



Are Scottish policy-makers familiar with natural capital?

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Incorporating insights from Dr Seb O'Connor at SRUC
working in People & Nature (C4-1)



alvanising Change via Natural Capital



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Is NC relevant to Scottish policy?

- Independent analysis has identified that NC is affected by – and affects – hundreds of Scottish policy domains¹.
- Protecting and enhancing NC is a commitment for Scotland – it is part of the NPF, and mentioned in many policy documents².



But...

- NC is a relatively new concept and priority, and introducing new approaches is rarely quick & simple³.
- Prior studies suggest knowledge on ecosystem services and natural capital is not often easy to use⁴.

- 1) Maes, M. J. A., Jones, K. E., Toledano, M. B. and Milligan, B. (2020). Accounting for natural capital has cross-cutting relevance for UK public sector decision-making, *Ecosystem Services*, 44, 101127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2020.101127>
- 2) Claret, C., Metzger, M. J., Kettunen, M. and ten Brink, P. (2018). Understanding the integration of ecosystem services and natural capital in Scottish policy, *Environmental Science & Policy*, 88, 32-38. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2018.05.019>
- 3) Lawton, J. H. (2007). Ecology, politics and policy, *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 44(3), 465-474. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2664.2007.01315.x>
- 4) Turnpenny, J., Russel, D. and Jordan, A. (2014). The challenge of embedding an ecosystem services approach: patterns of knowledge utilisation in public policy appraisal, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 32(2), 247-262. <https://doi.org/10.1068/c1317j>

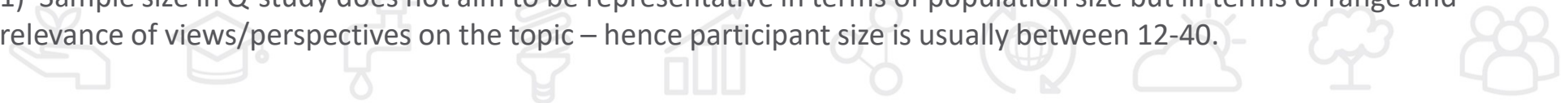
D4-1 People and Nature project

Nature-Economy discourse analysis



- Study of SG civil servants' views on nature-economy relationships
- 'Q-Study' carried out with 20 staff¹.
 - In different departments and bodies, e.g. Public Health Scotland, to Future Environment Division
 - Interviews & rankings of a 'Q set' of statements
- Results revealed 3 broad groupings in discourse.

1) Sample size in Q-study does not aim to be representative in terms of population size but in terms of range and relevance of views/perspectives on the topic – hence participant size is usually between 12-40.



D4-1 People and Nature project

Nature-Economy discourse analysis

Economy as...

Steward of nature



- 'Weakly' anthropocentric, stewardship of earth as key responsibility of economic systems.
- Relationships with nature not just focused self-interest of people.
- Limits to economic growth well recognized and reductions in material throughput identified as key.
- 'Pragmatic' approach to policy frameworks and tools.

Rebalancing relationships



- Strong emphasis on making economy more 'circular'.
- This was articulated through importance of reciprocal human-nature relationships and justice-oriented languages (repair, addressing harms of colonialism and capitalism) rather than efficiency through technology.
- Procedural and distributive justice held to be important for this group; including and helping people seemed to resonate more in this factor.

Manager of nature



- Nature needs to be managed better (as future investment).
- Quantifying nature and accounting frameworks like Natural Capital can do that, e.g. internalizing costs into the market.
- Technology can help with efficiency.
- Justice not seen as core part of everyday practices; '*social justice doesn't really come into that part of the work... it is not like something that's discussed*' (Participant #3).

D4-1 People and Nature project

Nature-Economy discourse analysis

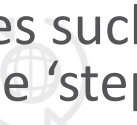
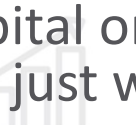


Implications:

- Formal policy landscape typically reflects nature as externalized from economy, but that doesn't necessarily reflect policy-makers own views e.g. about ethical and pragmatic limits of markets
 - More focus on wellbeing economy would reduce this; esp. with explicit recognition of Scottish economy as embedded within ecological systems and as such recognizing the limits to growth

Other insights

- Desire to improve coordination between and across sectors and departments
 - Policies focused on social wellbeing and ecological sustainability were often seen as siloed
- Useful to enable more spaces for reflection – to help civil servants identify and respond to tensions, compromises and emergent possibilities for nature-economy transformations.
 - Tools related to Natural Capital or approaches such as encouraging private finance, if used in a socially just way, could be 'stepping-stones'?



