

An Eco-wakening

Measuring global awareness,
engagement and action for nature



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- **Martin Koehring**, Head of the World Ocean Initiative, The Economist Group
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About The Economist Intelligence Unit

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is the research arm of The Economist Group, publisher of The Economist. As the world's leading provider of country intelligence, it helps governments, institutions and businesses by providing timely, reliable and impartial analysis of economic and development strategies. Through its public policy practice, The EIU provides evidence-based research for policymakers and stakeholders seeking measurable outcomes, in fields ranging from gender and finance to energy and technology. It conducts research through interviews, regulatory analysis, quantitative modelling and forecasting, and displays the results via interactive data visualisation tools. Through a global network of more than 650 analysts and contributors, The EIU continuously assesses and forecasts political, economic and business conditions in more than 200 countries. For more information, visit www.eiu.com.

About WWF

WWF is an independent conservation organization, with over 30 million followers and a global network active in nearly 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

Foreword

“This research shows how much people value the natural world, their willingness to make changes to protect it, and their increasing calls for leaders to take meaningful action. It is clear that to tackle global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss we must address the root cause of these issues - an economy that has waste and disposability woven into it. This work can play an important role in bringing together businesses and governments to build a circular economy that eliminates waste, generates value, and regenerates nature.”

Ellen MacArthur

Founder, Ellen MacArthur Foundation

“This research shows a growing concern for nature loss and we are seeing millions of Scouts worldwide add their energy and dedication to create awareness, and solutions to restore and protect nature.

Young people today are not surprised by this trend, and they are driving it because they recognise the enormous challenges facing our planet and the important role of young people in creating a more sustainable world. They are using their voice to push for change from all corners of society and the world.”

Ahmad Alhendawi

Secretary General, World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM)

“Covid-19 has produced irreparable losses, and emphasised the extent of our interdependence with the natural world. Consumers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about nature preservation and sustainable production cycles. And this trend in the report shows no signs of slowing.

The adoption of sustainable practices in business is not just about improving sustainability credentials, it makes business sense. Whilst there may be a cost to mitigating against these risks, this cost is far less than the cost of not acting.”

Marcelo Behar,

Vice President Sustainability & Group Affairs, Natura & Co

“Social media is undeniably a powerful way to deliver a message. Being a global citizen now involves digital activism. Companies must sit up and take note of the power of social in mobilising communities and amplifying key messages.

When it comes to nature, online groups tirelessly continue the fight by spreading awareness on biodiversity-loss and climate change.”

John Box

CEO Meltwater

“This year must be a turning point for nature and biodiversity. Later in the year, world leaders are scheduled to negotiate a global framework for addressing the nature crisis. This new research from The Economist Intelligence Unit shows that people all over the world are concerned about nature loss and that concern is growing, and decision-makers should pay attention. The research shows that people care about nature and want businesses and governments to take action and make bold decisions to protect and restore biodiversity. We cannot miss this opportunity to transform our relationship with nature and secure an equitable, nature-positive and resilient future for all.”

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema

Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Executive summary



The natural world is under threat. Scientists warn that 1m species, out of an estimated total of 8m, face extinction—many within decades. This decline is putting the future of the planet and everyone on it at risk.

Time is running out, and action to prevent fatal nature loss is urgently needed.



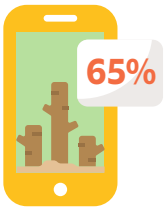
Do people care? Given the scale of the problem, it would be easy to assume that ordinary people are turning away, not only believing that biodiversity loss is not a priority, but also that nothing can be done.

We find the opposite.¹

New research by The Economist Intelligence Unit, commissioned by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), shows that hundreds of millions of people all over the world are concerned, and that this number is growing.



The most dramatic growth in engagement and awareness has occurred in Asia, most notably India (190%), Pakistan (88%) and Indonesia (53%). People all over the world care about nature, and that trend is growing—especially in emerging markets. This shift in public sentiment reflects a hard reality, as people in emerging markets are most likely to experience the devastating impact of the loss of nature.



The number of nature-loss conversations has grown, as seen in the 65% increase in Twitter mentions since 2016. Nature-loss and biodiversity issues are gaining more traction online than ever before, with the number of Twitter mentions increasing most in emerging markets. Major influencers around the world—including political figures, celebrities and religious leaders—are using their platforms to amplify nature issues, with messages reaching a combined audience of almost 1bn people worldwide.



Consumers are changing their behaviour, with searches for sustainable goods increasing globally by 71% since 2016.

Corporations are responding, particularly in the cosmetics, pharmaceutical, fashion and food sectors.



Public demand for action is rapidly growing through protests, petitions and campaign donations. Between 2016 and 2018, global news media coverage of nature-based protests grew by a steady 7%. Between 2018 and 2019, however, coverage jumped by a whopping 103%, driven by protest movements such as Extinction Rebellion.

The call for bold, decisive action by governments and businesses on behalf of the planet and future generations is getting louder and louder.

¹All statistics in the executive summary are based on primary EIU research.

The nature of change

Nature is disappearing

Since 1970, mammal, bird, fish, amphibian and reptile populations have seen an alarming decrease in size of 68% on average.²

With global declines across all species and ecosystems accelerating, our planet now faces an unprecedented extinction crisis. One that is so grave that scientists refer to the scale of biodiversity and nature loss as akin to “biological annihilation”.³

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive: food, clean water, shelter and medicine. The term itself is a contraction of biological diversity and is shorthand for a combination of species diversity and species richness. It was coined in 1985 by Walter G. Rosen of the National Research Council/National Academy of Sciences while he was planning a forum that took place in Washington, D.C.

Why does biodiversity matter?

The United Nations (UN) warns that an additional 1m animal and plant species are currently threatened with extinction, many within decades.⁴ If and when this prediction comes true, there will be dire—indeed, terminal—consequences for ourselves and the rest of life on Earth.



Without biodiversity, there is no future for humanity.”

David Macdonald, Oxford University Professor of Wildlife Conservation⁵

Species extinction is palpably life-critical because biodiversity sustains our very existence: the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, our shelter, our safety and our health.

Biodiversity underpins global food security and nutrition. Millions of species help nurture the healthy soils that are essential to grow the fruits, vegetables and animal products that provide a balanced diet to a world population of over 7.6bn people. Declining biodiversity threatens our food systems.⁶

Biodiversity helps fight disease.

Plants have been an essential part of medicine for tens of thousands of years, and biodiversity continues to support the research and development of new drugs.⁷ Around 25% of the drugs made by modern pharmaceuticals are derived from rainforest plants.⁸

² <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-us/>

³ <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/30/E6089>

⁴ <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://www.ecowatch.com/why-biodiversity-matters-2646065739.html?rebellitem=2#toggle-gdpr>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/how-to-be-a-botanical-buff/>

Covid-19 and nature

The covid-19 pandemic has been the biggest global health threat of the past century. Since January 2020, it has disrupted all aspects of daily life, causing untold physical, mental and economic damage and resulting in millions of deaths.⁹

Nature plays a key role in the origins and prevention of pandemics. A recent report by the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) shows that the same human activities that are driving biodiversity loss are also driving pandemic risk.¹⁰ Our impact on the environment—whether through land use, agriculture, or illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade—results in increased contact between animals, pathogens and people, paving the way for future pandemics. Better conservation of protected areas could reduce contact between wildlife, livestock and people, thereby reducing pandemic risk.

The covid-19 pandemic may have also affected public opinion, increasing support for and appreciation of nature.

A Boston Consulting Group survey of more than 3,000 respondents across eight countries found that 70% of participants are more aware now than before the covid-19 pandemic that human activity threatens the environment, and 75% of respondents said that environmental issues are as concerning as health issues. Three-quarters of respondents want to see environmental issues captured in covid-19 recovery plans.¹¹

In the People and Nature Survey for England, carried out between April and June 2020, 90% of adults said that protecting the environment was important to them, and three-quarters were concerned about biodiversity loss in England.¹²

⁹ <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

¹⁰ https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-12/IPBES%20Workshop%20on%20Biodiversity%20and%20Pandemics%20Report_0.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.bcg.com/en-gb/publications/2020/pandemic-is-heightening-environmental-awareness>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-people-and-nature-survey-for-england-adult-data-y1q1-april-june-2020-experimental-statistics>

Biodiversity sustains individual livelihoods. Nature is the foundation of economic growth, and billions of people rely on nature to help them earn a living. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), US\$44trn of economic value generation—over half of total global GDP—is potentially at risk because of the dependence of business on nature.¹³

Biodiversity could help reverse climate change. A report published by the US-based Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences suggests that, together with fossil-fuel reductions, nature-based solutions are capable of keeping global warming to within 2°C.¹⁴



Estimates suggest we would require 1.6 Earths to maintain the world's current living standards.”

Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta, University of Cambridge, Fellow of the Royal Society, author of the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity, 2021



¹³ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Future_Of_Nature_And_Business_2020.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/44/11645>

About the research

Findings in this report are based on an expert-validated research framework designed to measure society's engagement with, and action on, biodiversity and nature loss.

We use research frameworks to measure multi-dimensional concepts that cannot be captured by a single indicator—for example, food security, competitiveness, green growth, women's empowerment, infrastructure development, and so on.

Frameworks can be an important tool for policy analysis and public communication, while also enabling comparisons between countries and the measuring of progress over time.



The standard approach to measuring society's engagement and action is through surveys, typically asking people if they have engaged, or would be likely to engage, in specific actions.

This research programme has expanded on this approach in several key ways:

1. Global scope: This programme measures engagement, awareness and action for nature across 54 countries globally, covering 80% of the world's population.

2. Social media, news and Google trends analysis: The research framework includes more traditional indicators (e.g. opinion surveys) but the majority of the findings discussed in this report are based on new analysis of social media engagement, news media coverage and Google search data.

- Findings based on social media engagement are based on an analysis of 36m Twitter data points from 2016 to 2020. Wherever possible, Twitter data was geo-located in order to provide country and regional analysis of engagement online.
- Google search data (evaluating the relative popularity of key terms) was collected by week for 252 weeks and aggregated into yearly averages where appropriate.
- News media data covers editorial content from across all major international and national news outlets, as well as local news sources for each country in the study.

3. Key terms: A comprehensive (but by no means exhaustive) list of 150 unique search terms was used in an effort to capture as many online mentions as possible. The search terms used in this study were translated into 27 different languages.

While supplemented with more traditional measures, the primary research at the core of this programme provides unique insight into real-time trends in engagement and action for nature all over the world.

People care more about the planet now than ever before, but what about biodiversity and nature specifically?

Within the broader environmental movement, general awareness of nature loss has lagged behind climate change. There are several possible reasons for this.

