and Northern Ireland are clearly motivated to ensure they operate in a way that minimises harmful impacts on the environment. Almost all respondents reported that their business had implemented measures to reduce environmental harm, although motivations to do so were varied. They also understand the business benefits of implementing environmental protection measures, especially those of reducing operating costs and reducing the risk of prosecution. However,

there were significant variances in findings by size of company, with larger organisations (those with more than 50 employees) the most aware of potentially harmful activities and the relevant legislation, and the most likely to have taken steps to reduce their environmental impact. The smallest companies (those with less than 10 employees) tended to have lower levels of awareness, although they were not significantly less likely to perceive value in implementing or investing in measures to reduce environmental impact.

The research, therefore, suggests that the smaller SMEs require information and advice on how their operations could potentially harm the environment, and how they could minimise these harms. There is also a need to persuade these organisations of the business benefits and opportunities that investment in such harm reduction measures could bring in order to build on their openness to investing in environmental performance.

As noted in previous surveys, there is scope to raise awareness amongst all SME businesses of the NetRegs website. Indeed, the internet is the key source of information on environmental issues and SEPA/NIEA was the organisation most likely to have been contacted by those who have previously sought advice in this area (indicating a good level of trust and confidence in its advice). However, the NetRegs site itself is not being widely utilised by SME companies.

As noted in the previous wave of this research, the findings therefore provide clear evidence of the potential value of NetRegs, as well as the need for it, especially amongst smaller SMEs. Promotion of the site, with a focus on smaller SMEs, and including information about the value of engagement in environmental harm reduction measures, will drive visits to the site and potentially lead to improved environmental performance within this sector.

Introduction

Background and objectives

Background

SEPA, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, is a public sector agency that acts as the environmental regulator and flood warning authority in Scotland. In partnership with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), SEPA provides the NetRegs website, NetRegs.org.uk, and NetRegs newsletter, which offer free guidance to businesses in Scotland and Northern Ireland on corporate environmental responsibility, applicable key environmental legislation and economic benefits related to adopting a responsible environmental approach to business. The website provides guidance for all businesses but is targeted mainly at small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Since 2002, SEPA has commissioned a number of telephone surveys of SMEs in the UK to gauge awareness of the NetRegs website, knowledge of environmental legislation, and environmental performance. Over the course of the research, its scope has narrowed from 28 business sectors in 2002 down to just 10 by 2009. This allowed for a more representative data set to be developed.

Up to and including 2013 the survey was administered across the UK, with results produced for the UK as a whole, and for each of the four nations where sample sizes were sufficient. From 2016 onwards, the survey has been of relevance only to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The survey has been administered as a telephone interview, with separate surveys (online) undertaken to quantify the impact of using the site on the business. The 2020/21 survey combined both elements within a single survey.

Aims and objectives

The research aimed to measure:
- Awareness of existing environmental legislation
- Internal systems, policies and/or behaviours relating to environmental management
- Attitudes towards respondents' own companies' environmental impact
- Perceived benefits attached to improved environmental performance
- Previous interactions with external organisations regarding environmental information and issues
- Awareness and use of the NetRegs website
- Benefits of using the NetRegs website

The research was designed to meet current information requirements while bearing in mind the desire to provide time series analysis to track change since the previous waves of the survey.

This report outlines 2020/21 findings from the total sample of SMEs in Scotland and Northern Ireland combined. Separate reports for Scotland and Northern Ireland have also been provided separately. Comparisons to 2009 and 2016 data, where relevant, are provided in Appendix 1.

Method and sample

Introduction

In total, 895 interviews were conducted during October 2020 to February 2021; 447 with SMEs based in Scotland and 448 with SMEs in Northern Ireland. This sample size is somewhat less than the target of 1,000.

The fieldwork was constrained by the coronavirus pandemic. The fieldwork was initially scheduled to run over the period mid-March to end-May 2020. The national lockdown meant that fieldwork had to be suspended as it was not an 'essential service'. Once the economy began to open up over the summer, consideration was given as to an appropriate date to commence fieldwork. A number of test fieldwork shifts were run in mid-August. Strike rates were extremely low. It appeared at that stage businesses had not yet put in place effective working from home communications, which made it extremely difficult to contact key staff using the sample information: in some cases phones went unanswered; in others, getting transferred to the most appropriate person to undertake the interview proved a challenge. Many SMEs were working extremely hard at getting their business up-and-running again within new covid-constraints, so finding time to participate was limited. Further, many businesses were not contactable (not yet open/out-of-business). It was therefore agreed to allow a further period of acclimatisation before commencing fieldwork.

Fieldwork was commenced on 14 October 2020. Strike rates were initially low, but gradually picked up in Scotland. They remained extremely low in Northern Ireland where coronavirus rates were higher, and ongoing restrictions remained more stringent. It was therefore agreed to focus all fieldwork on the Scottish sample for the first few weeks. Fieldwork dates were therefore:
- Northern Ireland: 14 October to 24 February, with the substantive fieldwork during 2021
- Scotland: Substantive fieldwork undertaken 14 October to 15 December

Small numbers of interviews were collected during the tester sessions (to determine if fieldwork could be run successfully) during August and September 2020.

To boost the numbers, and to provide an option for respondents not reachable by phone, an online version was also produced. The online survey was open during October and November 2020. In total, 67 of the 895 responses were received through the online route.

The questionnaire was largely based on the 2016 version, although it was amended to reflect emerging areas of interest to SEPA and NIEA; to include questions on the benefits of the NetRegs website, previously addressed in a separate (online) survey; and a short section on how use of the site has changed since the pandemic. A copy of the survey questionnaire is included at Appendix 2.

Sampling

The sample was designed to ensure a good spread of SMEs were included in relation to industry sector and business size. The survey script also ensured that interviewers spoke to the person in the business who deals with environmental issues and decisions, such as waste management or water and energy use. The final sample profile is outlined in Table 1. The sample was designed to focus on Agriculture, Construction, Healthcare, Hotels and Restaurants, and Transport. These were also the core sectors included in the 2016 and 2009 surveys.

A note on business size

A sample of businesses in Scotland and Northern Ireland was purchased to be used as the sampling frame for the research. This sample had business size and sector detailed for each contact on the file. This information was used for quota control purposes to ensure a good spread of businesses was included in the research. However, a question was also asked in the survey about the number of employees the business had, and this data has been used for analysis and reporting (rather than the business size detailed on the sample file). In instances where the respondent did not know their business size, the sample categorisation information has been used. The proportion within each employee band was very similar comparing the sample list data to the respondents' own estimates.

As in 2016, it was agreed not to screen businesses of 250+ employees out of the survey. The final number of organisations over 250 was small (just 8 respondents).

The final dataset was weighted to reflect the target employee split (54% 1-9 employees, 29% 10-49 employees and 16% 50+ employees) and the target business sector profile.

The overall sample size of 895 provides a dataset with a margin of error of between ±0.65% and ±3.25%, calculated at the 95% confidence level (the market research industry standard)[1].

Table 1: Sample profile

	Unweighted		Weighted	
Industry sector	No.	%	No.	%
Agriculture	167	19%	143	16%
Construction	121	14%	130	15%
Healthcare	143	16%	134	15%
Hotels and restaurants	133	15%	134	15%
Transport	90	10%	112	12%
Education	42	5%	49	6%
Equipment and machinery	42	5%	36	4%
Financial services	35	4%	40	4%
Food and drink manufacturer	40	4%	36	4%
Retail and wholesale	40	4%	45	5%
Other	42	5%	36	4%
Business size	No.			
<10 employees	553	62%	482	54%
10-49 employees	250	28%	263	29%
50+ employees	90	10%	147	16%
Unsure	2	<1%	2	<1%

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[1] Please note that the survey did not use random sampling which means that we cannot provide statistically precise margins of error or significance testing as the sampling type is non-probability. The margins of error outlined should therefore be treated as indicative, based on an equivalent probability sample.

Analysis and reporting

This report outlines the 2020/21 survey findings for the total sample, including Scotland and Northern Ireland, providing analysis by industry sector (with a focus on the core sectors noted earlier, where larger sample sizes allow sub-group analysis) and business size.

Reporting conventions

Throughout this report, differences between sub-groups, such as size of business and industry sector, have been noted. Due to small base sizes for industry sector, some differences are statistically significant to the 90% confidence level and should, therefore, be treated as indicative.

Standard notification is used in tables with '*' used to indicate results of less than 1% and '-' used to indicate no respondents gave a particular answer. For ease of reading the results, '1%' and '2%' notations have been left off some of the charts.

For questions using ratings scales, mean scores have been calculated as follows:

- Usefulness: scored from 1 (of no use) to 4 (very useful) or from 1 (not at all useful) to 4 (very useful), depending on the question wording
- Likelihood: scored from 1 (very unlikely) to 4 (very likely)
- Satisfaction: scored from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied).

Where such mean scores are presented, these exclude all 'don't know' / 'not applicable' responses.

Research findings

Measures to address environmental issues

Measures taken to prevent or reduce harm to the environment

Respondents were asked what, if any, practical measures their business had ever introduced aimed at preventing or reducing harm to the environment. Interviewers first coded respondents' spontaneous, top of mind responses and then prompted them with a list of measures. Across the sample as a whole, 74% spontaneously mentioned at least one measure their business had implemented. However, when prompted with a list of possible measures, this figure rose to 93% overall.

As illustrated by Table 2, there was some variation in responses across core industry sectors and by business size. The smallest organisations were less likely to report implementing at least one measure spontaneously (69% of those with less than 10 employees) than medium (78% of those with 10 – 49 employees) or larger organisations (85% with 50+ employees). The Hotels and Restaurants sector was most likely to spontaneously cite any actions taken to reduce harm to the environment (83% at least one).

Prompted responses were generally consistent across sectors, however, the smallest businesses (91%) were less likely to state implementing at least one measure compared to the largest businesses (97%).

Table 2: Whether companies reported introducing practical measures aimed at preventing or reducing harm to the environment (spontaneous and all responses) (Q13, Q14)

Business size	Proportion taking at least 1 action		Base	
	Spontaneous	Spont & prompt	Spontaneous[1]	Spont & prompt
<10	69%	91%	529	553
10-49	78%	95%	222	250
50+	85%	97%	77	90
Core sector				
Agriculture	70%	93%	158	167
Construction	72%	95%	113	121
Healthcare	68%	90%	137	143
Hotels & restaurants	83%	95%	119	133
Transport	71%	90%	84	90
Sample average	74%	93%	828	895

Note 1: Q13 was not included in the Online Survey, hence the lower base for this question

Figure 1 shows the detailed responses to this question; as can be seen here, the most common spontaneous responses were cutting down on business waste (mentioned by 16%), improved energy efficiency or water reduction (15%) and recycling (15%).

However, upon prompting with the list of practical measures, a significantly higher proportion reported undertaking all of these activities. The majority reported cutting down on business waste (mentioned by 65%), and improved energy efficiency or water efficiency (60%), as well as measures such as reducing use of single use plastics (55%). While a quarter of respondents (26%) initially said

they had not introduced any practical measures to reduce their impact on the environment, when prompted with the list of possible measures this fell to 7%.

Figure 1: Practical measures introduced aimed at preventing or reducing harm to the environment (spontaneous and prompted) (Q13, Q14)

Measure	Spont & Prompt	Spont
Cut down your business waste	65%	16%
Improved energy efficiency or water reduction	60%	15%
Reduced usage of single-use plastic	55%	7%
Reduced transport emissions	44%	10%
Carried out environmental improvements	43%	11%
Staff training about environmental responsibilities	43%	2%
Made someone responsible for environmental matters	42%	1%
Reduced transport costs	38%	3%
Assessed the impact the business has on the environment	37%	7%
Reduced use of raw materials	29%	4%
Encourage staff involvement in initiatives	23%	1%
Measures to adapt to changes in climate	19%	0%
Recycling	14%	15%
Responsible waste disposal	3%	4%
Other	26%	26%
None	7%	26%

Base (all): Spont (Q13) = 828, Prompt (Q14) = 895

'Other' responses were given by 214 respondents spontaneously; examples of the initiatives raised were:

- Using environmental equipment/supplies/materials (34)
- Slurry storage and management (26)
- Reduce waste / waste management (26)
- Waste water management (20)
- Tree/hedge planting/rewilding (18)
- Renewable energy / reduced energy use (17)

Respondents from the largest organisations (50+ employees) were the most likely to report undertaking most of these measures.

As detailed in Table 3, there was also variation in responses across the core industry sectors. For example, the Hotels and Restaurants sector was the most likely to have undertaken a range of measures, including cutting down business waste (78%), reducing single use plastics (78%), making improvements in energy efficiency or water reduction (73%), encouraging staff involvement in initiatives (35%) and recycling (23%). Construction and Transport companies were the most likely to mention reducing transport emissions (58% and 69% respectively) and reducing transport costs (54% and 51% respectively). Construction companies were also most likely to mention making someone responsible for environmental matters (55%) and reducing use of raw materials (39%). Agriculture

businesses were the most likely to report carrying out a programme of environmental improvements (53%) and putting in place measures to adapt to change in the climate (33%).