Are Scottish policy-makers familiar with natural capital?

- Kerry Waylen, Ishaan Patil,
Esther Carmen



- Part of JHI-D5-3 project  **Galvanising Change via Natural Capital**
- <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/project/galvanising-change-via-natural-capital>



What did we do?

- Online survey for Scottish Government staff, Sep-Dec 2023.
- Distributed via email to energy, marine, planning, transport, well-being and agricultural teams – emphasise that open to all including those not confident or keen on the topic
- Four broad topics:
 - Job role and background
 - Understanding of Natural Capital
 - Familiarity with policy-oriented data and tools related to natural capital (ENCA, also NCAI and Natural Capital Accounts)
 - Views on the need for any changes to embed environmental issues in policy
- Mixture of open & closed-format answers, analysed in SPSS & Nvivo.

The questions & anonymised data will be open access on Zenodo



Who took part?

- 50 respondents – obviously a small subset of the 1000s in SG. Probably some self-selection - those who didn't respond were less likely to be familiar or interested in NC.
 - Specialisms: 35 economists, 10 as social researchers and 3 planners.
 - Length of time in civil service evenly spread from under 2 years through to more than 16 years. Nearly half of respondents had spent less than 18 months in their current role.
 - Mix of job grades from deputy director to assistant analyst
 - Mix of departments – from Transport Scotland to Marine Scotland, OCEA, to ENFOR, Health & Social care.
- We did explore how job role attributes may have affected views, but due to the small sample size it is challenging to draw firm conclusions on this, so detail on this is not shown here.



Results

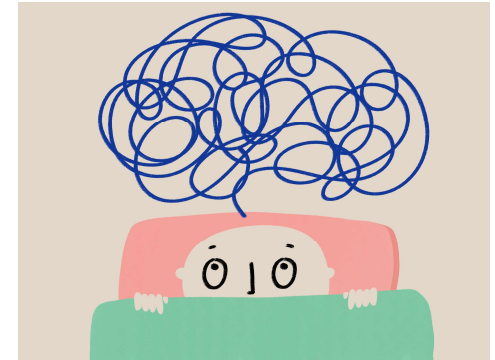
Headline themes for the following slides:

1. Understandings of NC
2. Familiarity with tools & data related to NC
3. Perceptions of whether any changes are needed, to embed sustainability, and if so what



Understandings of Natural Capital

- Familiar but not confident
 - 80% were somewhat or completely familiar with NC
 - 24% were somewhat or completely expert with NC
- Open text answers descriptions of NC align with dominant definitions e.g. as per the 2021 Dasgupta Report. For example, someone working on tourism described NC as: *“Natural resources (e.g. green and blue spaces) that give us pleasure/add to wellbeing through enjoying them (e.g. outdoor activities in nature) or those that give us benefits (financial or otherwise) from harvesting them.”*
- Views about who can work with it varied – many respondents identified NC as relevant to those working on environmental topics or non-policy groups, rather than themselves.



Familiarity with tools and data

Asked about 3 specific initiatives:

- Enabling Natural Capital Approach (ENCA)
Supplementary guidance to the green book, since 2020¹
- Scottish Natural Capital Accounts, linked to ONS²
- Natural Capital Asset Index (NCAI)³



