

Accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals

A Three-Stage Project: 2018-2020

Stage One: City Maker Survey

“How are the SDGs traveling in your world?”

Working Paper (August 2019)

City Maker Survey: Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

Contributors:

Anna Rubbo, Jade Watkins, Elaine Angeles, Merlyn Mathew
Vera Tangari, Jacqueline Klopp, Geeta Mehta, Elliott Sclar



Abstract

The City Maker Survey is the first stage in the Accelerating the SDGs project. This working paper positions the survey within a broader effort to increase awareness of, and engagement with, the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) among ‘City Makers’-defined as those in the urban professions and education, and civil society. Of the 1065 responses to “How are the SDGs traveling in your world?”, results show that Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) is the most-widely known Goal and that there is an ‘awareness gap’ in relation to other Goals that are arguably relevant to City Makers. Special attention is given to the responses and opinions of young people who have the most to lose if climate action (Goal 13) is not addressed. Preliminary findings and recommendations are reported in the Executive Summary, backed up by an analysis of survey data. Recommendations include the need for further outreach and action in the various City Maker categories to encourage greater awareness of, and engagement with, the SDGs and NUA.

City Maker Survey

“How are the SDGs traveling in your world?”

Contents

| | Page |
|--|------|
| PART 1: INTRODUCTION | |
| 1.1 Accelerating the SDGs | 4 |
| 1.2 Survey Approach and Methodology | 6 |
| 1.3 City Maker Survey Executive Summary | 7 |
| Preliminary Findings | 7 |
| Preliminary Recommendations | 9 |
| PART 2: SURVEY RESPONSE | 10 |
| 2.1 Summary | 10 |
| Quantitative Basics: Responses by Category, Age and Gender | 10 |
| Global Reach and Response | 11 |
| Youth Response: Category, Country and Gender | 13 |
| 2.2 Awareness and Relevance of the SDGs and NUA | 18 |
| All Respondents | 19 |
| Youth Respondents | 21 |
| Awareness of Individual SDGs | 23 |
| Further Analysis by Country | 26 |
| 2.3 Qualitative Response | 29 |
| Youth Open-ended response Summary | 29 |
| Youth Perspective on the NUA and Other Sustainability Frameworks | 30 |
| Youth Open-ended response by City Maker Category | 31 |
| PART 3: GOING FORWARD | 34 |
| Reader Feedback and Survey Links | 36 |
| Acknowledgments | 36 |
| Endnotes | 37 |



PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Accelerating the SDGs¹ and the City Maker Survey

Heralded as 17 goals to transform our world, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Global Goals were adopted by 193 countries in 2015. A year later, at Habitat III, 167-member states ratified the New Urban Agenda (NUA). The NUA comprises 175 commitments by which cities have the potential to drive sustainable development and promote equal rights and opportunity for all. Together, the SDGs and the NUA provide a roadmap to achieve the UN's ambitious Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Unlike the Millennium Development Goals (2000-15) which focused on poverty alleviation, the SDGs (2015-30) are universal aspirations to a decent life and a sustainable planet in rich and poor countries alike. With the inclusion of the hard-won Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and developments since 2015, cities have assumed an unprecedented importance on the global stage. Goal 11 is clearly of importance to City Makers in and of itself, but also because of its interconnectedness with many other Goals that impact life in cities².



UN Habitat³

The previous figure illustrates some of these connections. More could be made.

While all Goals, including Goal 11, and the NUA have been widely disseminated and promoted, and public opinion sought⁴, our non-scientific but often anecdotally confirmed hunch was that among ‘city makers’ in the urban professions, urban education and civil society organizations, awareness of the SDGs and the NUA may need additional focus. The “How are the SDGs traveling in your world?” survey intends to identify if, and where, an awareness ‘gap’ exists among ‘city makers’, and the extent to which the SDGs and the NUA have been incorporated by them in their work.

This line of inquiry provided the impetus for the three stage ‘Accelerating the SDGs’ project (2018-2020) whose aim is to test this hunch through the City Maker Survey (Stage 1), but also to provide a mechanism by which awareness of the SDGs and NUA can be increased, and shared. In other words, an action-oriented, capacity-building effort across three groups of ‘city makers’. Stage 2, the Local Project Challenge, is that mechanism.

Stage 2 invited the sharing of projects that are locally based, involve local partners and implement one or more SDGs. Local Projects located outside urban areas were also invited in order to acknowledge the significance of the rural-urban continuum⁵. By the closing date, over 100 Local Project submissions had been received, demonstrating a stronger than expected interest in the SDGs, and their practical implementation. Submissions are fairly evenly distributed between city maker groups.

This working paper presents preliminary results of the City Maker Survey carried out between December 2018 and June 2019. A future paper on the City Maker Survey will include additional qualitative data as well as further discussion of other SDG surveys and studies as they relate to this survey. Correlations with other surveys such as the Business Leaders study, or the survey of 85 experts drawn from Civil Society, Think Tanks, Universities and Government/Public Institutions, are of particular interest⁶. Given that the Accelerating the SDGs project is intended to be interactive and inclusive, comments on this working paper are welcome⁷. Stage 3 (2020) will disseminate and share Stages 1 and 2 through publications, an online gallery, conferences and exhibitions.

1.2 Survey Approach and Methodology

The City Maker Survey asked respondents “How are the SDGs traveling in your world?” and targeted City Makers in the urban professions (especially design, planning and related professions, local government and the arts), urban education (teachers, researchers, learners), and civil society (community development and environmental organizations). A central objective of the survey is to understand the awareness of, and engagement with, the SDGs and the NUA in these groups. Open-ended questions to explore perceptions of the usefulness of the SDGs and the NUA, as well as examples of implementation were included.

The City Maker Survey was disseminated via multipliers, an effort to create a cascading or ‘snowball’ effect through the following: a MailChimp list to 2,100 individuals representing all target categories; professional and civil society organizations; postings on the World Urban Campaign and other UN sites; distribution through the UIA (Union of International Architects), the World Architecture Community and CSU (Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization); architecture and planning educational bodies in the US and Australia; the Earth Institute’s State of the Planet blog, the New York Habitat Civil Society Working Group, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Efforts were made to reach grassroots organizations as well as universities, local government and others who collaborate with them. Individual and organizational survey recipients were invited to share the survey with others. The project team contributed to the City Maker Survey’s mailing lists and further distribution of the survey through their networks especially in the US, Australia, India and Brazil. This may, in part, explain a concentration of responses in these countries. Given this multiplier approach claims for representativeness, by region, country or category cannot be made. In June 2019, the survey question regarding sexual identity was modified; hence, data used in this working paper is representative of data collected before June 2019⁸.

In order to be more inclusive, the survey is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Hindi, and Mandarin. An explanation of the survey precedes the questions⁹. To see the Survey in full, please visit the [Center for Sustainable Urban Development site](#) and select the preferred language. As the Survey also has a function to raise awareness of the SDGs and the NUA among city makers, it will remain open for the duration of the Accelerating the SDGs project. Analysis of responses received July 2019 through July 2020 will be undertaken in 2020.

1.3 City Maker Survey Executive Summary

Preliminary Findings

- 1,065 responses from 92 countries were received for the City Maker Survey which asked “How are the SDGs traveling in your world?”
- 42% of respondents identified as Urban Professionals; 31% as Teachers and Researchers; 11% as Students; 16% as members of Civil Society.
- 51% of respondents identified as female; 43% male; 3% LGBT+; 3% preferred not to respond.
- 8% of respondents identified in the 18-24 year-old age group; 26% in 25-34; 25% for 35-44; 19% for 45-54; 14% for 55-64; and 7% for 65+.
- Around half of all respondents were from the USA, Australia, India, Brazil, South Africa and the United Kingdom, but at least one response was received from 92 countries.
- 35% of respondents had not previously heard of the SDGs until they participated in the survey, or until ‘very recently’.
- 76% considered the SDGs relevant to their present work and 5% ‘Maybe in the future’.
- Respondents were most familiar with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 13 (Climate Action), although Goal 13 is substantially less familiar than Goal 11.
- Respondents were least familiar with Goal 14 (Life Below Water), Goal 15 (Life on Land), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).
- Respondents were less familiar with the New Urban Agenda. 51% had not heard of the NUA until they received the survey, or until ‘very recently’.
- 50% considered the NUA relevant now, and 14% ‘Maybe in the future’.
- More qualitative feedback was provided by the urban professional, teacher, student, and researcher categories than civil society.

Observations from the City Maker Survey Results

a) Given the role young people around the world are playing in their demands for climate action, in the analysis special attention was paid to the 18-34-year-old cohorts. Disaggregated data and open-ended responses from this group provide distinctive feedback on their views of the SDGs, their utility, and their application within their educational and/or professional work. In particular, many youth respondents expressed frustration in their open-ended responses with government and educational institutions' inaction on the SDGs- and the lack of real progress towards a more sustainable future.

b) There are some parallels with United Nations reports on the Sustainable Development Goals for 2018¹⁰ and 2019¹¹. Of interest to our analysis is the SDSN study of 45 European cities and their progress towards achieving the SDGs¹². Goals 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) are advanced in high-achieving European cities. However, Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption), 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land) remain 'persistent challenges' in these same cities. Relating our results to those in the SDSN study, City Maker respondents were less familiar with Goal 13 (compared to 11), and were substantially less familiar with Goals 12 and 15. Goals 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and 9 (Industry Innovation Infrastructure) were moderately familiar.

c) Surprisingly, for City Makers Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) ranked relatively low.

Preliminary Recommendations

To support acceleration of the SDGs and the NUA among City Makers in the urban professions, education and civil society, further actions should include outreach to :

- Communicate SDG awareness ‘gaps’ that exist within City Maker groups to relevant city makers and policy makers.
- Increase awareness of lesser known but interconnected SDGs among City Makers, including Goals 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).
- Explore why there is low NUA familiarity, and how increased awareness can be addressed.
- Determine the need for increased awareness by City Maker category of the SDGs in general, but also as they are relevant to the needs of local regions.
- Build on the response that the Goals are generally perceived as relevant to the work of City Makers.
- Expand City Makers’ capacity to implement the SDGs and the NUA.
- Encourage more incorporation of SDGs into curriculum across disciplines and educational settings, and develop appropriate and stronger teaching materials around the SDGs and their interrelatedness.
- Encourage more inclusion of the SDGs and NUA knowledge in ‘professional development’ programs in the urban professions, education and civil society organizations.

