

“Circular Economy”: a Framing Concept to Catalyze Greater Climate Policy Action

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Introduction

The study initiated with a literature review focused on:

Sustainability vs. Circular Economy

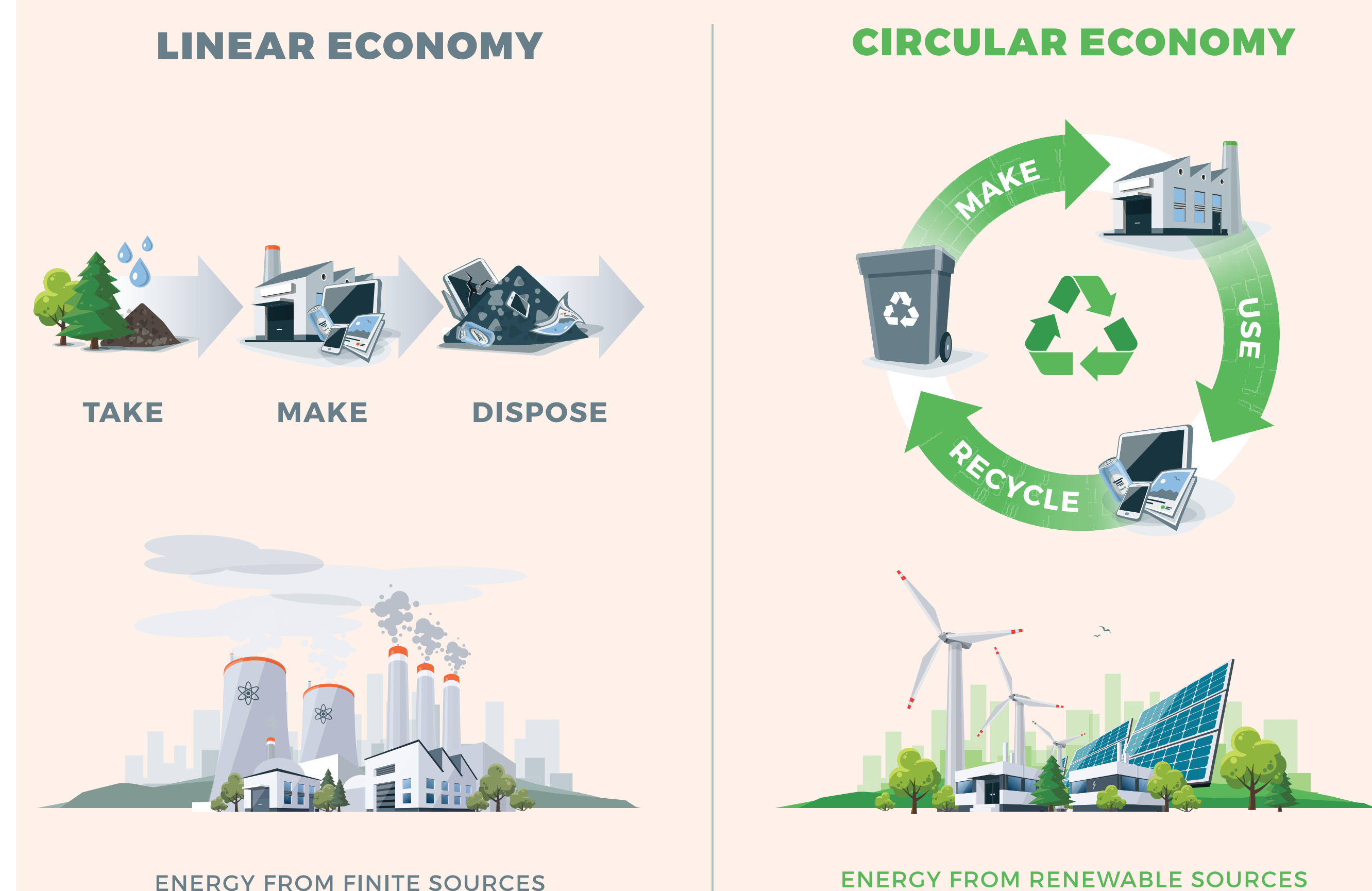
- To identify the similarities and differences between sustainability or sustainable development and circular economy to determine the relationship between both terms.
- To investigate the contextual use of these terms and the purpose and objectives served in referring to one vs. the other.

Policy Activism Related to Circular Economy

- To review existing national and regional policies and laws enacting Circular Economy.
- To explore the evolution and reorganization of existing related acts as Circular Economy laws.

