

Together2030/Newcastle University Perceptions Survey 2019: Methodology Note

Survey methodology

The survey was prepared in an online survey tool. It was disseminated in three languages (English, Spanish and French) via links shared over several mailing lists and social media (mainly Twitter) from 10 June – 4 July, 2019. The survey contains approximately 20 questions, with subsections for respondents from VNR and non-VNR countries, and for countries that have already undertaken VNRs.

This report was prepared by Graham Long and Elizabeth Muggleton from Newcastle University in partnership with Arelys Bellorini, Andrew Griffiths, Javier Surasky, Aissata Ndiaye and Margie Simo from Together 2030. Findings and recommendations were also shared and discussed with members of the Together 2030 Core Group.

It is important to highlight that this was an informal survey, based on perceptions from a broad range of stakeholders and organizations in different countries. This poses limitations to both the rigour and the generalisability of the conclusions. In this method note, we (i) highlight some of these limitations of the survey methodology and the resulting analysis, which should be borne in mind in interpreting the results and which might also inform future surveys. We then (ii) report on the composition of respondents, and lastly (iii) set out the regional groupings used in the report.

Limitations of the survey

Respondents accessed the information mainly through a diversity of mailing lists and social media accounts that connect stakeholders following issues related to sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda, and the SDGs. Clearly, the methods of dissemination for the survey here influence the data gathered.

Dissemination by mailing list and Twitter feeds limits the reach of the questionnaire beyond those organisations and individuals who are part of civil society networks around sustainable development or active on social media. With dissemination carried out electronically, in no way can the survey responses claim to be representative of civil society groups and individuals without reliable access to the internet.

The survey was disseminated in three languages - English, French and Spanish, but this clearly limits access to the questionnaire from countries – or regions within countries - where these languages are not as widely or fluently spoken. There is inevitably, therefore, selectivity and bias in who the survey reached and who was best placed to respond. To an extent, this is unavoidable, though it is something that future surveys might look to further ameliorate or compensate for. The proportion of respondents from each region was: Latin America and the Caribbean – 12.6%, Europe/USA/Canada – 13.8%, Asia Pacific – 26.4%, Africa – 47.2%.

Overall, there is the clear potential here for bias in the profile of respondents towards those who are globally connected and SDG-aware. However, these factors might make the limited apparent awareness of the SDGs and SDG review processes especially significant – we might speculate that outside of globally-connected and SDG-aware groups, levels of engagement with national planning and review would be significantly lower, and that less change since past VNRs would be perceived. In preparing the report, the data for several questions was gathered on a likert scale of 1-5. However, the report interprets these, and combines them, in a number of ways (e.g. in combining “disagree” and “strongly disagree”). It sometimes assigns labels to these numerical values – for

example, interpreting a value of 4 on a likert scale as “good” in the case of perceived progress (see section 6 of the report).

Furthermore, for reasons of simplicity in presentation, the report excludes the (very small number) of “don’t know” responses from the analysis, treating these as “missing responses” for the purposes of numbers of respondents. In such ways, the conclusions drawn from these responses are contingent on the way the data was re-coded and are not necessarily truly representative of the responses given. Organising responses in a different way could possibly lead to different conclusions being drawn.

The survey had two main variants: firstly, there was a set of questions that were only asked of those respondents in countries undertaking a VNR this year; and secondly, there was a set of questions that were only asked of respondents in countries with a previous VNR (Note that respondents could also fall into both or neither categories, and thus be asked both or neither set of questions). This generated uneven number of overall responses, so limiting comparison across questions *across* different variants of the survey. The survey gave respondents the option of skipping questions without providing an answer, which has the potential to limit comparison across questions *within* variants of the survey; however in this year’s survey, numbers of respondents are fairly consistent within each survey variant, except in the case of the questions that invite open responses. The problem of cross-comparison is exacerbated when responses are disaggregated by region, as each regional group contains a different number of countries and responses, even before missing responses are considered. Any comparison of the number of responses to a particular question *across* regions should also consider the total responses *by* region.