In addition, preliminary qualitative data suggests these actions:

- Ensure increased youth engagement with the SDGs and the NUA – in educational institutions, the urban professions and civil society organizations.
- Facilitate take-up of the SDGs and the NUA in City Maker groups through the development of implementation tools, as recommended by youth respondents.
- Harmonize the diverse sustainability frameworks, especially those used by urban professionals.
- Seek more qualitative input from Civil Society City Makers as to the efficacy and/or utility of the SDGs and NUA.
- Encourage government and other institutional support for real progress towards a sustainable future through action rather than ‘talk’.

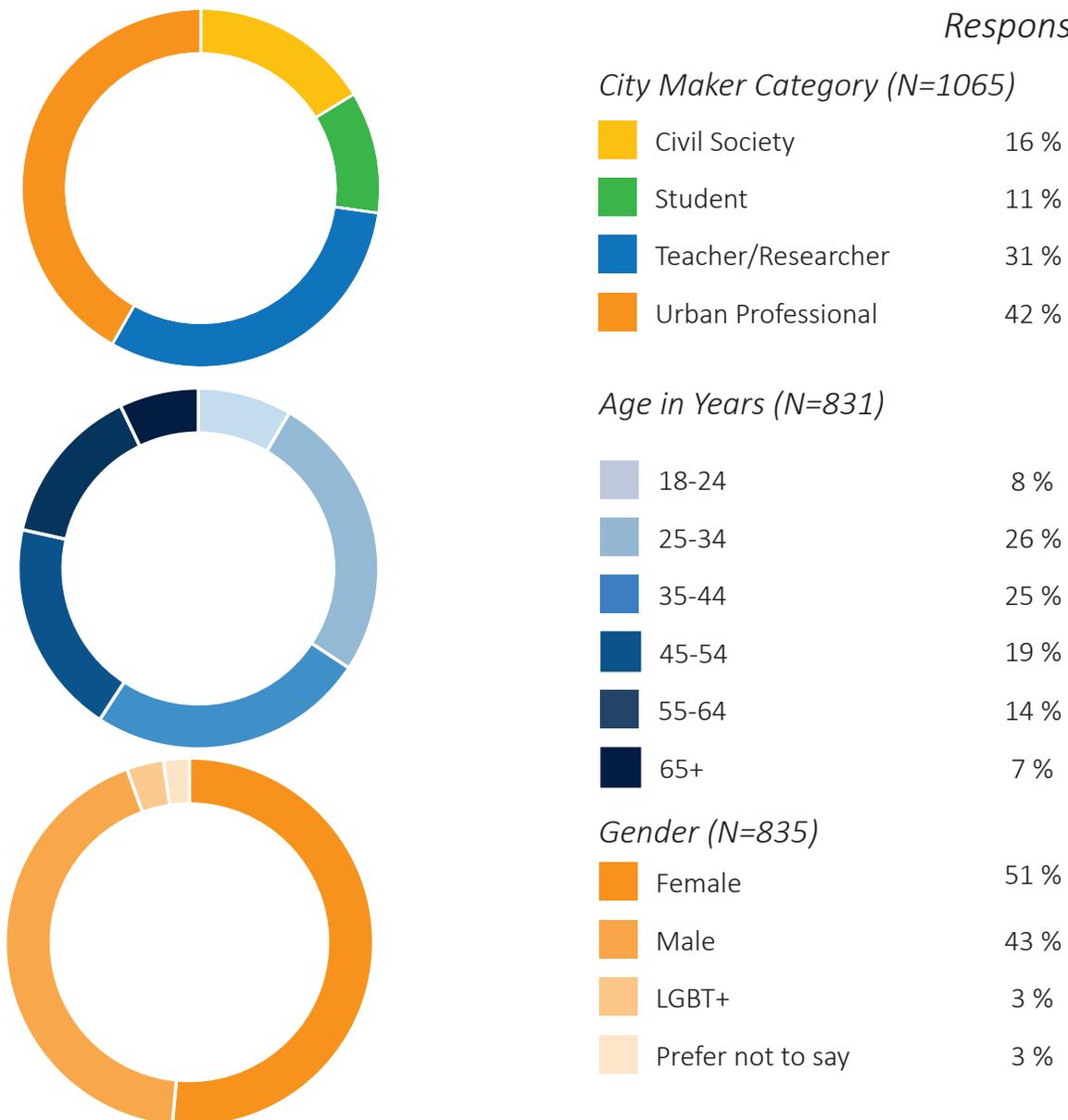
PART 2: SURVEY RESPONSE

2.1 City Maker Survey

The City Maker Survey was launched in December 2018 and was distributed to 2100 individuals by email, and various lists worldwide. The survey reached out to City Makers in the urban professions, individuals in academia (students, teachers, researchers) and civil society. As of June 2019, 1065 responses were received from 92 different countries across the globe.

Quantitative Basics: Response by Category, Age and Gender

Percent of Responses



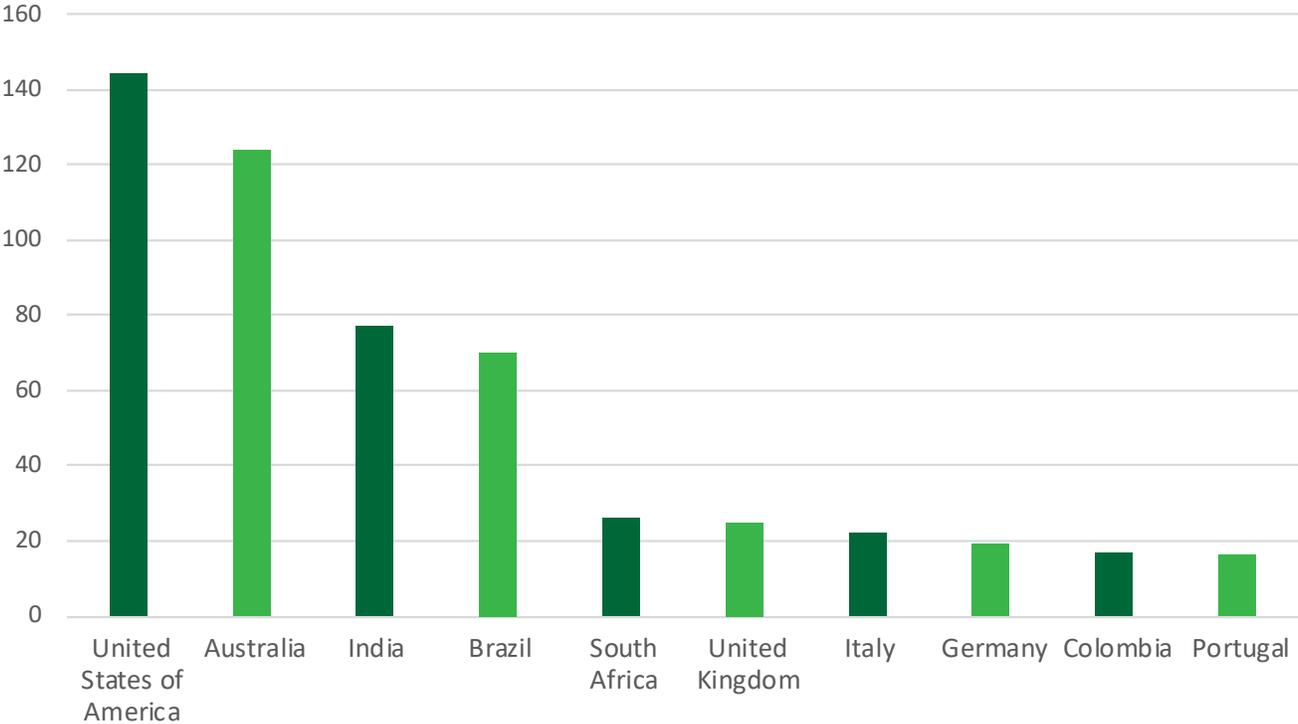
Global Reach and Response

Of the 1065 total responses, 826 or 78% provided information identifying their country. The global response to the City Maker Survey provides an insight into how the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 11, are traveling among different interest groups across the world, namely those in the urban professions, education and civil society.

Though the City Maker Survey received responses from 92 different countries, six countries accounted for 52% of the total responses in which the respondent identified a country. Equally divided between more and less developed countries, they are, in order, the United States of America, Australia, India, Brazil, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

| <i>Geographical Region</i> | <i>Count</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Africa | 104 | 12.6% |
| Asia | 138 | 16.7% |
| Caribbean | 5 | 0.6% |
| Central America | 14 | 1.7% |
| Europe | 164 | 19.9% |
| North America | 154 | 18.6% |
| Oceania | 135 | 16.3% |
| South America | 112 | 13.6% |

Number of Survey Responses for the Top 10 Responding Countries



Countries with 10 or more responses

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| United States of America (144) | Italy (22) | Mexico (11) |
| Australia (124) | Germany (19) | New Zealand (11) |
| India (77) | Colombia (17) | Canada (10) |
| Brazil (70) | Portugal (16) | Democratic Republic of the Congo (10) |
| South Africa (26) | Kenya (14) | |
| United Kingdom (25) | Nigeria (14) | |
| | Turkey (12) | |

Countries with 5-9 responses

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Afghanistan (9) | Peru (7) | Argentina (5) |
| Spain (9) | Denmark (6) | Belgium (5) |
| Finland(8) | Malaysia (6) | Ghana (5) |
| Ecuador (7) | Netherlands (6) | Indonesia (5) |
| France (7) | Switzerland (6) | |