Levels of Circular Economy Implementation

- To assess Circular Economy implementation and available monitoring frameworks; macro (national), meso (regional).
- To highlight the transition of corporations (micro) from linear to circular business models and quantify the added value reported as an outcome of such a transition.



Objectives

To gauge perception and palatability of Circular Economy as a policy lever and use results to develop recommendations for policymakers to improve the messaging and framing of their renewable and waste management policies to promote efficient and sustainable resource utilization.

Methodology

A survey was conducted to three categories of audience with overlapping and category-specific questions based on the three hypotheses (H) below. The targeted audiences were: a. policymakers, b. businesses, and c. academia / general public.

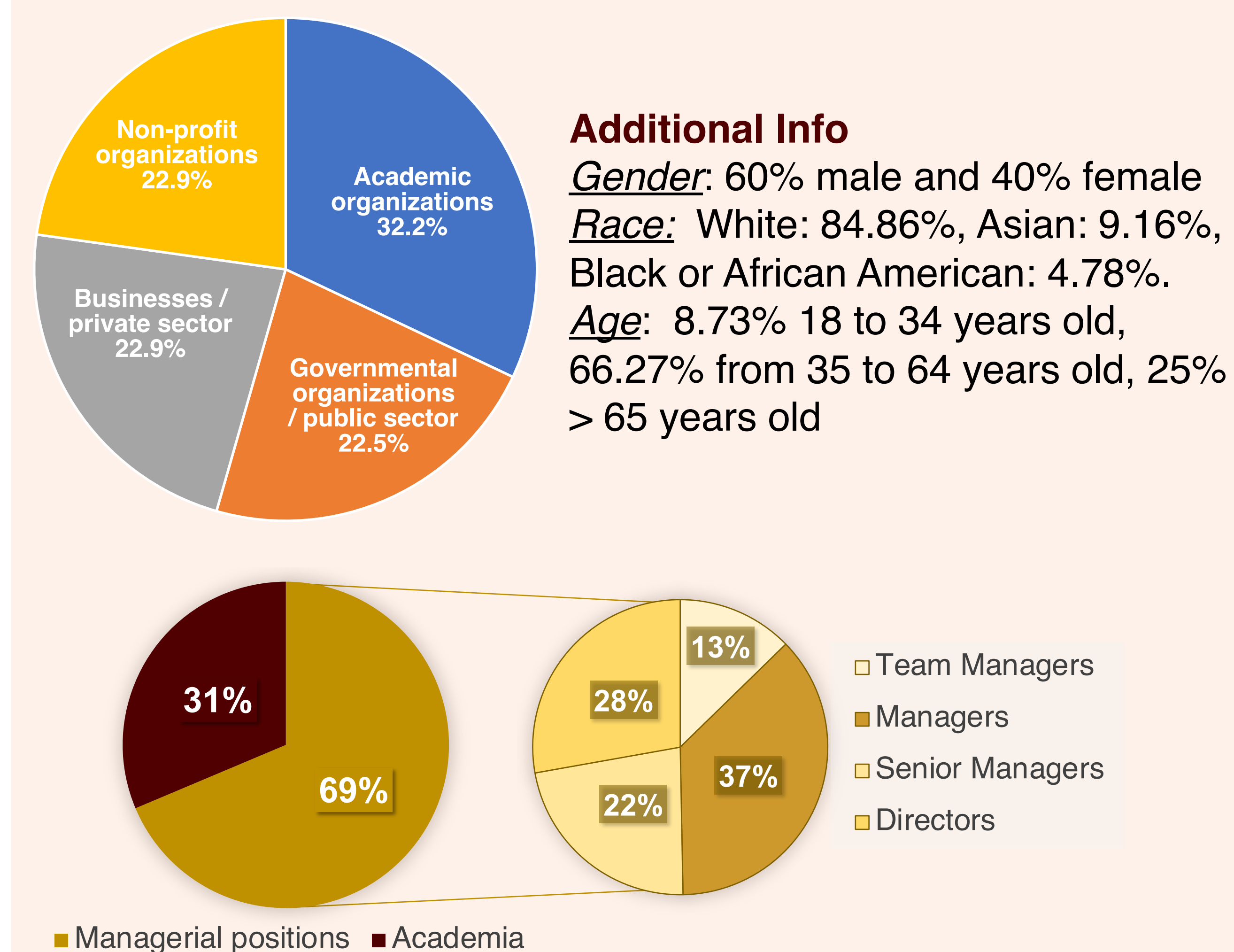
H1 (Policymakers): Public support for policy measures to meet sustainability targets and mitigate climate change improves when framed using the concept of “circular economy” compared to today’s framing in the context of “climate change” and “sustainability”.

