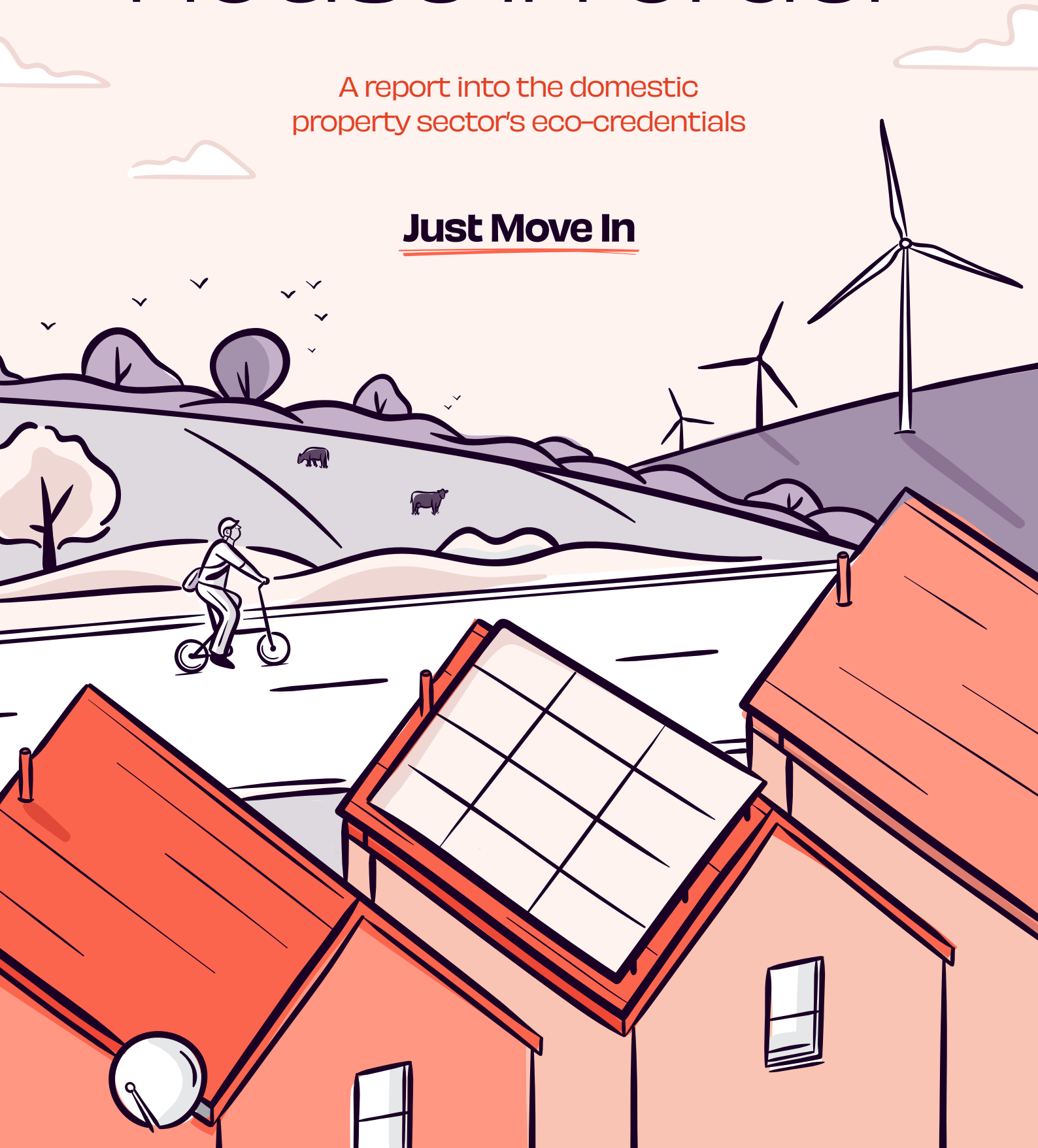


Getting our house in order

A report into the domestic property sector's eco-credentials

Just Move In



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INTRODUCTION

Home truths

Did you know that 40% of the **UK's emissions** come from households? That means two-fifths of those nasty molecules currently heating up the atmosphere originated from properties.

And here's another standout statistic: the Climate Change Committee, an independent non-departmental public body, has warned that the UK won't meet its legally binding **climate change targets** unless we eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from UK buildings. So what are we going to do about it?



It's on us

Whereas other industries can simply shrug their shoulders and focus on reducing the much smaller carbon footprint of their individual sectors, property professionals are actually one of the few groups able to help this broader societal problem.

An agent is usually involved every time a person moves into a new home. This puts this industry in a unique position. Not only can we reduce the carbon footprint of each move; we can also define what happens next.

As property experts, agents are perfectly placed to advise, persuade, and change people's habits. They can whisper in landlords' ears about drafty single-glazing, gas about the benefits of eco boilers, lay down a marker regarding loft insulation, and explain to buyers and sellers why the grass is greener with a green energy tariff.

Property professionals can therefore play a leading role in the fight against climate change. They can remind customers that houses are a primary setting for energy consumption, and that moving home is a great time to make a conscious decision to live better.

Setting an example

But before the industry sets its sights on renewable energies and the **19 million** UK homes that need better insulation, there's one thing we have to do first: get our own house in order.

All businesses are expected to be sustainable these days. Nearly **three quarters** of UK companies plan to introduce net-zero emissions goals to their own operations and across their supply chains in the next twelve months. What's more, 78% expect sustainable approaches to increase sales. So it's the right thing to do - both ethically and from a business perspective.

The bottom line is that customers prefer sustainable brands. And they particularly love brands that **help them** to become more sustainable themselves. Agents can do this with knobs on.

Stepping into the breach

Whilst the government grapples with the aftermath of the pandemic – the green homes grant was sadly scrapped in March 2021 – there's a real opportunity for estate and letting agents to seize the initiative and set an example.



But how can we measure progress? While the **green housing revolution** established new standards in building homes and set a target of reducing new build emissions by up to 80% by 2025, there are no sustainability targets of any kind for agents. There's not even a base from which we can calculate headway.

'82% of agents agree that sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the property sector.'

This report will help to fill the void. It's a comprehensive insight into the current state of sustainability in the domestic property sector. And we hope the results will interest and motivate the industry.

By revealing what the industry currently does well and what it could do better, we hope that property professionals will take note of the findings, take time to implement suggested changes, and take on climate change like never before.

CHAPTER I

The big questions

Our report asks two main questions:

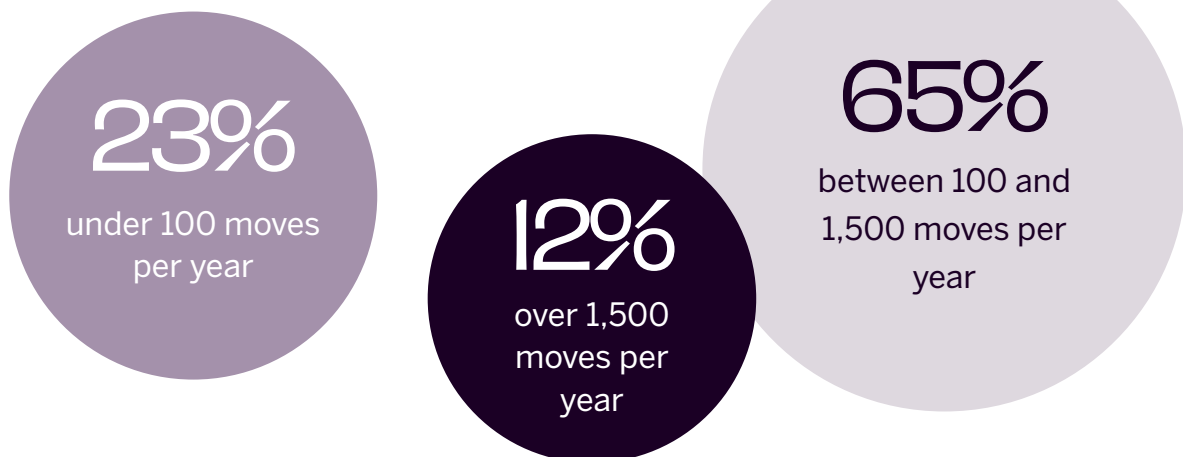
- 1 What is the current state of sustainability in the property sector?
- 2 What could the property sector do to improve its eco-credentials?

Who did we ask?

We could only answer the big questions by asking you, the hardworking agents, a series of much smaller ones in a comprehensive survey. But before we reveal what we asked, let's first explain who (precisely) answered the call. It was approximately 150 agents of various sizes from across the UK. Some specialise in sales; some specialise in lettings; but most (63%) do both.

Our respondents included small businesses handling under 100 moves per year (23%) and large agents handling over 1,500 (12%). But most of them (65%) fell in-between. Our results therefore represent a good cross-section of the industry.

THE AGENCIES WHO TOOK PART



The specifics

Our survey asked a series of general and then specific questions. The former delved into agents' views of sustainability: how important they think it is, whether they recognise its benefits, and if their agency was actively trying to become more eco-friendly. These questions revealed prevailing attitudes and whether agents appreciate that going green can keep them in the black.

The latter asked about specific sustainable behaviours in six key areas: energy use, waste, recycling, the office environment, transport, and initiatives. Did agencies use green energy? Did they recycle? What did they recycle? Were they moving towards a digital office? And did they support sustainable causes?

You'll find the full list of questions in our appendix.

Understanding

Our survey also hoped to reveal why agents did certain things but not others. So we asked which sustainable approaches would be easy to implement, and which ones would be harder than the Financial Times cryptic crossword. This would identify 'easy wins' - in other words, things agents could do right away.

We also asked agents whether they have the support necessary to become more sustainable. Do they have the knowhow? And what about Covid-19? Had the pandemic set back their efforts to become more sustainable?