Countries with over 2-4 responses

| | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Algeria (4) | Israel (3) | Luxembourg (2) |
| Bangladesh (4) | Japan (3) | Madagascar (2) |
| China (4) | Lebanon (3) | Malta (2) |
| Pakistan (4) | Rwanda (3) | Moldova (2) |
| Sweden (4) | Senegal (3) | Philippines (2) |
| Cameroon (3) | Uganda (3) | Serbia (2) |
| Chile (3) | United Arab Emirates (3) | Thailand (2) |
| Egypt (3) | Andorra (2) | Tunisia (2) |
| Georgia (3) | Dominican Republic (2) | Venezuela (2) |
| Hong Kong (3) | Greece (2) | |
| Ireland (3) | Liberia (2) | |

Countries with at least 1 response

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Albania (1) | Comoros (1) | Panama (1) |
| Aruba (1) | Cote d'Ivoire (1) | Russia (1) |
| Austria (1) | Croatia (1) | Singapore (1) |
| Azerbaijan (1) | Dominica (1) | Sri Lanka (1) |
| Barbados (1) | The Gambia (1) | Sudan (1) |
| Belize (1) | Guatemala (1) | Tanzania (1) |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina (1) | Jordan (1) | Trinidad and Tobago (1) |
| Botswana (1) | Morocco (1) | Ukraine (1) |
| Burkina Faso (1) | Nepal (1) | Vietnam (1) |
| Chad (1) | Palestinian Territories (1) | Zimbabwe (1) |

Youth Response

Young people across the globe are an effective voice for climate action. In order to understand how they viewed the SDGs and the NUA, special attention was paid to the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups. Out of the 1065 total survey responses, 775 respondents listed a specific age. Of these, 272 respondents, 8.5% and 26.6% were in youth age groups 18-24 and 25-34-year-olds, respectively. To disaggregate youth data, the five countries with the most responses (United States of America, India, Australia, Italy, Brazil) were used to compare by both age group and city maker category.

Youth Response by Country

Count of Country for Youth 18-24 y/o

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| United States of America (18) | United Kingdom (3) | Germany (1) |
| India (11) | New Zealand (2) | Spain (1) |
| Italy (5) | China (1) | Hong Kong (1) |
| Australia (4) | South Africa (1) | Malaysia (1) |
| Brazil (4) | Bangladesh (1) | Indonesia (1) |
| Kenya (3) | Mexico (1) | Ireland (1) |
| Colombia (3) | The Gambia (1) | |
| | Peru (1) | |

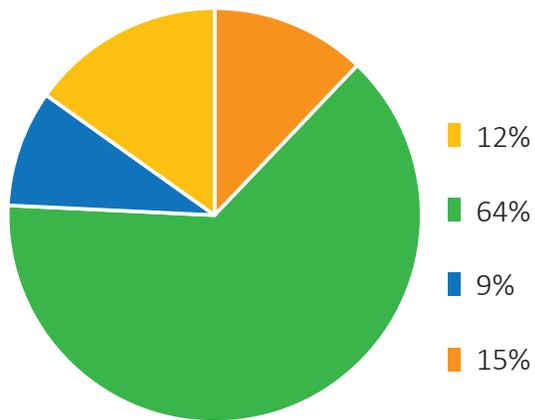
Count of Country for Youth 25-34 y/o

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| United States of America (30) | Denmark (3) | Ukraine (1) |
| Australia (24) | China (2) | Sri Lanka (1) |
| India (20) | New Zealand (2) | Russia (1) |
| Brazil (19) | France (2) | Switzerland (1) |
| Italy (10) | Indonesia (2) | Senegal (1) |
| United Kingdom (9) | Peru (2) | Dominican Republic (1) |
| Germany (7) | Ecuador (2) | Lebanon (1) |
| Nigeria (6) | Canada (2) | Finland (1) |
| South Africa (5) | Spain (2) | Sweden (1) |
| Afghanistan (5) | Turkey (1) | Morocco (1) |
| Colombia (4) | Portugal (1) | Ghana (1) |
| Netherlands (4) | Pakistan (1) | Nepal (1) |
| Mexico (4) | Bosnia and Herzegovina (1) | Malta (1) |
| Kenya (4) | Andorra (1) | Malaysia (1) |
| Belgium (3) | Tunisia (1) | Liberia (1) |
| Rwanda (3) | Georgia (1) | Luxembourg (1) |
| | Croatia (1) | Madagascar (1) |

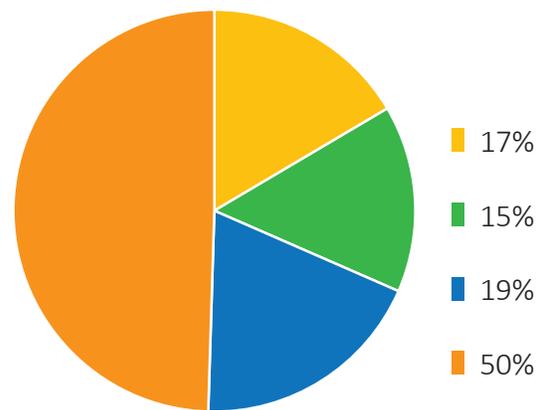
Youth Response by City Maker Category

Percent of Responses in Each City Maker Category, by Youth Age Group

18-24 y/o (N=66)

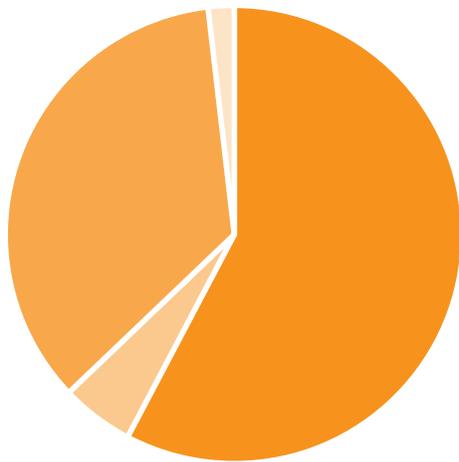


25-34 y/o (N=206)



- Civil Society
- Student
- Teacher/Researcher
- Urban Professional

Youth Response by City Maker Category and Gender

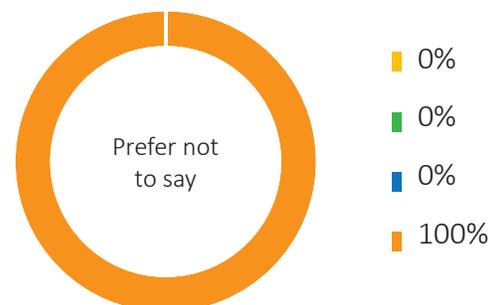
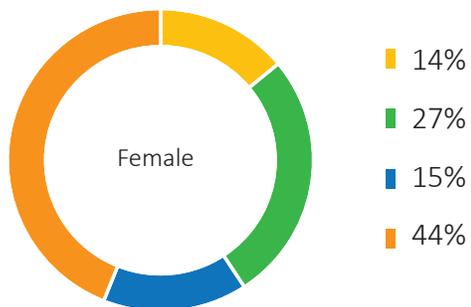
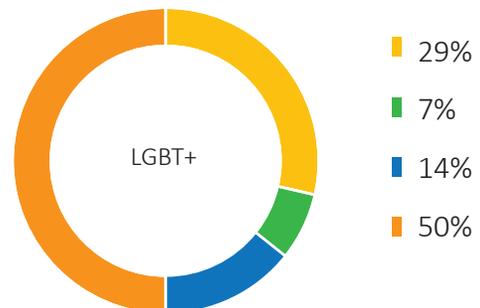
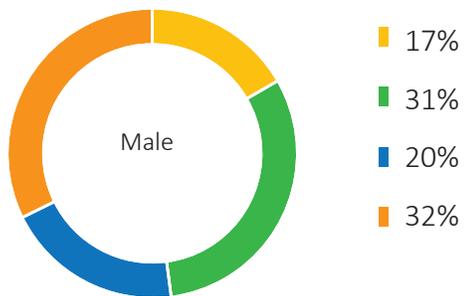


Gender for Youth (18-24 and 25-34 y/o) (N=272)

| Group | Percent of Survey Responses |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Female | 58% |
| LGBT+ | 5% |
| Male | 35% |
| Prefer not to say | 2% |

Youth (18-24 and 25-34 y/o) in Each City Maker Category by Gender (N=272)

■ Civil Society
 ■ Student
 ■ Teacher/Researcher
 ■ Urban Professional



Youth City Maker Category by Country 18-24 Age Group

Data for youth respondents was further disaggregated by City Maker category, for five countries with the greatest number of responses, United States, India, Australia, Italy, and Brazil.

Within the 18-24 age group, most respondents were students, with very few identifying as any other City Maker category.

- Civil Society
- Student
- Teacher/Researcher
- Urban Professional

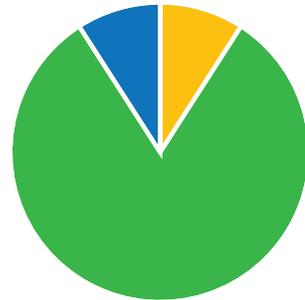
United States (N=18)

- 6%
- 77%
- 17%



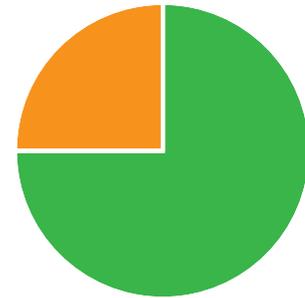
India (N=11)

- 9%
- 82%
- 9%



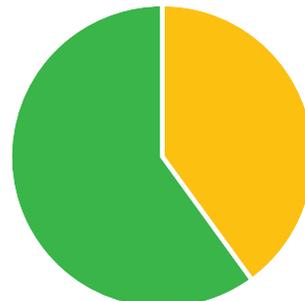
Australia (N=4)

- 75%
- 25%



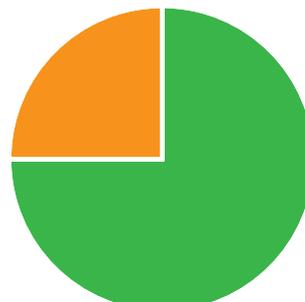
Italy (N=5)

- 40%
- 60%



Brazil (N=4)

- 75%
- 25%

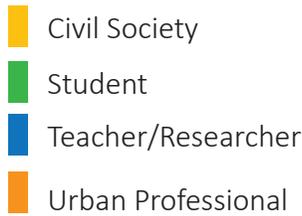


Youth City Maker Category by Country 25-34 Age Group

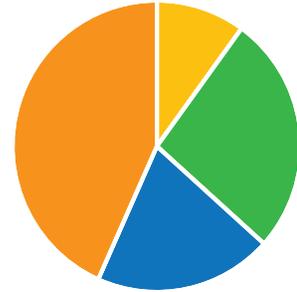
25-34 age group respondents for most of these five countries, were predominantly Urban Professionals.

