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New Research from ERM and GlobeScan Finds Climate Change Dominates Expert Priorities Worldwide

4th December 2025 - New research from GlobeScan and the ERM Sustainability Institute shows that climate change remains the most urgent global sustainability priority for 2025 according to sustainability professionals across the world, while concern for other critical issues such as biodiversity, diversity, and water scarcity has declined slightly. The findings also reveal a growing emphasis on renewable energy, low-carbon development, and cross-sector collaboration.

The survey of 391 expert stakeholders from business, civil society, government and academia across 57 countries, took place between August 26th and October 21st, 2025. The survey ranked the top sustainability issues, captured most important sustainability developments, and explored views of leadership in the NGO and corporate sectors.

Key findings from the 2025 Sustainability Leaders Survey:

- Climate change remains the top concern (cited as urgent by 94 percent of respondents), while urgency around issues such as biodiversity, deforestation, diversity, water scarcity, and labor conditions in supply chains has weakened.
- Legislation continues to be viewed as the most impactful driver of sustainability progress, though its perceived importance has declined significantly compared to 2024 (cited by 18 percent of experts in 2025 vs. 33 percent in 2024).
- Emerging priorities include renewable energy and low-carbon development, biodiversity initiatives, and global/multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Expert views on corporate and NGO sustainability leadership remain steady:

- Patagonia retains its position as the most recognized corporate sustainability leader (cited by 36 percent of experts), with IKEA, Unilever, and Natura &Co following. Meanwhile, companies such as Schneider Electric, Microsoft, Interface, and Ørsted gain recognition in specific regions.
- WWF remains by far the most recognized NGO for sustainability leadership (cited by 44 percent of respondents), followed by Greenpeace (cited by 15 percent), World

Resources Institute (cited by 12 percent) and The Nature Conservancy (cited by 10 percent).

Integrating sustainability into business strategy is viewed as key to sustainability leadership:

- Making sustainability a core business driver is seen as the top attribute of corporate sustainability leaders (cited by 26 percent of respondents) and demonstrating evidence of impact and actions and focusing on supply chains are also consistent drivers of recognized leadership.

Chris Coulter, CEO at GlobeScan said: “This year’s survey highlights both progress and persistent challenges. Climate change remains the defining issue, but we also see stakeholders pointing to companies and NGOs that are focused on driving more innovation and collaboration in the sustainability agenda.”

Mark Lee, Global Director of Thought Leadership at ERM, said: “Our survey findings reflect the strong belief across sectors and regions that sustainability must be embedded in business strategy and drive commercial results. These are the key factors that define sustainability leadership today, and the companies that adopt this approach will be well-positioned to benefit from enhanced resilience and value creation opportunities.”

A clear mandate for action

The 2025 Leaders Survey results set a clear mandate for organizations to act decisively. Leadership organizations in all sectors are encouraged to focus on sustainability issues that deliver measurable impact and financial value, secure clean and reliable energy, and meet rising regulatory and stakeholder expectations, even as budgets tighten. Success will depend on falling costs for renewable and low-carbon technologies, accelerating operational and value chain decarbonization, and embracing digital solutions.

At the same time, the research findings reveal both progress and stagnation, underscoring that sustained innovation and cross-sector collaboration will be essential to maintain momentum and drive meaningful change in a rapidly evolving sustainability landscape.

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Notes to editors

The [GlobeScan](#) / [ERM Sustainability Institute](#) Leaders Survey is an annual study that highlights the most urgent priorities in the current global sustainable development agenda.

The 2025 survey examines private sector and civil society sustainability leadership in addition to monitoring priority issues over time and tracking notable shifts in their perceived importance. This year's survey was conducted between August and October 2025 and reflects input from almost 400 sustainability experts across nearly 60 countries.

About GlobeScan

GlobeScan is an insights and advisory firm specializing in trust, sustainability, and engagement.

We equip clients with insights to navigate shifting societal and stakeholder expectations, crafting evidence-based strategies that reduce risks and create value for their organizations and society.

Established in 1987, we have offices in Cape Town, Hong Kong, Hyderabad, London, Paris, San Francisco, São Paulo, Singapore, and Toronto. GlobeScan is a participant of the UN Global Compact and a Certified B Corporation.

Learn more [here](#).

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About the ERM Sustainability Institute

The Sustainability Institute is ERM's primary platform for thought leadership. The purpose of the Institute is to define, accelerate, and scale sustainability performance by developing actionable insight for business. We provide an independent and authoritative voice to decode complexities. The Institute identifies innovative solutions to global sustainability challenges built on ERM's experience, expertise, and commitment to transformational change.

About ERM

Sustainability is our business.

As the world's largest specialist sustainability consultancy, ERM partners with clients to operationalize sustainability at pace and scale, deploying a unique combination of strategic transformation and technical delivery capabilities. This approach helps clients to accelerate the integration of sustainability at every level of their business.

With more than 50 years of experience, ERM's diverse team of 8000+ experts in 40 countries and territories helps clients create innovative solutions to their sustainability challenges,

unlocking commercial opportunities that meet the needs of today while preserving opportunity for future generations. Learn more [here](#).

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