Guidance

Enabling a Natural Capital Approach guidance

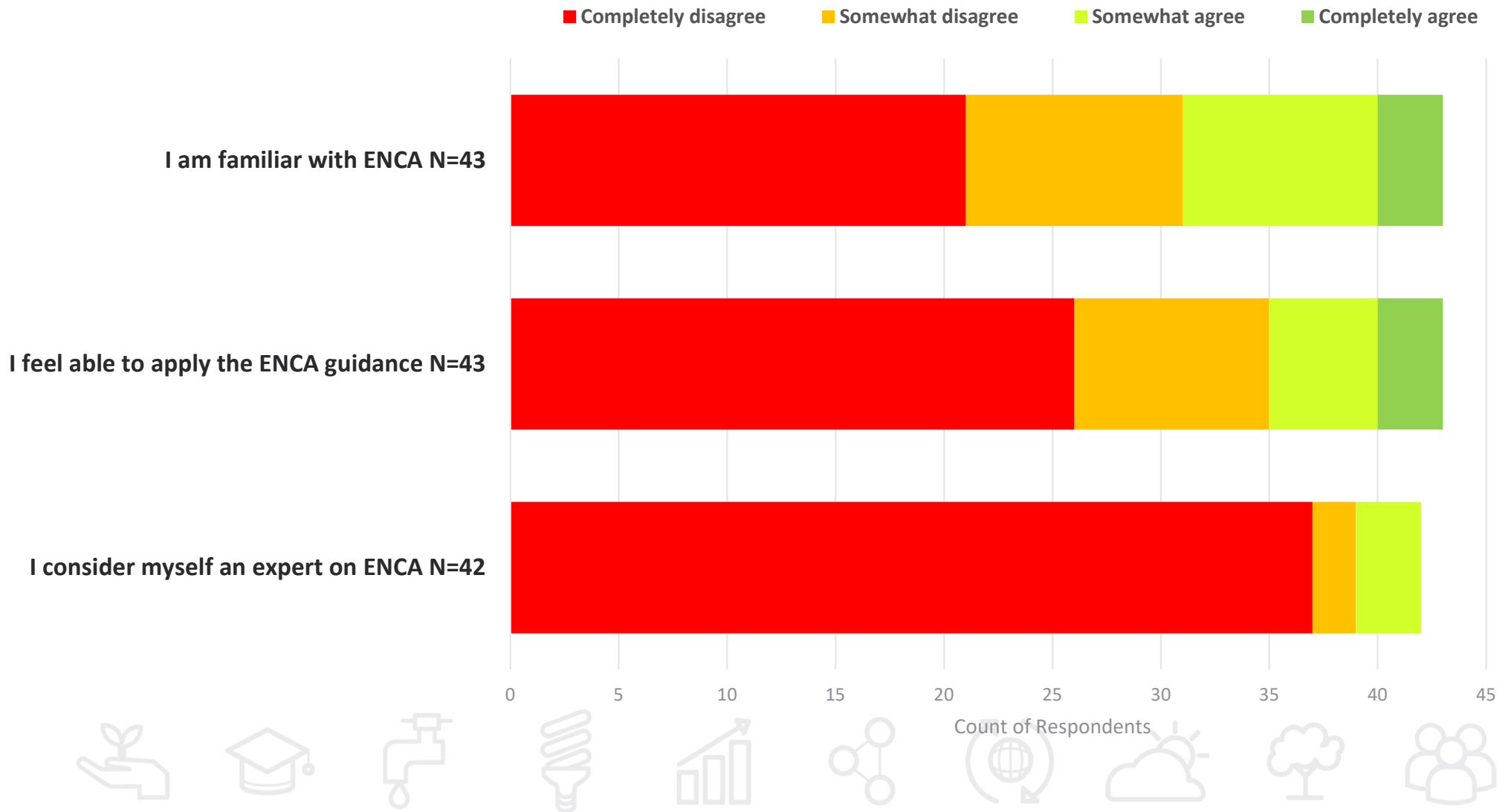
Updated 19 July 2023

- 1) Enabling a Natural Capital Approach guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/enabling-a-natural-capital-approach-enca>
- 2) Scottish Natural Capital Accounts: 2023 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-natural-capital-accounts-2023/>
- 3) Scotland's Natural Capital Asset Index <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/social-and-economic-benefits-nature/natural-capital/scotlands-natural-capital-asset-index>



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Familiarity with ENCA



Familiarity with NCAI and Accounts

Responses on 4-point Likert scale, to questions about familiarity with two Natural Capital accounting initiatives in Scotland:

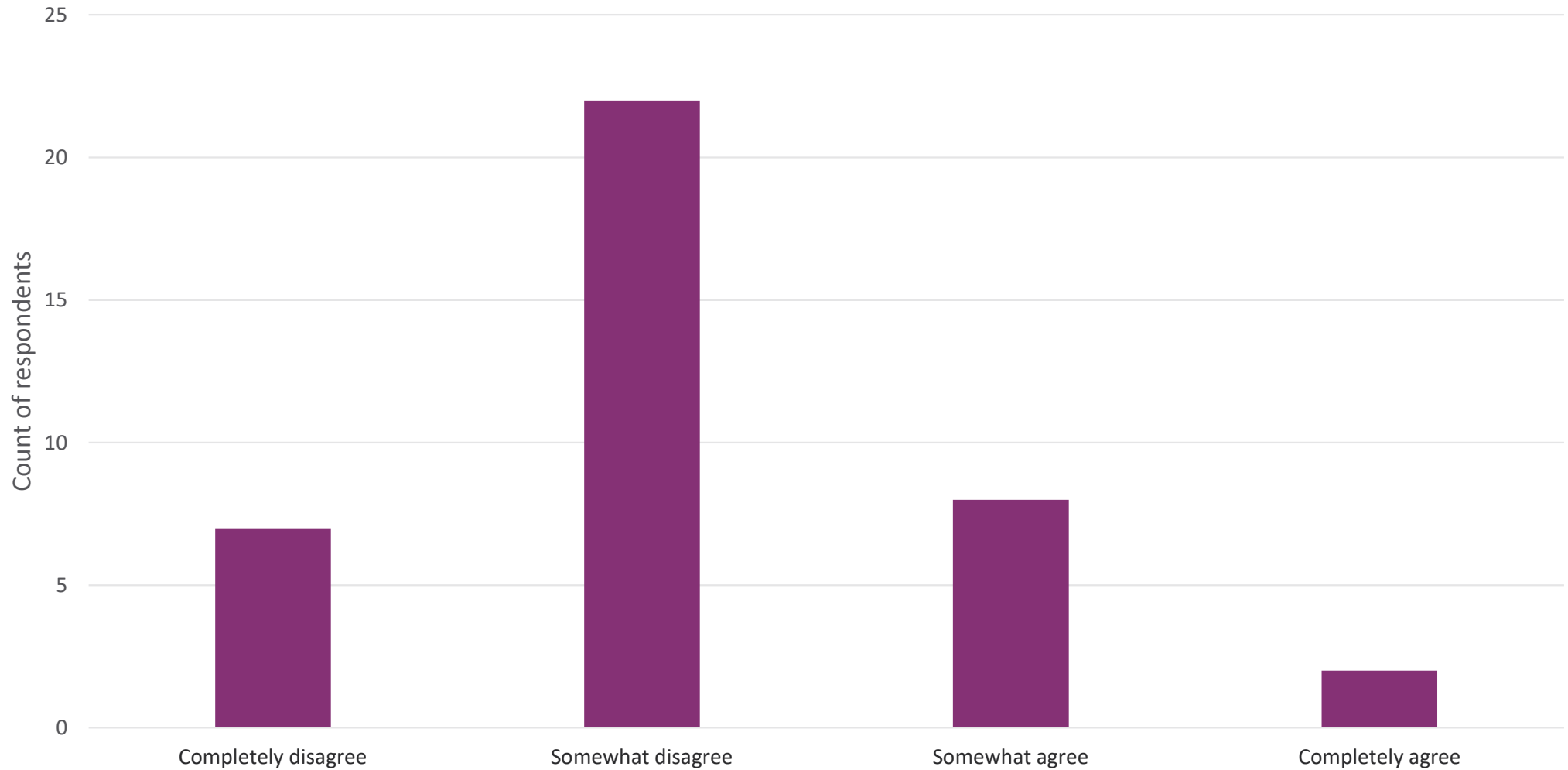
	I have not heard of this	I have heard of this but I don't know much	I am very familiar with this	I am expert in this
Scotland's Natural Capital Asset Index (NCAI). N=44	56%	28%	16%	0%
Scotland's Natural Capital Accounts. N=44	33%	47%	16%	5%

Training? Only a minority recalled receiving any related to NC.

- 4 had heard about it as part of 'general' CPD, 4 mentioned more focused training.
- 5 stated they had learnt about it 'on the job'.
- 1 had sought it out themselves without prompting.