Table 3: Practical measures undertaken by core industry sector (Q13, Q14)

Practical measures to protect / reduce harm (spont and prompt)	Agriculture	Construction	Healthcare	Hotels & Restaurants	Transport
Assessed impact business has on the environment	46%	42%	28%	35%	28%
Carried out a programme of environmental improvements	53%	43%	36%	44%	35%
Made someone in the company responsible for environmental matters	31%	55%	37%	45%	40%
Made any energy efficiency or water reduction improvements	64%	58%	55%	73%	46%
Cut down business waste	62%	64%	60%	78%	44%
Reduced use of single use plastics	57%	47%	47%	78%	41%
Reduced transport emissions	42%	58%	30%	37%	69%
Reduced transport costs	36%	54%	27%	32%	51%
Reduced use of raw materials	32%	39%	26%	29%	13%
Staff training on environmental responsibilities	32%	52%	42%	55%	32%
Encourage staff involvement in environment initiatives	14%	24%	23%	35%	16%
Measures to adapt to climate change	33%	17%	20%	23%	7%
Other environmental activity	39%	30%	21%	21%	26%
Recycling	6%	6%	16%	23%	6%
Responsible disposal of Waste	5%	5%	5%	4%	-
None of these / nothing	7%	5%	10%	5%	10%
Base	**167**	**121**	**143**	**133**	**90**

Circular economy

Respondents were asked if they had heard of the circular economy. As shown on Figure 2 below, 19% of respondents were aware of the term, while 79% were not. Larger businesses were significantly more likely to have heard of it (31% of those with 50+ employees). There were also differences across the sectors, with Healthcare (at 9%), and Transport (11%) significantly less likely than Construction (26%) and Agriculture (22%) to have heard the term.

Figure 2: Aware of the Circular Economy (Q15)
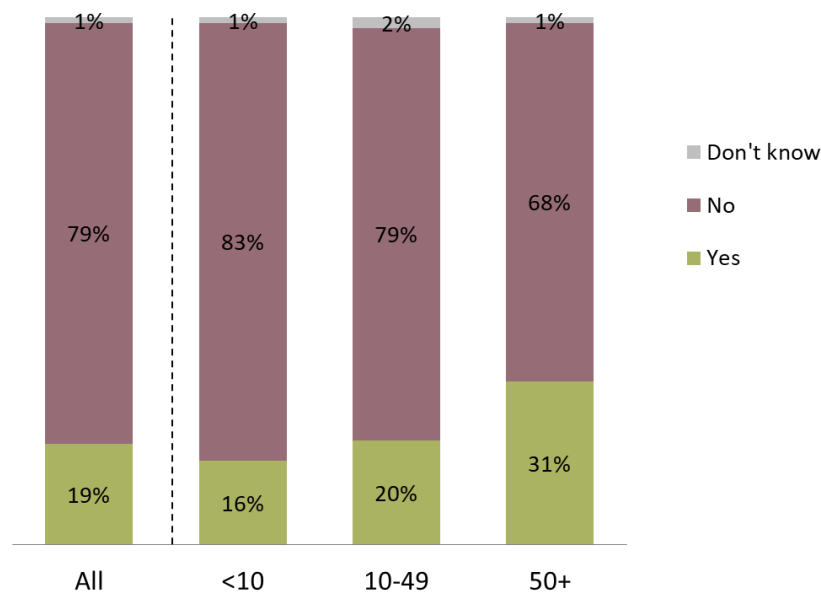
Base (All): 895

Despite low levels of awareness, almost all respondents are either currently undertaking activities or are in the process of adopting activities consistent with circular economy principles. In particular, 85% are repairing items with a view to extending lifespan, and 67% are recycling/reusing items. Around half (52%) are moving to redesign processes or products so as to reduce waste. Notably, as yet, far fewer – 12% of respondents – are using waste heat.

Size of business impacts the likelihood of adopting some activities, with larger companies (>50 employees) more likely to have adopted or be in the process of adopting redesigning processes or products to reduce waste (65% vs. 53% with 10-49 employees and 48% with <10 employees) and using waste heat (27% vs. 9% with 10-49 employees and 8% with <10 employees). There are variations between sectors. Agriculture and Construction businesses are more likely to be adopting most of these activities. Transport is performing less well than all other key sectors on redesigning processes and products.

Table 4: Adopted elements of the Circular Economy (Q16)

Adopted elements of the Circular Economy	Full sample	Agriculture	Construction	Healthcare	Hotels & restaurants	Transport
Repair items to extend their life	85%	93%	91%	78%	84%	83%
Reuse materials or use pre-used goods instead of brand new ones	67%	74%	78%	54%	60%	61%
Redesign processes or products to reduce waste	52%	62%	56%	45%	62%	26%
Use waste heat	12%	18%	16%	7%	10%	3%
Base (all)	**895**	**167**	**121**	**143**	**133**	**90**

Implementation of an Environmental Management System (EMS) or Environmental Policy

Adoption of an Environmental Management System

Across the sample as a whole, 19% said their company had an Environmental Management System (EMS) such as an ISO 14001, BS 8555 or Green Ticks/Green Dragon standard (see Figure 3). Thirteen per cent said they did not know, but most (68%) said they did not have an EMS.

Figure 3: Whether companies have implemented an Environmental Management System (Q9)


Base (all): 895
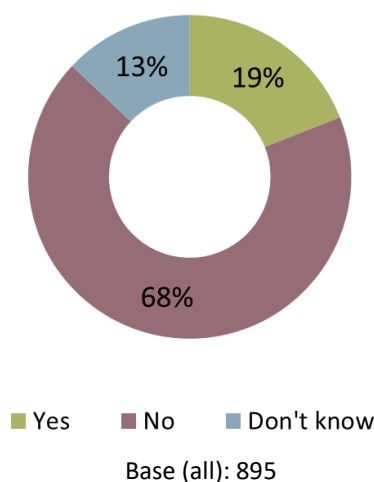
The proportion of companies with an EMS varied in relation to business size and core industry sector, as outlined in Table 5. Those with fewer than 10 employees were least likely to have an EMS (10%), compared to businesses with 10 to 49 employees (21%) and those with 50+ employees (47%). Respondents working in the Construction sector were more likely to report having an EMS (35%) than those working within other sectors.

Table 5: Whether companies had an EMS by business size and core industry sector (Q9)

Business size	Proportion with an EMS	Base
<10	10%	553
10-49	21%	250
50+	47%	90
Core sector		
Agriculture	14%	167
Construction	35%	121
Healthcare	15%	143
Hotels & restaurants	13%	133
Transport	18%	90
Sample average	19%	895

As shown on Figure 4 over, three quarters (77%) of those with an EMS considered it very effective/effective. There were no significant differences by size of businesses. In terms of sector, Healthcare organisations (96%) and Hotels and Restaurants (90%) were more likely to rate their EMS as very effective/effective than Agriculture businesses (61%). One fifth (20%) considered the EMS to be quite effective; just three businesses said it was not effective.

Figure 4: Effectiveness of the EMS (Q10)

Base (All with an EMS): 150
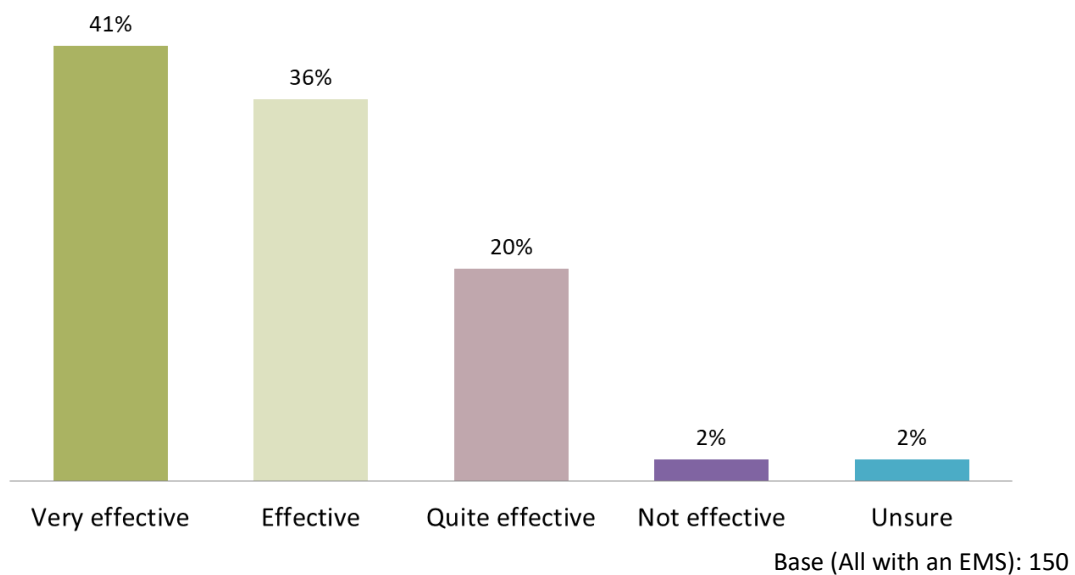
Adoption of an Environmental Policy

Those who did not have an EMS in place were asked if they had an Environmental Policy and around half (48%) said yes (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Whether companies without an EMS have an environmental policy (Q11)

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Don't know

Base (all who did not have an EMS): 745
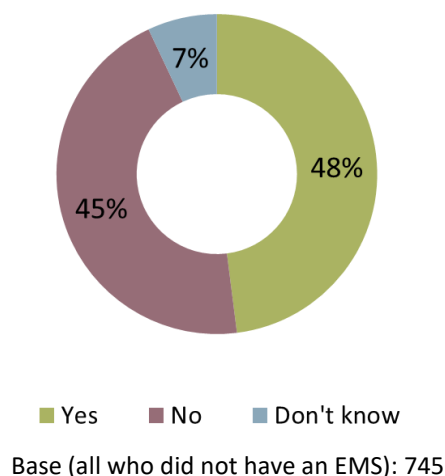
Taking these two questions together, over half (58%) of the sample overall had either an EMS or an environmental policy in place. Again, there was variation between businesses in terms of size and sector in relation to having this kind of policy in place. As shown in Table 6, the larger organisations (80%) were more likely to have an environmental policy, as were those in Construction (66%), Hotels and Restaurants (64%) and Healthcare (62%) sectors.

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Table 6: Whether companies had an EMS/environmental policy by business size and core industry sector (Q9, Q11)

| Business size	Proportion with environmental policy	Base
<10	46%	553
10-49	68%	250
50+	80%	90
Core sector		
Agriculture	51%	167
Construction	66%	121
Healthcare	62%	143
Hotels & restaurants	64%	133
Transport	46%	90
Sample average	58%	895

What prompted improvements to environmental performance

Respondents who had mentioned taking any actions to improve their environmental performance, or who had an EMS or environmental policy in place, were asked what had prompted them to take these steps. As illustrated in Figure 6, compliance with a mandatory requirement was the top reason given for taking action (mentioned by 23%). Financial pressures (16%), protecting the environment (14%) and suggestions from within the business (12%) were the next most common reasons for taking steps to improve environmental performance.

Figure 6: What prompted respondents to take steps to improve their environmental performance (Q19)
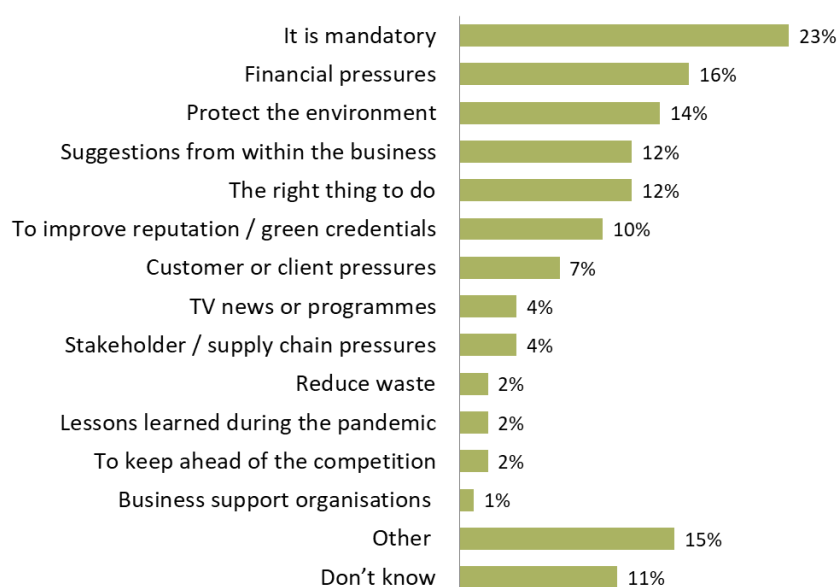
Base (all who had taken at least one action to improve performance, and/or who had an EMS or environmental policy): 875

Medium sized and larger organisations were more likely than the smallest to say they made environmental improvements which were mandatory (28% of those with 50+ employees and 26% with
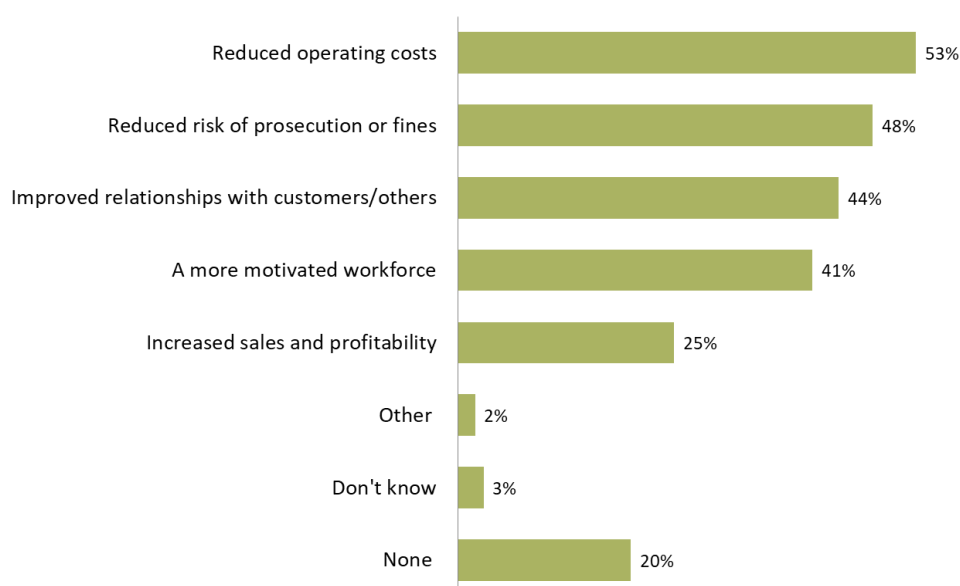
10-49 employees v 19% of those with <10 employees) and as a result of suggestions from within the business (27% of those with 50+ employees and 15% with 10-49 employees v 5% of those with <10 employees). The larger organisations were also more likely to mention to improve reputation/green credentials (16%), customer or client requests or pressures (15%), stakeholder/supply chain requests (12%), and in response to lessons learned during the pandemic (6%). The smallest organisations were more likely than the largest to mention helping to protect the environment (16% <10 v 8% 50+ employees) and it's the right thing to do (14% <10 v 6% 50+ employees).