We can't ignore the importance of living and working sustainably.

If you don't believe it, then think about the millions of people who do and ask yourself which agent they would rather instruct? Cynical but true!

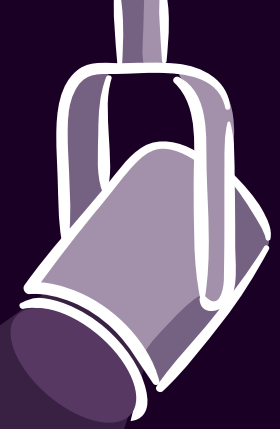
Expectations

Our hope was that we'd find a real awareness of the benefits of sustainability plus an appetite to embrace change. What we thought we'd find, however, was a different matter. We simply didn't know. After all, there was no benchmark or previous research to go on.



Did you know?

65% don't think
their agency
is sustainable
enough



PARTNER FOCUS

Agents Together

Sustainability. Sounds like a buzzword right? Maybe that is part of the problem, there are just so many things to do that get labelled with a word that makes them somehow easily dismissible. So let us ask ourselves this: do we want to make the world a better place for our children? I'm going to assume the answer is unequivocally yes to that. So, here is our chance, not only to do that but also to do the right thing by our employees, customers and environment.

This report details how agents are making some superb efforts in working toward having a better impact on the world. It also shows that there is plenty of work to do. The pertinent message is that this does not need to be an

overwhelming project; fundamentally it comes down to conscious decision making and confidence - skills that estate agents have in abundance.

Making a decision to choose a supplier that has a low environmental impact, having the confidence to stand by internal policies around remote and flexible working, around going paperless, or moving a fleet of cars to electric.

Likewise it's also ok to start small, to plan change in manageable 6 month cycles. Hamptons are a great example of this. They have embraced a proactive approach to small things like switching off the lights and electric devices each night and are now making strides to

This does not need to be an overwhelming project; fundamentally it comes down to conscious decision making and confidence – skills that estate agents have in abundance!

work with sustainable suppliers like JMI, use carbon neutral board suppliers and move toward electric vehicles.

They are also embedding this into their community by sharing any outside space they have at offices with local schools to turn into allotments.

The environmental and business benefits of this approach are remarkable and I encourage everyone to pay close attention to how you can do more by starting small. Agents Together will be providing sustainability tools, resources and a directory of sustainable

suppliers later this year, but don't wait to start til then, involve your team in the project and start today. Here is to a sustainable and profitable future.

Sarah Edmundson
CEO



AgentsTogether

CHAPTER 2

All the answers

So it's time for the big reveal. Drumroll please. Here's your unprecedented insight into the state of sustainability in the property sector...

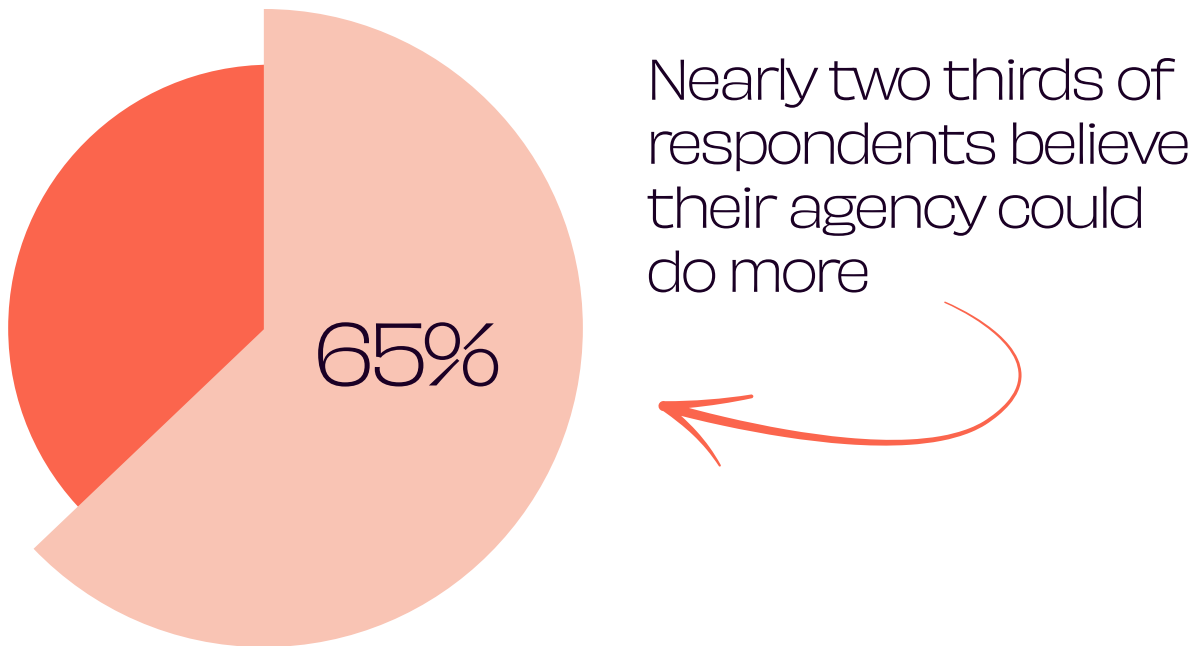
QUESTION

Is there an appetite for sustainability amongst agents?

Happily, yes. When we asked how important sustainability was to their agency, our respondents gave an average answer of 7 out of 10. They also said it was important to their employees (6/10) and important to their clients (6/10). Consequently, property professionals are generally aware of sustainability issues.

However, agents still feel that there's much work to be done. Only 35% believe that their agency is sustainable enough. So nearly two thirds believe their company could do more.

Interestingly, however, agents don't think the industry is alone in this regard. Only 36% believe that the property sector is less concerned with sustainability than other industries. This shows a healthy self-awareness regarding the need to do more but also a realistic conviction that estate and lettings agents aren't the worst climate culprits out there.



QUESTION

Do agents appreciate the benefits of sustainability?

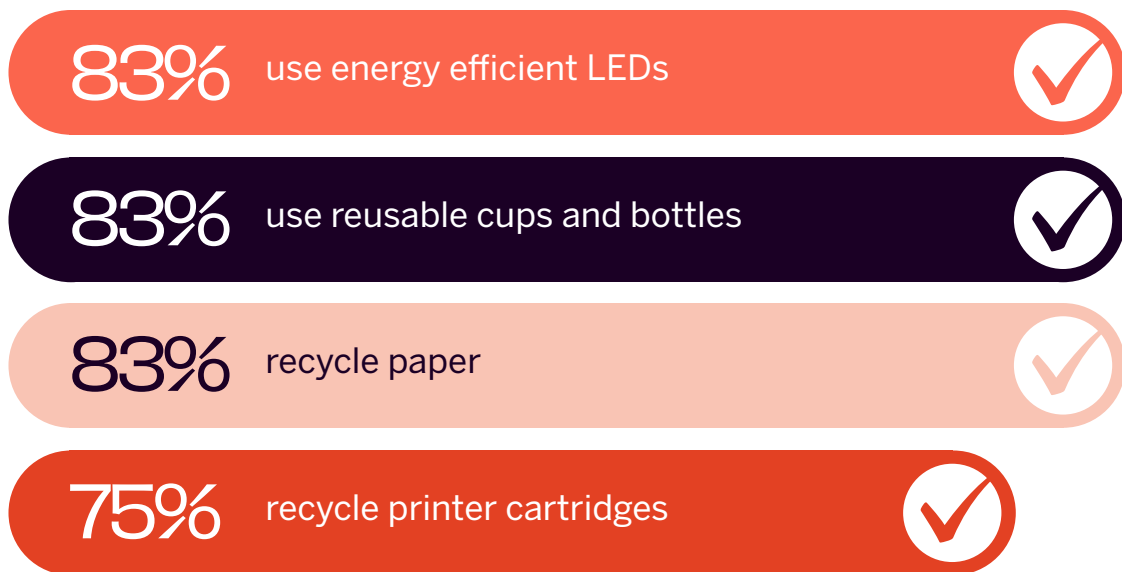
The results here were a little disappointing. Sad face. Whilst 66% of agents appreciated that poor eco-credentials could damage their brand – not a terrible result – only 58% realised that sustainability can boost their bottom line.

We were more encouraged, however, that just 27% saw sustainability as a mere box ticking exercise. This demonstrates that cynics are a minority when it comes to the property industry. Most agents really do understand that sustainability is an important aspiration.

QUESTION

What does the industry currently do well?

Here's more good news. The property sector does plenty of things well already, especially when it comes to recycling:



These are all highly encouraging results, so congrats all round. However, we'd like to see more than 71% recycling plastics. This is something many of us do at home already so there's no reason why we can't do the same in the office. The result on waste electrical equipment (41%) could be higher too. Never forget to recycle your old laptops and printers, folks.

Agents are also good at using office technologies to reduce their environmental impact. These are all 'easy wins' so it's great to see the industry saving paper and petrol. However, we were surprised that less than two thirds (58%) encouraged virtual viewings. They're a great way to cut down unnecessary viewings, and the technology has improved enormously in recent years.