Though these figures for both 18-24 and 25-34 groups can only show a snapshot, one may infer that many students in the 18-24 age group transition to urban professionals.

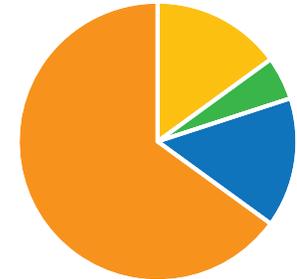
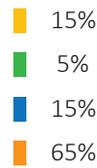
Students remain a high percentage of respondents for the United States and Italy.



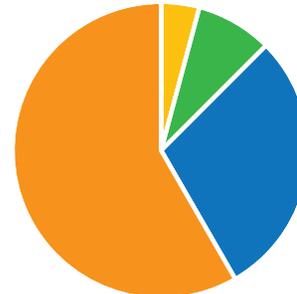
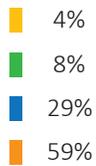
United States (N=30)



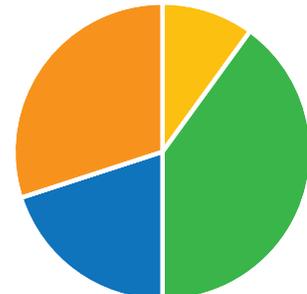
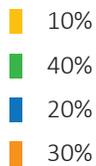
India (N=20)



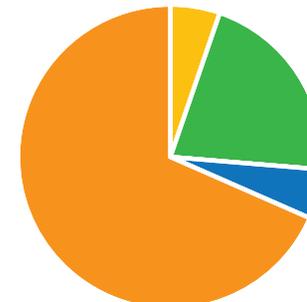
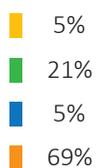
Australia (N=24)



Italy (N=10)



Brazil (N=19)



2.2 Awareness and Relevance of the SDGs and NUA

A primary goal of the City Maker Survey project is to assess awareness of the SDGs and the NUA, and to raise awareness of these if previously unknown. Respondents were asked several questions to understand their awareness of the SDGs and the NUA, and their relevance or incorporation in their work.

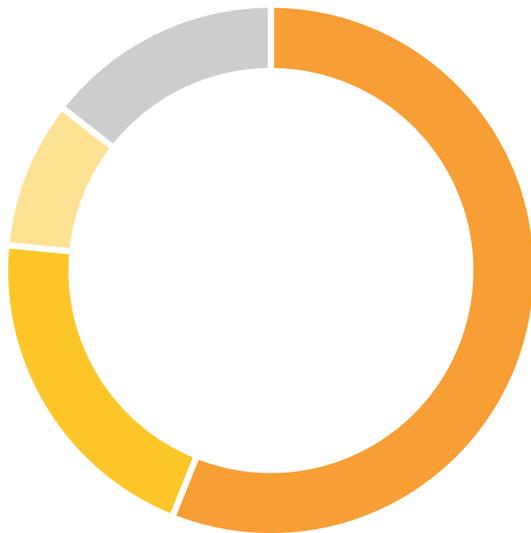
A majority of the respondents, 76%, consider the SDGs relevant to their work or learning:

- Educators and researchers noted the SDGs' influence their research (64%), teaching (63%), funding proposals development (36%), and professional engagements (32%).
- Students noted the SDGs' influence in their lectures/seminars (45%), studio projects (14%), field trips (13%), research projects (31%), and independent study (29%).
- Urban professionals noted the SDGs' influence their project concepts (46%), project design (43%), discussions with clients and other organizations (40%), project implementation (33%), professional engagements (32%), and policy decisions (32%).
- Civil society respondents noted that the SDGs' influence how they speak with government representatives (50%), which projects or advocacy campaigns to take up (47%), how to proceed with projects or advocacy campaigns (45%), funding proposals development (44%), how to speak to fellow citizens (44%), how to speak with urban professionals (38%), and how to approach universities with requests for input or help with projects (32%).

All Respondents

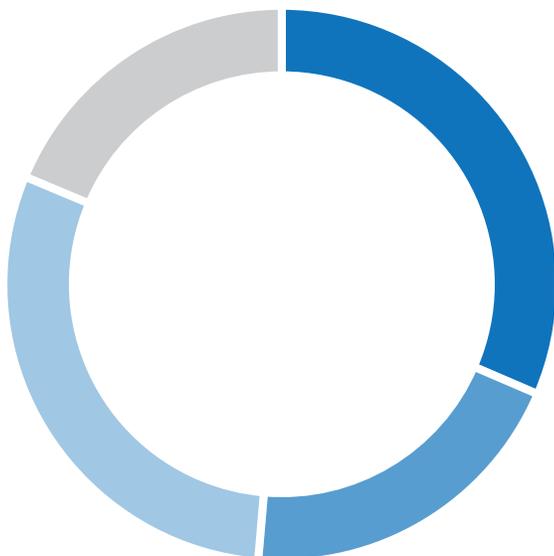
Awareness of the SDG Goals Compared to the NUA

Respondents' awareness of the SDGs exceeds awareness of the NUA. While 9% of the 1,065 respondents learned of the SDGs upon taking the City Maker Survey, 30% of respondents had not previously heard of the NUA.



Awareness of the SDG Goals (N=1065)

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| 2015 | 56% |
| Recently | 21% |
| Just Now | 9% |
| No Response | 14% |



Awareness of the NUA (N=1065)

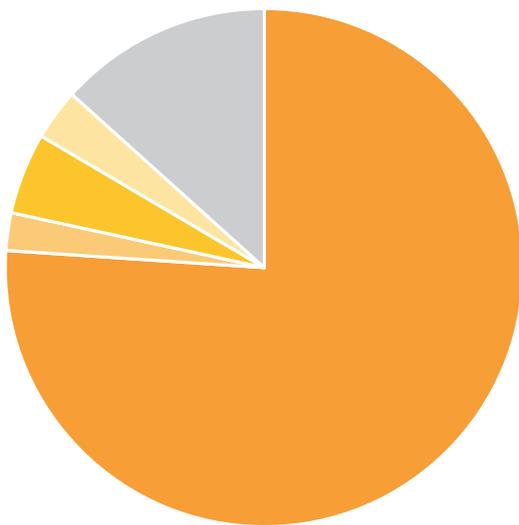
| | |
|-------------|-----|
| 2016 | 31% |
| Recently | 20% |
| Just Now | 30% |
| No Response | 19% |

All Respondents

Relevance of the SDG Goals Compared to the NUA

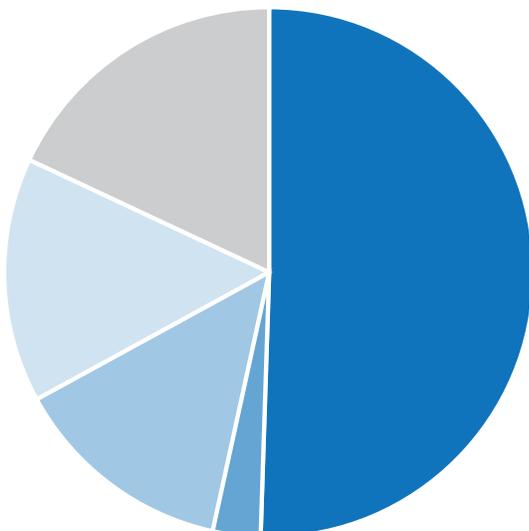
Respondents were asked to assess their view of the relevance of the SDGs and the NUA frameworks, including feedback on their usefulness and relevance to their work. Qualitative feedback to these questions will be included in a future paper.

Overall, more respondents viewed the SDGs as relevant compared to the NUA, 76% compared to 50%. A higher percentage of respondents were unsure of the NUA's relevance, as compared to the SDGs.



Relevance of the SDG Goals (N=1065)

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Relevant | 76% |
| No | 3% |
| Maybe In the Future | 5% |
| Don't Know | 3% |
| No Response | 13% |



Relevance of the NUA (N=1065)

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Relevant | 50% |
| No | 3% |
| Maybe In the Future | 14% |
| Don't Know | 15% |
| No Response | 18% |

Youth Respondents

Awareness of the SDG Goals Compared to the NUA

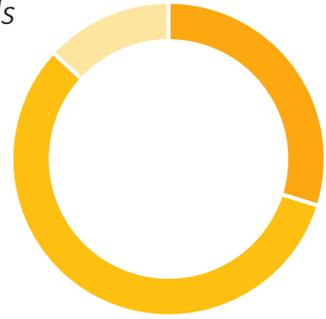
A higher percentage of the 25-34 age group were aware of the SDGs in 2015, 79%, compared to 30% for 18-24 year olds.

Among the 70 respondents in the 18-24 age group, 53% became aware of the NUA upon taking the City Maker Survey, and 40% of the 215 respondents for the 25-34 year old group. Both of these age groups had less awareness of the NUA than the SDGs.

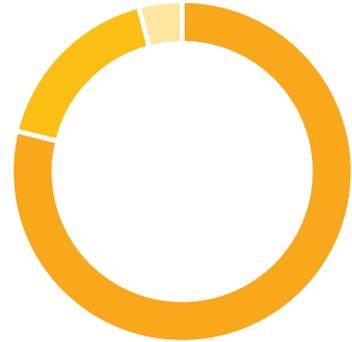
The survey highlights how survey respondents are generally more aware of the SDGs than the NUA. To promote the NUA and sustainable cities, greater education is needed to disseminate information regarding the NUA.