There were very few differences in responses to this question in relation to the core industry sectors, with the exception of Healthcare businesses being less likely than most others to say they were prompted by customer/client pressures (1%).

Benefits of making environmental improvements

These respondents were also asked whether their business had benefited as a result of taking steps to improve environmental performance. The most commonly reported benefits were reduced operating costs, and reduced risk of prosecution or fines (both mentioned by around half the sample) – see Figure 7.

Figure 7: Benefits to the business of environmental improvements (Q18)

Reduced operating costs 53%
Reduced risk of prosecution or fines 48%
Improved relationships with customers/others 44%
A more motivated workforce 41%
Increased sales and profitability 25%
Other 2%
Don't know 3%
None 20%

Base (all who had taken at least one action to improve performance, and/or who had an EMS or environmental policy): 875

The likelihood of reporting each of these benefits increased with the size of the business, with the largest organisations (50+ employees) being the most likely to mention almost all of the benefits.

Among the core industry sectors, the following patterns emerged:
- Hotels and Restaurants were most likely of all the core sectors to report reduced operating costs (62%) and a more motivated workforce (54%).
- Hotels and Restaurants (58%) and Construction (58%) were more likely to state improved relationships with customers/others, compared to Healthcare (28%) and Agriculture (34%) businesses.
- Agriculture (60%), Construction (54%) and Hotels and Restaurants (51%) were more likely to state reduced risk of prosecution or fines than Healthcare (33%) and Transport (39%) sectors.

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- Healthcare businesses (15%) were the least likely to mention increased sales and profitability. This sector was the most likely to state no benefits (32%).

Perceived usefulness of an EMS or Environmental Policy

The survey also asked those **who did not** have an EMS or environmental policy how useful they felt such a policy would be. The majority did not feel this would be useful (64% overall said it would be of no use or of little use). Only 23% felt it would be quite or very useful, while 12% were unsure (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: How useful an EMS or environmental policy would be (Q12)
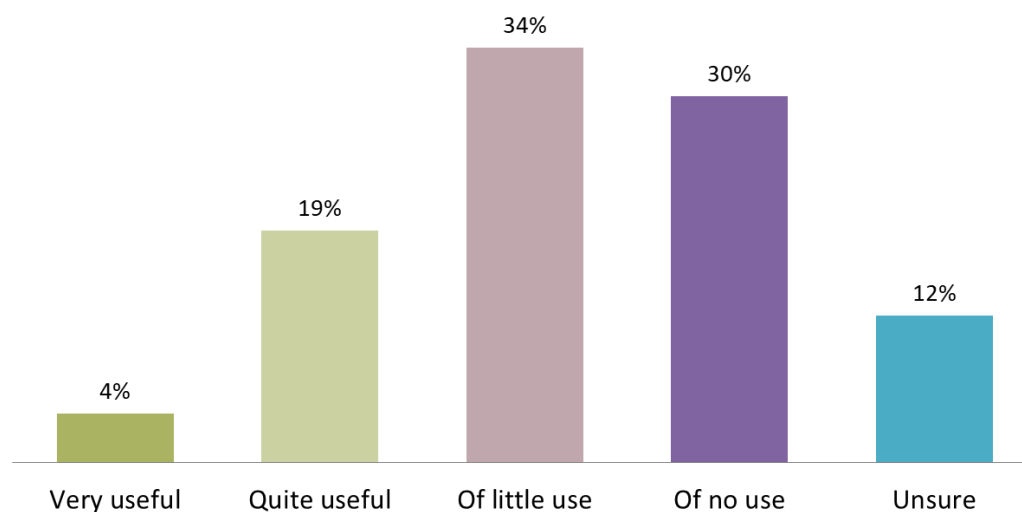
Base (all **without** an EMS or environmental policy): 393

Since four fifths of the largest organisations already had a policy in place, the base size for this question among businesses of 50+ employees was small (16 respondents). However, there was a difference in responses between the small and medium-sized organisations in relation to perceived usefulness of an EMS or environmental policy, with 36% of those with 10-49 employees saying they thought this would be very or quite useful, compared to only 19% of the small (<10 employees) businesses.

Reasons for not taking measures to reduce harm to the environment

Only twenty businesses had not taken any measures to prevent or reduce harm to the environment – that is, they did not have an environment system or policy in place, they had not taken any actions to prevent or reduce environmental harm from their business, and they had not taken any circular economy actions. These businesses were asked what had prevented them from taking measures to reduce harm to the environment. Their responses included:

- Not applicable to me: 6
- Don't have time: 3
- It is too expensive: 2
- Never thought about: 2
- Don't know: 5

Likelihood to invest in environmental performance

All respondents were asked how likely they were to invest money in improving their environmental performance over the next 12 months. Almost half (47%) reported that they were very or quite likely to invest, while 38% said they were quite or very unlikely to do this, and 15% said they did not know (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Likelihood to invest in environmental performance in the next 12 months (Q20)

Base (all): 895
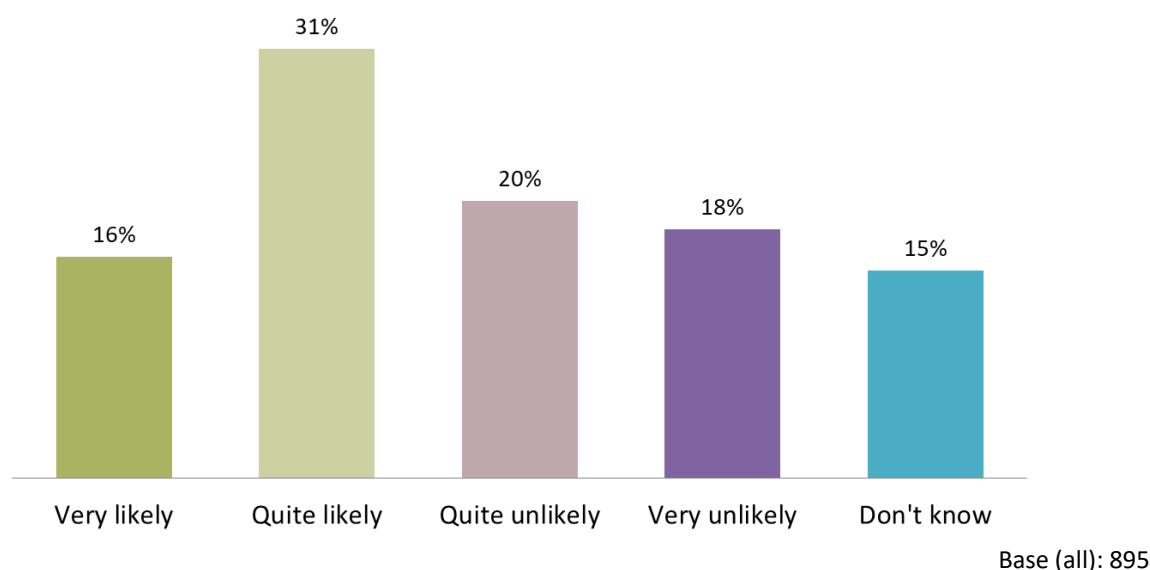
There was a clear pattern in responses to this question based on the size of the organisation, the smallest organisations being least likely to anticipate investment in their environmental performance (42% said it was very or quite likely) compared to the medium sized firms (52% of those with 10-49 employees) and the largest organisations (56% of those with 50+ employees).

The Hotels and Restaurants sector was found to be the most likely to consider investing in improving their environmental performance over the next 12 months. In total, 57% of respondents within this sector considered such investment to be very or quite likely.

Respondents were asked specifically whether their business had thought about the steps they would need to take to achieve government targets for Net Zero Carbon emissions. In Scotland, the Scottish Government's target is to achieve Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2045, while in Northern Ireland the UK Government's target is to achieve Net Zero Carbon emissions by 2050. In Northern Ireland over one third (37%) stated they had thought about what steps they might need to take, while in Scotland the proportion was slightly higher at two-fifths (41%) who had considered how they could move towards zero carbon emissions (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Has business thought about steps needed to achieve Net Zero Carbon emissions target (Q23/24)

Northern Ireland – Net zero by 2050

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

37%
51%
11%

Base (NI): 448

Scotland – Net zero by 2045

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

41%
49%
10%

Base (Scotland): 447
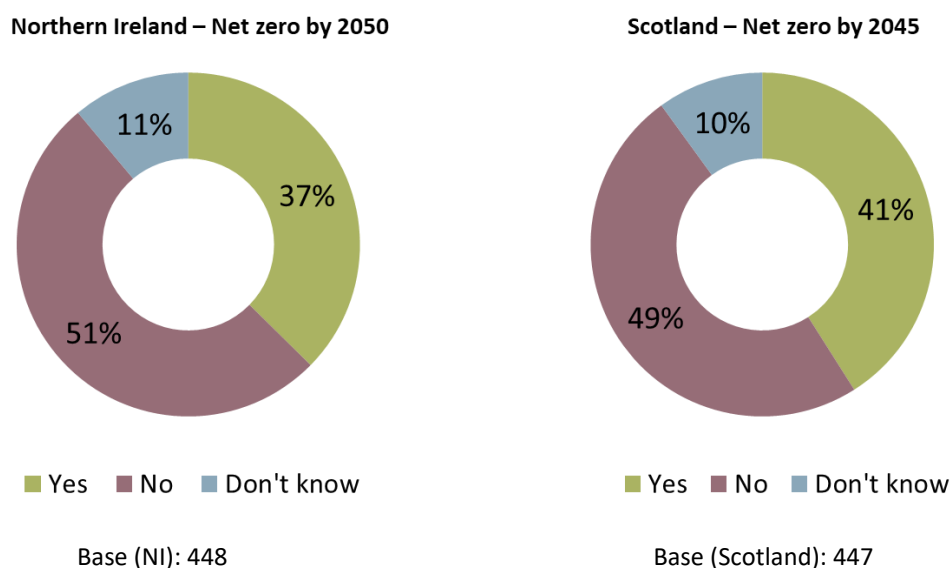
In Northern Ireland, larger businesses were more likely than medium and smaller organisations to say they had thought about steps towards net zero emissions (48% of those with 50+ employees v 37% of < 10 employees and 32% of 10 - 49 employees). In Scotland, the proportion saying they had taken steps was consistent across size of business, although a quarter (23%) of large organisations (50+ employees) said they don't know, which was significantly more than small (7%) and medium businesses (9%).

In Northern Ireland, businesses in the Transport (56%), Agricultural (49%) and Construction (48%) sectors were most likely to say they have been thinking about Net Zero. Similarly, in Scotland, businesses in the Transport (55%) and Agricultural (53%) sectors were more likely than those in other sectors to say they have been thinking about Net Zero. However, only 26% of Construction businesses in Scotland reported that they had been thinking about it. Healthcare businesses and Hotels and Restaurants tended to be less likely to have given consideration to Net Zero in both Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Awareness of the environment and legislation

Activities that may harm the environment

Respondents were asked what activities, if any, their organisation undertakes which could be regarded as harmful to the environment. Across the whole sample, 46% spontaneously mentioned at least one activity their business did which could be regarded as harmful to the environment, although this rose to 92% when prompted with a list of potentially harmful activities.

There was some variation in responses across core industry sectors and by business size, as outlined in Table 7. As shown here, the smallest organisations were the least likely to spontaneously report undertaking harmful activities when prompted (40% of <10 employees, versus 53% of 10-49 employees and 53% of 50+).

Transport (68%) businesses were the most likely and Hotels and Restaurants (30%) were the least likely to spontaneously mention such activities. When prompted, high proportions of businesses in all sectors mentioned harmful activities, however, the proportion was particularly high for Transport businesses (100%) and somewhat lower for Healthcare organisations (88%).

Table 7: Whether businesses reported undertaking harmful activities by business size and core industry sector (spontaneous and all responses) (Q7, Q8)

Business size	Proportion undertaking at least 1 harmful activity		Base	
	Spontaneous	Spont & prompt	Spontaneous*	Spont & prompt
<10	40%	89%	529	553
10-49	53%	94%	222	250
50+	53%	96%	77	90
Core sector				
Agriculture	50%	96%	158	167
Construction	56%	91%	113	121
Healthcare	43%	88%	137	143
Hotels & restaurants	30%	95%	119	133
Transport	68%	100%	84	90
Sample average	46%	92%	828	895

 * Note Q7 was not included in the Online Survey, hence the lower base for this question

Figure 11 shows the detailed responses to this question. Over half (54%) said 'none' when asked for a spontaneous response. The most common activities mentioned spontaneously were using transport (11%) and storing waste on site prior to removal (11%).

However, when prompted with the list, a substantially higher proportion mentioned each of these harmful activities. Taking the spontaneous and prompted responses together, 64% mentioned transport, 56% said they store waste on site prior to removal, 50% store chemicals, fuels or oils, and 35% reported undertaking an activity that could create noise, smell or dust. Only 8% reported doing none of the activities on the prompted list.