People are more physically disconnected from nature than ever before. Sixty-eight percent of the world's population is expected to live in cities by 2050, and for many—particularly those living in urban environments—the impact of nature loss can seem like a distant problem, far removed from their everyday lives.¹⁵

People do not realise how much they rely on nature. The connection between nature and the economic, physical and mental well-being of humanity can feel tenuous. In a European Union (EU) study, only 16% of the 25,000+ respondents said that their lives had already been affected by biodiversity loss.¹⁶ The nature crisis can therefore seem less urgent than it really is, especially when compared with other political, social, economic and even environmental issues.

Despite these challenges, there is cause for hope. Momentum is building, and calls for change are louder than ever before.

In this report, we examine what ordinary people are doing to protect the diversity of life on Earth. We look at how engagement, awareness and action for nature have changed over time, and in different parts of the world. We find that a growing number of people are concerned about nature loss. Millions are calling for bold, decisive action on behalf of the planet and future generations.

There is still time to reverse nature loss. But the clock is ticking.



Mother Nature and ecosystems loss are linked to the current development model that is centered on the economy and business rather in the wellbeing of humankind and the preservation of biodiversity. For Indigenous Peoples, land is a mother that is alive and sacred. Mother Earth's animals and plants are our brothers and sisters who deserve our care and rational use. Within Indigenous livelihoods, healthy relationships among men and women and between them and Mother Earth play an important role in achieving cultural diversity with integral balance and harmony. Social actors should understand, respect and follow Indigenous views and practices including Indigenous women, youth and elders' wisdom and knowledge in reversing the damage caused to Mother Nature."

Yolanda Terann, Post-Doctoral Fellow Native American Studies, University of New Mexico

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl_379_en.pdf <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html#:~:text=Today%2C%2055%25%20of%20the%20world's,increase%20to%2068%25%20by%202050.>

¹⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl_379_en.pdf

Explore the study: Awareness, engagement and action for nature

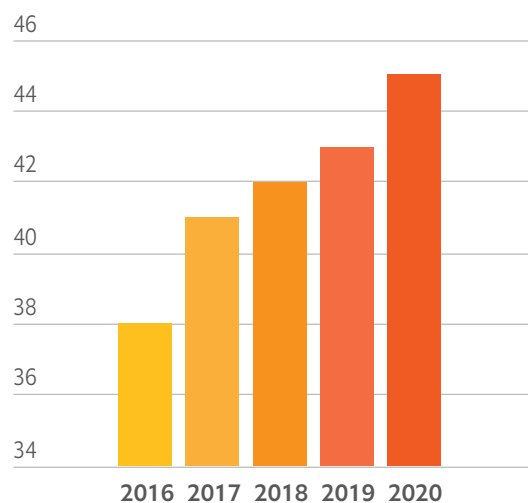
Hundreds of millions of people all over the world are concerned about nature, and since 2016 the rates of individual awareness and engagement for nature have steadily increased

This trend is growing fastest in emerging markets

While nature loss is happening all over the world, some countries and communities are hit harder than others. This explains, at least in part, why engagement is increasing in emerging markets, where citizens are experiencing the loss faster and more noticeably than in other places.

More popular

Google searches for terms related to biodiversity and nature loss, relative to all searches, index value yearly average



Source: EIU, Google Trends. English, all countries

The action people take depends, to an extent, on where they live and the resources at their disposal. Factors such as income, language and access to digital technology affect the ways in which people are able to get involved, tell others about their concerns and draw attention to what they are doing.

In the following sections, we explore the actions that are being taken all over the world to help fight against nature loss and protect biodiversity.

Awareness and engagement online

More and more people are sharing their opinions, their actions, and news about the causes that concern them on social media. The digital technology driving the use of social media plays a critical role in raising awareness and facilitating activism on behalf of nature.

Digital technology: A powerful enabler

Digital technology enables the sharing of information at unprecedented rates. Social media in particular has become a critical vehicle for political action and civic engagement over the past five years,¹⁷ with social media platforms used to amplify issues across a broad range of topics to a global audience. A recent survey by the Pew Research Center found that the majority of respondents believe social media platforms to be important for achieving certain political goals, including getting politicians to pay attention to issues (69% agree) and creating sustained movements for social change (67% agree).¹⁸

¹⁷ <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/07/11/activism-in-the-social-media-age/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

In addition to being a tool for raising awareness, social media engagement has been linked to action offline. A Georgetown University study found that social media users who lend support to online causes are twice as likely to take part in an event or volunteer their time, four times more likely to urge others to contact politicians, and five times more likely to recruit others to sign petitions for a cause or social issue.¹⁹

People are using social media to raise awareness and organise on behalf of nature

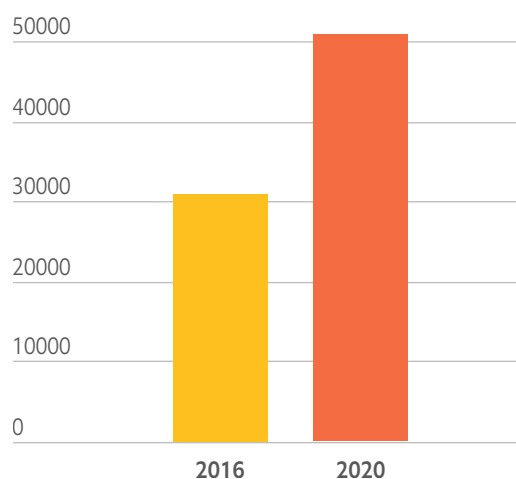
On Twitter, the volume of posts related to biodiversity and nature loss has increased by 65% since 2016.²⁰ This trend is strongest in Latin America, where the number of messages related to nature and biodiversity soared by 136% between 2016 and 2019.²¹

Major events in the real world drive engagement online.

The growth in Tweets between 2016 and 2019 that mention nature and originate in Latin America can be explained, in part, by forest fires in the Brazilian states of Amazonas and Rondônia. Brazil has the largest number of Twitter users in the region (12m), followed by Mexico (9m) and Argentina (5m).²² The hashtag #PrayForAmazonia appeared on over 3m Tweets. Some of the most popular Tweets, which have been “liked” thousands of times, criticised the country’s president, Jair Bolsonaro, for failing to act while large parts of Brazil’s natural environment were burning to the ground.²³

The digital fight for nature

Number of Twitter posts mentioning biodiversity & nature ‘000



Source: EIU, Meltwater. All languages.



More and more people are holding themselves, their communities and businesses to higher standards when it comes to respecting the planet. As people take a hard look at the environmental costs of everyday life, they are becoming increasingly focused on taking action and finding innovative solutions to create a more sustainable culture.”

Twitter Insights Report

¹⁹ <https://csic.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/dce-slacktivists.pdf>

²⁰ EIU analysis

²¹ EIU analysis

²² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/977791/number-twitter-users-in-latin-american-countries/#:~:text=As%20of%20the%20February%202020,activities%20in%20Latin%20America%20altogether.>

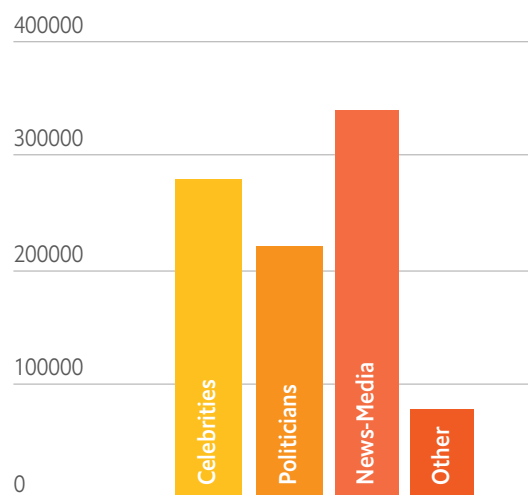
²³ Ibid.

The world's most famous people use their platforms to amplify local nature issues to a wider audience

The top 20 key influencers include the Pope, Hillary Clinton, film star Leonardo di Caprio, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and organisations such as the BBC and the New York Times. Combined, these accounts have a global audience of almost 1bn people worldwide.²⁴ Twitter also released an official report in 2020 revealing that conversations about sustainability, “clean” corporations and natural products—those that are environmentally friendly and health-enhancing—are among the fastest-growing topics on the platform.²⁵

Global reach

Top 20 Twitter accounts by number of followers, categorised '000



Source: EIU, Meltwater

²⁴ EIU analysis

²⁵ <https://marketing.twitter.com/en/culture-and-conversations#/>

Sub-Saharan Africa

Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda

With concern about the loss of animal and plant species growing by nearly double digits over the past five years, people are increasingly showcasing their support for nature through social media. Key decision-makers are following suit.

Population: 1.107bn²⁶

GDP: \$1.737trn²⁷

Percentage of population using the internet: 25% average; Angola – 14%, Democratic Republic of the Congo – 9%, Cameroon – 23%, Ghana – 39%, Kenya – 18%, Madagascar – 10%, Nigeria – 42%, South Africa – 56%, Tanzania – 25% and Uganda – 24%²⁸

Number of social media users: 135m²⁹

Yale Environmental Performance Index – Biodiversity & Habitat Ranking:³⁰

Angola: 133/180

Democratic Republic of the Congo: 50/180

Cameroon: 121/180

Ghana: 99/184

Kenya: 113/184

Madagascar: 163/184

Nigeria: 112/184

South Africa: 80/184

Tanzania: 60/184

Uganda: 33/184³¹

²⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/region/sub-saharan-africa>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57 (selected the option sub-saharan africa)

²⁹ <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-angola/2020/01>; https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-dr_congo/2021/02; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-cameroon/2020/01>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-ghana/2020/01>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-kenya/2020/01>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-madagascar/2020/01>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-nigeria/2020/01>; https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-south_africa/2020/01; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-tanzania/2020/01>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-uganda/2020/01>

³⁰ The Biodiversity and Habitat issue category assesses countries' actions toward retaining natural ecosystems and protecting the full range of biodiversity within their borders. It consists of six indicators: *terrestrial biome protection (weighted for the national and global rarity of biomes)*, *marine protected areas*, *Protected Areas Representativeness Index*, *Species Habitat Index*, *Species Protection Index* and *Biodiversity Habitat Index*.

³¹ <https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2020/component/bdh>



Awareness, engagement and action for nature, 2016–2020

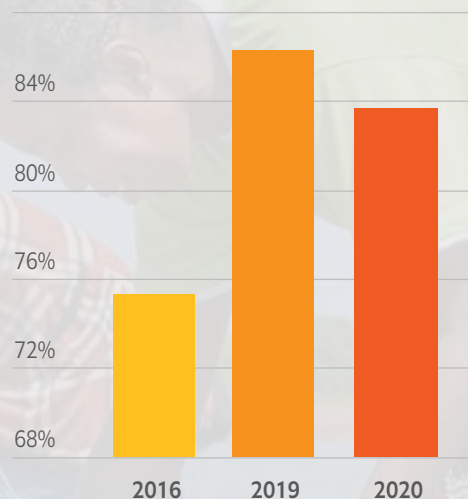
- Concern about the loss of animal and plant species grew by 9 percentage points, increasing from 75% to 84%.
- The percentage of Globescan survey respondents who agreed with the statement “We need to preserve the environment for future generations” increased most in Nigeria (58% to 69%), Kenya (64% to 71%) and South Africa (65% to 75%).
- The number of nature-loss and biodiversity-related Tweets grew by 168%.
- Online news articles about biodiversity and nature loss grew by only 2% between 2016 and 2020. However, online news articles related to nature protests increased by 11% from 2016 to 2019 before dipping in 2020, possibly due to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic.