As this report primarily utilises descriptive data in chart form, the statistical accuracy of the data itself is not especially problematic. However, if data were to be compared *across* questions - comparing respondents who were aware of SDG planning *and* agreed that civil society and other stakeholders can engage in the process of national review, for example - this would require statistical accuracy measures for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn. Disaggregating responses into smaller groups also diminishes the statistical accuracy and reliability of general conclusions made from the data.

The survey as a whole garnered 159 responses. But after disaggregation by VNR status and region, these sample sizes become much smaller and hence less significant in terms of denoting more general experiences or perceptions. Regional disaggregation was not reported in any sub-category where the numbers of respondents in more than one region in that sub-category was below 10; where respondents in a sub-category in only one region was below 10, this was noted in the report. Limited numbers of responses at country level makes disaggregation beyond the regional level problematic. However, it is clear that country-specific issues might well be responsible for the disparities found as we aggregate these responses into regional groups.

Composition of respondents

The survey includes questions to assess which kinds of stakeholders - and which kinds of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) - are engaging.

The vast majority of respondents to the survey were from CSOs - 62.7%, see fig 1.

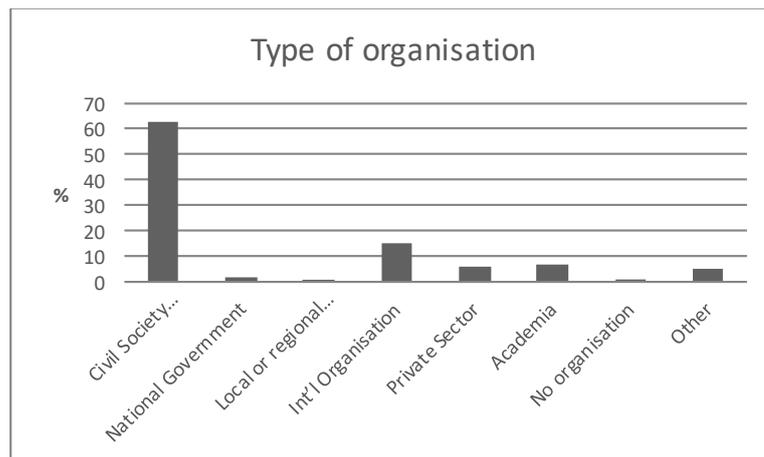


Fig 1

The majority of these were from national level organisations (47, 50.0%), with significant numbers from grassroots (18; 19.1%) and international (21; 22.3%) civil society organisations - see fig. 2 below.