Awareness of the SDG Goals

18-24 y/o (N=114)

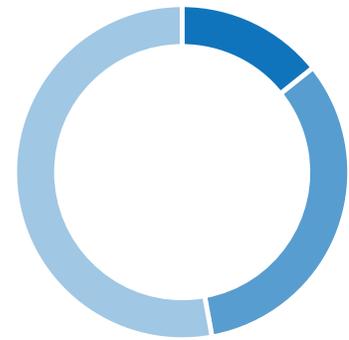


25-34 y/o (N=170)

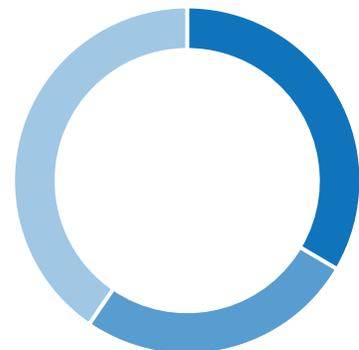


Awareness of the NUA

18-24 y/o (N=70)



25-34 y/o (N=215)



Youth Respondents

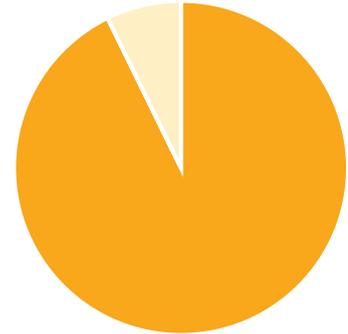
Relevance of the SDG Goals Compared to the NUA

A greater percentage of youth viewed the SDGs and the NUA relevant compared to respondents in the overall survey.

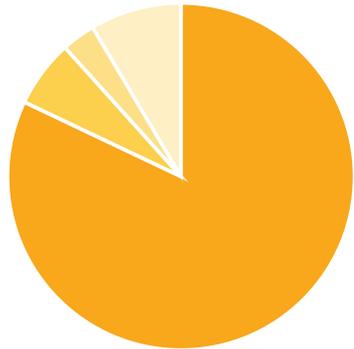
The majority of both youth age groups viewed the SDGs as relevant.

Relevance of the SDG Goals

| 18-24 y/o (N=69) | | |
|---------------------|-----|--|
| Yes | 93% | |
| Maybe In the Future | 7% | |

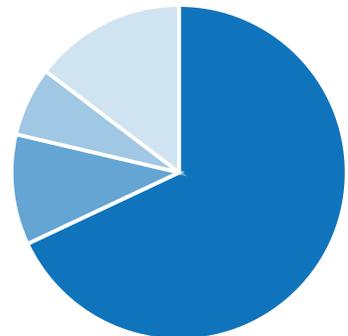


| 25-34 y/o (N=223) | | |
|---------------------|-----|--|
| Yes | 82% | |
| No | 6% | |
| Don't Know | 3% | |
| Maybe In the Future | 9% | |

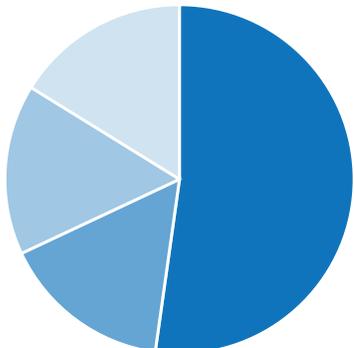


Relevance of the NUA

| 18-24 y/o (N=75) | | |
|---------------------|-----|--|
| Yes | 68% | |
| No | 11% | |
| Don't Know | 7% | |
| Maybe In the Future | 15% | |



| 25-34 y/o (N=254) | | |
|---------------------|-----|--|
| Yes | 51% | |
| No | 18% | |
| Don't Know | 15% | |
| Maybe In the Future | 16% | |



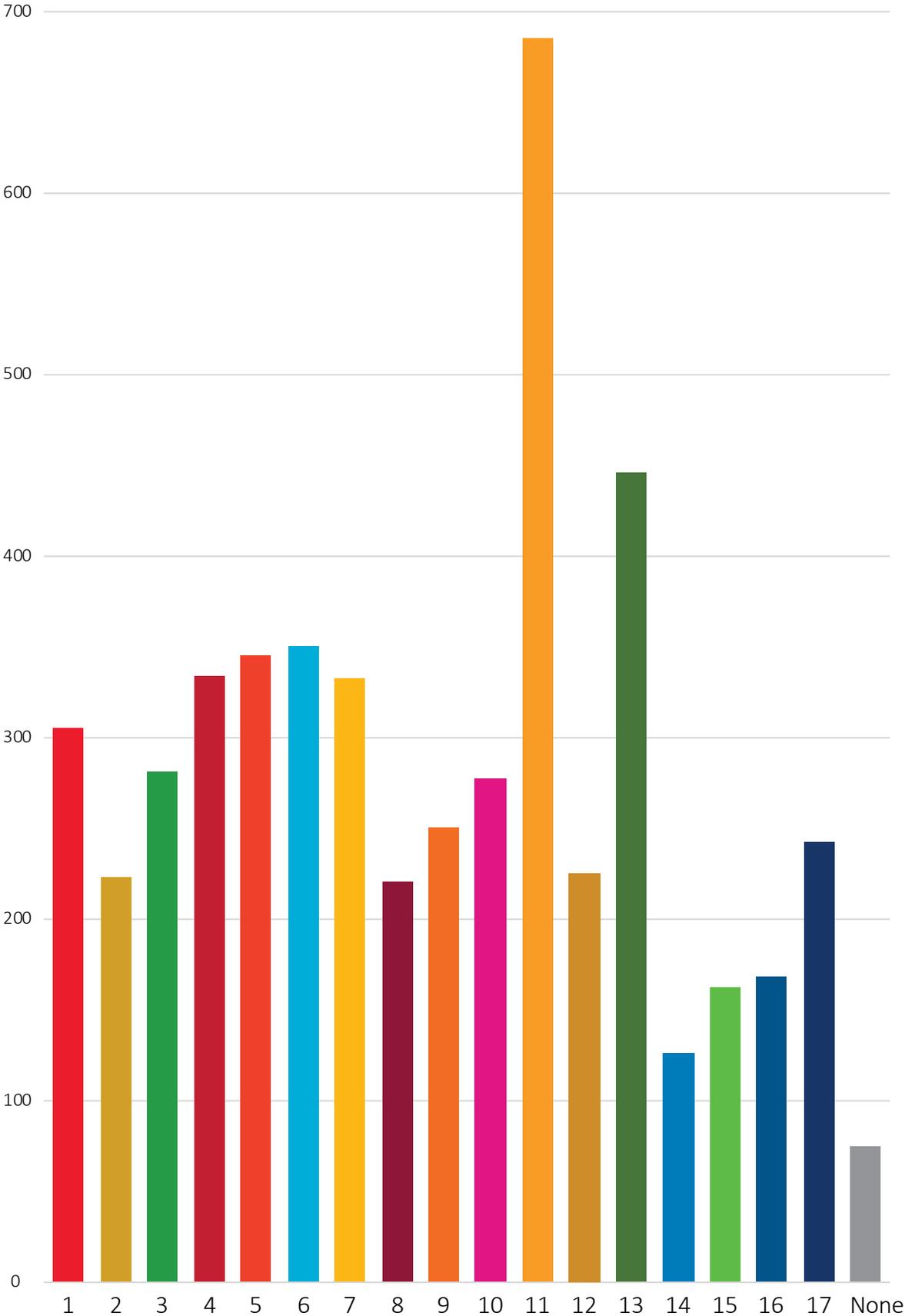
Awareness of Individual SDGs

A important aim of the City Maker Survey is to identify respondents' familiarity with specific SDGs. Among respondents, SDG Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) was by far the most widely recognized among the 17 SDGs.

Percent of respondents who identified familiarity for each SDG



Count of respondents who identified familiarity for each SDG



SDG 13 (Climate Action) was the second most widely recognized SDG Goal among survey respondents. It should be noted that, where N=1065, only 446 respondents were familiar with the climate action goal. As mentioned previously, SDG 13 has been identified by several global reports as the SDG with the worst performance and progress across the world. For example, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018 called for “urgent and accelerated action by countries,” and advocates for progress towards each country’s commitments to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019, and the recently released SDG Index and Dashboards Report for (45) European Cities, both echo that major performance gaps persist on the environmental SDG goals, specifically SDG Goals 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land). According to the authors, these gaps are persistent and alarming, with even the top performing Nordic countries scoring relatively low.

Although SDG 13 (Climate Action) was familiar to 42% of survey respondents, SDGs 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land), and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), were the least recognized. It should not be overlooked that climate change is currently receiving significant media attention. Results from the City Maker Survey highlight how SDGs 14 and 15, two of the lowest performing SDGs across the globe, are also the two SDGs least familiar to survey respondents. Only 12% and 15% of respondents, respectively, were familiar with Goals 14 and 15.

Recently, climate action that includes a focus on SDG 14 (especially plastics in the oceans that derive primarily from cities) has drawn attention around the world with protests, strikes, lawsuits, and demands by youth for immediate action to stop climate change, recognizing that present day inaction will lead to disastrous effects later^{13,14,15}. We also note that an arguably related goal, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), received only 15% familiarity.