Recent actions by civil society and key decision-makers

- In an address at the end of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly in March 2021, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta stated that “The environment holds and can provide solutions to most of the challenges we face as humanity.”³²
- Kenya Vision 2030—which aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrialising, middle-income country in a clean and secure environment—recognises threats to wildlife and conservation and the long-term ecology of the coastal zone. By way of response, the National Wildlife Strategy maps out 70 “priority activities” to secure resilient ecosystems, promote awareness and conservation projects, and improve sustainability.³³

Growing concern

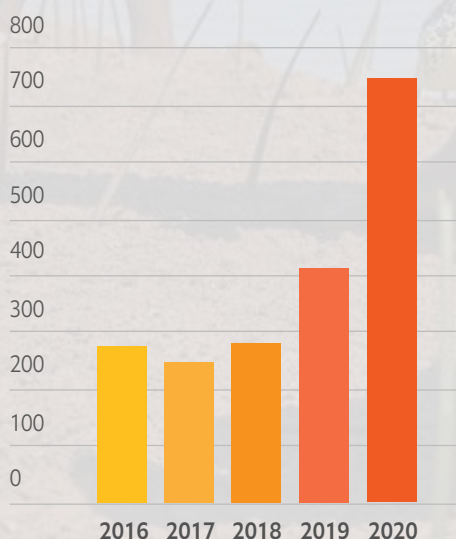
% of respondents who indicated the loss of animal and plant species is a global concern



Source: The EIU. Globescan

Twitter mentions

Sub-Saharan Africa '000



Source: The EIU. Meltwater

³² <https://www.africanews.com/2021/02/24/kenyan-president-talks-climate-change-at-un-environment-assembly/>

³³ https://ecotourismkenya.org/wp-content/uploads/ekdownloads/press_releases/NWS2030%20-%20FINAL%20JUNE%2012%2C%202018.pdf



- In February 2021, the UK Supreme Court ruled that oil-polluted Nigerian communities can sue Royal Dutch Shell in English courts. The decision is a victory for the Bille community and the Ogoni people of Ogoniland and is the latest development in a long-running battle to gain recompense for “decades of pollution”, which they say has severely affected the lives and health of 40,000 people, as well as the local environment. Royal Dutch Shell said it was disappointed by the ruling. The company did not dispute that pollution had been caused but claimed that it is not legally responsible for its Nigerian subsidiary.³⁴
- Vodacom, one of the largest Mobile phone networks in South Africa, implemented water-saving strategies across its property portfolio in the wake of the country’s National Water Week campaign in 2021. Over the previous five years, the company has reduced its water consumption by 63%, while reaching out to local municipalities to help them follow suit. South Africa is one of the 30 driest countries in the world, according to WWF.³⁵

³⁴ <https://www.africanews.com/2021/02/12/polluted-nigerian-communities-can-sue-shell-in-the-uk/>

³⁵ <https://www.mediaupdate.co.za/publicity/150327/vodacom-group-reduces-water-usage-by-63>

Improving digital infrastructure creates new opportunities to raise awareness and facilitate action for nature

As of January 2021, 60% of the global population—4.66bn people—were internet users. Rapidly expanding access to the internet enables millions of additional people to participate in digital activism on behalf of nature, particularly in parts of the world that are most affected by its loss.

Since 2016, the popularity of Google searches about nature loss and biodiversity has increased by 16% worldwide, driven primarily by growth in Asia. The growing popularity of nature-related searches not only indicates increased levels of interest in the issue, but also the growing opportunity for engagement

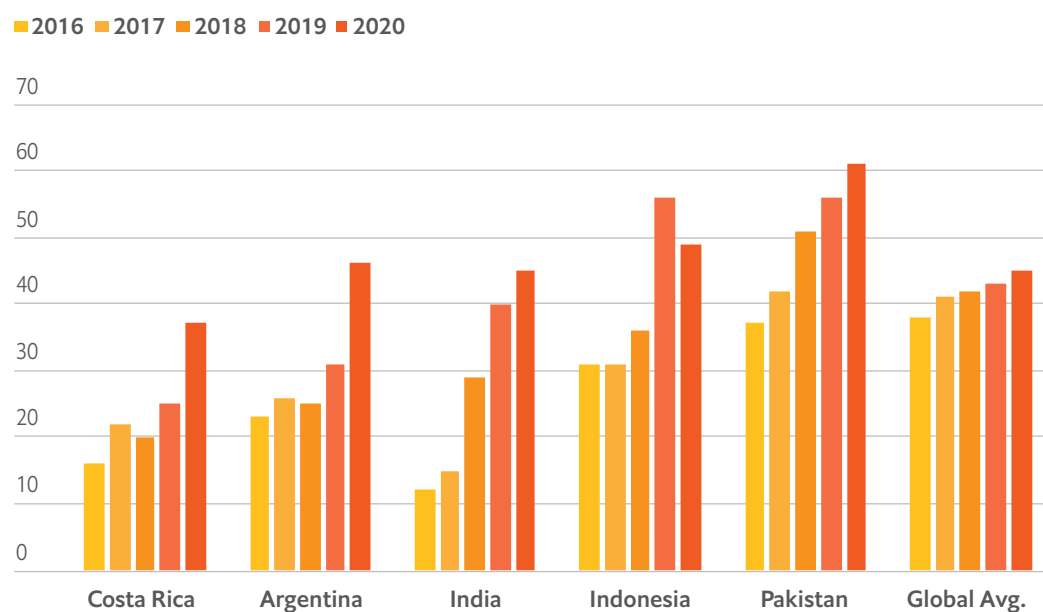
as more and more people come online.

In India, for example, the number of internet users increased by 8% between 2020 and 2021—which translates to a total of 624m people online—and internet penetration stood at 45% in January 2021.³⁶ In Indonesia, the number of internet users increased by 16% (202m people online). Over 25% of the Indonesian population were still not online as of January 2021, however. With growing internet access in Indonesia, we could see up to 250m people come online and advocate for nature.³⁷

The significance of these numbers is underlined by the UN's declaration that internet access is a human right and an essential tool in the arsenal for social, economic and environmental change.³⁸

Going global

Google searches for terms related to biodiversity and nature loss, relative to all searches, index value per yearly average



Source: EIU, Google Trends. English and predominant local language.

³⁶ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-india>

³⁷ <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-indonesia>

³⁸ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/internet-access-sustainability-and-citizen-participation-electricity-as-prerequisite/>, <https://www.internetsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ISOC-ICTs-SDGs-201506-Final.pdf>

India

People across the country are educating themselves about nature loss, and their concern for nature has encouraged them to show support on social media and through petitions and donations. Decision-makers are starting to react to demand, putting policies in place to protect the natural world.

Population: 1.3bn³⁹

GDP: \$2.8trn⁴⁰

Percentage of population using the internet: 34%⁴¹

Number of social media users: 324m⁴²

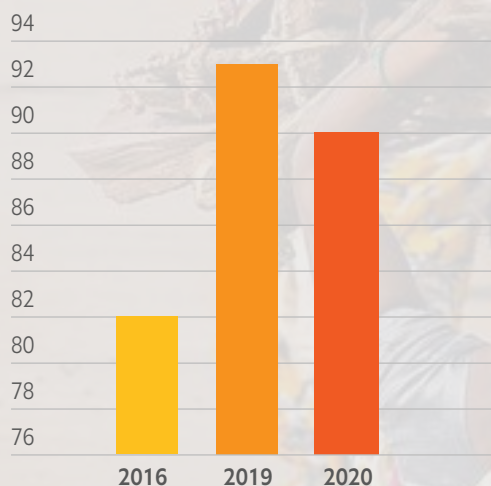
Yale Environmental Performance Index – Biodiversity & Habitat Ranking: 148/180⁴³

Awareness, engagement and action for nature, 2016–2020

- Concern about the loss of animal and plant species increased from 82% to 90%.
- The popularity of Google searches relating to nature loss and biodiversity grew by 190%.
- The volume of nature-loss and biodiversity-related Tweets grew by a staggering 550%, from 232,020 in 2016 to 1.5m in 2020.
- Avaaz received 480,000 signatures and 3,400 donations supporting nature campaigns from people in India.
- News coverage about nature loss and biodiversity has increased by 26%, from 133,888 articles in 2016 to 168,556 articles in 2020.

Growing concern

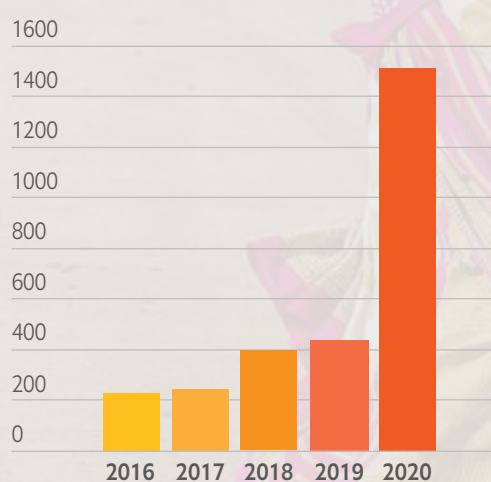
% of respondents who indicated the loss of animal and plant species is a serious global concern



Source: The EIU. Globescan

Twitter mentions

India '000



Source: The EIU. Meltwater

³⁹ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/india>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

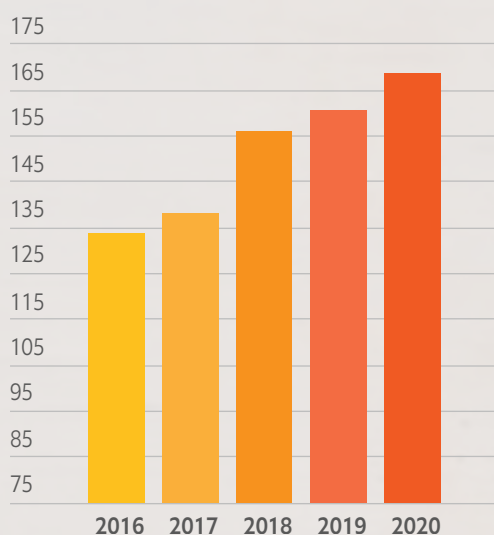
⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-india/2020/01>

⁴³ <https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2020/component/bdh>

News media coverage

India '000



The EIU. Meltwater

Recent actions by civil society and key decision-makers

In October 2020, the Maharashtra State Government pledged to declare a densely forested area within Mumbai (the Aarey Colony) a reserved forest.⁴⁴ The decision to protect the area, which is rich in biodiversity, came as a result of tireless advocacy work by activists, communities, students and Mumbai residents, as well as celebrity influencers who participated in a highly publicised social media campaign.