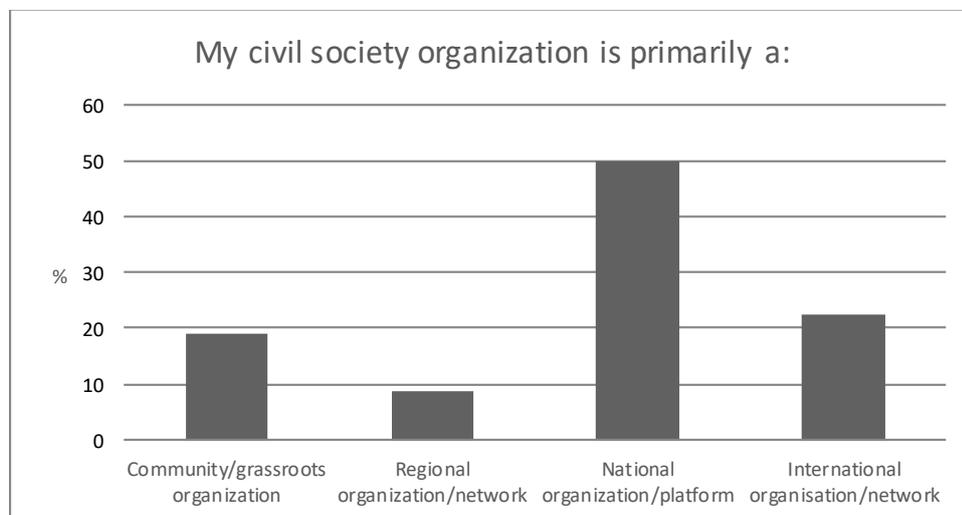


Fig 2

Further detail on the profile of CSO respondents

In the charts below, we present further data on the make-up of civil society respondents. Most respondents were from organisations with 5-19 employees (38.3%) or 20-100 employees (30.9%) (fig 3). CSOs were asked, further, to characterise themselves by type and areas of work, with respondents able to choose more than one option. CSOs of all kinds responded, but mostly describe themselves as advocacy and development organisations (fig 4).