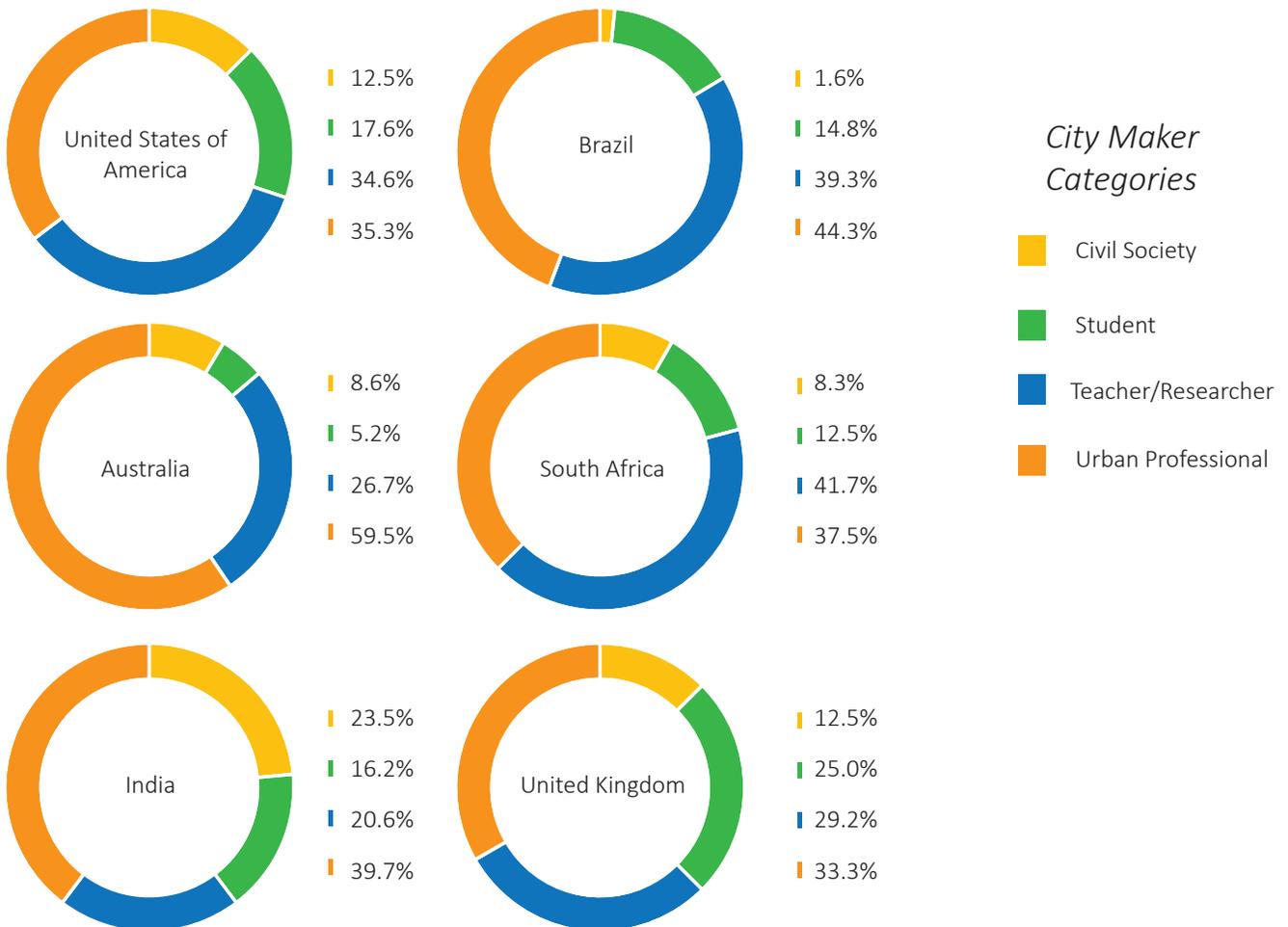
Awareness of the SDGs are highest among females and youth groups (ages 18-34), especially for SDG Goals 11 and 13. 7% of respondents, roughly 75 individuals, had no familiarity with any of the SDGs.

Further Analysis by Country

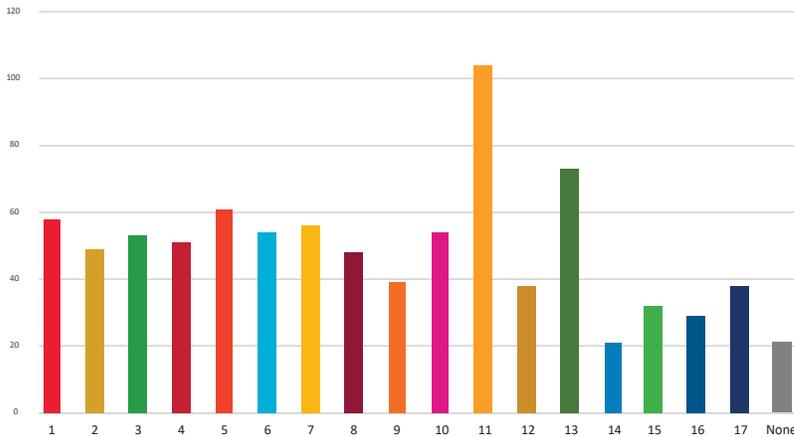
Of the 1065 responses, 826 respondents identified a country in their survey response. Of those 826 responses, 92 countries were included in the survey results.

Responses from six countries accounted for 52% of the total respondents who identified a particular country. The larger sample size from these countries can possibly provide greater insight into differences between countries and geographical regions. Quantitative data for the United States of America, Australia, India, Brazil, South Africa, and the United Kingdom was disaggregated by City Maker category and SDG Recognition. The United States and Australia have the greatest number of respondents for zero recognition of any SDGs.

Percent of Respondents in Each City Maker Category

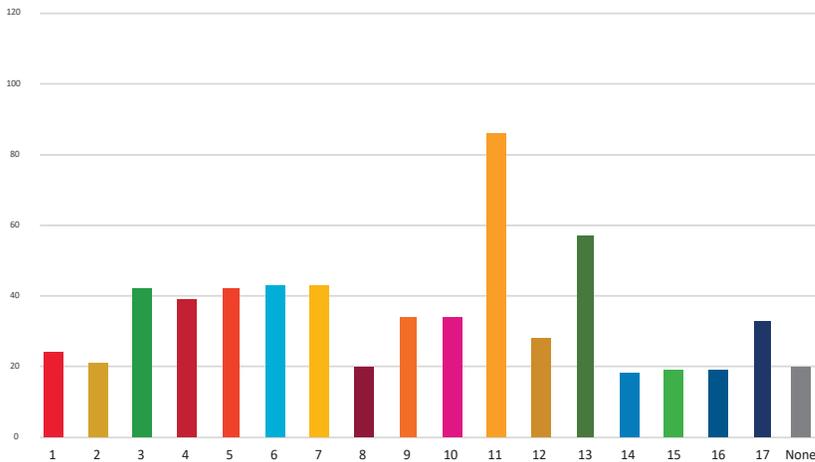


Count of respondents who identified familiarity for each SDG



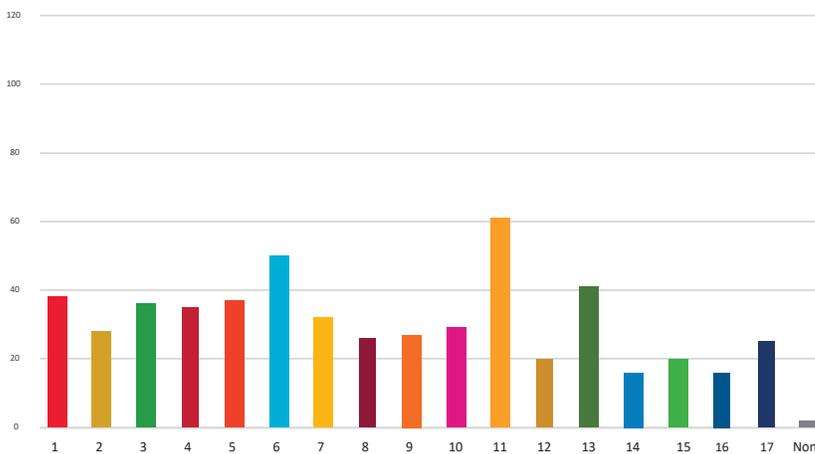
United States of America

For Goal 11, most of the respondents were from the Teacher & Researcher category followed by Urban Professionals. Teachers & Researchers were also the category most familiar with Goals 14 and 15.



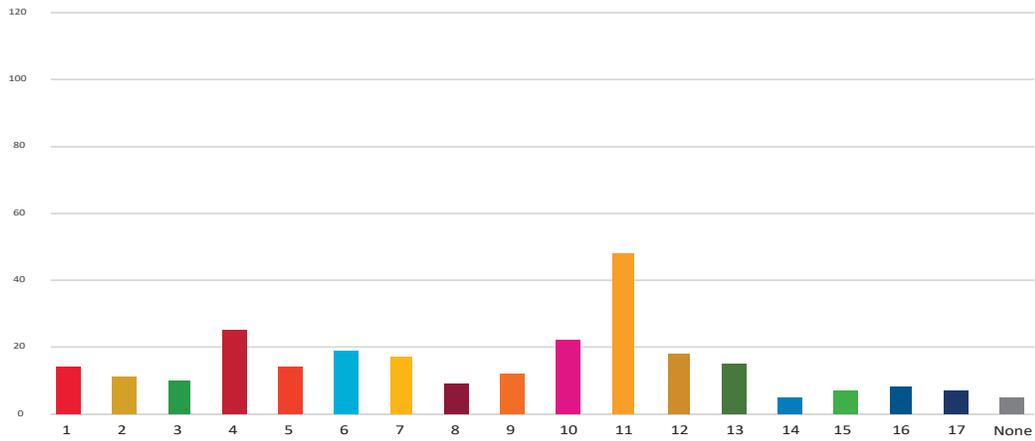
Australia

Among Australian respondents, familiarity with Goal 11 was dominated by the Urban Professionals City Maker category. Goals 2 and 8 scored lower relative to the US and India.



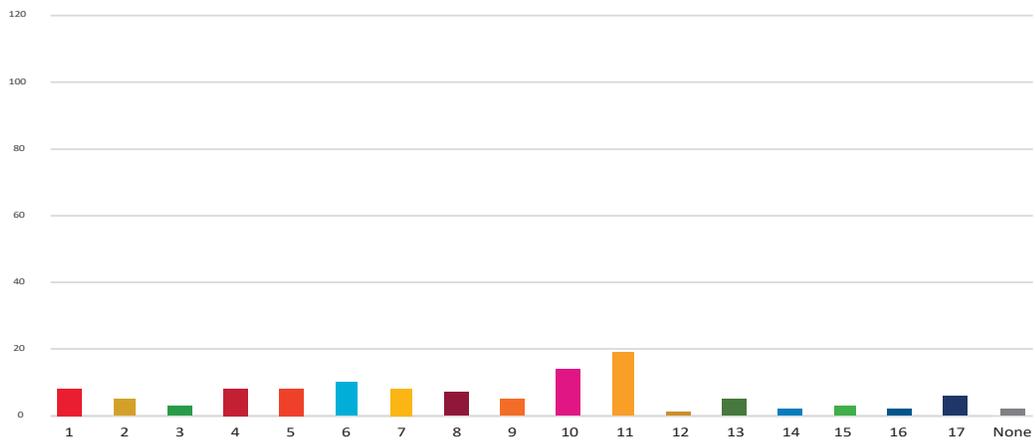
India

Civil Society was the City Maker category with the greatest familiarity for Goals 14 and 15 in India.