Figure 11: Activities undertaken which could be regarded as harmful to the environment (spontaneous and prompted) (Q7, Q8)
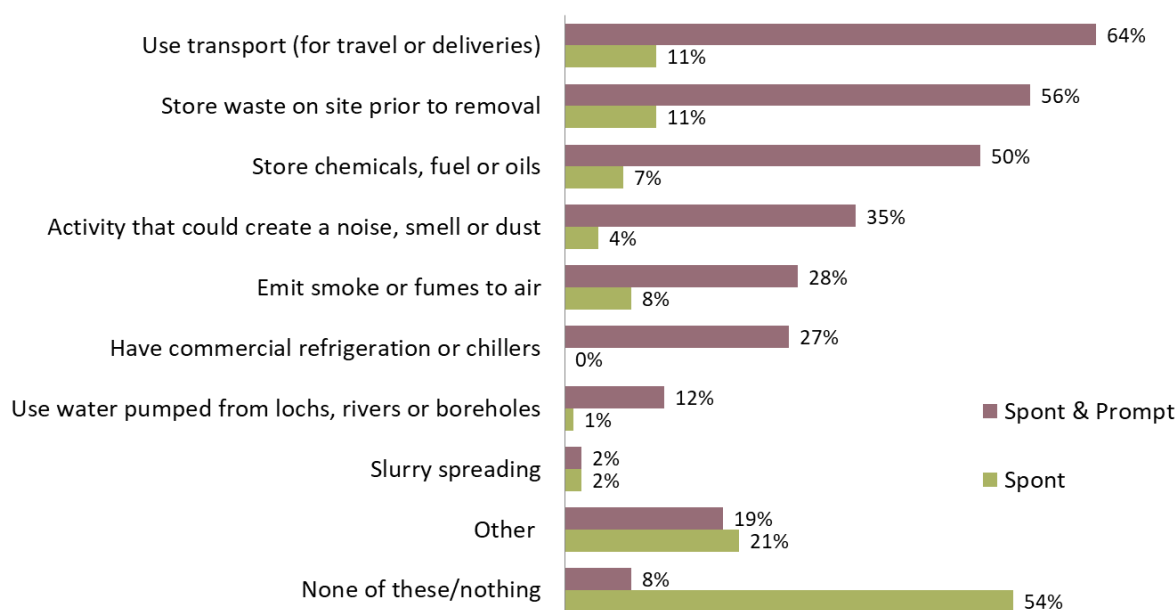
Base (all): 895

Among the 163 respondents who spontaneously mentioned an 'other' activity that may harm the environment, the types of issues raised were:

- References to waste / clinical waste / hazardous materials (70)
- Electricity overuse/heating (21)
- Use carbon fuels / fuel spillages (19)
- Water disposal / contamination (16)
- Non-environmental materials/equipment (13)
- Packaging and plastics / non-recyclable materials (12)
- Use of chemicals/pesticides (9)

Taking spontaneous and prompted responses together, the smallest organisations were the least likely to report storing waste on site prior to removal (46% <10 said they did this, v 68% of 10-49 and 70% of 50+); while the largest organisations were most likely to report storing chemicals, fuel or oils (71%, compared to 42% of <10 and 52% of 10-49), emitting smoke or fumes to air (38% v 25% and 28%), carrying out any activity that could create noise, smell or dust (44% vs. 33% and 34%), having commercial refrigeration or chillers (43% vs. 20% and 32%) and using water pumped from lochs, rivers or boreholes (19% vs. 13% and 7%).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the activities undertaken varied by industrial sector. Among the core industrial sectors, the following patterns emerged:
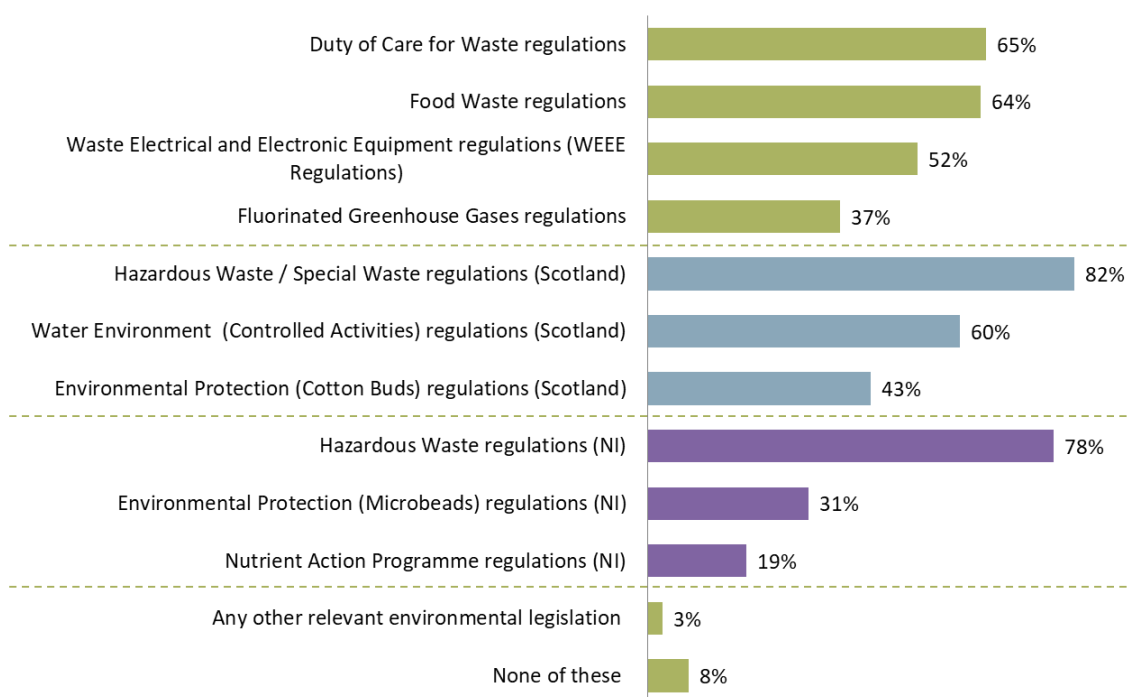
- Hotels and Restaurants was the most likely sector to have commercial refrigeration or chillers (77%) and to store waste on site prior to removal (73%).
- Transport companies (88%) were the most likely to use transport for travel or deliveries, followed by Construction (76%) and Agriculture (68%)

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- Agriculture businesses (77%) were the most likely to report storing chemicals, fuels or oils; while Construction (71%) and Agriculture (60%) were most likely to carry out activities that create noise, smell or dust.
- Transport companies were the most likely to report emitting smoke or fumes (51%) and Agriculture businesses were the most likely to use water pumped from lochs, rivers or boreholes (37%).

Awareness of environmental regulation and legislation

The survey also addressed awareness of relevant legislation; respondents were therefore asked which of the following environmental regulations / legislation they had heard of. Awareness was highest for the Hazardous Waste regulations (78%), Duty of Care for Waste regulations (59%), and the Food Waste regulations (59%). Less than half of the sample had heard of each of the other regulations listed. Just less than one in ten (8%) said they had not heard of any of the listed regulations.

Figure 12: Environmental regulation or legislation respondents had heard of (Q5)

Regulation	Percentage
Duty of Care for Waste regulations	65%
Food Waste regulations	64%
Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment regulations (WEEE Regulations)	52%
Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases regulations	37%
Hazardous Waste / Special Waste regulations (Scotland)	82%
Water Environment (Controlled Activities) regulations (Scotland)	60%
Environmental Protection (Cotton Buds) regulations (Scotland)	43%
Hazardous Waste regulations (NI)	78%
Environmental Protection (Microbeads) regulations (NI)	31%
Nutrient Action Programme regulations (NI)	19%
Any other relevant environmental legislation	3%
None of these	8%

Base (all): Total sample 895; Scotland 447; NI 448
Percentages aware for legislation unique to Scotland and NI are calculated based on Scotland and NI bases.

There was a very clear pattern in responses across business size for this question, with the largest organisations being the most aware of the regulations / legislation.
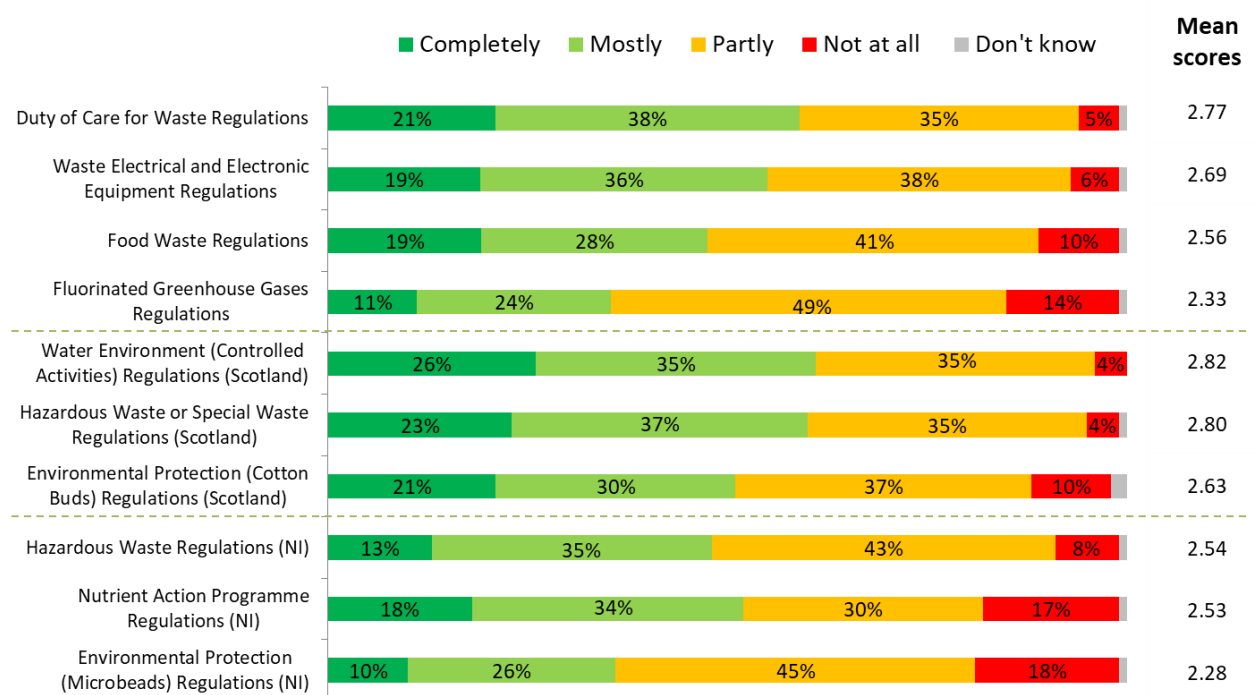
Among the core industrial sectors:

- Hotels and restaurants (79%) and Healthcare (71%) were most likely to be aware of the Food Waste Regulations
- Hotels and Restaurants (75%), Construction (69%) and Healthcare (68%) were more likely to have heard of the Duty of Care for Waste regulations than Agriculture (54%) and Transport (55%).

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- In Scotland, Construction (85%) and Healthcare (92%) organisations were the most likely to be aware of the Hazardous Waste / Special Waste Regulations.
- Agriculture businesses in Northern Ireland (55%) were the most likely to have heard of the Nutrient Action Programme regulations.
- In Scotland, Agriculture businesses (74%) and Construction businesses (72%) were most likely to have heard of the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) regulations.

Those who were aware of each type of regulation were asked to what extent they understood the regulations. Figure 13 below summarises the responses. It shows that, on the whole, businesses have at least a partial understanding of the regulations, but only a minority would say they fully understand them. The highest levels of understanding were stated for Duty of Care for Waste Regulations (59% understand completely/mostly), Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations (55% completely/mostly) and Food Waste Regulations (47% completely/mostly). The lowest levels of understanding were for Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases Regulations (35% completely/mostly) and the Environmental Protection (Microbeads) regulations (36% completely/mostly).

Figure 13: Understanding of regulations (Q6)

	Mean scores
Duty of Care for Waste Regulations: Completely 21%, Mostly 38%, Partly 35%, Not at all 5%	2.77
Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations: Completely 19%, Mostly 36%, Partly 38%, Not at all 6%	2.69
Food Waste Regulations: Completely 19%, Mostly 28%, Partly 41%, Not at all 10%	2.56
Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases Regulations: Completely 11%, Mostly 24%, Partly 49%, Not at all 14%	2.33
Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Regulations (Scotland): Completely 26%, Mostly 35%, Partly 35%, Not at all 4%	2.82
Hazardous Waste or Special Waste Regulations (Scotland): Completely 23%, Mostly 37%, Partly 35%, Not at all 4%	2.80
Environmental Protection (Cotton Buds) Regulations (Scotland): Completely 21%, Mostly 30%, Partly 37%, Not at all 10%	2.63
Hazardous Waste Regulations (NI): Completely 13%, Mostly 35%, Partly 43%, Not at all 8%	2.54
Nutrient Action Programme Regulations (NI): Completely 18%, Mostly 34%, Partly 30%, Not at all 17%	2.53
Environmental Protection (Microbeads) Regulations (NI): Completely 10%, Mostly 26%, Partly 45%, Not at all 18%	2.28

Base (Those who had heard of each type of legislation): 95-570
Percentages aware for legislation unique to Scotland and NI are calculated based on Scotland and NI bases.

There was a very clear pattern in responses across business size for this question, with the largest organisations being the most likely to completely/mostly understand the regulations, especially with respect to Food Waste regulations and the Hazardous or Special Waste regulations

There were some differences across the core sectors, with Hotels and Restaurants often most likely to say they fully/mostly understand regulations:
- Hotels and Restaurants (73%) and Healthcare (61%) were the most likely to completely/mostly understand the Food Waste regulations.