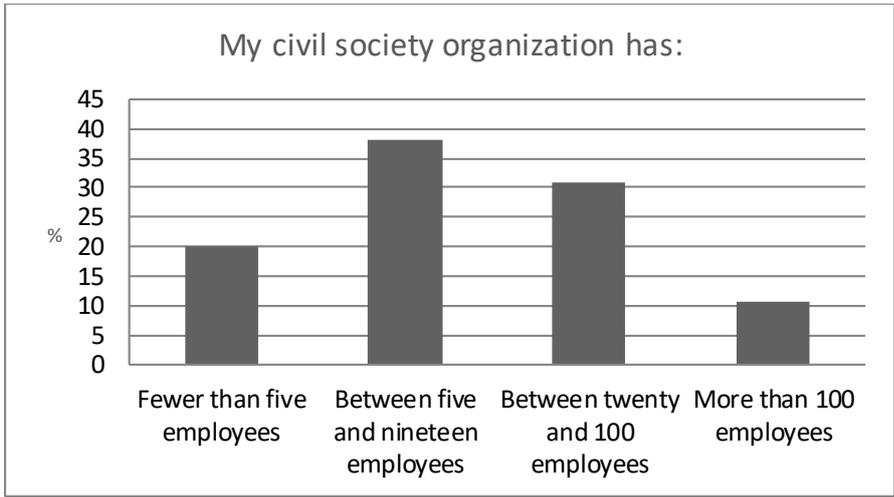


Fig 3

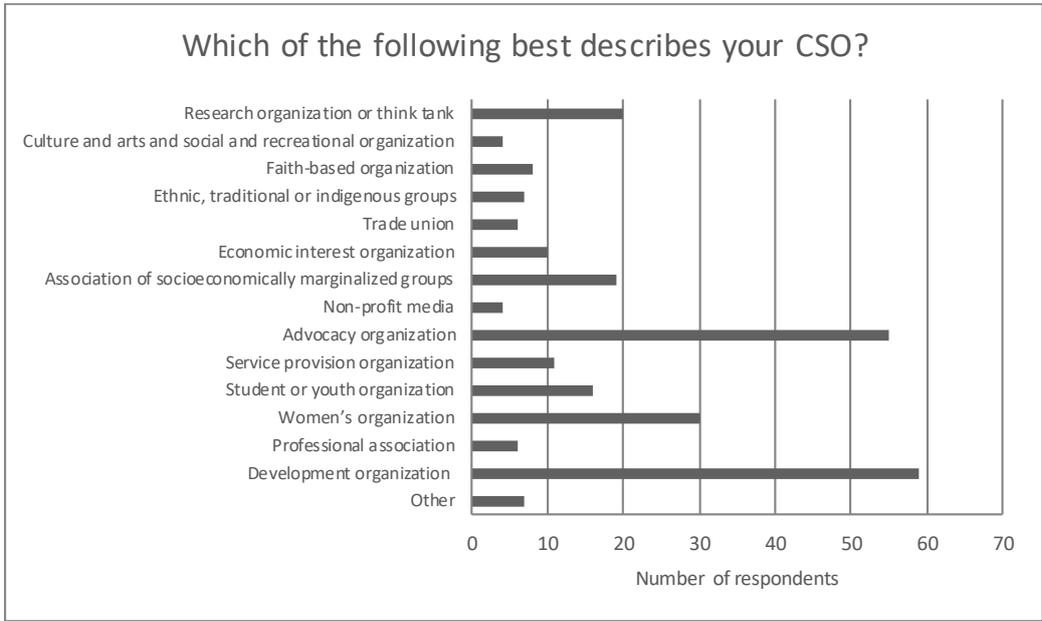


Fig 4

Respondents covered a variety of issue areas, with coverage of environmental issues, education, gender equality, poverty reduction, and human rights being the five most prominent (respondents were able to select more than one option) (fig 5 below).

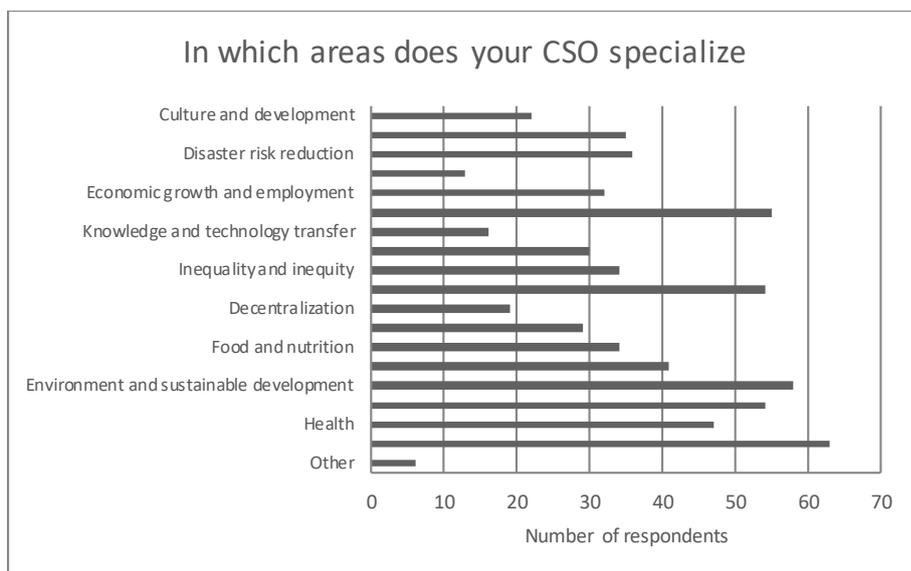


Fig 5

Overall, there is evidence here that national and more grassroots CSOs, of different sizes and interests, are aware of, and engaging with, the SDGs – but we cannot speak to how widespread overall awareness is within country contexts.

Categorisation of countries

The survey disaggregates responses by regions at various points, and this was done on the basis of four regional groupings of countries.

| Africa | Asia-Pacific | Europe, Canada and USA | Latin America/ Caribbean |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Benin | Armenia | Albania | Argentina |
| Botswana | Bahrain | Austria | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) |
| Burkina Faso | Bangladesh | Canada | Brazil |
| Burundi | Cambodia | France | Chile |
| Cameroon | China | Ireland | Colombia |
| Chad | India | Serbia | Dominican Republic |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | Indonesia | Spain | El Salvador |
| Egypt | Iraq | Turkey | Guatemala |
| Ghana | Kazakhstan | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Honduras |
| Guinea | Mongolia | United States of America | Mexico |
| Kenya | Myanmar | | Peru |
| Mauritius | Nepal | | |
| Morocco | Pakistan | | |
| Niger | Philippines | | |
| Nigeria | Republic of Korea | | |
| Rwanda | | | |
| Sierra Leone | | | |
| Togo | | | |
| Tunisia | | | |
| Uganda | | | |
| United Republic of Tanzania | | | |
| Zambia | | | |