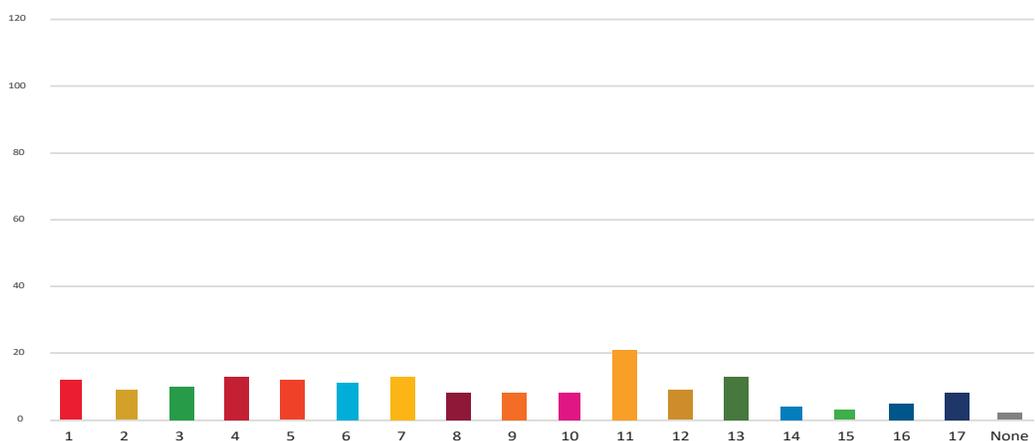
Brazil

Brazil's most familiar SDGs are Goal 4 and Goal 11. Both Teachers & Researchers, and Urban Professionals, had the greatest familiarity with these two goals in Brazil.



South Africa

In South Africa, familiarity with individual SDGs was distributed fairly evenly among City Maker categories.



United Kingdom

The UK reflected similar trends to the other countries, with higher familiarity for Goal 11 and lower among Goals 14, 15, and 16. The Teacher & Researcher category showed the greatest familiarity with individual SDGs.

2.3 Qualitative Response

Youth Open-ended response Summary

Many respondents expressed frustration with governments' inaction towards implementation of the SDGs, with statements such as "they don't care" or they "just pay lip service." Across the City Maker categories, respondents called for greater incorporation of the SDGs in education, including primary, high school, and higher education.

Others had interesting views of the SDGs' relation to climate action. Some of these respondents noted that they were unsure whether it was advocacy of the SDGs that accelerated climate action, or a societal shift that is promoting more climate action independent of the SDGs (male, 25-34 y/o, Denmark). Some respondents commented that they undertake sustainability projects without using the SDG framework or terminology.

Several respondents believed implementing the SDGs was difficult in relation to 'vertical consistency'. By that respondents meant how can the SDGs translate across multiple scales, and how can the priorities of municipalities remain consistent or contribute to a common goal? From global to national, regional, city, and community, how can governmental authorities wanting to support the SDGs and sustainable development move across scales?

Suggestions to support governmental authorities include a 'set of resources and tools for implementation of the SDGs and the NUA, especially for local authorities'. A number of respondents were eager to see greater implementation of the SDGs, especially at the local and grassroots level, but noted that the SDGs and NUA are difficult to implement, which may be due to the lack of implementation tools.

Overall, the greatest benefit of the SDGs and the NUA cited by youth respondents is the "common language" and "common framework" to allow diverse actors across the world to 'connect, grow together, and progress forward'. The City Maker Survey allowed respondents to provide honest and critical feedback about the SDGs. Though several important points were raised about uptake, implementation, and engagement with the SDGs, an overwhelming majority agreed the SDGs were relevant to their professional work, and saw their usefulness as a common framework for global progress towards sustainable development.

Youth Perspective on the NUA and Other Sustainability Frameworks

Perspective on the NUA

Many leveled criticisms at the NUA, saying that the “NUA is weak, diluted, and not as assertive as it needs to be,” (male, 25-34 y/o, China) and that it needs to be “easier to read” (male, 25-34 y/o, Germany). Similar to others’ comments about the SDGs overall, one respondent suggested the need for implementation tools at the local level (prefer not to say, 25-34 y/o, no identified country; LGBT+, 25-34 y/o, Mexico).

In relation to the SDGs, one respondent viewed the NUA as secondary to the SDGs and just an extra complication that makes sustainability work more difficult (female, 25-34 y/o). Another respondent commented the NUA just expands on SDG 11 (female, 18-24 y/o, Kenya).

One respondent commented that the NUA (especially in Australia and the EU) ‘informs their research and outreach’ activities (female, 25-34 y/o, Australia) while others said of the NUA “there is no knowledge/awareness of this agenda among our city partners [...] and it is not a local priority,” (female, 25-34 y/o, UK). Another said it is less known by Australian students (male, 25-34 y/o, Australia). Knowledge and implementation of the NUA is widespread in Asia according to one respondent (male, 25-34 y/o, Australia). Others use the NUA to ‘promote sustainable city projects and policy discussions’ (female, 25-34 y/o, Kenya).

Perspective on Other Sustainability Frameworks

Respondents were asked if other sustainability frameworks were more useful than the SDGs and the NUA.

A wide variety of other sustainability frameworks, sustainability reports, and global documents were listed. These included the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Paris Climate Agreement, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s 2018 report on 1.5°C global warming. One respondent noted that other sustainability frameworks are “not necessarily more helpful or useful, just part of the broader picture,” (female, 25-34 y/o, South Africa). Another mentioned the need for vertical consistency with so many frameworks.

Other items noted by multiple respondents include: local level frameworks, green finance, OneNYC, and UN Global Compact on Migration, and Refugees. Interestingly, LEED was not mentioned by youth respondents within the open-ended question on sustainability frameworks.

Youth Open-ended responses by City Maker Category

Civil Society

Almost all of the youth respondents in the civil society category work locally in non-governmental organizations.

These respondents mainly commented on the SDGs' usefulness to: provide common ground for conversation (male, 18-24 y/o, Malaysia), act as a shared framework to aid coordination and communication (female, 25-34 y/o, Switzerland), and opportunity to bring a cultural dimension to the sustainability conversation (male, 25-34 y/o, Brazil). One respondent offered a critique that there was a gap in the SDGs' ability to reach the local level, or be relevant to organizations except for funding purposes (LGBT+, 18-24 y/o, India).

Students

Most of the youth respondents who answered open-ended questions in the student category were graduate students in architecture, urban planning, environmental science and policy. Students' perspective on the SDGs provided a wide range of responses, from one viewing that there are "too many SDGs and significant overlap," (female, 18-24 y/o, USA), to another declaring that the SDGs "Need to be legally binding," (female, 25-34 y/o, Germany).

Some student comments echoed common themes among all the youth respondents, such as the lack of implementation of the SDGs (female, 25-34 y/o, Malaysia) and that to implement the SDGs, "Have to depend on the government, but they don't seem interested in trying to fulfill the agreements or really work towards the SDGs," (female, 25-34 y/o, Colombia).

A set of responses by students raised a different perspective, hardly present in the responses of any other category. That is, the need for incorporation of the SDGs into education curricula. Several respondents called for the SDGs to be "explicitly covered in curricula, as well as encouraged in relevant professions in the general community" (female, 18-24 y/o, Australia), and coverage in higher education rather than relying on individuals' own independent research (male, 19-24 y/o, China). There is not only a greater need for the SDGs in education (female 18-24 y/o, USA), but also a need for students to understand their applicability in their own lives (female, 25-34 y/o, UK).

Because of the lack of education about the SDGs, it is "Hard for some, like medical students, to know how the SDGs are relevant to them," therefore, the need for

multi-disciplinary engagement becomes apparent (male, 25-34 y/o, Australia).

Teachers and Researchers

Most of the youth respondents who answered open-ended questions in this category were teachers, with a few in administration; many of these teachers were in architecture or urban-related disciplines.

Individuals commented about their institutions' uptake of the SDGs, which varied for each institution, with some saying their college administration barely knows about the SDGs (female, 25-34 y/o, India) to another saying their institution had roughly seven subjects which covered the SDGs (LGBT+, 18-24 y/o, India). One respondent wrote that the University of Cape Town, South Africa, created an SDG Task Team (female, 25-34 y/o, South Africa).

One respondent echoed many of the students' perspectives, and advocated for the SDGs to be included in primary education curricula (male, 25-34 y/o, Brazil). Beyond institutions, other respondents utilized the SDGs in their research projects (female 25-34 y/o, Australia; female 25-34 y/o, UK; female 25-34 y/o, South Africa).

Views of the SDGs ranged from supportive in that they offer a "nice scaffold to consider humanitarian aspects of innovation and development," and offer a "paradigm shift" away from "over commercialized ways of thinking that stem from the industrial revolution," (LGBT+, 25-34 y/o, Finland) to critiques that the SDGs didn't consider rural areas in their creation (female, 18-24 y/o, Colombia) and they are mainly used in a rhetorical, top-down approach, in speeches, used to justify implementation of projects or policies (LGBT+, 25-34 y/o, Belgium).

Again, several youth respondents in this category stressed the importance of connections between the SDGs, and connections to current projects, frameworks, and individuals' existing awareness of sustainability. Many people are already working on projects/programs/ideas that support and work towards the SDGs, yet without the knowledge, terminology, or conceptual framework to know that they are directly in-line with the SDGs (female, 25-34 y/o, USA). Connecting these individuals to understand how they are both aligned with and supporting the SDGs would be a beneficial connection (female, 25-34 y/o, USA). Similarly, awareness of the existing interconnections within sustainability and the SDGs should be increased (female, 25-34 y/o, Netherlands). The SDGs "are most useful when understood as mutually reinforcing gears" (male, 25-34 y/o, China).