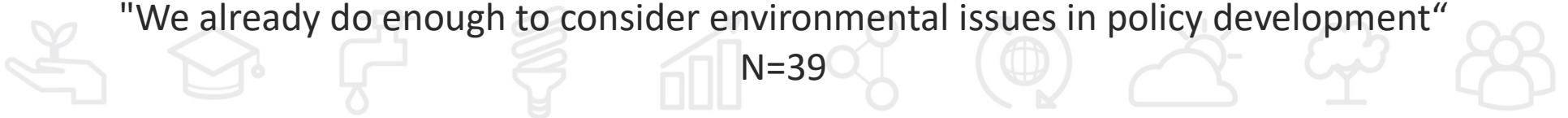


Are environmental sustainability issues already sufficiently well-embedded?

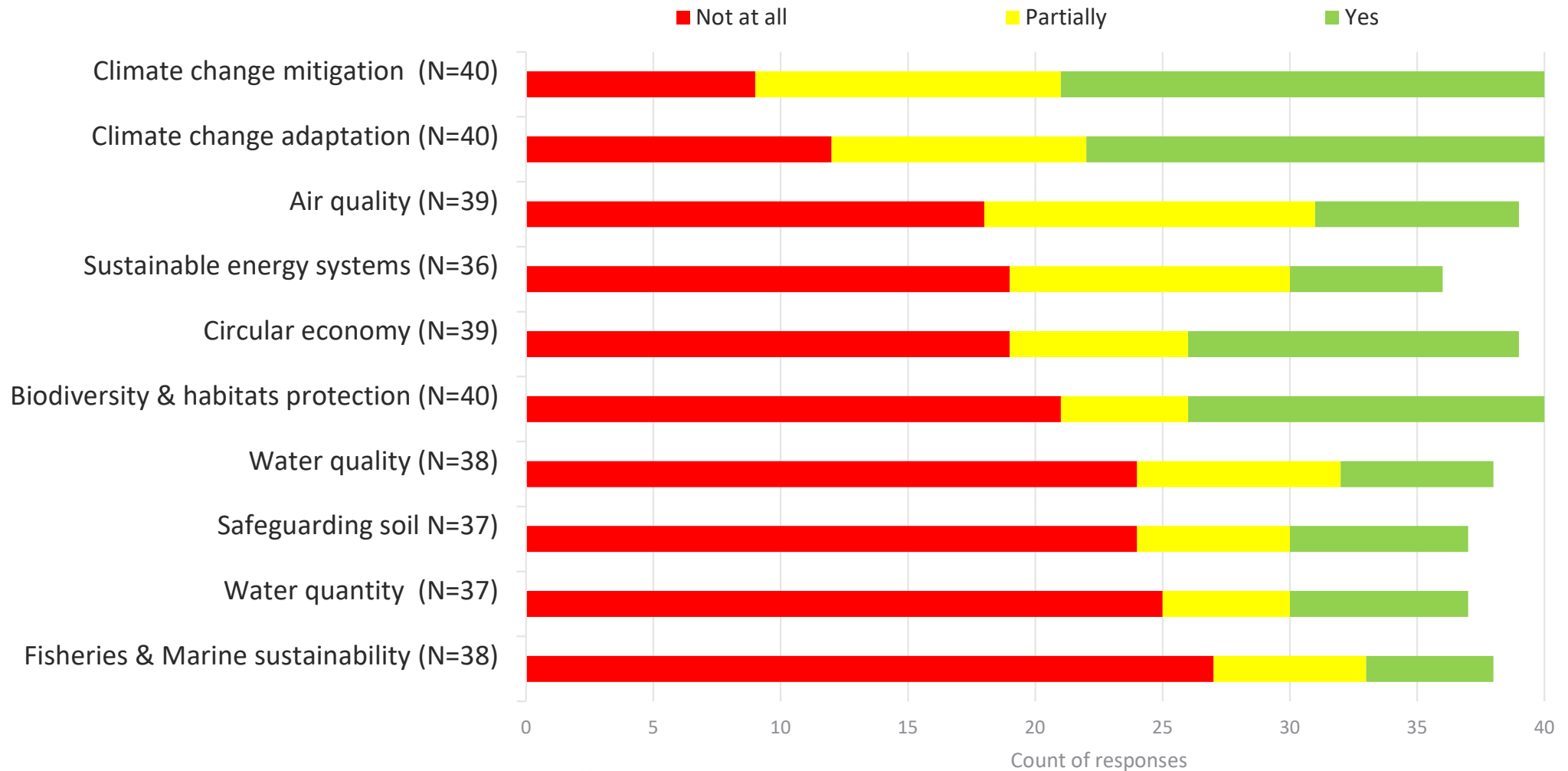


"We already do enough to consider environmental issues in policy development"