- Hotels and Restaurants (70%) and Healthcare (71%) were also the most likely to completely/mostly understand the Duty of Care for Waste regulations.
- Hotels and Restaurants were the most likely to completely/mostly understand the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment regulations (70%) and the Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases regulations (65%).

Permits, licences and exemptions

All respondents were asked whether their business requires a permit, licence or exemption from SEPA/NIEA in order to carry out its activities. Overall, 22% confirmed that this is a requirement (see Figure 14). As the figure illustrates, larger organisations with more than 50 employees were more likely to require a permit (36%), licence or exemption than small (20%) or medium sized (16%) businesses.

Figure 14: Whether respondents' companies need a permit, licence or exemption from SEPA/NIEA (Q4)
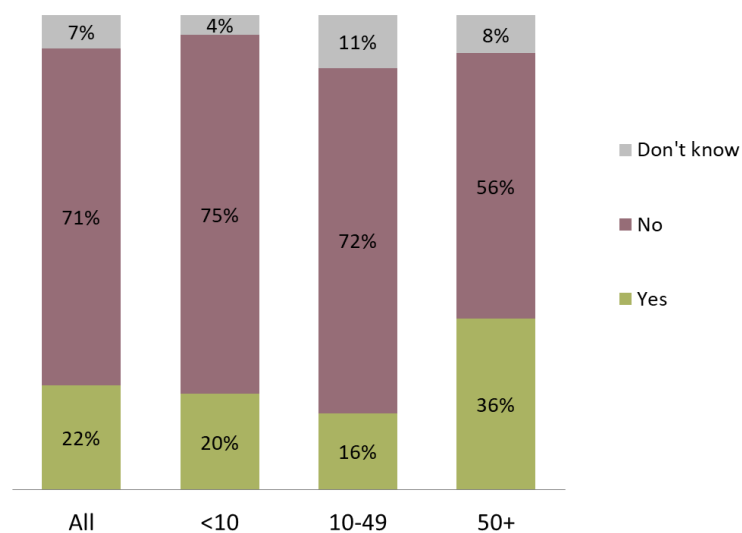
Base (all): 895

Among the core industry sectors, Construction (39%), Agriculture (29%) and Transport (26%) businesses were most likely to report needing a permit.

Sources of information, advice and support

Contact with business support organisations

Respondents were asked which organisations they had contacted to discuss environmental issues. Overall, half (49%) said that they had contacted an organisation about an environmental issue (see Figure 15). The largest organisations were most likely to have sought support (66% of businesses with 50+ employees, compared to 48% of medium sized businesses and 44% of the small businesses).

Within the core sectors, Agriculture (60%), Construction (57%) and Hotels and Restaurants (51%) were most likely to have sought support, while Healthcare (35%) and Transport (36%) were least likely.

The most commonly mentioned organisations which businesses had gone to for support were SEPA/NIEA (15%) and the local council (14%). A proportion of respondents (18%) also mentioned other support organisations not listed, although there was no consistent pattern to emerge in this data. Instead a wide range of specific organisations were named. A full list has been provided separately.

Figure 15: Business support organisations contacted (Q21)

Organisation	%
SEPA/NIEA	15%
Local Council	14%
Waste Companies	6%
A Consultant	5%
WRAP NI / Zero Waste Scotland / Resource Efficient	3%
Energy Saving Trust / Carbon Trust	3%
Invest NI / Scottish Enterprise/ HIE	3%
Business in the Community	2%
A Trade Association	2%
NetRegs email	1%
Federation of Small Businesses	1%
Other	18%
None	51%
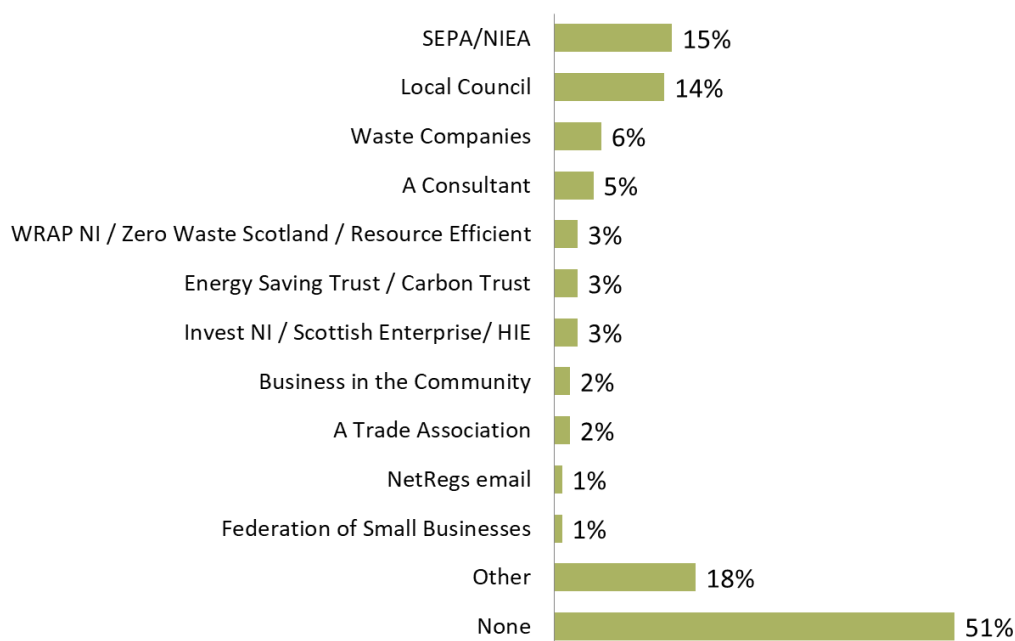
Base (all): 895

Larger businesses were more likely than medium and small businesses to contact SEPA/NIEA (25% of those with 50+ employees compared to 15% with <10 employees and 11% with 10 – 49 employees). The smaller organisations were less likely than medium or larger organisations to use a number of sources including Wrap NI/Zero Waste/Resource Efficient Scotland (1%, v 6% of 10 – 48 and 4% of 50+), Invest NI/SE/HIE (0%, v 4% of 10 – 48 and 7% of 50+), Energy Saving Trust/Carbon Trust (1%, v 4% of 10 – 48 and 7% of 50+) and waste companies (3%, v 10% of 10 – 48 and 10% of 50+).

Usage of NIEA/SEPA was highest for Agriculture (31%) and Constructions (26%) businesses.

Awareness and use of NetRegs

Awareness of NetRegs

A number of questions were asked specifically about the NetRegs website. First, respondents were asked whether they had heard of the NetRegs website. As shown in Figure 16, the majority (86%) were not aware of NetRegs, although awareness was higher among the larger organisations (28% had heard of it, compared to 9% among the smallest companies).

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Figure 16: Whether respondents had heard of the NetRegs website (Q25)
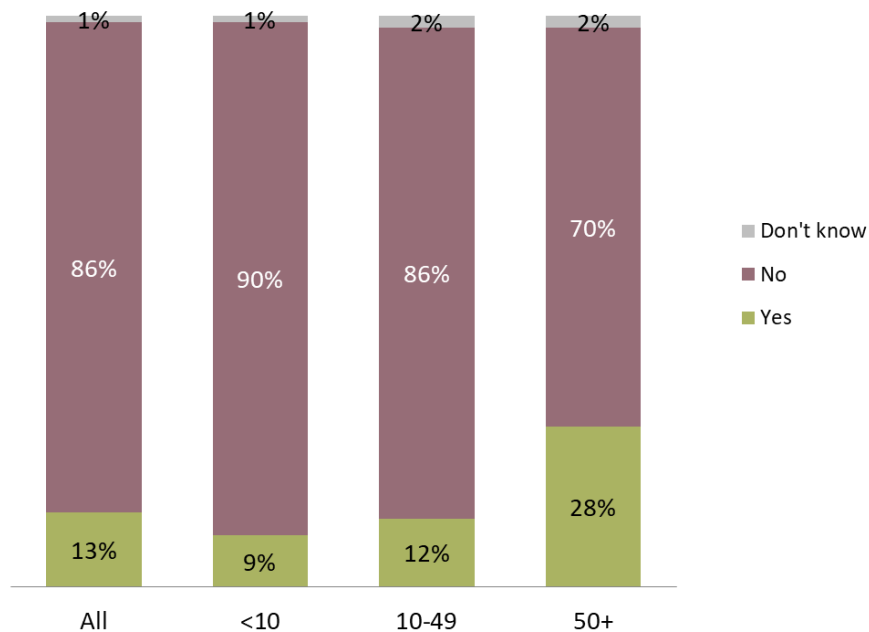
Base (all): 895

Among the core industrial sectors, respondents from Construction businesses were most likely to say they had heard of NetRegs (28%). Businesses in the Hotels and Restaurants (4%) and the Transport (5%) sectors were least likely to be aware of NetRegs

Use of NetRegs

Those who had heard of NetRegs were asked if they had ever used the website, and 44% said that they had done so. This equates to 6% of the total sample of 895 respondents who had used the NetRegs website (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Whether respondents had used the NetRegs website (Q27)

Base (All who had heard of NetRegs): 105

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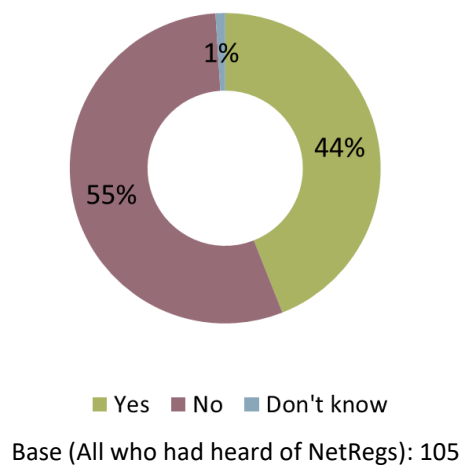
Those who had used NetRegs were asked some questions about their use and experience of the site. It is stressed that the only 45 businesses were eligible to respond to these questions so the base for analysis is small.

Just over a third (37%) of those using NetRegs visit the site at least once a month. A very similar proportion (36%) visit every 2 to 3 months, while a quarter are fairly infrequent visitors, using the site just once or twice a year (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Frequency of using NetRegs (Q29)

Base: (All who have used NetRegs): 45
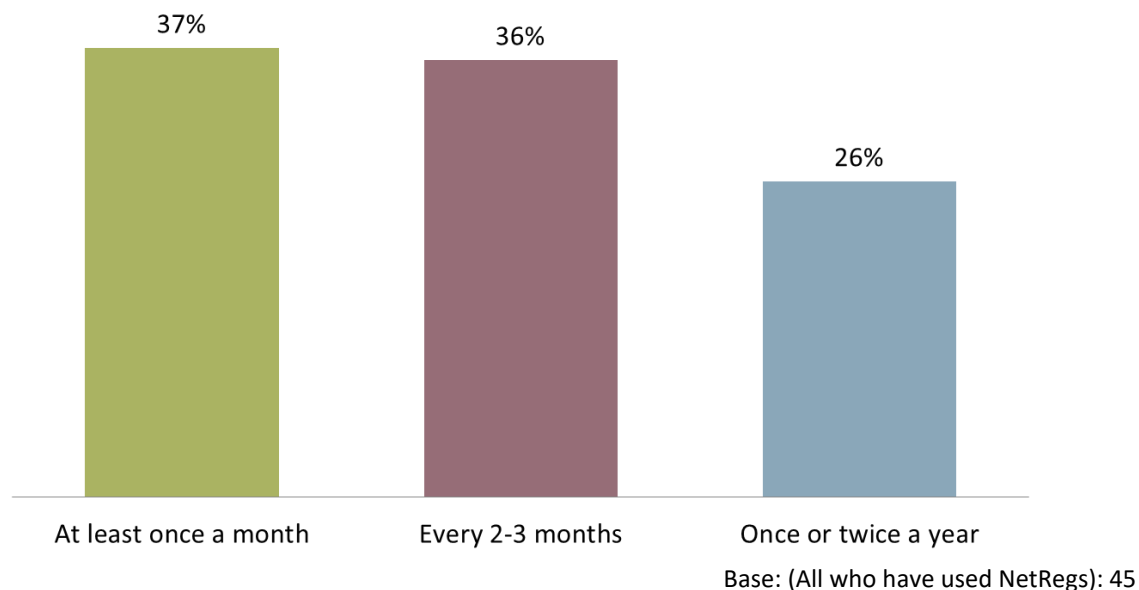
As Figure 19 shows, the features of the NetRegs site that most visitors find useful are the Legislation Lists (98% find this very or quite useful); the Website Guidance pages (93%), the GPP series (73%), and the email newsletter (57%). The Legislation Lists and the Website Guidance pages were also the most widely used parts of the NetRegs website (98% and 93% of NetRegs users used these pages respectively). Fewer than half of respondents had used the NetRegs mailbox (33%), the E-learning tools (39%), the Good Practice videos (42%) or the Environmental Self-assessment Tool (42%).

Figure 19: Usefulness of aspects of NetRegs (Q28)

Legend: ■ DK / Not used ■ Not at all useful ■ Not very useful ■ Quite useful ■ Very useful

					Mean scores
The Legislation lists	2%		37%	61%	3.62
The Website guidance pages	7%		47%	47%	3.50
The Guidance for Pollution Prevention series	23%	5%	33%	40%	3.45
The Email Newsletter	41%	2%	22%	35%	3.56
The Environmental Self-Assessment Tool	58%	3%	23%	16%	3.31
The E-Learning tools	61%	3%	18%	17%	3.37
The Good Practice Videos	58%	8%	16%	17%	3.14
NetRegs Mailbox	67%	5%	15%	12%	3.14

Base (all who had used NetRegs): 45

One in five NetRegs users (9 respondents) increased their usage of the site during the pandemic. Respondents who indicated that they were spending more time on the site during the pandemic reported using the Legislation Lists (6 respondents), the GPP series (4 respondents) and the website guidance pages (3 respondents).