Urban Professionals

Respondents from the 'Urban Professionals' City Maker Category accounted for the greatest percentage (42%) of respondents in the overall survey, and in the youth cohort, this group also provided many responses to open-ended questions. Within the urban professions, most worked as architects, urban planners, designers, placemakers, and local government roles. Respondents in this category had the opportunity to describe the influence of the SDGs in their professional work. The majority of respondents in the urban professional category described their use of the SDGs primarily as a 'reference during the development process for project vision and goals, setting long-term outcomes and even budget development'.

Many commented that their work was directed towards sustainability, but not explicitly tied to the SDGs (male, 25-24 y/o, Australia; female, 25-34 y/o, USA).

Some critiques of the SDGs and their implementation in the urban professions included that the SDGs 'don't translate into actionable items' (female, 25-34 y/o, India) and 'haven't been incorporated into normal urban planning and policy making' (female, 25-34 y/o, Australia).

A few urban professionals questioned how best to monitor the goals if the indicators are changing across different levels (male, 25-34 y/o, India; female 25-34 y/o, India). Others questioned how to gain support for the SDGs from both public and private groups in order to be useful and widespread (female, 25-34 y/o, Australia).

Some respondents commented on the usefulness of the SDGs to 'provide a common language for different backgrounds to come together' (female, 25-34 y/o, Italy), and 'to understand how the work one person is doing can have broader outreach and greater impacts on other sectors of development'.

The SDGs are "useful to get big money thinking about sustainability holistically," (female 25-34 y/o, South Africa), but need financial support and financial backing in order to implement future projects and improve dissemination (LGBT+, 25-34 y/o, Brazil).

A few respondents believed the SDGs were "non-existent" and "not relevant outside the international development realm" (female, 25-34 y/o, USA; male, 25-34 y/o, Australia). Such statements indicate the need for more meaningful dissemination of the SDGs and NUA.

PART 3: GOING FORWARD

A number of recommendations have emerged from this preliminary analysis of the 1065 responses to the City Maker Survey. We have provided a glimpse into ‘city maker’ awareness of, and engagement with, the SDGs and the NUA across a number of countries, age groups, genders and city maker categories: urban professionals; educators, researchers, and students; civil society organizations. It is noteworthy that there is 64% familiarity with Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and that 81% consider the SDGs relevant to their work now or in the future.

In this working paper we have paid particular attention to the qualitative as well as the quantitative data as it applied to youth, on the basis that it is young people who have been, and are, most active in their demands for climate action, and it is they who have most to lose if action is not taken. Further attention should be paid to understand the most pressing needs for youth in their respective regions, such as the Global North versus South. As the generation who will be the decision makers in 20 years, it would seem worthwhile to focus further attention on emerging city makers in ways that facilitate and enable their engagement with the holistic potential of the SDGs and the NUA. A ‘people as partners’ model, joining the very diverse city makers in collaborative and equitable arrangements, could be helpful in breaking down silos that can impede progress and transformation. It would appear that youth respondents would like urban educators and urban professionals to lift their game in their adoption of the SDGs and the NUA – in the classroom, research lab and in practice. In the eyes of some the NUA is ‘weak’ and needs to be ‘easier to read’. As one respondent put it, “the SDGs are useful to get big money thinking about sustainability holistically”.

As noted earlier, further work remains to be done to fully explore the responses to open-ended questions among other age groups. It will be useful to gain a more in-depth understanding of the views of today’s decision makers, and to explore the differences in and between the 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65+ age groups. Does any single age group contain more champions for change than another? Looking forward, does sexual identity affect the uptake of the SDGs and NUA? Are the Goals implemented more by any specific group of city makers? Is the bad news on climate change impacting the way city makers carry out their work? Do steps have to be taken to better connect knowledge of Goal 11 to the other 16 Goals? Further research into these questions may be useful.

Some of the quantitative results resonate with recent UN reports. For example, respondents are least familiar with Goals 14 (Life below water) and 15 (Life on Land), two of the goals with the lowest performance worldwide. One would assume Life on land especially would fall within the purview of city makers; similarly Goal

13 (Climate action), a 'persistent challenge' in European cities as we noted earlier. In this survey Goal 13 received the second highest recognition after the Cities goal (11). However, in total, only 42% of all survey respondents acknowledged familiarity with Goal 13. Youth respondents demonstrated the greatest awareness of Goal 13; the 65+ age group the least.

Further work needs to be done to relate some of these findings with the results of other surveys and outcomes. *SDGs in Order*¹⁶ has already been referred to. No questions were asked as to whether implementation of the Goals should be prioritized. *SDGs in Order* did address this question, and it is worth noting that Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), while top on this Survey's familiarity list, ranks low on the *SDGs in Order* priorities. Should efforts be made to prioritize Goal implementation order, or at least understand rankings by different interest groups?

As a result of the approach to gathering responses which we described as a cascading multiplier approach, there is an uneven range of responses by country and to some degree by city maker category. By making the Preliminary Findings and Recommendations available in a working paper, we have two hopes: that readers will provide comments on this paper, and/or suggest questions that might enrich a future paper; and that individuals who have not taken the survey, or whose countries might be underrepresented, might take the survey before it closes July 30th, 2020.

Reader Feedback and Survey Link

[Follow link to provide reader feedback](#)

[Follow link to take the City Maker Survey](#)

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the Earth Institute Internship Program; also CSUD, Federal University, and Asia Initiatives colleagues for advice and support throughout the project. We are grateful to Annouch Missirian, Vera Tangari, and Shilin Xia for Survey translations; also Elaine Angeles, Mark Luborsky, William Chan and Devangi Ramakrishnan for their contributions to the Survey design. For advice and assistance with data retrieval and management, thanks to Raymond Wu, Elaine Angeles and Jade Watkins. For help with survey distribution, our thanks to ACSA, AASA, UIA, WCA, and CSU. Last, our sincere thanks to the more than 1000 people who responded to the survey.

Citation:

Rubbo, A., Watkins, J., Angeles, E., Mathew, M., Tangari, V., Klopp, J., Mehta, G., Sclar, E. (2019). "City Maker Survey: Preliminary Findings and Recommendations." Working Paper. Center for Sustainable Urban Development, Columbia University. August 2019.

Endnotes

- 1 Accelerating the SDGs is a partnership between CSUD and the Federal University in Rio de Janeiro, represented by Vera Tangari. Anna Rubbo is the project director; the international project team is noted [here](#).
- 2 Mesa, Edquist and Espey in [A Pathway to Sustainable American Cities: A Guide to Implementing the SDGs \(2019\)](#), note how the “goals are designed to reveal the interdependent systems at play in sustainable development [...] If integrated and managed well, the SDGs can help to strengthen local communities with their values of transparency, inclusions and engagement.”
- 3 UN Habitat, Sustainable Urbanization and Sustainable Development Goals. <http://csud.ei.columbia.edu/files/2018/11/SDG-Booklet.pdf>.
- 4 The SDGs [My World Survey](#) brings people into the debate about the SDGs, and had almost eight million responses indicating people’s SDGs preferences. See also [MyWorld Analytics](#).
- 5 Center for Sustainable Urban Development. Accelerating the SDGs: Stage 2 Local Project Challenge, <http://csud.ei.columbia.edu/projects/local-projects-challenge/stage-2-local-project-challenge/>.
- 6 For examples of some SDG related surveys and studies see [Global Survey on Sustainability and the SDGs](#), and [Habitat Uni’s Survey](#) on accountability, transparency and the targets of SDG 11; [Sustainable Business Leaders Report](#); [SDGs in Order](#); [Sustainable Development Solutions Network | SDG Index and Dashboards Report for European Cities](#), 22 May 2019; Klopp. J. and Petretta, D. 2017. “The urban sustainable development goal: Indicators, complexity and the politics of measuring cities” *Cities* 63:92-97.
- 7 Comments on this working paper are welcome. Please provide feedback [here](#).
- 8 Data regarding sexual identity results may be skewed due to wording presented in the original survey. The survey was updated in June 2019 to better reflect gender identity. Future research should accurately reflect the full sexual identity spectrum (biological sex, gender, orientation).
- 9 Excerpt from text introducing the City Maker Survey questions. “Like many around the world we, at the Center of Sustainable Urban Development (CSUD) in the Earth Institute at Columbia University, are deeply worried by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) October 2018 Report, the November 2018 US National Climate Assessment, the message from the December 2018 COP 24 climate talks in Poland, and the possibility that the world might not meet the inclusive objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We support the need for positive actions, and invite you to join us in our efforts towards that end. In this survey, and in CSUD’s upcoming Agenda 2030 Local Project Challenge, our aim is to accelerate positive actions in cities through a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). Your response to the Survey will help us explore the uptake of the SDGs and the NUA- how and where- and greatly assist our efforts to encourage positive action. The City Maker Survey should take approximately seven minutes. We appreciate any extra comments you provide.
- 10 UN DESA (2018), The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018, UN, New York, <https://doi.org/10.18356/7d014b41-en>.
- 11 Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. (2019): Sustainable Development Report 2019. New York: Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).

- 12 Sustainable Development Solutions Network | SDG Index and Dashboards Report for European Cities. 22 May 2019, http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Full-report_final-1.pdf
- 13 Shoot, Brittany. "Students at 957 Schools Will Strike for Climate Action on March 15. One Swedish Teenager Started the Worldwide Protest." Fortune, <https://fortune.com/2019/03/12/climate-strike-global-youth-school-action-march-15-greta-thunberg-fridays-for-future/>. Accessed 22 July 2019.
- 14 Irfan, Umair. "The Kids Suing the Government over Climate Change Want to Halt Fossil Fuel Extraction." Vox, 23 Feb. 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2019/2/23/18234721/childrens-climate-lawsuit-juliana-injunction>.
- 15 Borunda, Alejandra. "These Young Activists Are Striking to Save Their Planet from Climate Change." National Geographic, 13 Mar. 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/03/youth-climate-strike-kids-save-the-world/>.
- 16 SDGs in Order (2019). <https://www.sdgsinorder.org/>

Inquiries

Anna.rubbo@columbia.edu

Copyright © 2019

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**