In the same year India's current government, proposed changes to the country's Environmental Impact Assessment process. A draft policy to protect land, water, forests

and other ecosystems from damage caused by industrial, mining and infrastructure projects was issued, "to create a healthy balance between sustainability and development".⁴⁵

Consumer demand for sustainable products in India is relatively low compared with other countries. That said, the tide is starting to turn. According to the Science Based Targets Initiative, India is the emerging economy with the largest number of companies committed to implementing Science Based Targets, which are designed to reduce the impact of business on the environment. Twenty-five companies in India had signed up to the scheme in 2018, and that number rose to 38 the following year. Additionally, organic product sales have grown by 13% since 2018.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/maharashtra-officially-declares-328-9-hectare-reserved-forest-at-aarey-colony-in-mumbai/story-WfzJDKJlRQPQEOkoDQ2Dj.html>

⁴⁵ <https://www.commonwealththroughtable.co.uk/commonwealth/eurasia/india/modi-six-years-and-the-environment/>

⁴⁶ Nielsen (2018)

Does online activism stimulate real-world change, or is it all just hot air?

While some critics question the value of digital activism, there is no doubt that technology has already facilitated significant social and political change in some countries. Here are just a few examples of far-reaching engagement that has heralded genuine transformation.

- Awareness and action associated with the hashtag **#blacklivesmatter** has resulted in criminal justice reform in many North American states in the past five years. In several European countries, policymakers have responded to online activism by beginning to tackle a legacy of racism and discrimination—for example, by removing statues that are associated with the slave trade and opening up debates about systemic inequality.⁴⁷
- In similar vein, the **#MeToo** movement (which began more than ten years ago) grew exponentially online in the wake of allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein. Subsequent worldwide repercussions include the outlawing of nondisclosure agreements that cover sexual harassment, and financial restitution for some of those who have been abused.⁴⁸
- During the **Arab Spring** (2010–2012) social media was a critical communication tool for protestors, whose actions resulted in the relatively peaceful disintegration of regimes in Tunisia and Egypt.⁴⁹
- Digital activism allows anyone with access to the internet an opportunity to make

their case for change and interact with like-minded people. **RESET**, an organisation that specialises in digital social innovations, says that this access is especially valuable for ordinary citizens who would otherwise have no voice or vehicle for their message. Social media enables these citizens to help increase the pressure on governments to take action and bring about the changes they seek.⁵⁰

Growing online engagement has the clear potential to drive action offline, resulting in significant and tangible change that could halt the loss of nature and avert a looming global crisis.

⁴⁷ <https://thegeopolitics.com/the-global-impact-of-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>,

⁴⁸ <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/10/4/20852639/me-too-movement-sexual-harassment-law-2019>

⁴⁹ <https://interactiveme.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Arab-Social-Media-Report.pdf>

⁵⁰ <https://en.reset.org/knowledge/digital-and-online-activism>

Consumer power

Politicians and other elected leaders are accountable to their voters, but elections only come around every few years. Businesses, on the other hand, are at the mercy of consumer trends, which often fluctuate quickly and can result in equally rapid changes to products and processes by way of response.

Shoppers are searching for sustainable options more than ever before

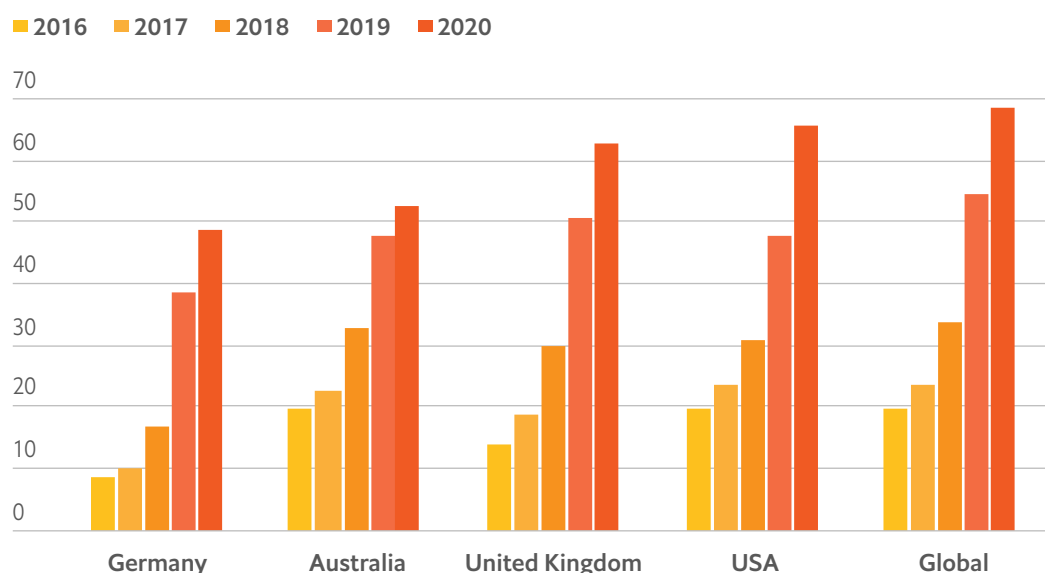
While the core objective of every business is to make money, today, more than ever, consumers around the world expect

businesses to play a positive role in society.⁵¹ When they fail to do so, retribution is not far behind. According to a survey by advertising agency Havas Group Worldwide, 65% of consumers believe that when it comes to driving positive social change, brands bear as much responsibility as governments.⁵²

The popularity of Google searches for sustainable goods increased by 71% between 2016 and 2020.⁵³ According to a 2019 McKinsey & Company survey, 66% of all respondents (and 75% of millennial respondents) said that they consider sustainability when making a purchase.⁵⁴

Shopping sustainably?

Google searches for sustainable products in the 'shopping' category. All countries. English. Index Value per Yearly average.



Source: The EIU, Google Trends

⁵¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/how-can-business-drive-social-change>

⁵² <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/brands-not-government-drive-social-change-say-consumers-study/1380448>

⁵³ EIU analysis

⁵⁴ <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/industries/retail/our%20insights/the%20state%20of%20fashion%202020%20navigating%20uncertainty/the-state-of-fashion-2020-final.pdf>

Decisions made in Europe and North America are protecting nature and vulnerable workers many thousands of miles away

Politicians and businesses are responding to consumer pressure more than ever before.

This means that government regulations and industry-wide sustainability commitments made in one part of the world can—and do—have a global impact on the protection of nature and biodiversity, even in parts of the world where domestic demand for sustainable products is still low.

A prime example is the EU's 2020 Sustainable Products Initiative. New regulations will force companies that want to sell their products in Europe to meet tougher sustainability regulations. The EU is prioritising high-impact product categories including textiles, chemicals, furniture and electronics.⁵⁵ China, Viet Nam, India and Indonesia are among the countries that export significant amounts of wooden furniture to the EU⁵⁶ and will need to comply with the more stringent rules in order to keep trading.

Supply chains are global and interconnected, and there are growing efforts to apply sustainability requirements from start to finish

Although domestic demand for sustainable goods in emerging markets often lags behind demand in Europe and North America,⁵⁷ many suppliers and manufacturers are located in countries that are suffering rapid nature loss. This means that decisions taken many thousands of miles away are having a positive impact by averting further biodiversity decline and improving workplace conditions.

For example, global retailer H&M partners with over 700 suppliers who manufacture in 1,600 factories across Europe, Asia and Africa. These suppliers employ over 1.56m predominantly female workers, mostly in Bangladesh and China.⁵⁸ All suppliers must abide by H&M's code of conduct, which aims to ensure that textiles are sourced from responsible, sustainable manufacturers, and that items created for the company adhere to a set of ethical standards including fair wages for workers, a ban on child labour and acceptable working conditions.⁵⁹

⁵⁵<https://www.natlawreview.com/article/european-commission-launches-roadmap-sustainable-products-initiative-to-us-her-new>

⁵⁶ <https://forestindustries.info/eu-wood-furniture-imports-last-year-at-highest-level-since-2007-itto-european-market-report-15th-april-2020>

⁵⁷ EIU analysis

⁵⁸<https://hmgroupp.com/sustainability/leading-the-change/supplier-list.html#:~:text=We%20do%20business%20with%20750,Union%20for%20our%20beauty%20assortment>

⁵⁹<https://www.thomasnet.com/insights/h-m-supply-chain/>

Consumer research clearly informs spending decisions

In the United Kingdom, ethical consumer spending has reached record levels. A 2019 survey by the Co-op supermarket chain revealed that the total market for ethically and sustainably sourced goods— including food, drinks, clothing, energy and eco-travel— was worth £41bn. Its value has risen almost fourfold within 20 years.⁶⁰

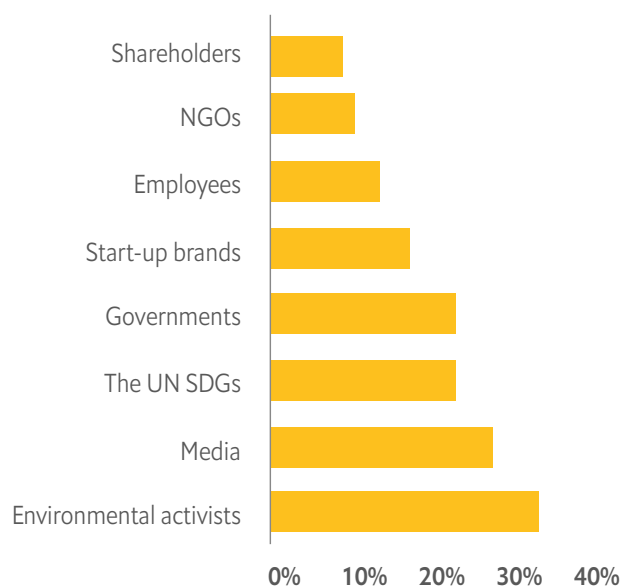
Sales of sustainable consumer products have outperformed their traditional alternatives

Harvard Business Review reported in 2019 that 50% of growth in consumer packaged goods came from products that carried an on-pack sustainability claim.⁶¹ In China, 41% of consumers say that they want eco-friendly products, and in India sales of organic products have grown by 13% since 2018.⁶²

It is not only products that are being carefully scrutinised. Consumers also want to know about corporate values, especially when it comes to sustainability. Over 6,000 people who took part in a 2019 survey by Hotwire were asked if they had ever switched products or services because a company violated their values. Almost 50% had done so, and the number one reason was to support products or services that “protect the environment”.⁶³

In the driver's seat: Consumers

What drives the focus on sustainability issues in the fashion and textile industry?