89%

encourage digital brochures / particulars to save paper



91%

use digital apps to share files



85%

use video conferencing to cut travel



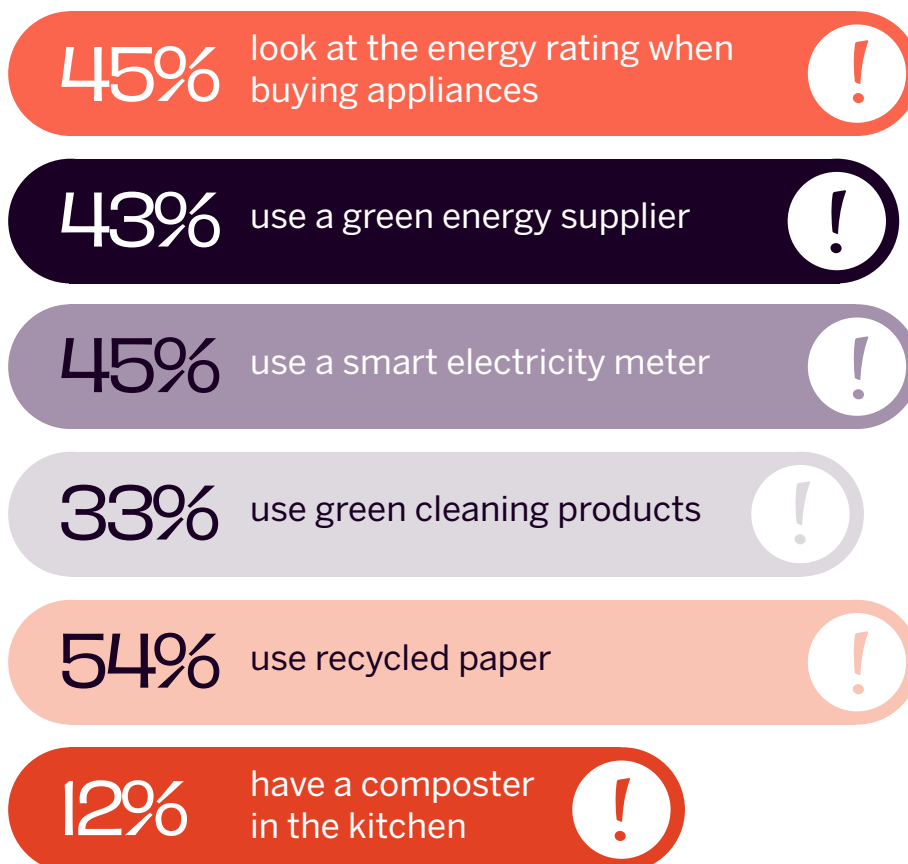
QUESTION

What could the industry do better?

Don't shoot the messenger, but there were a few disappointing results that immediately struck us. For starters, only 13% of respondents said their agency had a net-zero carbon policy.

It was also disappointing to see that only 26% always take eco-credentials into account (and 48% sometimes do) when choosing suppliers, especially as the World Economic Forum has identified an **'eco-wakening'** in which 71% now search specifically for sustainable companies.

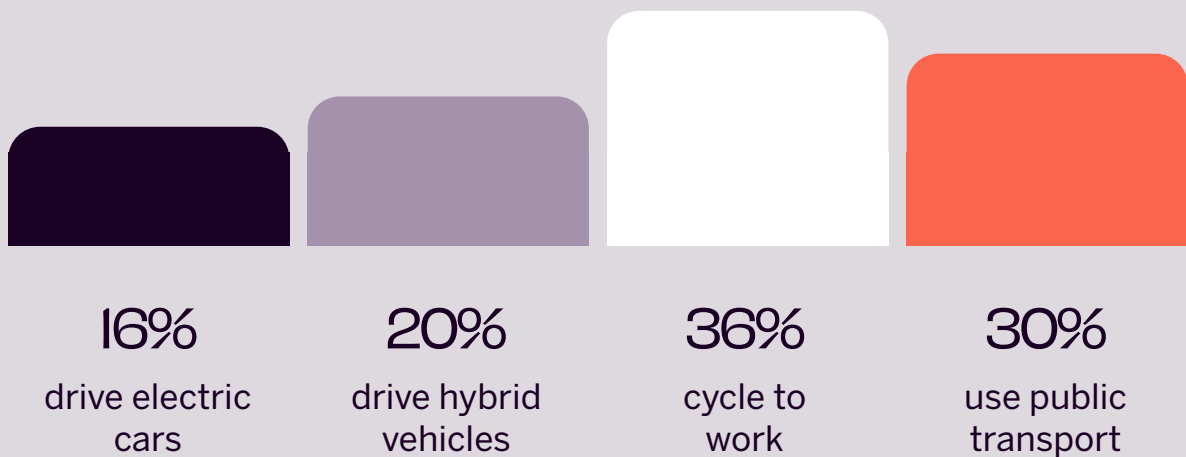
Our survey also identified the following areas where improvements could be made. All of these things are really easy to implement. All it takes is a bit of thought, the odd phone call, or a few quick clicks.





Finally, we should mention that the industry has a long way to go when it comes to travel and transport. Transport is a tricky one as new cars are obviously expensive to buy. However, we hope that agents will consider electric or hybrid options the next time they renew their fleet. We also appreciate that cycling / public transport isn't realistic for everyone, especially if you live out in the sticks.

But what about electric scooters? Sadly, they didn't get much love in our survey – only 3% use them – but they're a solid eco-friendly option and perfectly legal if rented as part of a government-backed trial. You might look rather fetching on one, too.



Did you know?

59% of agents
say they don't
have the
knowhow to
become more
eco-friendly

The need for support

Sustainable approaches can take time to learn. That's why our survey examined whether agents need help in their efforts. The will seems to be there – 86% agreed that agents have a responsibility to be sustainable – but are the changes we'd like to see actually possible?

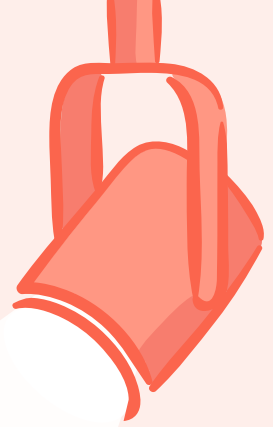
Interestingly, 59% of agents say they don't have the knowhow to become more eco-friendly. What's more, 78% believe the government should incentivise sustainable approaches. If you're listening, Boris...

Encouragingly, however, only 36% believed that Covid-19 had slowed down their sustainability efforts. This isn't entirely surprising, as the pandemic has encouraged more remote working and increased awareness of the digital office concept.

'It is better that everyone does something rather than nothing at all. Take the first steps and continue to evolve to make it ingrained, long term, habitual'

So what does it all mean?

Now that the results are in – you can see the full facts and figures in our appendix - it's time to digest everything, stroke our chins, and think about what they tell us. That's all coming up in part 3.



PARTNER FOCUS

Hamptons

At Hamptons, we're committed to making a positive impact on the communities we serve, and beyond. Minimising our environmental impact is at the heart of that commitment. From small gestures like our sustainable property boards to turning up by the minibus-load to clean up Brighton beach and planting 150 trees to commemorate our 150 years.

We're always looking to work with organisations who share our values, which is why we chose to partner with Just Move In over a number of other home set-up service providers. As a certified B Corporation, their sustainability mission aligns perfectly with ours.

As well as giving our customers a one-stop shop for all their essential home

move admin, Just Move In enables them to transfer onto a 100% renewable energy plan, plus they will get a carbon-absorbing Mangrove tree planted in their name.

We wanted to take the partnership one-step further. As a business, we made the decision not to take any referral fees from Just Move In. Instead all funds are being donated to the Marine Conservation Society, the UK's leading charity for the protection of the planet's seas and shores. Our ambition is to donate a total of £20,000 in 2021/22 to this worthy cause, which was voted for by Hamptons' staff.

Donating to the Marine Conservation Society is just one of the ways we will be supporting them this year. Throughout July, many of our people

'If we were to give advice to those who want to do more, but don't know where to start, it would be to start small.

You will be amazed at how quickly simple changes add up!

enthusiastically took part in their annual Plastic Challenge, attempting to go plastic-free for one month by making simple, sustainable switches.

If we were to give advice to other agents or property businesses who want to do more, but don't know where to start, it would be to start small. You will be amazed at how quickly simple changes add up. We're not a huge multi-national with dedicated resource, our green agenda is championed by a small committee of passionate individuals. You don't have to be perfect, but you do have to start somewhere to protect this planet we all call home.

Mary Beeton
Head of Residential Sales

Hamptons

THE HOME EXPERTS

CHAPTER 3

Little changes, big difference



Identifying the easy wins

Although the results of our survey speak for themselves – the industry does some things well and other things not so well - there are still key areas we can underline with a fat marker pen. These are the 'easy wins' you can do right away. And how do we know they're easy? Because you told us so...

A big part of our survey involved asking agents how easy or difficult various changes would be to make. Interestingly, a lot of the low hanging fruit has yet to be plucked from the sustainability tree.

Getting started

The obvious place to start is switching to a green energy supplier. 70% of you said this would be easy or very easy. And yet only 43% of agents have done it. It's also worth mentioning that only 45% use a smart electricity meter. This is something you could easily change when you switch suppliers. You could also swap to a green web host. It only takes a few clicks but only 5% have made the effort.

There are also several easy wins around the office. For example, 79% said it would be very or quite easy to use recycled stationery yet only 54% have grasped the nettle.

Meanwhile, an encouraging 80% said it would be easy to discourage disposable cups, bottles and paper towels. So why not take this further by using green cleaning products and adding a composter in your office kitchen? Only 33% and 12% respectively currently do this.

Only 43% of agents use a green energy supplier

It's also worth reminding people that more remote working – which 42% said would be easy or very easy to implement - is great for the environment. It cuts down commutes from an eco-endangering drive to a leisurely stroll to your home office (with or without coffee and a late breakfast).

Remote working also promotes cloud-based project management and collaboration tools. These applications are inherently sustainable because they promote paperless office solutions.

Other areas to target

Although switching to electric vehicles and other sustainable means of transport is more of a long-term aspiration, there are still plenty of other ways to become sustainable in the short term. Embracing green initiatives and partnerships is one such example.

A great way to start is by putting someone in charge of sustainability. Then they can explore partnerships with eco-friendly companies (only 28% currently do this) and look to sponsor sustainable charities like wildlife organisations (42% are yet to do this). You could also donate a percentage of your profits to sustainable causes, and/or offset the carbon impact of every move by planting a tree for every customer. This is something we do ourselves.