Benefits of NetRegs

All those who used NetRegs were asked if the use of NetRegs had led to their company becoming more resource efficient. As shown on Figure 20, over half (55%) said it has had a positive impact, while 39% said it has not.

Figure 20: Whether use of NetRegs has led to resource efficiencies (Q33)

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Base (All who have used NetRegs): 45
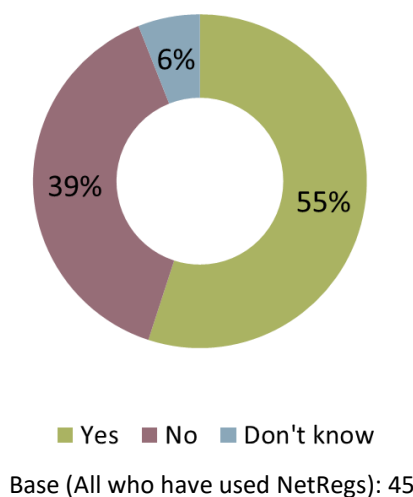
All businesses using NetRegs were asked if they could provide an estimate of any savings made by using the site (Figure 21); for example, by avoiding fines, remediation costs and consultancy fees; efficiency savings; and from supporting the organisation's environmental management system. In total, 15% said they could attribute no savings to using the site, while 21% made savings of up to £500 a year, and 9% made savings in excess of £500 a year, and more than half (55%) were unsure.
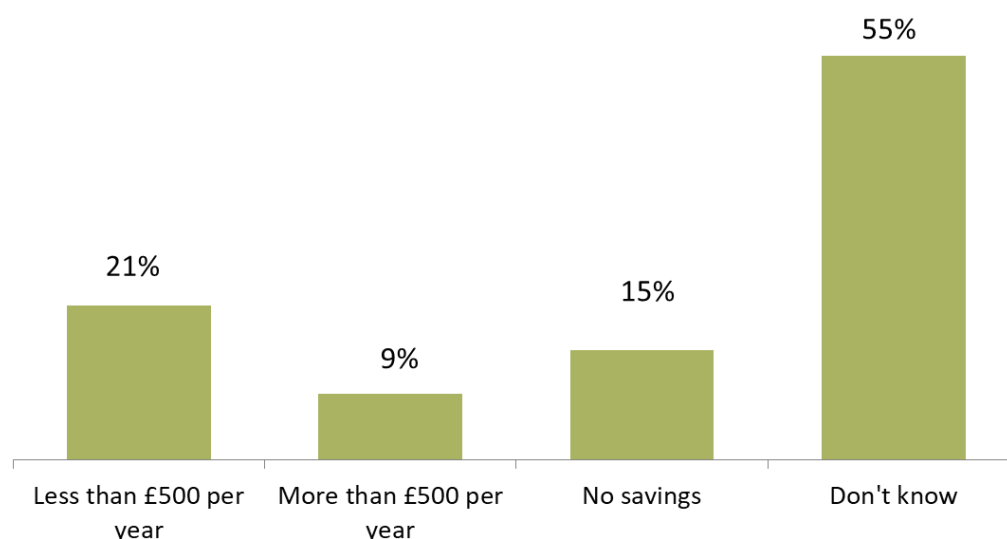
Figure 21: Estimate of savings generated using NetRegs (Q34)

Base (All who have used NetRegs): 45

Information sources

Finally, the survey focused on information sources that respondents were likely to use to find out about environmental issues relating to their business.

As shown in Figure 21, the most commonly mentioned information source was internet searches – in total 80% identified the internet as something they would use. The other main sources of information used were conversations with colleagues and briefings from subject experts (51%); information sent through the post, such as information from NIEA and other organisations; (51%); email newsletters (46%); and trade magazines, journals and industry reports (45%). Very few respondents identified sources of information not suggested on the survey list (4%), and only a small proportion (8%) stated they would not use any information sources at all.

Figure 22: Information sources likely to use for environmental information related to business (Q22)

Source	%
Internet searches	80%
Conversations with colleagues/briefings from staff	51%
Information sent through the post	51%
Email newsletter	46%
Trade magazines, journals or reports	45%
Online videos	42%
Television programmes	39%
Radio and newspapers	38%
Environmental consultants - in person	37%
Social media and blogs	34%
Seminars and conferences	26%
Telephone helpline	26%
Mobile app	25%
Other	4%
None	8%

Base (all): 895

There were some sub-group differences in response to this question, including:
- Large businesses were more likely than medium and small businesses to mention seminars and conferences (43% 50+ employees v 20% <10 employees and 27% 10-49 employees).
- Larger and medium sized companies were more likely than small companies to mention visits from consultants (48% of those with 50+ employees and 40% of those with 10-49 employees v 31% of business with <10 employees) and conversations with colleagues (61% 50+ and 58% 10-49 v 44% <10).
- Hotels and Restaurants were the most likely to mention social media and blogs (52%)
- Agriculture (63%), Construction (52%) and Transport (51%) were more likely to mention trade magazines, journals and industry reports than other sectors
- Transport businesses (23%) were least likely to mention using visits to/from consultants

Summary and conclusions

Summary of key findings

The majority of businesses that participated in the research reported that their organisation undertakes activities that could be harmful to the environment (92%). However, for many awareness of such activities was not top of mind - only 46% were able to state without prompting any activities that their company did which could potentially be environmentally damaging. It is encouraging, however, that the vast majority of SME businesses (93%) have taken at least some action to reduce potential harm to the environment. The most common measures implemented were cutting down on waste, improved energy efficiency or water reduction and reduced usage of single use plastics.

In total, one in five respondents said their company had an Environmental Management System, such as an ISO 14001, BS 8555 or Green Ticks/Green Dragon standard, while 48% of those who did not have an EMS reported having an environmental policy. In total, 58% of respondents had either an EMS or an environmental policy.

The most common reasons given for taking steps to improve environmental performance were to comply with legislation, financial pressures, to protect the environment, suggestions from within the business and simply because it's the right thing to do.

Businesses in Scotland and Northern Ireland have different target dates in terms of reaching net zero carbon emissions. A similar proportion of businesses in both Scotland and Northern Ireland had thought about the steps they need to take to reach net zero: two fifths (41%) in Scotland and just over one third (37%) in Northern Ireland. Most (79%) were unaware of the term circular economy, but the majority had adopted elements of the circular economy, typically repairing items to extend their life (85%) or reusing goods or materials (67%).

Given that many businesses are motivated to take environmental harm reduction measures in order to reduce the risk of prosecution, it is also important to understand how aware SME businesses are of relevant environmental legislation. When prompted with a list of regulations and legislation, the majority (92%) recognised at least one, with awareness highest for Hazardous Waste/Special Waste regulations (82% in Scotland), Hazardous Waste Regulations (78% in Northern Ireland), Duty of Care for Waste regulations (65%) and Food Waste regulations (64%).

As well as investigating the actions that businesses had taken to reduce environmental harm, the research also explored where businesses seek advice and support on such issues. Just less than half of respondents reported that their business had sought support to ensure that they comply with legislation and operate in an environmentally friendly way, most commonly from SEPA/NIEA or their local council. The survey also explored information sources that respondents were likely to use to find out about environmental issues relating to their business. The most commonly mentioned information source was internet searches. Any action that SEPA and NIEA can take to ensure a good web presence when searching for relevant terms will help organisations find them as a source of advice.

However, when asked specifically about the NetRegs website, only a minority of respondents (13%) reported that they were aware of it, while 44% of these businesses had actually used it (6% of the total sample). The research therefore suggests that there is some considerable scope to raise awareness of the NetRegs website and the benefits it can offer businesses. Those using the site, found

the Legislation Lists, the Website Guidance Pages, and the GPP series particularly useful. Just over half of those using the site said it helped make their business more efficient.

Conclusions

SME businesses in Scotland and Northern Ireland are clearly motivated to ensure that they operate in a way that minimises any harmful impact on the environment. Almost all respondents reported that their business had implemented measures to reduce environmental harm, although motivations to do so were varied. They also understand the business benefits of implementing environmental protection measures, especially reducing operating costs and reducing the risk of prosecution. However, there were significant variances in findings by size of company, with larger organisations (with more than 50 employees) the most aware of potentially harmful activities and the relevant legislation, and the most likely to have taken steps to reduce their environmental impact. The smallest companies (those with less than 10 employees) tended to have lower levels of awareness, although they were not significantly less likely to perceive value in implementing or investing in measures to reduce environmental impact.

The research, therefore, suggests that the smaller SMEs require information and advice on how their operations could potentially harm the environment, and how they could minimise these harms. There is also a need to persuade these organisations of the business benefits and opportunities that investment in such harm reduction measures could bring in order to build on their openness to investing in environmental performance.

As noted in previous surveys, there is scope to raise awareness amongst all SME businesses of the NetRegs website. Indeed, the internet is the key source of information on environmental issues and SEPA and NIEA were the organisations most likely to have been contacted by those who have previously sought advice in this area, indicating a good level of trust and confidence in its advice. However, the NetRegs site itself is not being widely utilised by SME companies.

As noted in the previous wave of this research, the findings therefore provide clear evidence of the potential value of NetRegs, as well as the need for it, especially amongst smaller SMEs. Promotion of the site, with a focus on smaller SMEs, and including information about the value of engagement in environmental harm reduction measures, will drive visits to the site and potentially lead to improved environmental performance within this sector.

Appendix 1: Comparisons to 2016

This appendix details comparisons between the 2016 and 2020/21 data for the combined Scotland and Northern Ireland sample. These should be read and interpreted in conjunction with the limitations outlined below, and treated as indicative only. No comparisons are made to the 2009 survey as data combined for Scotland and Northern Ireland is not available – this report included data from England in the total figures.

Limitations

2020/21 survey

There are a number of differences in sampling and questionnaire design in the 2020/21 survey which should be borne in mind when comparing data to the previous findings.

As was the case in the previous surveys, the sample was designed to ensure that a good spread of SMEs was included in relation to industry sector and business size, with a focus on the core sectors of agriculture, construction, healthcare, hotels and restaurants, and transport.

The approach adopted with respect to business size was the same as in 2016: slightly higher targets than in previous years for the proportion of larger organisations (50+ employees) and businesses of 250+ employees were not screened out (as in 2016, the number of such businesses was small).

As noted in the method section, the coronavirus restrictions severely impacted on the fieldwork; it was suspended for several months, and then proceeded very slowly once commenced. Measures were taken to improve strikes rates. These included implementing an online boost survey and taking the decision to lift the tight interlocking quotas that had been placed on sector and size. While the target of 1,000 was not reached, some 895 responses were achieved. The sector profile was broadly in line with targets. However, the proportions falling into each size category *within each of the sectors* was slightly different to the previous surveys. The sample has been weighted to reflect the target sample (and to bring into line with the sample achieved in 2016).

Questionnaire changes 2020/21

Finally, there have been changes to the questionnaire in 2020/21 in order to streamline the survey and to provide SEPA with the most useful data to meet their current information needs. This means that some of the questions are not directly comparable across years.

In particular in 2020 new questions were added on:
- Effectiveness of the EMS
- The Circular Economy
- Preparation for Net Zero Carbon Emissions
- The frequency of use of NetRegs, efficiency gains from NetRegs and financial impacts
- Impact of Covid on the use of NetRegs

A small number of questions were deleted to accommodate additions and slight changes have been made to prompted lists.

This appendix therefore presents comparisons with data from the 2016 survey where either the overall Scotland/Northern Ireland data is available, and/or the Scotland/Northern Ireland data for the core industry sectors is available, and where broadly the same questions were asked. Variations in question wording are noted where relevant.

Measures to address environmental issues

Across the sample as a whole, spontaneously 74% reported introducing at least one practical measure to reduce harm to the environment. This is very similar to the equivalent figure in 2016 (77%), therefore, the overall proportion of SMEs reporting that they have introduced practical measures aimed at preventing or reducing harm to the environment has remained stable since 2016. The proportion was also consistent between 2016 and 2009 within each of the key sectors (all variances within the table 8 are not statistically significant).

Table 8: Whether companies reported introducing practical measures aimed at preventing or reducing harm to the environment. Proportion taking at least 1 action (spontaneous) (Q13)

	2016	2016 base	2020/21	2020/21 base*
Agriculture	72%	163	70%	158
Construction	75%	158	72%	113
Healthcare	76%	156	68%	137
Hotels & restaurants	86%	161	83%	119
Transport	68%	132	71%	84
Sample average (all sectors)	77%	1006	74%	828

*Note: This question was not asked in the 2020/21 online version of the survey, hence the lower base

The combined data for both spontaneous and prompted responses also indicates some increases in the proportions of businesses reporting the individual measures to protect the environment. In particular, there have been increases in those who have carried out a programme of environmental improvements (from 37% in 2016 to 43% in 2020/21) and who have assessed the impact of their business on the environment (from 31% to 37%). Table 9 presents options that were included in all surveys; additional options were included in 2020/21.

Table 9: Practical measures aimed at preventing or reducing harm to the environment (spontaneous and prompted) (Q13/Q14)

Practical measures to protect / reduce harm (spontaneous and prompted)	2016	2020/21
Cut down business waste	61%	65%
Made any energy efficiency or water reduction improvements	56%	60%
Carried out a programme of environmental improvements	37%	43%
Made someone in the company responsible for environmental matters	41%	42%
Assessed impact business has on the environment	31%	37%
Base	1006	895

Implementation of an EMS or Environmental Policy

As shown here, the proportion of businesses with an Environmental Management System (EMS) has remained broadly stable since 2016. None of the slight increases/decreases observed on the table since 2016 are statistically significant.

