

# Evolutions in consumer awareness & definitions of sustainability: a multi-country study

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Cite as:

Goedertier Frank, Weijters Bert, Van den Bergh Joeri, Schacht Ole (2023), Evolutions in consumer awareness & definitions of sustainability: a multi-country study. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 52nd, (114515)

Paper from the 52nd Annual EMAC Conference, Odense/Denmark, May 23-26, 2023



# Evolutions in consumer awareness & definitions of sustainability: a multi-country study

## **Abstract**

Sustainability is increasingly an active agenda topic for politicians and businesses. Yet a view on how consumer definitions and awareness are evolving is often missing. In response to this research opportunity, online panel respondents from seven advanced economies (France, UK, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Netherlands, Australia, N = 5620) were surveyed in two cross-sectional waves. Substantially more consumers report knowing what sustainability is in 2020 (vs 2019). Factor analytical results show that consumer definitions of sustainability center around three key dimensions: the traditional social (e.g., fair wages) and environmental (e.g., recycling) ones, but also a 'naturalness' dimension (e.g., avoiding use of pesticides and GMOs). This observation may offer inspiration to update the traditional two-dimensional (social vs. environmental) structure of sustainability advanced in previous research. We discuss observed country differences and offer theoretical and managerial implications.

**Subject Areas:** *Consumer Behaviour, Cross-cultural and International Marketing*

**Track:** Social Responsibility & Ethics