Change your mind-set

There's one more big change we recommend: think about sustainability at all times. If it's front of mind then you'll soon become a front-runner.

Try tweaking the things you already do, like newsletters and customer information leaflets, to promote eco-friendliness. A monthly e-zine or email that explains what you've been doing to help the environment will keep you motivated, accountable, and even generate some great PR.

'We need to implement this daily into our private life, and this needs to transpire in our business. This is what everyone needs to do urgently now'

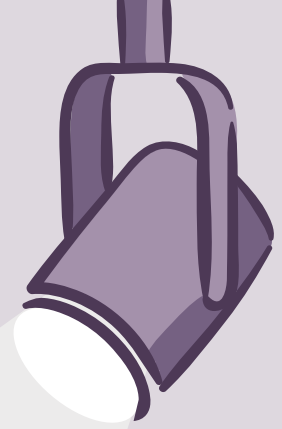
You could even give every new landlord, tenant, vendor, or buyer a guide on how to make properties greener. This should be in PDF format rather than paper form, of course.

Finally, try to emphasise a home's EPC in your promotions. This is another great way to cleverly coax customers into eco-friendly actions. If everyone does their bit then it can make a big difference overall.



Sold On Sustainability

If you'd like some more advice on making your agency sustainable then download our **Sold On Sustainability Guide**. It offers practical tips in the six key areas we've identified: energy use, waste, recycling, the office environment, transport, and initiatives. You'll find easy wins and long-term targets in equal measure. What's more, it's completely FREE - both eco-friendly and wallet-friendly.



PARTNER FOCUS

The Negotiator

'Sustainability' has become an overused word. We use it everywhere for everything. But there's no getting away from its importance to our ecosystem, our planet, and humanity itself.

So, what can a single property professional do to make a difference? The answer is lots. It starts with a mindset and an ethos – how you organise and run your business and marshal your assets.

At your next staff meeting, ask for a volunteer to be your Sustainability Champion for the company – give them

a small incentive payment even. You will find you are pushing on an open door – especially with your younger staff, who have a heightened sensitivity to ecological issues and global warming.

Your Sustainability Champion will have an internet of information and ideas at their disposal. Just Google it! Set small achievable goals and your business will start to transform.

There are lots of good reasons to do this over and above the obvious 'save the planet' one. You can set an example in your high street. Your business

In the future, clients will know that instructing you will not increase their own carbon footprint. It may well be the reason you get the business, rather than the agency over the road.

can become your local Sustainability Champion. You can show your clients your green credentials.

In the future, clients will know that instructing you will not increase their own carbon footprint. It may well be the reason you get the business, rather than the agency over the road. Next year, you could even pitch to be Sustainable Agent of the Year at the Negotiator Awards.

At The Negotiator, we've joined Just Move In using our influence as your trade press to raise awareness of sustainability issues. We want to show that we care about the community and the planet. So please join us by taking those first steps towards a sustainable life.

Grant Leonard
Publisher

The Negotiator 

CHAPTER 4

Opportunity knocks



Help the planet and your agency

If you think sustainability isn't for you, then think again. You don't need room for solar panels or a wind turbine at the back of the office. Every agency can make changes and benefit. And you can make headway simply through small changes: switching to LED lighting, saving energy, using less water, recycling more, working from home more often, and supporting other eco-friendly businesses.

There are so many advantages, too. Your business will immediately become more attractive to potential customers, investors, partners, and employees. What's more, by reducing waste, streamlining processes, and making the most of your resources – the core values of sustainability – your team will become more productive and your business more profitable. It's a win-win.

Embracing sustainability will also help to future-proof your agency. Environmental regulations are only going to get tighter in the coming years. Energy costs are likely to increase, and there will be ever-greater pressure on businesses to set the right example. So now's the time to get on the sustainability bandwagon and be proactive.

Food for thought

COURTESY OF BARCLAYS

45%

of consumers actively seek out eco-friendly products and services

70%

believe it's important to work for green businesses

44%

would boycott businesses that hurt the environment

Sustainability helps you to...

Reduce waste ✓

Save money ✓

Boost productivity ✓

Increase profits ✓

Win more customers ✓

Generate good PR ✓

Enhance your brand ✓

Hire new employees ✓

Retain existing employees ✓

Attract new investment ✓

Prepare for the future ✓

Let's do it

There are so many reasons to be sold on sustainability. If potential customers are torn between you and a rival agency then environmental friendliness could make all the difference. Bad eco-credentials are a red flag; sustainability could help your agency get the green light.

**'Just take a step back and think
– what could we do and do it!'**

Acting with purpose can create a brighter future for your business and the industry as a whole. So identify what you do well and what you could do better. Set targets, set deadlines to reach them and, above all, set a good example. Remember that agents are in a unique position to lead the fight against household emissions. So never forget to remind your customers that sustainable homes tend to be worth more. Green mortgages also make the cost of borrowing cheaper.

We'll be monitoring the industry's performance ourselves and hope to see an improvement in the coming months and years.

Bring your A game. Become a B Corp.

Applying to become a **B Corporation** – which is like a Fairtrade coffee stamp for businesses - is a fantastic way to improve your agency's sustainability credentials. B Corps have to meet rigorous social and environmental standards, and the application process will help you improve your agency's performance across five key areas: governance, workers, customers, community, and the environment.

However, even if the official B Corp assessment process isn't for you, your agency can still fly the flag for sustainability simply by making the changes we've suggested in this report.

You can also establish closer links with other like-minded organisations. After all, we're all in this together. And the more that sustainable businesses collaborate and inspire each other, the greater the change we'll inspire.

Final thoughts from Just Move In

Thanks go to Hamptons, Agents Together, The Negotiator, and B Lab for their help in putting this report together. And thanks to you for reading it, too. We hope it inspires you to join the cause.

If you'd like to know more about us, please visit www.justmovein.com. We're a leading home setup and utility management specialist and, as a proud B Corp and member of 1% For The Planet, we plant a mangrove tree for every new customer.

Agents for sustainability

Our Agents For Sustainability campaign is leading the fight against climate change in the domestic property sector. We'll be producing regular reports and guides, as well as hosting events to raise awareness.

One such event was a special webinar hosted by Gabby Logan. It discussed the state of sustainability in the industry and suggested plenty of ways for agents to become more eco-friendly. **You can watch it here.**

If you'd like more information on our campaign, please visit **this page**. Please show your support by signing up for regular updates.





'Go paperless,
walk to work, work
from home some
days, do virtual
viewings'

'We can't ignore the
importance of living and
working sustainably. If you
don't believe it, then think
about the millions of people
who do and ask yourself
which agent they would
rather instruct. Cynical but
true!'

'Start with efficiency
– most sustainable
measures actually
improve efficiency and a
lot provide cost savings
when implemented
correctly'

Quote wall

'Take it one
step at a
time'

'It needs
to be
done'

Some of the things
you told us

'We need to
work together
as an industry
that forms a
collective benefit
of sustainability'

'Do what you
can, a little from
everyone goes a
long way'

'Just take a step
back and think –
what could we do
and do it!'

'Make the change
now, engage
clients and staff to
aid a cultural shift'

'Everyone should do their bit'

'We need to do it for the planet and our children's future regardless of whether it has business benefits'

'There are a lot of eco changes that can be made that save you time and money'

'It is better that everyone does something rather than nothing at all. Take the first steps and continue to evolve to make it ingrained, long term, habitual'

'Make an effort'

'Donate to a cause, go digital, work from home more often'

'We all need to do something'

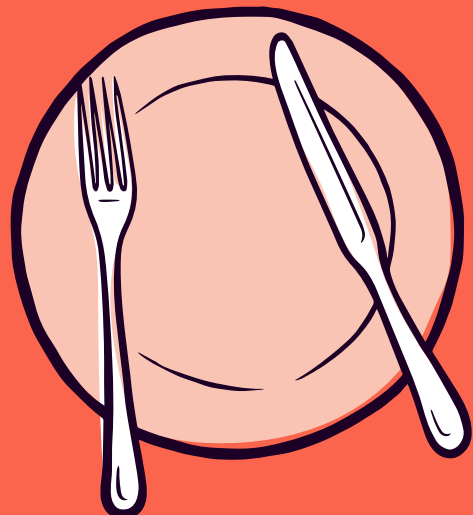
'We need to implement this daily into our private life, and this needs to transpire in our business. This is what everyone needs to do urgently now'

CHAPTER 5

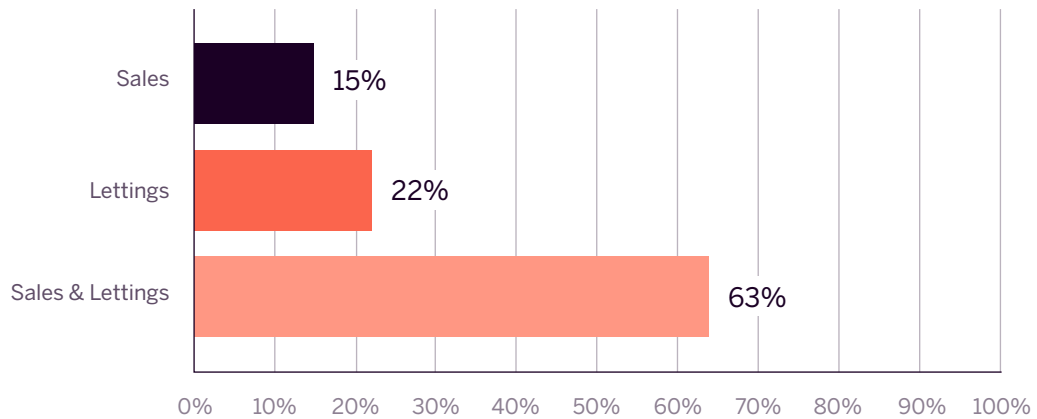
Appendix

For anyone that's still hungry for more, we've included the full results from the report.*

*Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

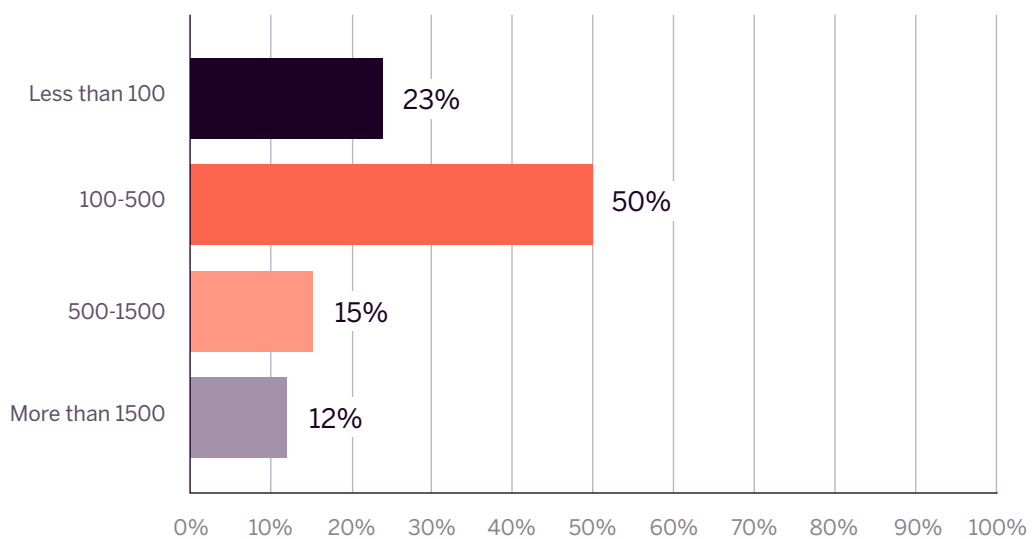


Q1 What type of home moves does your agency manage?

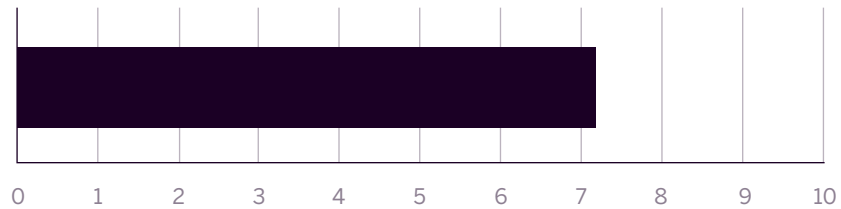


Q2 How many moves does your agency manage each year?

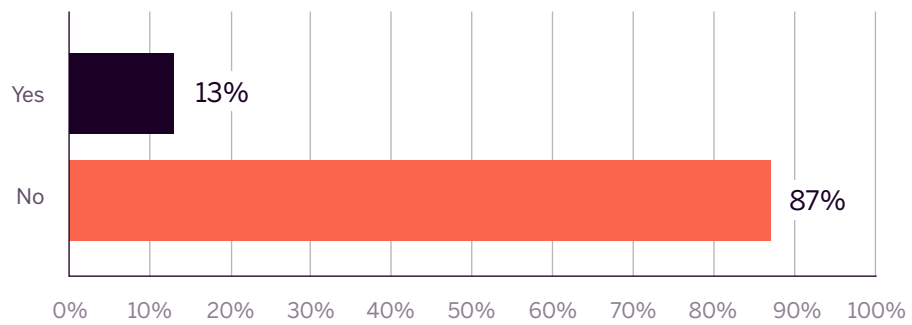
(This should include sales transactions, new tenancies and renewals)



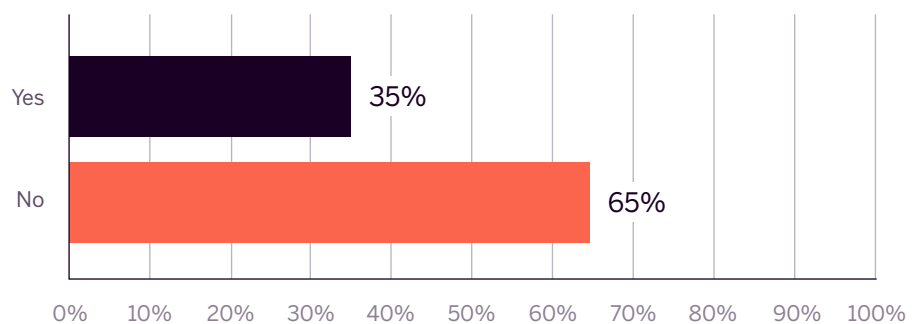
Q3 On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is sustainability to your agency?



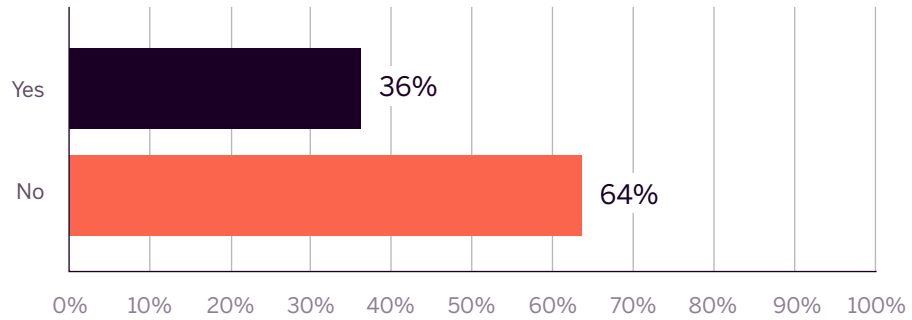
Q4 Do you have a net-zero carbon strategy?



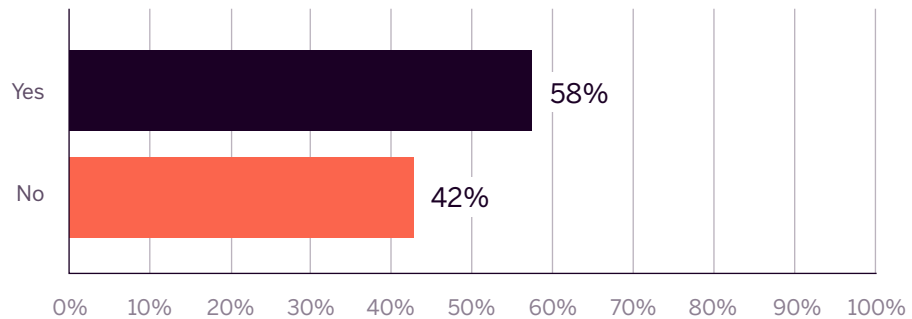
Q5 Do you believe your agency is sustainable enough?



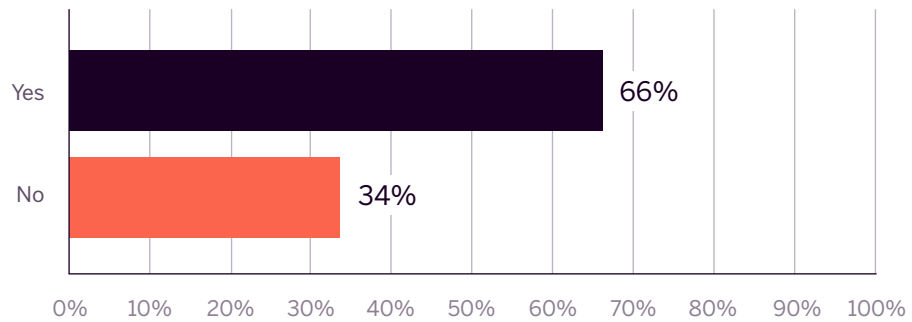
Q6 Has COVID-19 slowed down your agency's sustainability efforts?



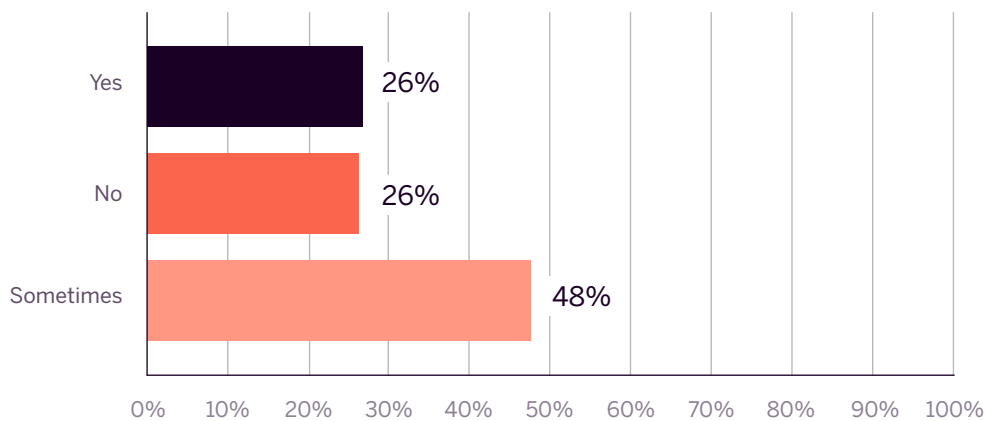
Q7 Do you think that sustainability can boost your bottom line?



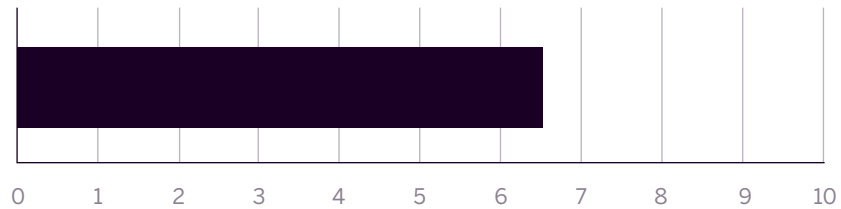
Q8 Do you believe that poor eco-credentials can impact your brand negatively?