Source: EIU Survey. 2020.

⁶⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/dec/30/uk-ethical-consumer-spending-hits-record-high-report-shows>

⁶¹ <https://hbr.org/2019/06/research-actually-consumers-do-buy-sustainable-products>

⁶² <https://www.nielsen.com/eu/en/insights/article/2019/a-natural-rise-in-sustainability-around-the-world>

⁶³ <https://www.emarketer.com/chart/228374/internet-users-worldwide-who-have-switched-product-service-company-violated-their-personal-values-jan-2019-of-respondents>

The United States of America

People all across the United States are becoming increasingly concerned about nature loss and are using Twitter to amplify that concern through social media campaigns, such as #NoDAPL, reaching a global audience. Demand for sustainably produced goods is pushing Fortune 500 companies to implement ambitious sustainability measures, and politicians are following suit with some of the most ambitious policymaking in the country's history.

Population: 321m

GDP: \$21trn

Percentage of population using the internet: 87%

Number of social media users: 230m

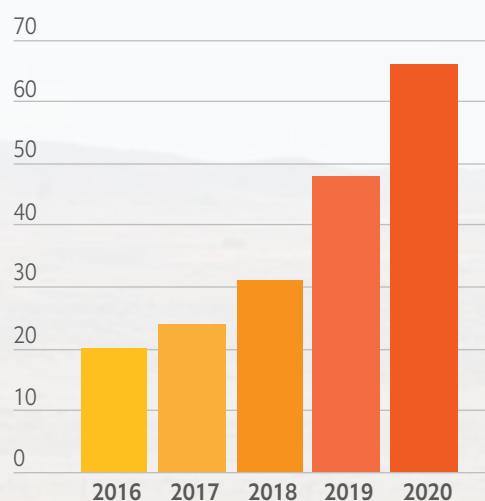
Yale Environmental Performance Index – Biodiversity & Habitat Ranking: 67/180

Awareness, engagement and action for nature, 2016–2020

- The popularity of Google searches for sustainable products grew by 450% between 2016 and 2020.
- Online campaign site Avaaz received 7m signatures and 374,000 donations supporting nature campaigns from people located in the United States. This accounted for 4% and 7% of global signatures and donations, respectively.
- The popularity of Google searches about nature loss and biodiversity increased by 24%.
- Concern about the loss of animal and plant species increased by almost 10%, from 79% to 86%.
- The number of nature-loss and biodiversity-related Tweets peaked in 2016 (driven partly by engagement with the Dakota Access Pipeline issue, #NoDAPL), in 2018 (California

Google search (sustainable goods)

The United States of America Index value



Source: The EIU, Google Trends

wildfires) and again in 2019 (California wildfires and Extinction Rebellion).

- Eleven million news articles about nature loss and biodiversity were written between 2016 and 2020, with peaks occurring in 2017 in the wake of the US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, and again during the California wildfires of 2018.

Recent actions by civil society and key decision-makers

On his first day in office, in January 2021, President Biden issued an executive order to cancel the Keystone XL oil pipeline, in a victory for indigenous activists, landowners and environmental groups that had been campaigning against the project for a decade. Activists welcomed the decision and immediately called on Mr Biden to halt the Dakota Access Pipeline, which crosses through communities, farms, tribal land, sensitive natural areas and wildlife habitat from

North Dakota to Illinois, and which has been running for the past year without a legal permit.⁶⁴

Within three weeks of Mr Biden taking office, the first ever US National Climate Task Force met for the first time. A whole-of-government approach has been initiated to tackle climate change at home and abroad,

create well-paid jobs in the clean energy sector and achieve environmental justice.⁶⁵

The previous year, 540 of the world's biggest corporations signed up to a Business for Nature statement calling on governments worldwide to do more to reverse nature loss. Signatories include Fortune 500 companies such as Walmart, Citigroup, Unilever and Microsoft.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/21/dakota-access-pipeline-joe-biden-indigenous-environment>

⁶⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/11/readout-of-the-first-national-climate-task-force-meeting/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.businessfornature.org/call-to-action>

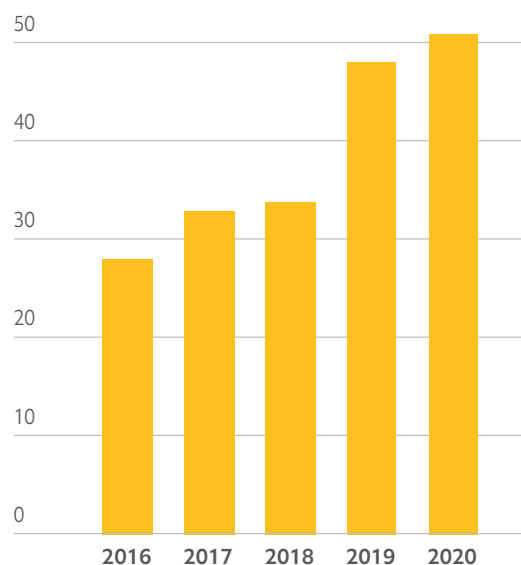
Entire industries are changing as a direct result of increased consumer demand for more sustainable goods and services

The fashion and textile industry (which makes up between 1% and 1.5% of global GDP) is the second largest polluter in the world, ranking just behind the oil industry.⁶⁷ The industry has been pushed to change as a result of consumer demand. Over 50% of C-suite executives surveyed by EIU say that consumers are driving the focus on sustainability in the fashion and textile industry, followed by environmental activists (35%).⁶⁸ As a result of this pressure, 65% of the businesses surveyed have committed to sourcing sustainably produced raw materials, and 60% now collect data on supply chain sustainability.⁶⁹ Recognising that it takes 20,000 litres of water to produce just a single kilo of cotton,⁷⁰ the use of water and other natural resources in production processes is being addressed.

Businesses in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries are also making changes in response to consumer demand for ethically sourced, natural products. Famous brands including LVMH, The Body Shop and Yves Rocher have all committed to sourcing practices that benefit people and biodiversity, and membership of the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT)—a non-profit association that promotes sourcing practices that conserve biodiversity—has increased by 45%.⁷¹

Natural beauty

Union of Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) membership per year



The EIU. UEBT

⁶⁷ <https://www.sustainyourstyle.org/old-environmental-impacts>

⁶⁸ <https://www.eiu.com/n/is-sustainability-in-fashion/>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ EIU analysis

United Kingdom

Demand for sustainable products has increased eightfold over the past five years, as Brits show their support for nature through what they buy and through their charitable donations and activism. Leaders are responding to demand, with a new Green Plan focused on a “green industrial revolution”.

Population: 66.8m⁷²

GDP: \$2.83trn⁷³

Percentage of population using the internet: 93%⁷⁴

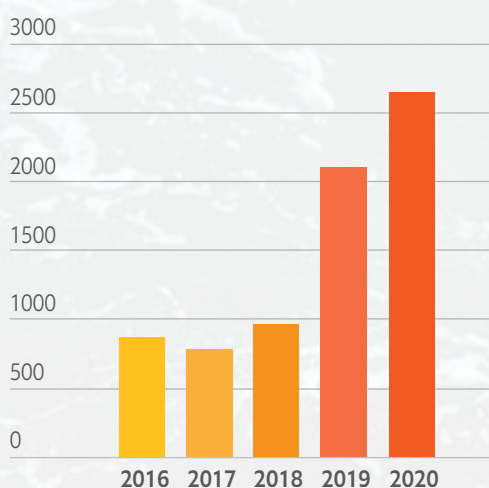
Number of social media users: 50.36m⁷⁵

Yale Environmental Performance Index – Biodiversity & Habitat Ranking: 6/180

Awareness, engagement and action for nature, 2016 - 2020

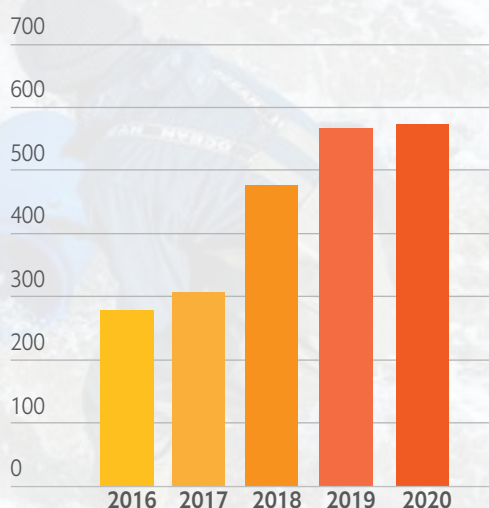
- The popularity of Google searches for sustainable products grew by 800%.
- 92% of UK-based Globescan survey respondents believe that the loss of animal and plant species is a serious or somewhat serious global problem.
- The popularity of Google searches about nature loss and biodiversity increased by 30%.
- The number of Tweets about nature loss and biodiversity grew by 206%.
- People in the United Kingdom made 686,599 donations and contributed 11.5m signatures in support of nature campaigns via the online campaign site Avaaz.
- News articles about nature loss and biodiversity more than doubled, increasing by 105% between 2016 and 2020.

Twitter mentions United Kingdom '000



Source: The EIU, Meltwater.

News media coverage United Kingdom '000



Source: The EIU, Meltwater.