H2 (Businesses): Transition to circular business models can create incremental economic value compared to traditional operational efficiency measures.

H3 (Public): High understanding and acceptability of Circular Economy compared to sustainability and climate change.

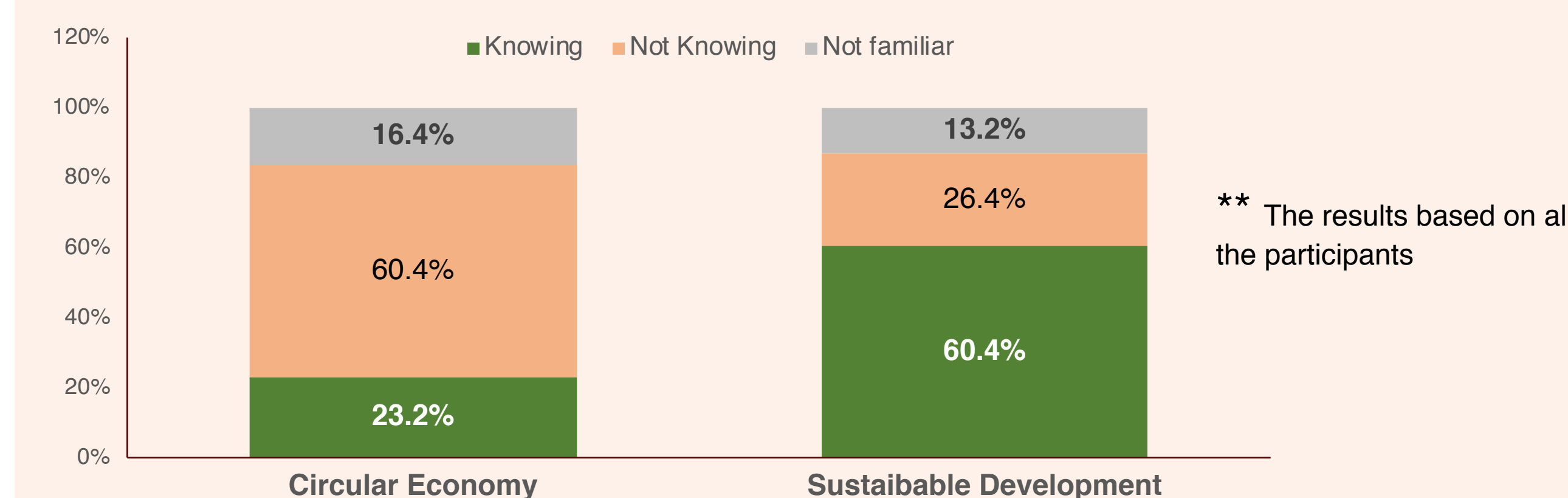
Profile of Respondents

The survey has been filled in by 253 participants.



Initial Research Findings

Understanding the terms



Implementing a circular economy framework will improve the quality of goods, but may affect the cost of production and, consequently, consumer prices, having none or somewhat positive impact on unemployment rates and businesses’ profitability. Nevertheless, this will somewhat increase economic growth.

75% and 80% of the terms are related to understanding of sustainability and CE, respectively

“conserve”, “efficiency”, “reduce”, “recycle”, “renewable”, “reuse”, “waste reduction”, “environmental quality”, “recover” and “regenerative”

closed-loop system”, “economic prosperity”, “intergenerational”, “replace” and “social equity”

25% and 75% of the terms are not related to understanding of sustainability and CE, respectively

Public and Private Sector Views

- 63% and 57% somewhat or strongly agree at the public sector and 55-53% somewhat or strongly agree at the private sector that a greater benefit will be obtained from a sustainable development or a circular economies framework, respectively.
- Significant technological innovation is necessary for both sectors to implement a circular economy framework.

Environmental Views

- 56% believe that earth has limited space and resources.
- 63.5% support that humanity will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe, if business as usual trends continue.
- 42% agrees that implementing a circular economy framework will have a positive effect on the environment.

Conclusions

What are the ranking of key priorities?

1. Economic wellbeing
2. Societal wellbeing
3. Environmental wellbeing

Circular Economy and Companies

Companies in the private sector implementing a CE framework are expected to be more i) Innovative (63%), ii) Efficient (57%) and iii) Profitable (47%).