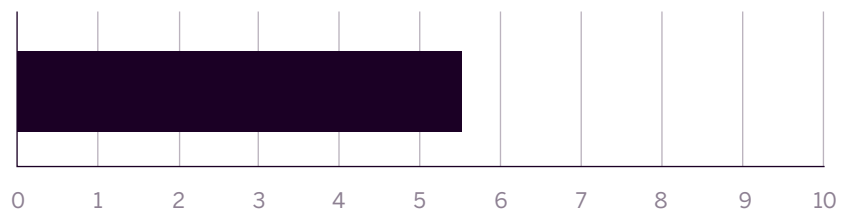
Q9 Do you take eco-credentials into account when choosing suppliers?



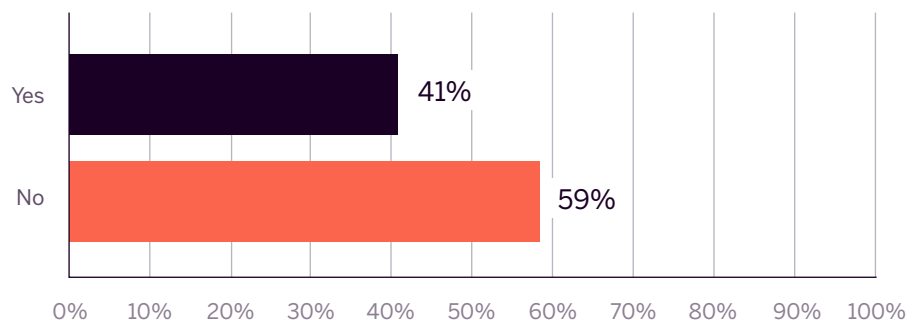
Q10 On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is sustainability to your employees?



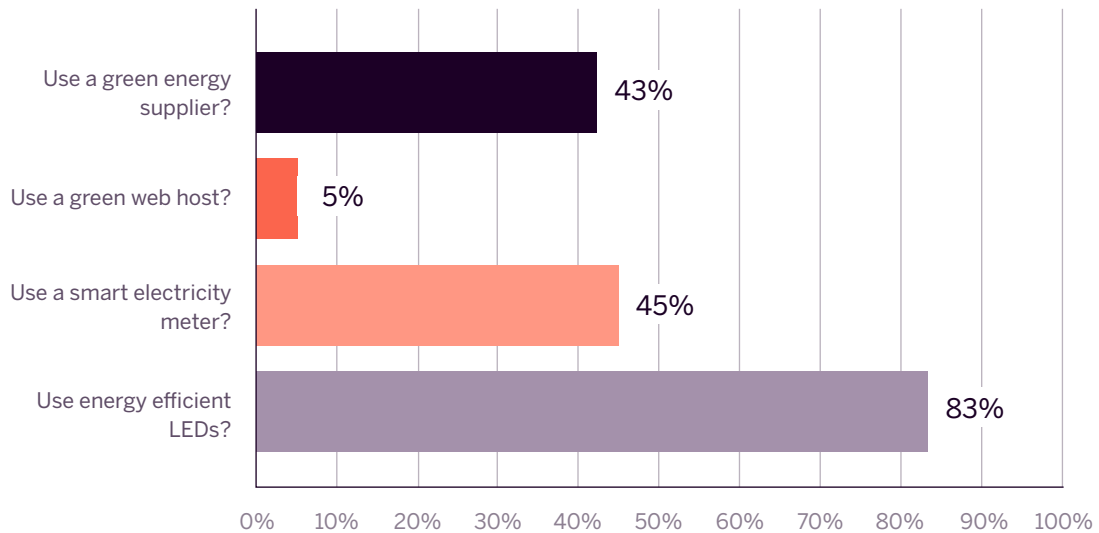
Q11 On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is sustainability to your clients?



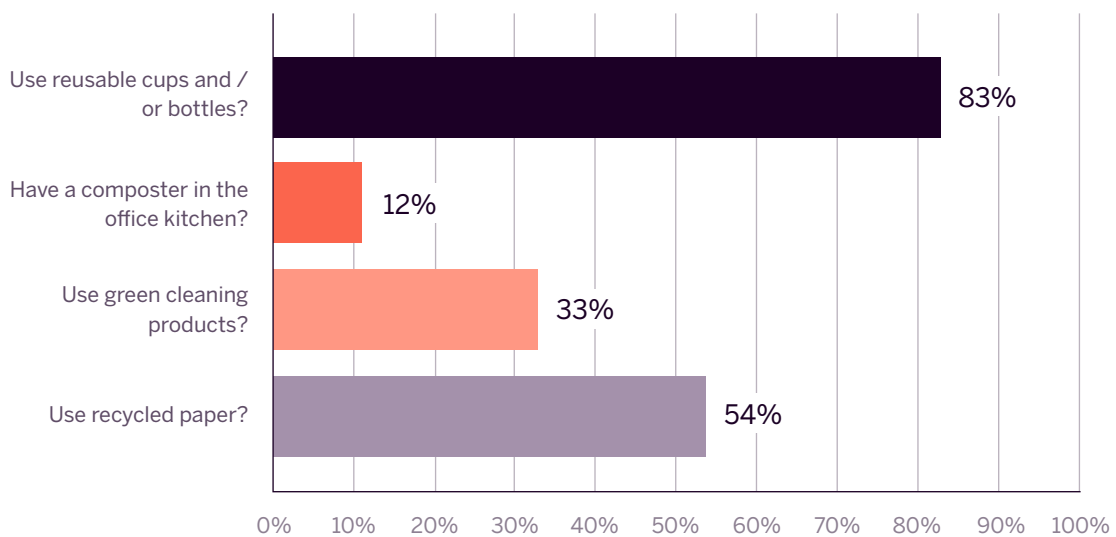
Q12 Does your agency have the knowhow to become more sustainable?



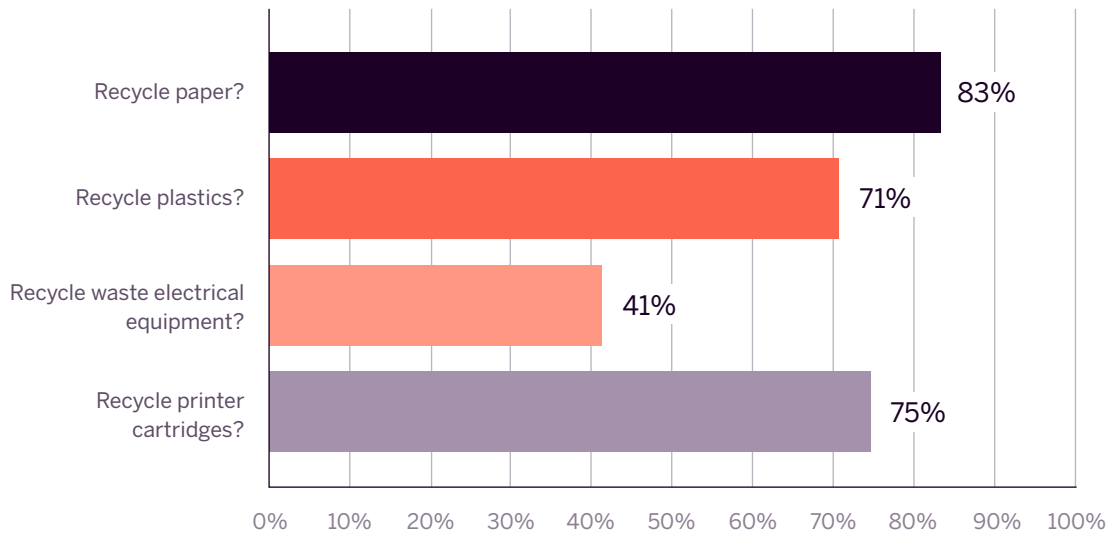
Q13 Energy: Does your agency currently do the following:



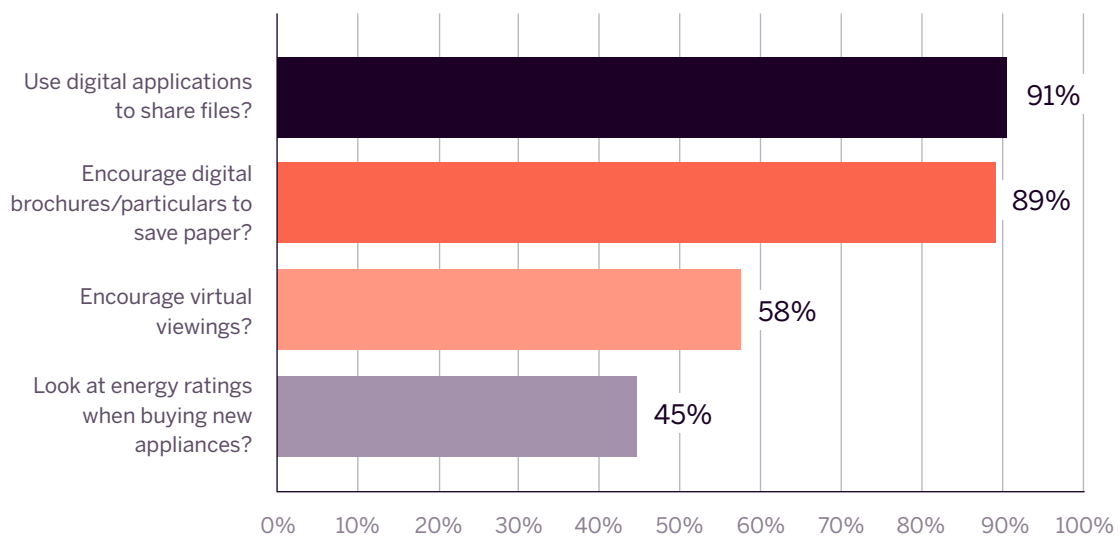
Q14 Waste: Does your agency currently do the following:



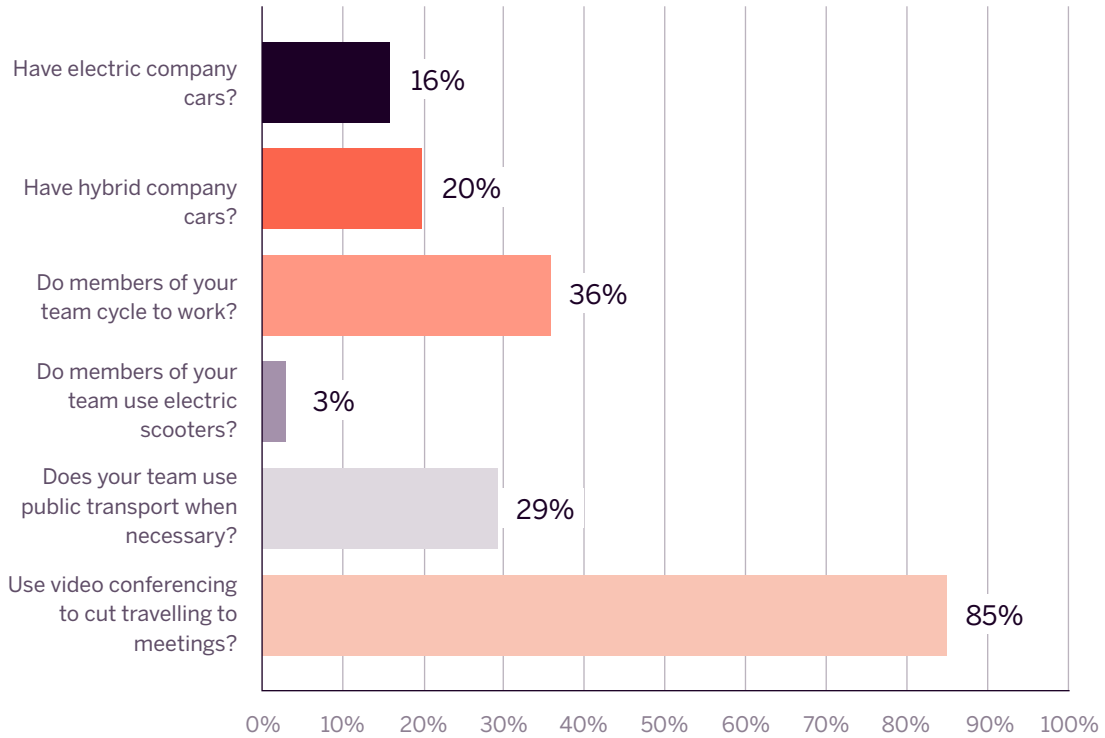
Q15 Recycling: Does your agency currently do the following:



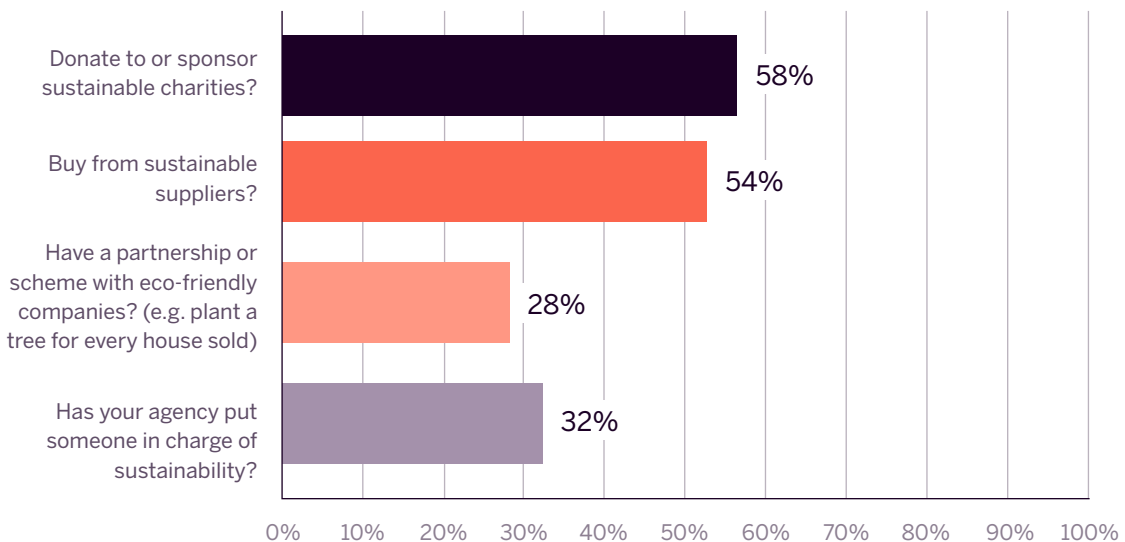
Q16 Office: Does your agency currently do the following:



Q17 Transport: Does your agency currently do the following:



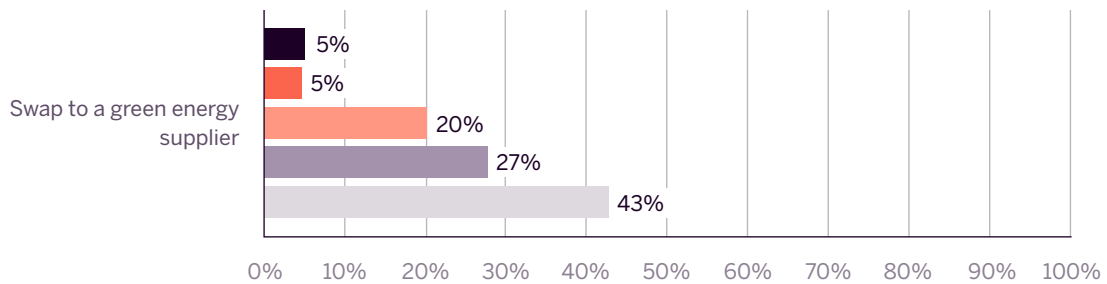
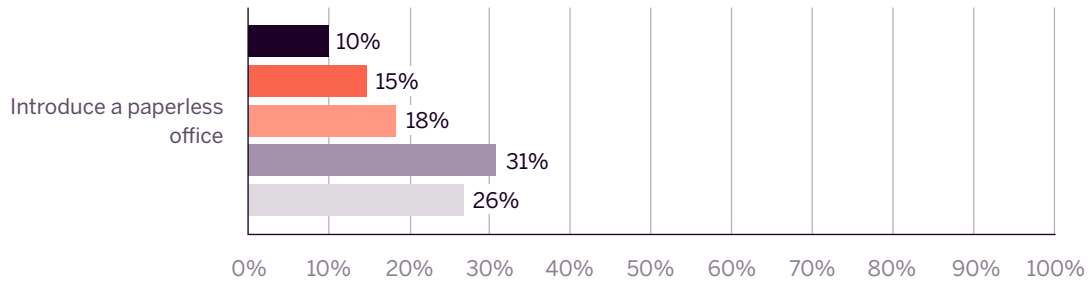
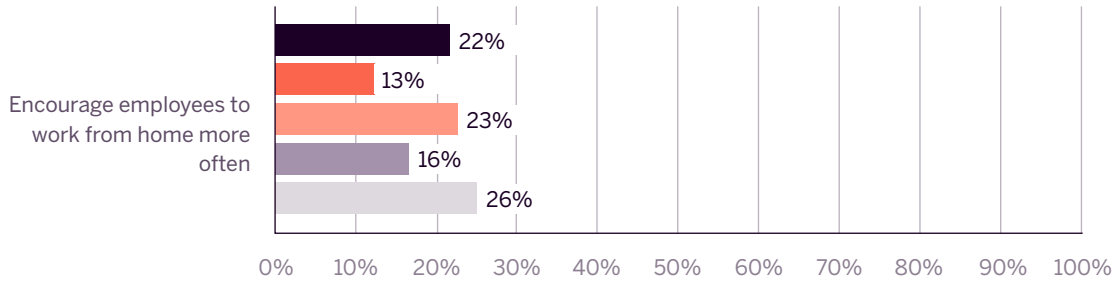
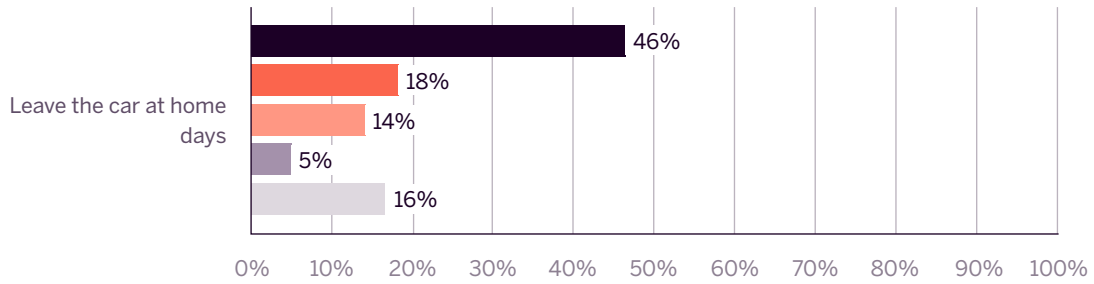
Q18 Initiatives: Does your agency currently do the following:



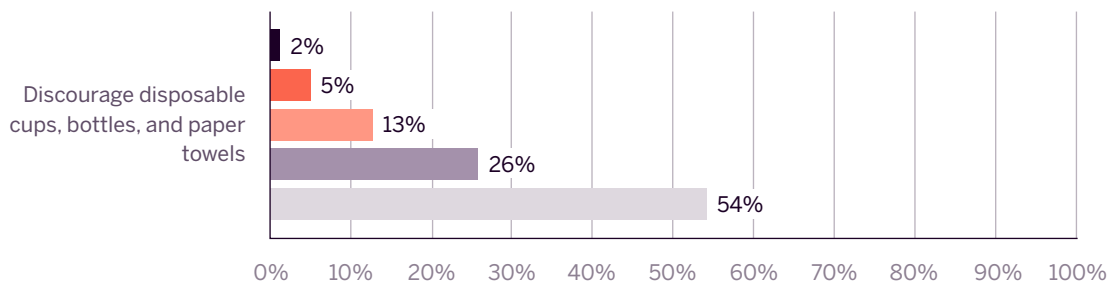
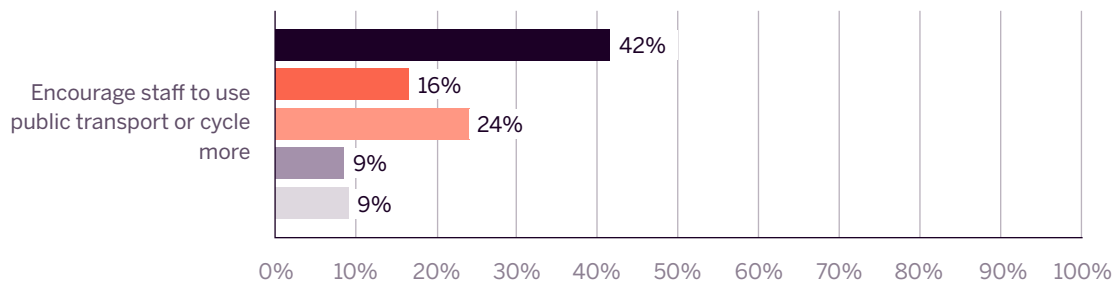
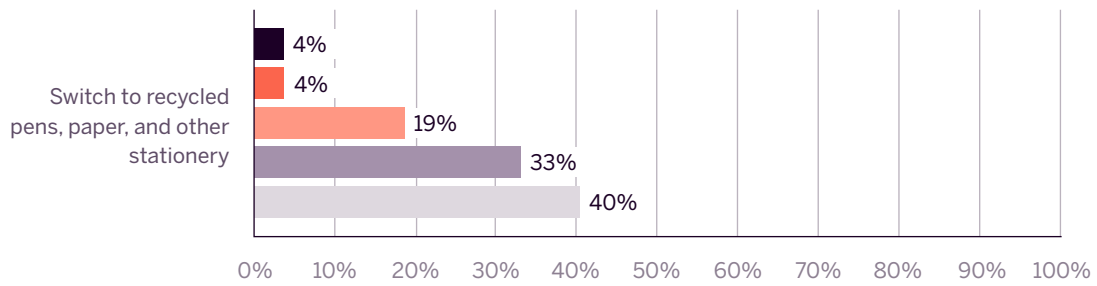
Q19

How easy would it be to implement the following ideas?

Very Difficult Difficult OK Easy Very easy



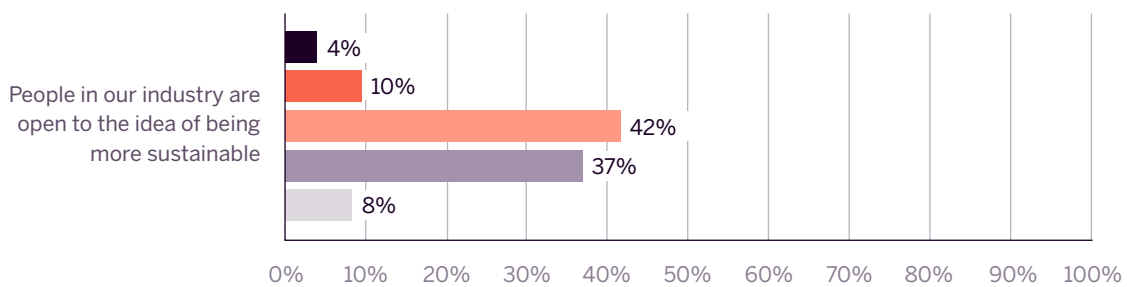
GETTING OUR HOUSE IN ORDER



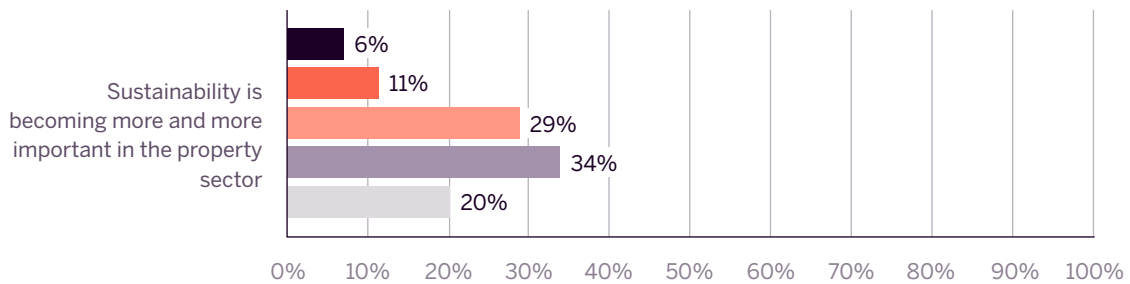
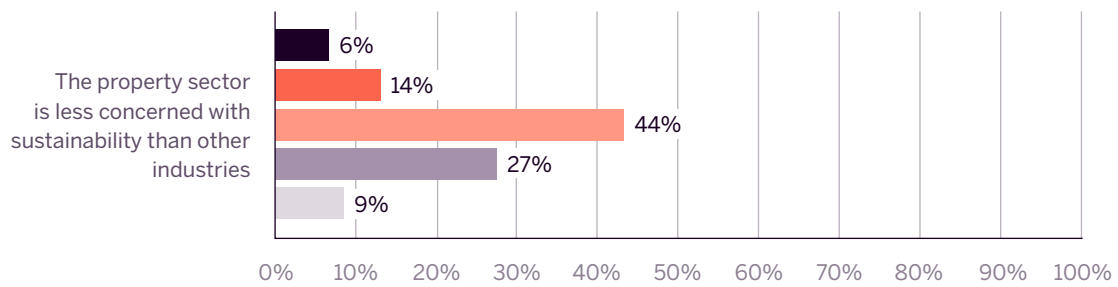
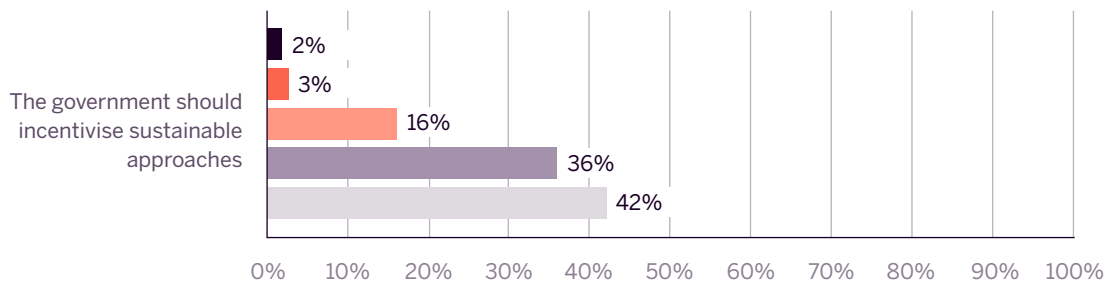
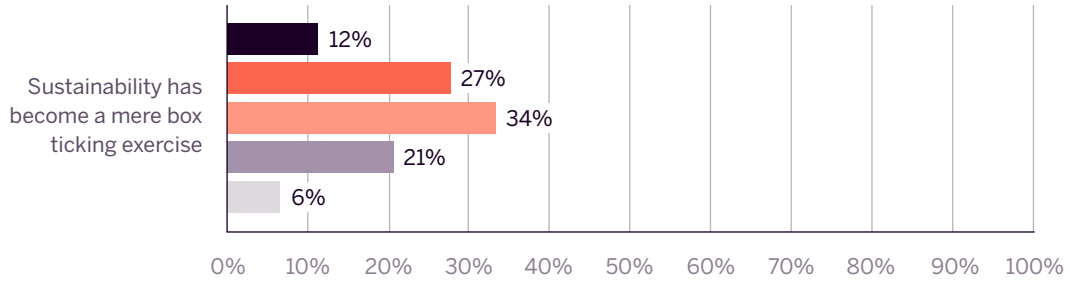
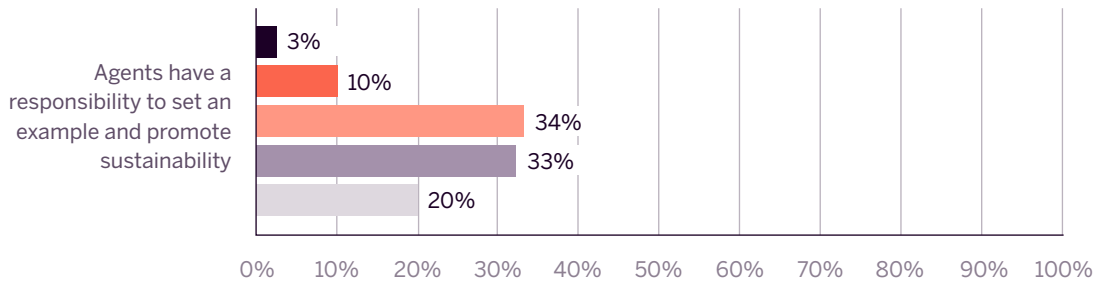
Q20

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Strongly disagree
 Disagree
 Neither agree or disagree
 Agree
 Strongly agree



GETTING OUR HOUSE IN ORDER



Just Move In