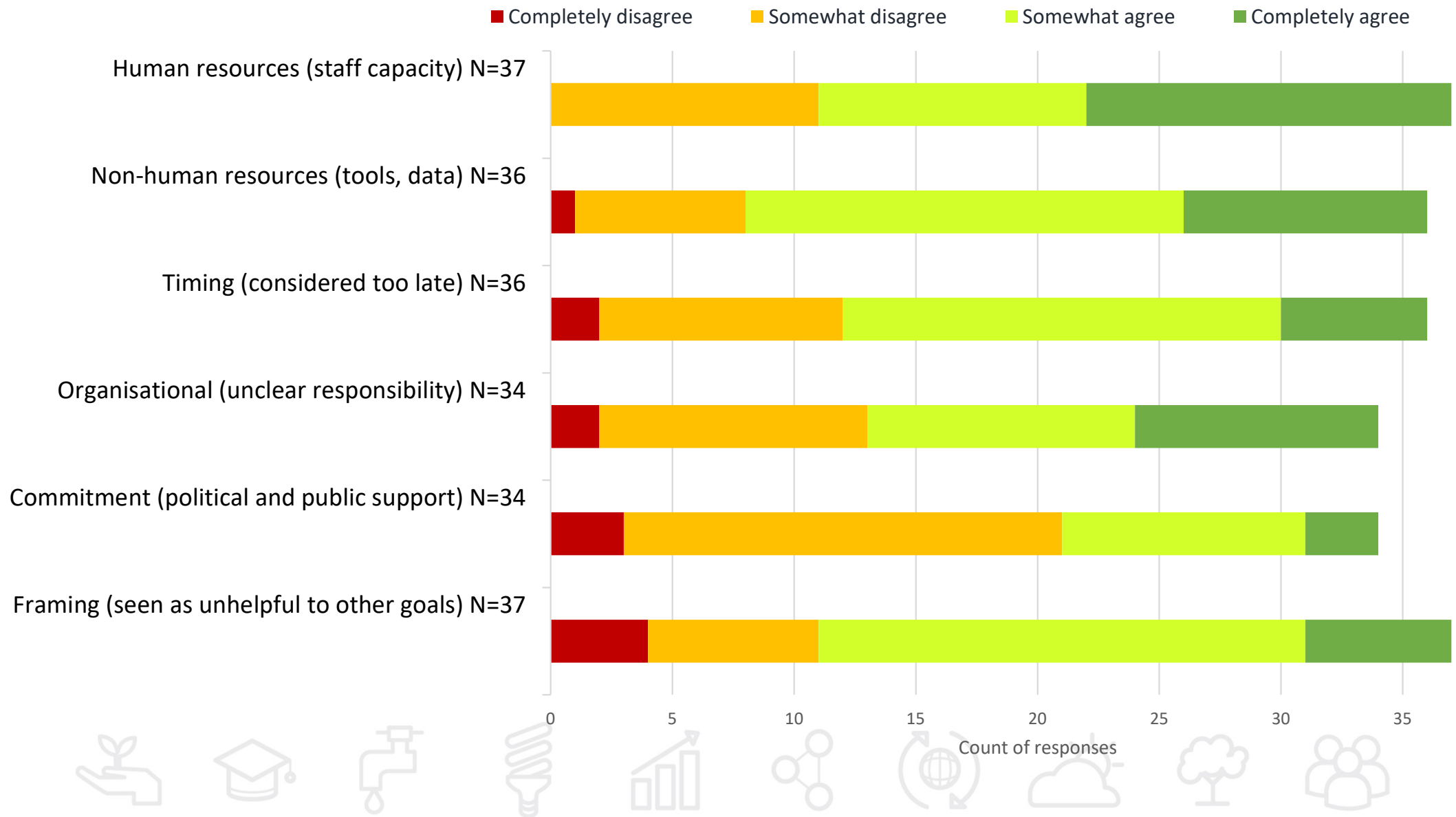
N=39



What aspects of environmental sustainability are already considered in the work of your unit?