Table 10: Whether companies have an Environmental Management System (Q9)

	2016	2016 base	2020/21	2020/21 base
Agriculture	11%	163	14%	167
Construction	32%	158	35%	121
Healthcare	12%	156	15%	143
Hotels & restaurants	10%	161	13%	133
Transport	17%	132	18%	90
Sample average (all sectors)	17%	1006	19%	895

Amongst those businesses who did not have an EMS the proportion who reported they had an Environmental Policy has increased since 2016. Within the individual sectors, there have been increases in the Construction, Healthcare and Hotels and Restaurants sectors.

Table 11: Whether companies have an Environmental Policy (Q11)

	2016	2016 base	2020/21	2020/21 base
Agriculture	41%	145	43%	145
Construction	32%	108	48%	87
Healthcare	40%	138	56%	125
Hotels & restaurants	32%	145	58%	117
Transport	28%	109	34%	75
Sample average (all who do not have an EMS)	36%	831	48%	745

When the data for businesses with an EMS is combined with those who have an environmental policy, a total of 58% had one of these in 2020/21, which is an increase compared to 2016 (47%). Within sectors, there have been increases in the proportions having these systems/policies in Construction, Healthcare and Hotels and Restaurants.

Table 12: Whether companies have an EMS or an Environmental Policy (Q9/Q11)

	2016	2016 base	2020/21	2020/21 base
Agriculture	47%	163	51%	167
Construction	54%	158	66%	121
Healthcare	47%	156	62%	143
Hotels & restaurants	39%	161	64%	133
Transport	41%	132	46%	90
Sample average (all sectors)	47%	1006	58%	895

Higher proportions of businesses in 2020/21 saw 'improved relationships with customers/others' (35% v 44%) and a more motivated workforce (33% v 41%) as benefits of environmental improvements than in 2016. The proportion citing 'Increased sales and profitability' also increased (21% to 25%).

Table 13: Benefits to the business of environmental improvements (Q18)

Benefits to the business of environmental improvements	2016	2020/21
Reduced operating costs	53%	53%
Increased sales and profitability	21%	25%
Improved relationships with customers/others	35%	44%
Reduced risk of prosecution or fines	47%	48%
A more motivated workforce	33%	41%
Base (all who had taken action or who had an EMS/environmental policy)	937	875

There has been a small decrease since 2016 in the proportion of businesses who predict that they were very or quite likely to invest in environmental performance in the next 12 months – from 53% to 47%. The decrease was statistically significant for the Healthcare and Transport sectors.

There was a slight change in the both the question wording, and related context, in 2020/21. The question preface notes that Governments are encouraging a green recovery in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic; an issue clearly not facing businesses in either previous surveys.

Table 14: Proportion who are 'very likely' or 'quite likely' to invest in environmental performance in the next 12 months (Q20)

	2016	2016 base	2020/21	2020/21 base
Agriculture	53%	163	48%	167
Construction	56%	158	49%	121
Healthcare	55%	156	40%	143
Hotels & restaurants	48%	161	57%	133
Transport	61%	132	44%	90
Sample average (all sectors)	53%	1006	47%	895

Awareness of the environment and legislation

The proportion of businesses spontaneously reporting that their business undertakes at least one activity that is potentially harmful to the environment has increased significantly since 2016. Due to limited base sizes, most of the industry sector increases are not statistically significant, however, there has been an increase in the proportion of Construction businesses spontaneously reporting harmful activities between 2016 (43%) and 2020/21 (56%).

Table 15: Whether companies reported undertaking harmful activities by business size and core industry sector (spontaneous) (Q7)

Core sector	2016	2016 base	2020/21	2020/21 base
Agriculture	44%	163	50%	158
Construction	43%	158	56%	113
Healthcare	33%	156	43%	137
Hotels & restaurants	35%	161	30%	119
Transport	59%	132	68%	84
Sample average (all sectors)	40%	1006	46%	828

*Note: This question was not asked in the 2020/21 online version of the survey, hence the lower base

The table below compares awareness of the legislation / regulations that were included in both the 2016 and 2020/21 surveys. As can be seen here, awareness is generally stable or increasing, both for some of the individual regulations and for regulations overall, with 92% of businesses now aware of at least one piece of environmental legislation. The overall increase (that is, of those who could identify at least one piece of legislation) and the increase in awareness of Duty of Care for Waste regulations were statistically significant.

Table 16: Environmental regulation or legislation respondents had heard of (Q5)

Legislation / regulations	2016	2020/21
Could identify at least one piece of legislation	**87%**	**92%**
Duty of Care for Waste Regulations	60%	65%
Food Waste Regulations	62%	64%
Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations	50%	52%
Base	1006	895

Sources of information, advice and support

Comparisons across years for this question is, at best indicative. In 2016 the question was in two parts, the first asked SMEs if they had been in touch with a business support organisation, the second asked those saying 'yes' who they had contacted; whereas in 2020/21 one question was asked with a 'none' option.

Bearing this in mind, it appears that there has been an increase in the proportion of businesses approaching their local council, SEPA/NIEA and waste companies for support since 2016.

Table 17: Business support organisations contacted (Q21)

Business support organisations contacted	2016	2020/21
SEPA / NIEA	7%	15%
Local Authority / Local Council	6%	14%
Waste companies	2%	6%
Trade or professional organisations / Trade Association	1%	2%
NetRegs[1]	<1%	1%
Base	1006	895

Note 1: The 2009/16 surveys asked about NetRegs website,
2020 survey asked about NetRegs email

Awareness and use of NetRegs

The proportion of SMEs who have heard of, and who have used NetRegs, has remained stable since 2016.

Table 18: Awareness and use of NetRegs (Q25, Q27)

	2016	2020/21
Aware of NetRegs	12%	13%
Used NetRegs	7%	6%
Base	1006	895

Appendix 2: Survey questionnaire

SEPA
NetRegs Survey
Questionnaire – FINAL – REVISED POST C-19

Revised – 4th November 2020

Code from Sample
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon, I am _____ from Progressive, an independent market research company who are carrying out a government survey funded by the [ROUTE FROM SAMPLE] Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) / Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), who along with others, are tasked with protecting the environment.

The survey is about the environmental issues and challenges that UK businesses are facing just now, and how aware people are of the sources of help available. This will be used by the Agency to help improve communication and delivery of information and support available to businesses like yours, in meeting environmental legislation and targets.

This is a confidential survey which takes 10 minutes to complete. Everyone who takes part will be entered into a prize draw to win £200 in shopping vouchers of your choice. Would it be OK to ask you a few brief questions to ascertain your views on the subject?

SQ1.   We would like to speak to the person in your business who deals with environmental issues and decisions, such as waste management or water and energy use in the business. Are you responsible for this kind of decision making in your business?

	CODE
Yes	1
No	2

IF YES, CONTINUE. IF NO, ASK TO SPEAK TO THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE AND/OR ARRANGE CALL-BACK. IF SPEAKING TO NEW CONTACT, REPEAT INTRODUCTION ABOVE.

Before I start, I just need to give you a few details about the research. No personal data, such as your contact details, or organisational data will be provided to Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) / NIEA. Your details will never be passed to any other third parties. Calls are recorded for quality control and training purposes.

You are free to withdraw at any stage of the research, including withdrawing permission after the survey to use the information you provided. I can give you contact details for Progressive if you would like to withdraw now or at the end of the survey.

REASSURE IF NECESSARY:

The survey is completely confidential, in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

The answers you give in the survey will be combined with answers from other people who have taken part to give overall survey findings. No one will be able to identify you or your business individually from the data.

If you would like to read Progressive's privacy statement it is on our website at www.progressivepartnership.co.uk.

SQ1: Consent

Are you happy to continue with the survey?

	CODE
Yes	1
No	2

1 Classification

The first few questions are to help us group the responses of all businesses

1. I have your business sector as [seed from sample] – is that correct?

SINGLE CODE	Code
Yes	1
No	2
Unsure	3

Ask Q1a if Q1 = (2, 3)
1a. What is your business sector? [READ OUT CODES if necessary]

SINGLE CODE	Code
Agriculture	1
Construction	2
Healthcare	3
Hotels and restaurants	4
Transport	5
Education	6
Electric equipment and machinery manufacturing	7
Financial services (offices)	8
Food and drink manufacturing	9
Retail and wholesale	10
Other (please specify)	11
Refused [DO NOT READ OUT]	12 - CLOSE

2. How many full time equivalent employees does your business have, including yourself?
[READ OUT CODES if necessary]

SINGLE CODE	Code
1 to 9	1
10 to 49	2
50 to 249	3
250+	4
Unsure / Don't know [DO NOT READ OUT]	5 – CLOSE
Refused [DO NOT READ OUT]	6 – CLOSE

3. What is your position in the company?

SINGLE CODE	Code
Owner/MD/Partner	1
Director/Company secretary	2
Works manager/Production manager/Site manager/Farm manager	3
Environmental manager/ Environmental officer	4
Technical manager/ Technical officer (e.g. Health and safety, quality, contracts)	5
Office manager/Personnel manager/Admin/Secretary/PA etc.	6
Other (specify)_____	7
Refused [DO NOT READ OUT]	8 – CLOSE

SCREEN OUT IF REFUSED AT Q1~3

4. Does your business need any Permit, Licence or Exemption from **[ROUTE FROM SAMPLE: SEPA (in SCOTLAND) / NIEA (in NORTHERN IRELAND)]** to carry out its activities?

SINGLE CODE	Code
Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

2 Environmental issues

5. Have you heard of any of the following environmental regulations or legislation? [READ OUT]

MULTICODE		CODE
ASK ALL	Food Waste regulations	1
ASK ALL	Duty of Care for Waste regulations	2
ASK ALL	Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment regulations (WEEE Regulations)	3
ASK ALL	Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases regulations	4

ASK NI	Hazardous Waste regulations	5
ASK NI	Nutrient Action Programme regulations 2019-2022 (or NAP 2019-2022)	6
ASK NI	Environmental Protection (Microbeads) regulations	7
ASK SCOT	The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Regulations – also known as CAR Regulations	8
ASK SCOT	Hazardous Waste Regulations or Special Waste regulations	9
ASK SCOT	The Environmental Protection (Cotton Buds) (Scotland) Regulations - or Cotton Buds regulations	10
ASK ALL	Any other environmental legislation that applies to your business (specify)_____	11
ASK ALL	None of these	12

For each mentioned at Q5:

6. You said you had heard of _____. To what extent would you say you understand these regulations: would you say you understand them Completely, Mostly, Partly, or Not at all? [ONLY THOSE MENTIONED AT Q14]

ONLY THOSE AT GIVEN AT Q5, SINGLE CODES		Completely	Mostly	Partly	Not at all	DK
ASK ALL	Food waste regulations	1	2	3	4	5
ASK ALL	Duty of Care for Waste Regulations	1	2	3	4	5
ASK ALL	Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations (WEEE Regulations)	1	2	3	4	5
ASK ALL	Fluorinated greenhouse gases regulations	1	2	3	4	5
ASK NI	Hazardous Waste Regulations	1	2	3	4	5
ASK NI	Nutrient Action Programme Regulations 2019-2022 (or NAP 2019-2022)	1	2	3	4	5
ASK NI	Environmental Protection (Microbeads) Regulations (Northern Ireland)	1	2	3	4	5
ASK SCOT	The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Regulations – also known as CAR Regulations	1	2	3	4	5
ASK SCOT	Hazardous Waste Regulations or Special Waste Regulations	1	2	3	4	5
ASK SCOT	The Environmental Protection (Cotton Buds) (Scotland) Regulations - or Cotton Buds regulations	1	2	3	4	5

3 Harmful activities

7. What activities, if any, does your organisation undertake which you think could be harmful to the environment? [SPONTANEOUS, MULTICODE]?

8. Does your organisation undertake any of the following activities? [READ OUT. MASK ANY ALREADY MENTIONED AT Q7. MULTICODE]

MULTICODE Q8: EXCLUDE ANY MENTIONED AT Q7	Q7 Spontaneous	Q8 Prompted
Store waste on site prior to removal	1	1
Use transport (for travel or deliveries)	2	2
Store chemicals, fuel or oils	3	3
Have commercial refrigeration or chillers	4	4
Use water pumped from lochs, rivers or boreholes	5	5
Emit smoke or fumes to air	6	6
Carry out any activity that could create a noise, smell or dust	7	7
Other (specify)_____	8	8
Nothing	9	9

9. Has your business set up an Environmental Management System (EMS) such as an ISO 14001 [PRONOUNCED 'fourteen thousand and one'], BS 8555 [PRONOUNCED '8 triple 5'] or **[ROUTE from sample:** Green Ticks in Scotland; Green Dragon in NI] standard?

SINGLE CODE	Code	Route
Yes	1	Go to 10
No	2	Go to 11
Don't know	3	Go to 11

ASK if Q9=1

10. How effective is your Environmental Management System?

SINGLE CODE	Code	Route
Very effective	1	Go to 13
Effective	2	Go to 13
Quite effective	3	Go to 13
Not effective	4	Go to 13
Unsure	5	Go to 13

ASK if Q9=2 or 3

11. Does your business have an Environmental Policy in place?

SINGLE CODE	Code	Route
Yes	1	Go to 13
No	2	Go to 12
Don't know	3	Go to 12

ASK if Q11=2, 3

12. How useful do you think an Environmental Management System (EMS) or Environmental Policy would be to your business?

SINGLE CODE	Code	Route
Of no use	1	Go to 13
Of little use	2	Go to 13
Quite useful	3	Go to 13
Very useful	4	Go to 13
Unsure	5	Go to 13

ASK ALL

13. Has your organisation taken any measures, now or in the past, to prevent or reduce harm to the environment? Which? [DO NOT READ OUT, MULTICODE]

14. Has your organisation ever undertaken any of the following actions to prevent or reduce harm to the environment? [READ OUT FROM TABLE. EXCLUDE ANY ALREADY MENTIONED AT Q13]

MULTICODE Q14: EXCLUDE ANY MENTIONED AT Q13	Q13 Spontaneous	Q14 Prompted
Assessed the impact your business has on the environment	1	1
Carried out a programme of environmental improvements	2	2
Made someone in the company responsible for environmental matters	3	3
Made any improvements in energy efficiency or water reduction	4	4
Cut down your business waste	5	5
Reduced usage of single-use plastic	6	6
Reduced transport emissions	7	7
Reduced transport costs	8	8
Reduced use of raw materials	9	9
Provide training to your staff about their environmental responsibilities	10	10
Encourage staff involvement in initiatives, for example, established a Green Team or a Green Champion	11	11
Put in place measures to adapt to changes in climate - such as floods, droughts and heat waves.	12	12
Other environmental activity (Specify) _____	13	13
None	14	14

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15. Have you heard of the Circular Economy?