⁷² <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=GB>

⁷³ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/GB>

⁷⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=GB>

⁷⁵ https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-united_kingdom/2021/01

Recent actions by civil society and key decision-makers

Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced a ten-point Green Plan costing £12bn in 2020. Described as a “green industrial revolution”, policies include a ban on petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030, quadrupled offshore wind power (sufficient to power every UK home), carbon capture initiatives, nature conservation projects, increased hydrogen production and a pledge to make London “the global centre of green finance”.⁷⁶

In 2021, a survey carried out by the University of London revealed broad support for the plan, regardless of political preference, with the strongest support for tree planting, offshore wind power and electric public transport.⁷⁷

Delays to an Environment Bill that will redraw the rules in the wake of the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the EU were met with fierce criticism by campaigners in 2021. The bill sets out new targets for air pollution, water quality, waste, resource use and biodiversity, and creates a new Office for Environmental Protection. The government describes the bill as “the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on earth”.⁷⁸

Market researcher Gartner reports that 73% of UK consumers want to behave more sustainably in 2021, while HSBC’s Made For The Future study showed that almost 50% of UK companies are planning to increase their environment-related spending during 2021, with money going on manufacturing improvements, building updates, and equipment and operational efficiency.⁷⁹

⁷⁶<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/nov/17/boris-johnson-announces-10-point-green-plan-with-250000-jobs#:~:text=Boris%20Johnson%20announces%2010%2Dpoint%20green%20plan%20with%20250%2C000%20jobs,-This%20article%20is&text=Boris%20Johnson%20has%20announced%20plans,of%20nuclear%20and%20hydrogen%20power.>

⁷⁷<https://www.edie.net/news/11/Survey--Two-thirds-of-Brits-support-UK-s-green-industrial-revolution-plans/>

⁷⁸ <https://gowlingwlg.com/en/insights-resources/articles/2020/environment-bill-2020-analysis/>

⁷⁹ <https://ethicalhour.co.uk/consumer-sustainability-trends-2021/>

China

Population: 1.398bn⁸⁰

GDP: \$14.343trn⁸¹

Percentage of population using the internet: 54.3%⁸²

Number of social media users: 1.17bn⁸³

Yale Environmental Performance Index – Biodiversity & Habitat Ranking: 172/180⁸⁴

Awareness, engagement and action for nature, 2016-2020

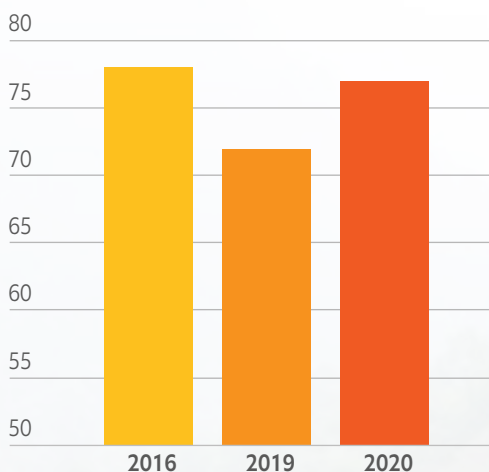
- 77% of Globescan survey respondents from China saw the loss of animal and plant species as a serious global problem.
- The percentage of Globescan survey respondents who agreed with the statement “We need to consume less to preserve the environment for future generations” increased from 75% to 83% between 2019 and 2020.

Recent actions by key decision-makers

“Green development” is highlighted as a priority in the draft of China’s modernisation plan for the next 15 years, which was unveiled in March 2021 at the 13th National People’s Congress in Beijing. President Xi Jinping and fellow lawmakers from north China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region also discussed ecological conservation. Inner Mongolia is seen as China’s “Green Great Wall”, according to Mr Xi, who also discussed desertification control and forest protection with colleagues.⁸⁵

Growing concern

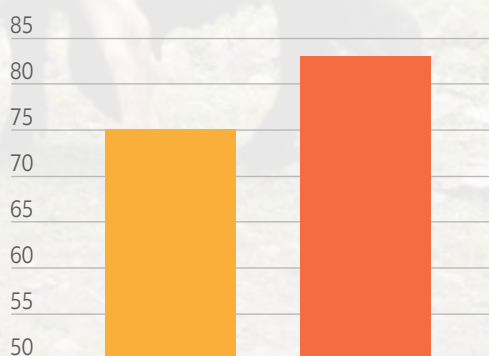
% of respondents who indicated the loss of animal and plant species is a serious global concern (China)



Source: The EIU. Globescan

Growing concern

% of respondents who agreed with the statement: We need to preserve the environment for future generations (China)



Source: The EIU. Globescan

⁸⁰ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/china>

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ WeChat <https://review42.com/resources/wechat-statistics/#:~:text=There%20are%20a%20whopping%201.17,million%20users%20in%20Q4%202019.>

⁸⁴ <https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2020/component/bdh>

⁸⁵ <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202103/07/WS6044101ea31024ad0baad487.html>

China intends to complete a national monitoring network for biodiversity conservation during 2021 as part of the country's preparations to host a major UN conference on the subject. The Ministry of Ecology and Environment has invested a total of 400m yuan (US\$61.9m) in biodiversity surveys and assessments and a network of 749 observation areas, capable of providing more than 700,000 pieces of data every year.⁸⁶

China's first law to protect a specific river basin, the Yangtze River Protection Law, came into force in 2021. It includes tougher punishments for violations that cause environmental hazards, and a fishing ban. Similar action is being prepared to protect other bodies of water across the country, including the Yellow River Basin.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202103/04/WS604016dda31024ad0baac8db.html>

⁸⁷ <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202102/24/WS6035a76ba31024ad0baaaa27.html>



Riding the wave: Collective action for nature

The movement to protect nature and biodiversity is both global and interconnected. Someone in Brazil, for example, could witness wildfires in the Amazon and post about their experience on social media. Their messages would be read and re-Tweeted by people in other countries, and the cause could then be picked up by major celebrities in North America and Europe. This could result in a push from concerned citizens all over the world—signing petitions, donating to nature campaigns and demanding change from policymakers and politicians—further amplifying the issue and continuing the cycle.

Between 2016 and 2020 a total of 159m people signed online petitions in support of nature, according to Avaaz, a non-profit organisation promoting global activism. The largest number of signatures for nature-loss and biodiversity campaigns came from people in Brazil (23m), while the majority of donations to these same campaigns came from Germany (1m), the United Kingdom (686,000) and the United States (373,000).⁸⁸

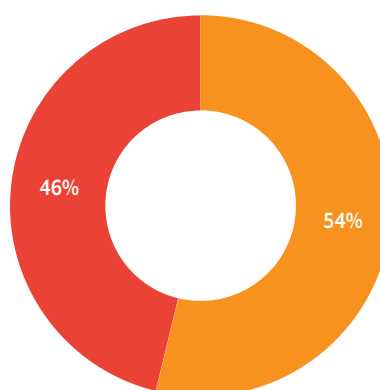
Other organisations are seeing similar levels of engagement. Over 3m people from 92 countries have signed a Global Deal for Nature petition, calling on world leaders to protect and restore half of Earth's land and oceans.⁸⁹

The “ripple effect” trickles down to individual countries. For instance, the Australian Conservation Foundation is on track to meet its target of 500,000 signatures in 2021 for a petition that demands a complete overhaul of the country's environmental laws. The petition states that nature in Australia is in “big trouble”, with iconic wildlife like the koala and platypus at risk.⁹⁰

Stand up and be counted

Number of signatures for nature-loss and biodiversity campaigns, compared to all campaigns

■ Biodiversity=160m ■ All=186m



Source: Avaaz

⁸⁸ EIU analysis

⁸⁹ <https://www.globaldealornature.org/>

⁹⁰ https://www.acf.org.au/environment_laws_petition

Brazil

Population: 211m⁹¹

GDP: \$1.84trn⁹²

Percentage of population using the internet: 67.5%⁹³

Number of social media users: 332m⁹⁴

Yale Environmental Performance Index – Biodiversity & Habitat Ranking: 38/180⁹⁵

Awareness, engagement and action for nature, 2016–2020

- Brazil produced the largest number of signatures for biodiversity and nature campaigns of any country in the world, contributing 23m signatures—13% of global signatures.
- On average, 96% of Globescan survey respondents saw the loss of animal and plant species as a serious global problem.
- The number of nature-loss and biodiversity-related Tweets grew by 442%.
- The volume of news stories about nature loss and biodiversity increased by 148%.
- News articles about nature protests peaked in 2019, following a 79% increase since 2016.

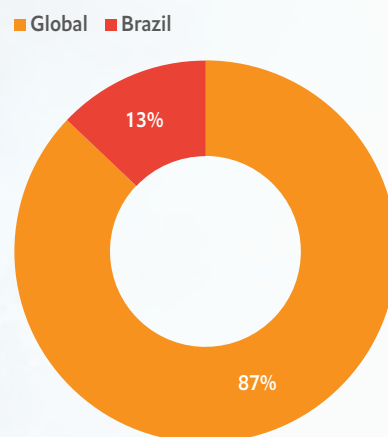
Recent actions by civil society and key decision-makers

Brazil's president, Jair Bolsonaro, was accused of crimes against humanity in 2021. Indigenous leaders and human rights groups urged the International Criminal Court to investigate what they say amounts to ecocide.⁹⁶

Since Mr Bolsonaro took office in 2019, biodiversity loss and deforestation have soared. Environmental policies and agencies—Ibama, ICMBio and Funai—have been systematically dismantled, indigenous

Stand up and be counted

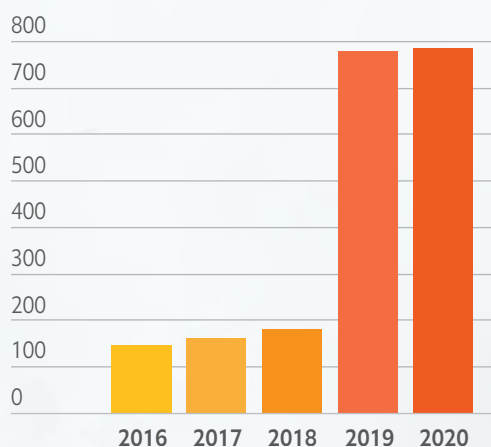
Number of signatures for nature-loss and biodiversity campaigns, compared to all campaigns (Brazil)



Source: Avaaz

Twitter mentions

Brazil '000



Source: The EIU. Meltwater

⁹¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/brazil>

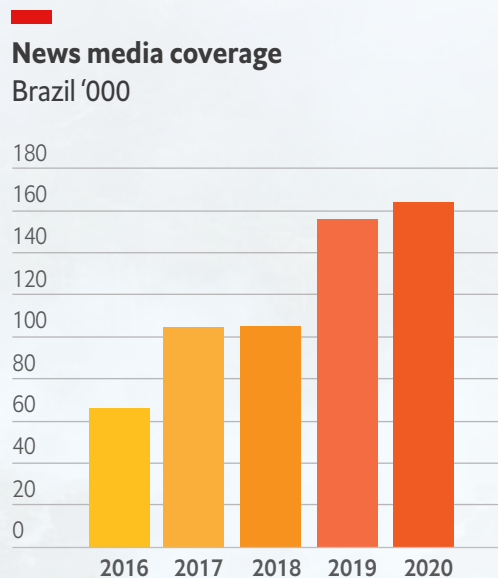
⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-brazil/2020/01>

⁹⁵ <https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2020/component/bdh>

⁹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/23/jair-bolsonaro-could-face-charges-in-the-hague-over-amazon-rainforest>



Source: The EIU. Meltwater

communities have been threatened, and vast stretches of the rainforest have been destroyed. Deforestation has risen by almost 50% in just two years, with no action taken to combat the forest fires of 2020⁹⁷ in the Amazon and Pantanal regions.