SINGLE CODE	Code
Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

16. Has your business already adopted any of the following elements of the Circular Economy?

SINGLE CODES	YES: Have adopted/in process of adopting	NO: Haven't adopted	Don't know
Reuse materials or use pre-used goods instead of brand new ones	1	2	3
Repair items to extend their life	1	2	3
Redesign processes or products to reduce waste	1	2	3
Use waste heat	1	2	3

TAKEN NO ACTION
ASK IF:
Don't have an environ system/policy (Q11= 2,3) AND
No actions to prevent prevent/reduce harms (Q13=14 AND Q14=14) AND
No circular economy action (16a≠1, and 16b≠1, and 16c≠1, and 16d≠1)

17. What would you say has prevented you from undertaking any of these measures to reduce harm to the environment? [Do not read out, MULTICODE]

SPONTANEOUS, MULTICODE	Code	Route
It is too expensive / cost issues	1	
Don't have time to think about it / it is not a priority for the business	2	
Don't know what actions to take	3	GO TO Q20
Have never thought about it	4	
Other (specify)_____	5	
Don't know	6	

HAVE TAKEN ACTION:
ASK IF THE FOLLOWING <u>DO NOT APPLY</u>
Don't have an environ system/policy AND
No actions to prevent prevent/reduce harms AND
No circular economy action

18. As a result of taking steps to improve your environmental performance, has your business benefited from any of the following? [READ OUT, MULTICODE]

   [PROBE — Anything else? Code under 'other'.]

MULTICODE	Code
Reduced operating costs	1
Increased sales and profitability	2
Improved relationships with customers/others	3
Reduced risk of prosecution or fines	4
A more motivated workforce	5
Other (specify)_____	6
None	7
Don't know	8

19. What prompted your business to take steps to improve your environmental performance? [DO NOT READ OUT, MULTICODE].

   [PROBE — Anything else? Code under 'other'.]

SPONTANEOUS, MULTICODE	Code
It is mandatory, demanded by the regulations	1
Business support organisations (specify name of organisation)	2
Suggestions from within the business	3
Stakeholder / supply chain requests or pressures	4
Customer or client requests or pressures	5
TV news or programmes	6
Financial pressures	7
To keep ahead of the competition	8
To improve reputation / green credentials	9
In response to lessons learned during the pandemic	10
Other (specify)_____	11
Don't know	12

ASK ALL
20. Governments are encouraging a green recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. How likely are you to invest in improving your environmental performance over the next 12 months?

SPONTANEOUS, MULTICODE	Code
Very unlikely	1
Quite unlikely	2
Quite likely	3
Very likely	4
Don't know	5

4 Environmental information

21. Which organisations has your business ever contacted to discuss environmental issues? [DO NOT READ OUT, MULTICODE]

SPONTANEOUS, MULTICODE		CODE
ASK ALL	None	1
ASK ALL	A trade association (specify)	2
ASK ALL	Federation of Small Businesses	3
ASK ALL	Business in the community	4
ASK ALL	Waste companies	5
ASK ALL	Local Council	6
ASK ALL	Energy saving trust	7
ASK ALL	NetRegs - email	8
ASK ALL	Carbon Trust	9
FOR NI	NIEA (Northern Ireland Environment Agency)	10
FOR NI	WRAP Northern Ireland	11
FOR NI	Invest NI	12
FOR NI	Business in the Community Northern Ireland	13
FOR SCOT	Resource Efficient Scotland	14
FOR SCOT	Zero Waste Scotland	15
FOR SCOT	Scottish Enterprise/ or Highlands and Islands Enterprise	16
FOR SCOT	SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency)	17
ASK ALL	A consultant	18
ASK ALL	Any other organisation (specify)	19

22. Which sources of information, if any, are you likely to use to find out about environmental issues related to your business? [READ OUT]

MULTICODE	CODE
Internet searches	1
Social media and blogs	2
Online videos	3
Mobile app	4
Email newsletter	5
Information sent through the post (from SEPA/NIEA or other organisation)	6
Telephone helpline	7

Television programmes	8
Radio and newspapers	9
Trade Magazines, Business Journals or Industry reports	10
Seminars and conferences	11
Internal conversations with colleagues or briefings from expert staff	12
Visit to or from an environmental consultant	13
Other (Specify)_____	14
None	15

For Northern Ireland

23. The UK government has set a target of achieving Net Zero Carbon emissions in the UK by 2050. Have you thought about what steps your business needs to take to achieve this?

SINGLE CODE	Code
Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

For Scotland

24. Scottish Government has set a target of achieving Net Zero Carbon emissions in Scotland by 2045. Have you thought about what steps your business needs to take to achieve this?

SINGLE CODE	Code
Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

5 NetRegs

The last few questions are about a free, anonymous service provided by the environmental regulators in Scotland and Northern Ireland, called NetRegs. NetRegs is a website that provides free environmental guidance tailored for small to medium sized organisations. The guidance covers a large number of industry sectors and is constantly updated to reflect changes in legislation.

25. Have you heard of the NetRegs website?

SINGLE CODE	Code	Route
Yes	1	Go to Q27
No	2	Go to Q26
Don't know	3	Go to Q26

26. **NetRegs is a website from the environmental regulators that provides guidance to businesses, about environmental regulations and good practice.**

It provides online courses, videos and an interactive anonymous use compliance tool, all free, in easy to understand English. Would you like to write down the website?
It is WWW.NETREGS.ORG.UK"

GO TO Q35

ASK IF Q25=1

27. Have you used the NetRegs website?

SINGLE CODE	Code	Route
Yes	1	Go to Q28
No	2	Go to Q35
Don't know	3	Go to Q35

ASK IF Q27=1

28. How useful do you find the following features of the NetRegs site?

SINGLE CODES	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Quite useful	Very useful	Don't know / not used
The Website guidance pages	1	2	3	4	5
The GPPs and PPGs – that is, the Guidance for Pollution Prevention series	1	2	3	4	5
The Legislation lists	1	2	3	4	5
The E-Learning tools	1	2	3	4	5
The Environmental Self-Assessment Tool (an interactive tool for businesses to check how well they are doing)	1	2	3	4	5
The Good Practice Videos	1	2	3	4	5
The Email Newsletter	1	2	3	4	5
NetRegs Mailbox	1	2	3	4	5

29. How often does your company use the NetRegs website? SPONTANEOUS

SPONTANEOUS, SINGLE CODE	Code
Every week	1
Every month	2
Every two months	3
Four times a year	4
Twice a year	5
Once a year	6
Less than once a year	7
Don't know	8

30. Has the time you spent on the NetRegs website increased since the COVID-19 pandemic?

SINGLE CODE	Code	Route
Yes	1	Go to Q31
No	2	Go to Q33
Don't know	3	Go to Q33

31. Which parts of the website site did you spent more time on?

SPONTANEOUS, MULTICODE	Code
The Website guidance pages	1
the Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP and PPG) series	2
The Legislation lists	3
The E-Learning tools	4
The Environmental Self-Assessment Tool	5
The Good Practice Videos	6

ASK IF Q30=1
32. Why did you spend more time on the website?

PROMPTED, MULTICODE	Code
Business priorities are changing: essential business support	1
More time available within the business: review/update policy and procedures	2
More time available within the business: opportunity for training	3
On furlough: opportunity for training	4
On furlough: general interest	5
Other: specify	6

ASK IF Q27=1
33. **Overall,** has using the NetRegs website made your company become more resource-efficient? (For example, by conserving water, energy, materials and reducing waste disposal costs.)

SINGLE CODE	Code
Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

34. Could you provide an estimate of any savings made by using NetRegs? (For example, by avoiding fines, remediation costs and consultancy fees; efficiency savings; and supporting your environmental management system.)
Could you say roughly what the savings would be per year?

SINGLE CODE	Code
No savings	1
Less than £250 per year	2
£251-£500 per year	3
£501 - £750 per year	4
£751 - £1,000 per year	5
£1,001 - £1,500 per year	6
£1,501 - £2,000 per year	7

£2,001 - £5,000 per year	8
More than £5,000 per year - If so, please provide an estimate_____	9
Don't know	10

ASK ALL

35. NetRegs provides a free monthly email newsletter about changes in environmental regulations, consultations, events and other environmental news.
Would you be interested in signing up to receive the NetRegs newsletter?

	Code	Route
Yes – I would like to sign up	1	Go to Q35a
No – I am already signed up	2	Go to Q36
No – I would not like to sign -up	3	Go to Q36
Don't know	4	Go to Q36

35a Can I take your email address? This email address will be used solely for sending the newsletter and not for any other purpose.
_____

35b Can I take the name for that email address?
_____

35c And the postcode (optional)
_____

ASK ALL

36. Would you like to be entered into the prize draw to receive £200 shopping vouchers of your choice?

	Code
Yes	1
No	2

ASK IF Q35 = 1 and information has been provided at Q35a and Q35b

37. Will we use the same name and email address as you provided to receive the NetRegs newsletter?

	Code
Yes	1
No	2

ASK ELSE (that is, of no name and email address has been collected at Q35, or if Q37 =2)
37a Can I take your email address for the prize draw? This email address will be used solely for administering the prize draw and not for any other purpose.
_____

37b Can I take the name for that email address?
_____

Outro

Thank you for taking part in this research survey.

You have the right to access the information you have provided in this survey, and to withdraw consent to process this information after taking part. We will only hold your details for a limited time, until September 2020. Would you like information about how to do this? [IF YES, PROVIDE CONTACT DETAILS]

Appendix 3: Technical appendix

Method

1.   The data was collected by telephone and online survey
2.   The target group for this research study was SMEs in Scotland and Northern Ireland
3.   The sampling frame for this study was a purchased sample list of businesses in the key target sectors with less than 250 employees – Purchased from Sample Answers Ltd.
4.   The target sample size 1000 and the final achieved sample size was 895. The reason for the difference between these two samples was constraints experienced as a consequence the coronavirus pandemic. Many target businesses were closed or only partially open, in some cases staff were working from home and – especially in the early stages, difficult to contact. Some sectors were working beyond capacity and simply did not have time to participate. The fieldwork was initially suspended, and gradually reinstated over a long period of time in response to developing/changing circumstances
5.   Fieldwork was undertaken between September 2020 and February 2021
6.   Respondents were selected using non-probability sampling: potential respondents were drawn from the sampling frame in line with predetermined quotas, based on sector and business size to ensure that the sample represents the target population. To enable strike rates to be interlocking quotas were relaxed at times during the fieldwork, with only sector quotas observed.
7.   The achieved sample has been be weighted to reflect the business size of the population, based on previous research.
8.   *Online component:* Email addresses for a portion of the sample were available. These were contacted and asked if they wished to participate in the survey online. Every individual on the sampling frame for whom email addresses were available was invited to participate in the study. Respondents to internet self-completion studies are self-selecting and complete the survey without the assistance of a trained interviewer. This means that Progressive cannot strictly control sampling and in some cases, this can lead to findings skewed towards the views of those motivated to respond to the survey
9.   In total, 12 interviewers worked on data collection.
10.   Interviews lasted 15 minutes.
11.   *CATI Validation:* Each interviewer's work was validated as per the requirements of the international standard ISO 20252. All telephone interviews were recorded and a minimum of 10% listened to in full for validation purposes. All interviewers working on the study were subject to validation of their work. In addition, interviewers are constantly monitored by the Telephone Unit Manager to ensure quality is maintained throughout each interview.
12.   The sample provision for this project was sub-contracted to Sample Answers.
13.   All research projects undertaken by Progressive comply fully with the requirements of ISO 20252, the GDPR and the MRS Code of Conduct.

Data processing and analysis

1.   The final data set was weighted to reflect the size of businesses (in terms of number of employees) and sector. The sample base before weighting is 895, whilst the weighted sample base is 895.
2.   Quota controls were to be used to guide sample selection for this study. This means that statistically precise margins of error or significance testing are not appropriate, as the

sampling type is non-probability. The margins of error outlined below should therefore be treated as indicative, based on an equivalent probability sample.

- The overall sample size of 895 provides a dataset with an approximate margin of error of between ±0.65% and ±3.25%, calculated at the 95% confidence level (market research industry standard).

3. The data processing department undertakes a number of quality checks on the data to ensure its validity and integrity.

- For online questionnaires these checks include:
  – Responses are checked for duplicates where unidentified responses have been permitted.
  – All responses are checked for completeness and sense.
- For telephone (CATI) questionnaires these checks include:
  – All responses logged by the interviewers are checked for completeness and sense. Any errors or omissions detected at this stage are referred back to the field department, who are required to re-contact respondents to check and, if necessary, correct the data.

4. A computer edit of the data carried out prior to analysis involves both range and inter-field checks. Any further inconsistencies identified at this stage are investigated by reference back to the raw data on the questionnaire.

5. Where 'other' type questions are used, the responses to these are checked against the parent question for possible up-coding.

6. Responses to open-ended questions will normally be spell and sense checked. Where required these responses may be grouped using a code-frame which can be used in analysis.