In June 2020, seven major European funds threatened to withdraw their US\$2trn worth of investments from the country unless the surging destruction of the Amazon rainforest decreased.⁹⁸ The Brazil Climate, Forests and Agriculture Coalition then sent the government its own proposals to halt deforestation.⁹⁹ The coalition consists of an unprecedented 230 environmental groups and businesses, such as JBS, Klabin, Marfrig, Amaggi, Basf, Danone, Natura and Unilever.¹⁰⁰

In December 2020, Brazil presented an updated climate plan to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that is notably less ambitious than the 2015 version. Using procedural and legal manoeuvres, Brazil has weakened its existing climate change commitments by violating the spirit, if not the letter, of the Paris Climate Agreement. This has reduced its credibility on the global stage and further affected investor confidence and the possibility of future trade agreements.¹⁰¹

If passed, two bills currently (as of publication) on the floor of the House and Senate, would further enable the privatisation of public lands that have been illegally deforested. This would result in further occupation and deforestation of public land and accelerate destruction of the Amazon.¹⁰²

On a more positive note, Brazil's indigenous people and non-governmental organisations have been working at the local level to expand representation in government to meet their communities' needs and protect the lands they inhabit. At the 2020 national municipal election, the number of indigenous voters rose by 27% compared with the 2016 turnout, and more indigenous people than ever before in Brazil's history were elected: ten mayors, 11 deputy mayors and 213 councillors, of whom 13% were women.¹⁰³ Candidates from all parties acknowledged the need to recognise, strengthen and protect indigenous territories.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-environment-divestment-exclusi/exclusive-european-investors-threaten-brazil-divestment-over-deforestation-idUSKBN23Q1MU>; <https://www.brasilagro.com.br/conteudo/como-as-empresas-se-uniram-contras-polemicas-do-governo-bolsonaro.html>

⁹⁹ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1986951/environmental-groups-big-ag-unite-for-amazon-in-brazil>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.brasilagro.com.br/conteudo/como-as-empresas-se-uniram-contras-polemicas-do-governo-bolsonaro.html>

¹⁰¹ https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?1173241/WWF-Brazil-NDC

¹⁰² <https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/brazils-amazon-is-under-threat-from-proposed-land-use-laws/>

¹⁰³ <https://apiboficial.org/2020/11/17/eleicoes-2020-em-contagem-parcial-apib-mapeia-159-candidatos-indigenas-eleitos/>

In response to increasing levels of awareness and pressure from concerned citizens, new and more stringent laws are being passed

One of the most significant activist success stories is the reduction in plastic waste. As of 2019, legislation to restrict single-use plastics had been passed in 127 countries, following sustained global protest about the environmental harm that was being caused.¹⁰⁴

At a more local level, a campaign that began with people expressing their concern about water pollution ended in 2019 with voters in Toledo, Ohio, passing the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, which gives the lake the same legal rights as a person or corporation. The landmark legislation was passed after 500,000 people were cut off from their supply of safe drinking water. Local residents can sue any future polluters for clean-up costs.¹⁰⁵

The “rights of nature” movement has spread elsewhere in the United States, with communities in Silicon Valley, Florida, Salt Lake City, states surrounding Chesapeake Bay and cities along the Maine coast all launching campaigns.¹⁰⁶



© WWF-US / Keith Arnold

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/07/24/ever-more-countries-are-banning-plastic-bags>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/feb/28/toledo-lake-erie-personhood-status-bill-of-rights-algae-bloom#:~:text=But%20this%20week%2C%20more%20than,human%20being%20or%20corporation%20would>

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

South-East Asia

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam

Population: 2.094bn¹⁰⁷

GDP: \$17.215trn¹⁰⁸

Percentage of population using the internet: 56.6%¹⁰⁹

Number of social media users: 951m¹¹⁰

Yale Environmental Performance Index – Biodiversity & Habitat Ranking:

Indonesia: 107/180

Malaysia: 110/180

The Philippines: 105/180

Thailand: 114/180

Viet Nam: 150/180

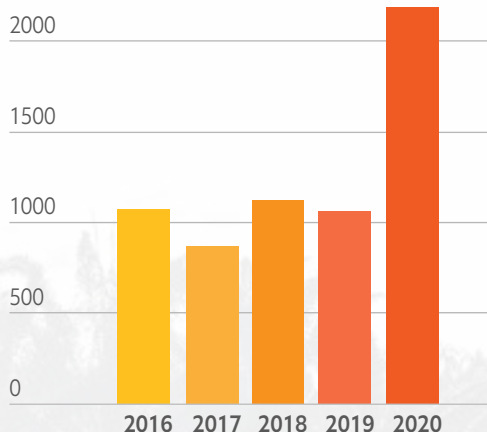
Awareness, engagement and action for nature, 2016-2020

- The number of nature-loss and biodiversity-related Tweets grew by 102% in the region.
- The volume of news stories about nature loss and biodiversity increased by 77%.
- News articles about biodiversity protests increased by 48% between 2016 and 2020.

Recent actions by civil society and key decision-makers

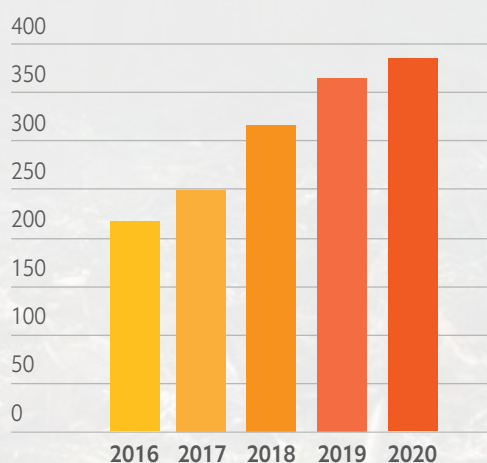
In 2020, the Thai government threatened to invoke an agreement that could halt plans to build another hydroelectric dam on the Mekong River. The large number of Laos and Chinese dams along the Mekong have hugely affected the lives of communities downstream in Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam, with water salinisation of once-

Twitter mentions
South-East Asia '000



Source: The EIU. Meltwater

News media coverage
South-East Asia '000



Source: The EIU. Meltwater

¹⁰⁷ <https://data.worldbank.org/region/east-asia-and-pacific-excluding-high-income>

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57

¹¹⁰ <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-indonesia/2021/02>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-malaysia/2021/03>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-philippines/2021/02>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-thailand/2021/05>; <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-vietnam/2021/02>

fertile land affecting food exports and resulting in insufficient fresh water for daily needs. Environmental studies have been requested by Thailand before a final decision is reached.¹¹¹

Political leaders in Indonesia and Malaysia have joined forces to fight what they describe as a smear campaign against palm oil. The two countries produce 85% of the world's palm oil—a ubiquitous ingredient in processed foods, cosmetics and biodiesel—and face global criticism for the commodity's negative environmental impact, along with numerous calls for boycotts of products that contain the ingredient. Activists working to reform or eliminate the industry are concerned by this move on the part of the Indonesian government, which could hurt their efforts.

In 2021, Malaysia followed Indonesia's example and filed a lawsuit against the EU, which stands accused of favouring its own vegetable oil producers. Retaliatory trade measures have also been invoked.¹¹²

Viet Nam which has been recognised as a country with high biodiversity—joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Working Group on Climate Change in 2021. As a member, the country will take part in regional initiatives such as marine plastic waste prevention and cross-border water and air pollution initiatives.¹¹³

¹¹¹ <https://thethaiger.com/hot-news/environment/thai-government-threaten-to-boycott-new-lao-hydro-electric-dam-project>

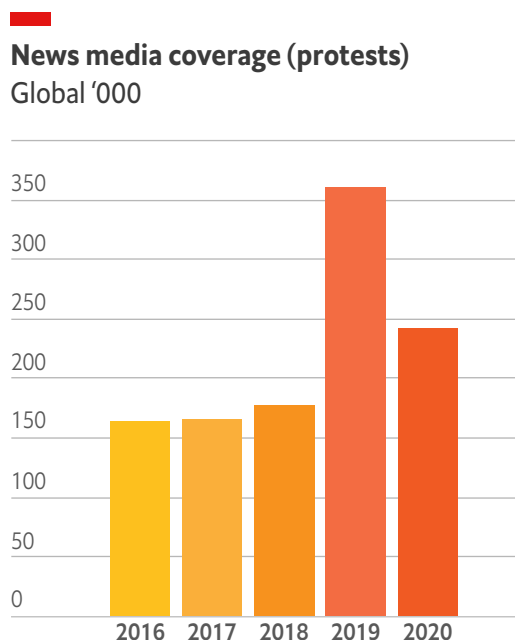
¹¹² <https://www.eco-business.com/news/indonesia-in-joint-bid-with-malaysia-to-shield-palm-oil/>

¹¹³ <https://vietnamnews.vn/environment/887219/viet-nam-actively-contributes-to-asean-environmental-cooperation.html>

A dramatic increase in news coverage fosters interconnected global action to protect nature and biodiversity

Year by year, growing concern about the universal threat to nature has been working its way up the media agenda. Between 2016 and 2018 global news coverage of nature-based protests was growing by a steady 7%.¹¹⁴

The following year, however, reporting leapt by 103%.¹¹⁵ In part, this was due to the rise of global activism—in particular, protests under the umbrella of Extinction Rebellion—that advocated for civil disobedience as a tool to compel governments to act in defence of nature.¹¹⁶ Media coverage about the movement spiked in October 2019, when railways, airports and streets around the world were all brought to a standstill by activists.



Source: The EIU, Meltwater

¹¹⁴ EIU analysis

¹¹⁵ EIU analysis

¹¹⁶ <https://rebellion.global/about-us/>

Colombia

Population: 50m¹¹⁷

GDP: \$323.6bn¹¹⁸

Percentage of population using the internet: 65%¹¹⁹

Number of social media users: 37.8m¹²⁰

Yale Environmental Performance Index – Biodiversity & Habitat Ranking: 43/180

Awareness, engagement and action for nature, 2016–2020

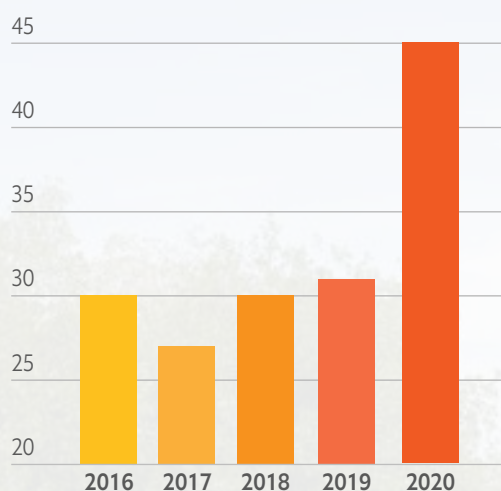
- The popularity of Google searches about nature loss and biodiversity grew by 74%
- The number of Tweets about nature loss and biodiversity grew by 293%.
- The popularity of Google searches for sustainable products increased by 63%, reaching new peaks in 2018, 2019 and 2020.
- Avaaz received 1.06m signatures and 8,763 donations supporting nature campaigns from people in Colombia.
- News articles about nature loss and biodiversity increased by 34%.

Recent actions by civil society and key decision-makers

Colombian President Iván Duque’s ineffective environmental decisions, amongst other social and economic issues, provoked a national strike in 2019. Indigenous people, teachers, students and campaigners took to the streets, giving momentum to issues including deforestation, fracking, limits on citizen participation and biodiversity protection.¹²¹ Meanwhile, the Frontline Defenders organisation named Colombia the most dangerous place in the world for activists seeking to protect land and other natural resources, with over 100 activists killed during 2019.¹²²

Google search

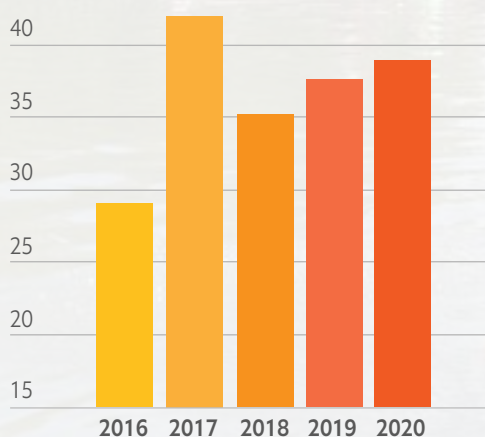
Colombia (Index value)



Source: The EIU. Google Trends

News media coverage

Colombia '000



Source: The EIU. Meltwater

¹¹⁷ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/colombia>

¹¹⁸ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/colombia>

¹¹⁹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=CO>

¹²⁰ <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/social-media-users-in-colombia/2021/01>

¹²¹ <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/01/for-colombia-2019-was-a-year-of-environmental-discontent/>

¹²² https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/global_analysis_2019_web.pdf

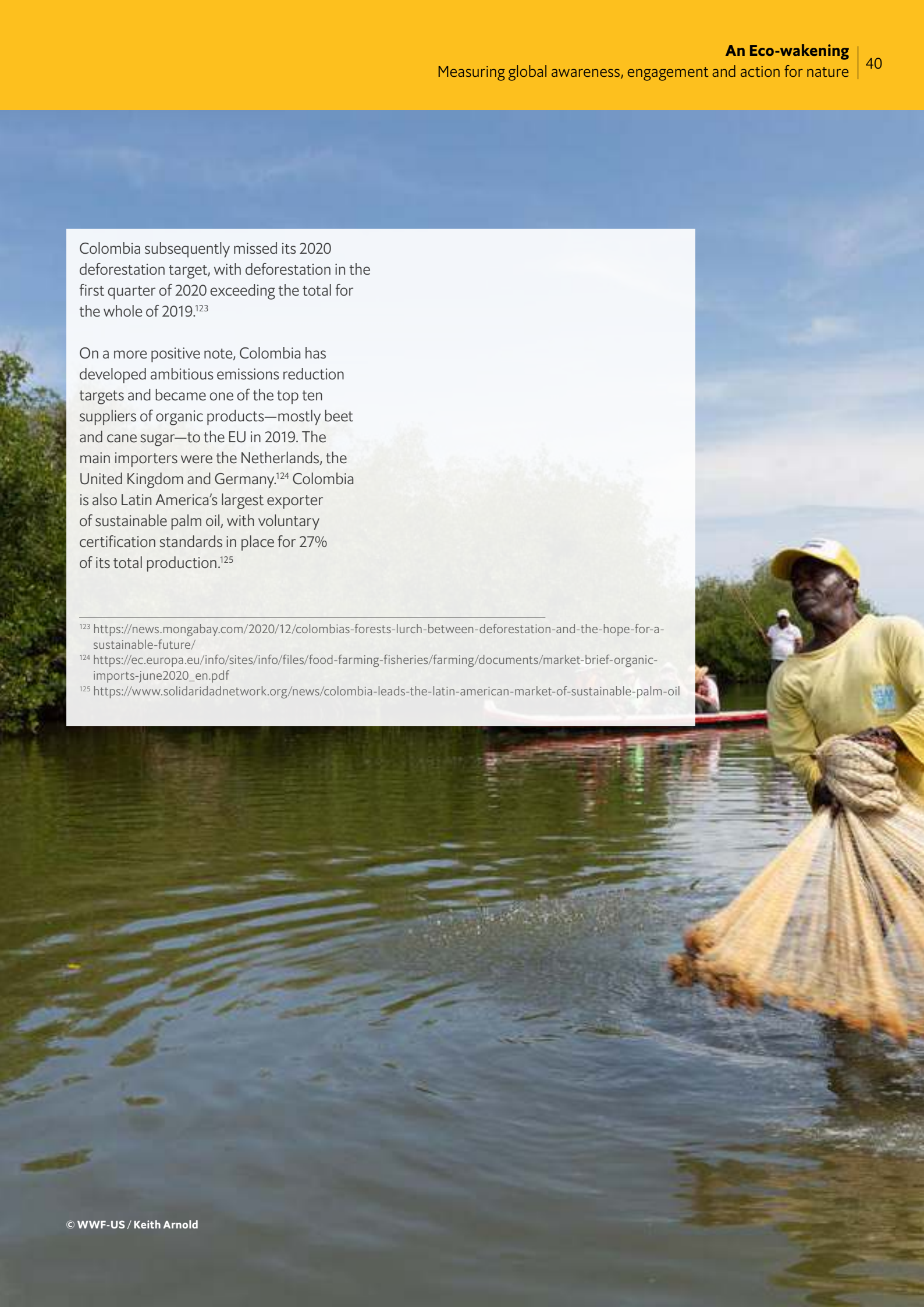
Colombia subsequently missed its 2020 deforestation target, with deforestation in the first quarter of 2020 exceeding the total for the whole of 2019.¹²³

On a more positive note, Colombia has developed ambitious emissions reduction targets and became one of the top ten suppliers of organic products—mostly beet and cane sugar—to the EU in 2019. The main importers were the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany.¹²⁴ Colombia is also Latin America's largest exporter of sustainable palm oil, with voluntary certification standards in place for 27% of its total production.¹²⁵

¹²³ <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/12/colombias-forests-lurch-between-deforestation-and-the-hope-for-a-sustainable-future/>

¹²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/farming/documents/market-brief-organic-imports-june2020_en.pdf

¹²⁵ <https://www.solidaridadnetwork.org/news/colombia-leads-the-latin-american-market-of-sustainable-palm-oil>



If people care, why is nature still under threat?

We know that awareness, engagement and action for nature are greater than ever before. At the same time, the rate of nature loss appears to be continuously accelerating. There seems to be a gap between people's growing concern about nature loss and the development of ambitious policies that will stop or even reverse it. Why might this be happening, and what can be done to bridge the gap between public opinion and government action?

There is an ongoing debate about what could be causing government inaction. Existing laws and regulations, cost implications and a lack of awareness are three possible barriers.

Enforcement of existing laws and regulations

At first glance, it seems as if huge progress has been made by governments that are determined to protect the environment. The UN reports that since 1972 there has been a 38-fold increase in environmental laws.¹²⁶ A total of 176 countries have environmental framework laws, 150 countries have enshrined environmental protection in their constitutions, and 164 countries have created cabinet-level bodies responsible for the environment.¹²⁷

Upon closer examination, however, it is clear that it is one thing to pass these laws, but it is quite another to properly enforce them. This failure presents perhaps the greatest challenge of all to protecting nature and biodiversity, now and in the future.¹²⁸ A 2016 WWF survey



Overall, respondents believed that roughly 35% of the world's sea is preserved. In reality, only 7% is protected. It's a similar story for land. Assumptions about how much is conserved varied by country, ranging from Australia, where people thought 25% of land is protected to India, where people believed it was 45%. The actual figure is just 15%."

National Geographic, Ipsos Survey

of 570 national wildlife park rangers across 12 African countries found that 59% of respondents had insufficient equipment and 42% had insufficient training to do their jobs safely and effectively.¹²⁹

Cost implications

Consumer demand has pushed more and more industries to integrate sustainable practices into their goods and services. However, the cost of re-orienting a business model towards sustainability is expensive. According to an EIU survey, two-thirds of C-suite executives in the fashion and textile industry—a key driver of nature loss—believe that implementing sustainability measures results in higher operating costs.¹³⁰ For example, organic materials can be more expensive to grow, and implementing new production, distribution or monitoring technologies has significant upfront costs.¹³¹

¹²⁶ <https://www.unep.org/resources/assessment/environmental-rule-law-first-global-report>

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ <https://www.worldwildlife.org/press-releases/new-survey-rangers-across-africa-feel-lack-of-equipment-training-and-support>

¹³⁰ https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/Is%20sustainability%20in%20fashion_Industry%20leaders%20share%20their%20views_FINAL.pdf; <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/poll-extinction-public-slow-extinction>

¹³¹ <https://www.eiu.com/n/is-sustainability-in-fashion/>

Some of these costs can be mitigated when sustainable solutions are implemented at scale, but the *perception* of cost still acts as a barrier. This perception matters, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises that may not have the money to make upfront sustainability investments in their supply chain.

Lack of awareness—still

While many people are actively campaigning on behalf of nature and public awareness is steadily increasing, more needs to be done to help the general population make the connection between their own existence and the health of the planet. A 2019 survey by National Geographic and market research company IPSOS questioned 12,000 people in 12 countries around the world to see how they valued nature and biodiversity. Almost everyone—98%—said that they were concerned about the threat of species extinction. The majority, however, were unaware of the exact pace or extent of nature loss around the world.¹³² Continued efforts to raise public awareness, particularly by political and social influencers, could help to mitigate the problem.

The world could now be at the tipping point required for transformational change

From digital activism to urban disruption, people all over the world are coming together behind an increasingly interconnected nature preservation movement.

Concern about nature loss has moved beyond activist circles and into the mainstream. Voters and the general public in countries all over the world are demanding more radical action to protect biodiversity.

Key areas of action could include:



Ambitious global targets for nature conservation, which are agreed to and implemented



Integration of environmental issues across all government policy



Private-sector sustainability efforts across all industries



Finance-sector reform, to properly disclose the financial risks of nature loss and to eliminate subsidies that drive nature loss



Nature-positive changes in consumer purchasing habits



Awareness-raising about nature loss, especially using digital technology



Recognition of indigenous activism, and respect for indigenous rights and the role of other marginalised groups

¹³² <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/poll-extinction-public-slow-extinction>

Forcing nature right to the top of the agenda for key decision-makers in both the public and private sector could be the catalyst required to deliver genuine, sustained change.

People around the world are calling for change—who will answer?

- **Individuals** who pledge to fight for nature and continue to raise awareness, share information, engage in collective action and increase the number of sustainable purchasing decisions they make.
- **Policymakers and governments** who design and enforce policies in support of nature and biodiversity preservation.
- **Private-sector companies** that act decisively in response to consumer demand by embedding sustainable practices throughout their organisations and developing innovative technologies designed to support our planet.



The fatal risk of species extinction can be avoided if individuals, organisations, businesses and policymakers unite to identify, assess, disclose, mitigate and overcome the issues to preserve nature for all the generations still to come.”

EIU, April 2021



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