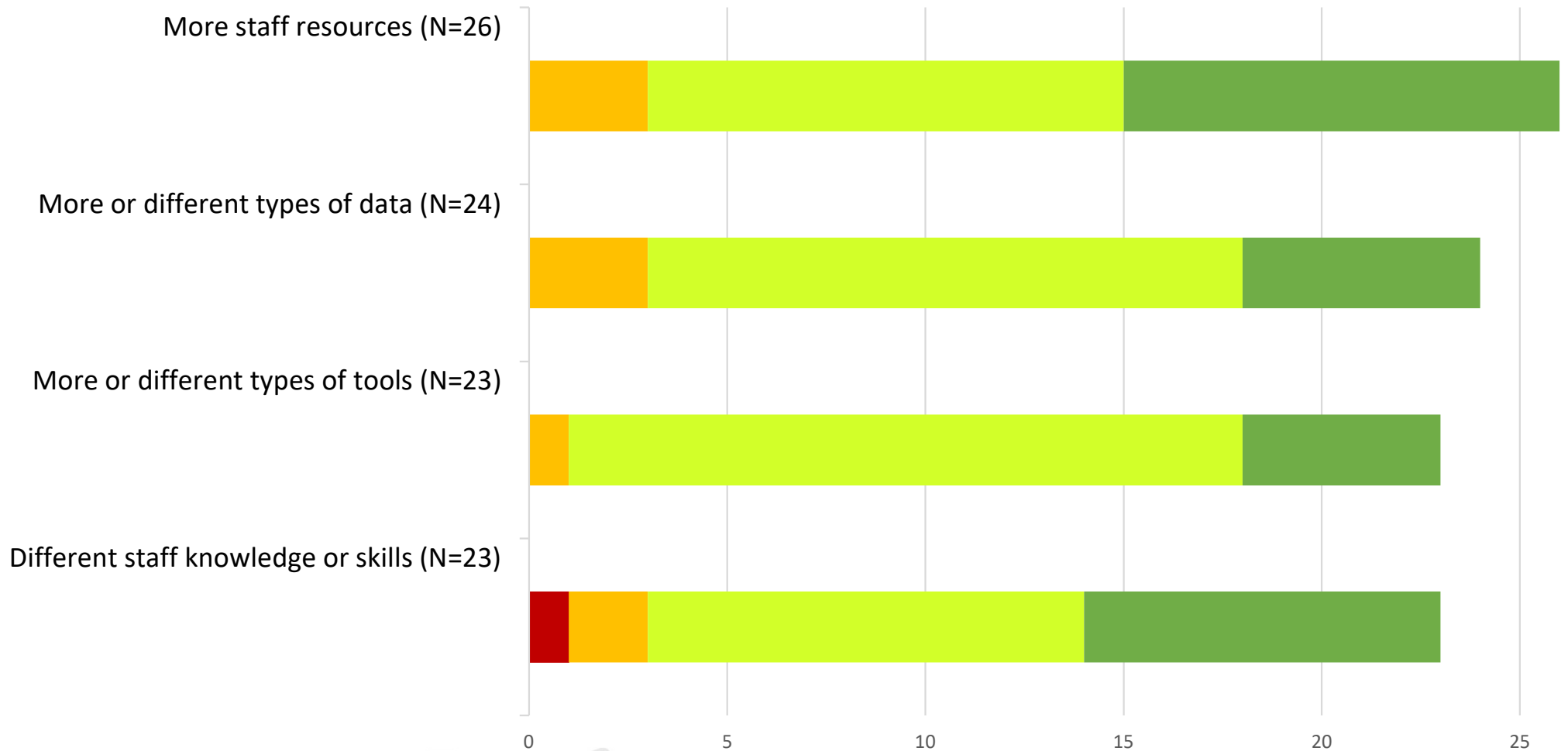


What challenges, if any, can make it difficult to embed environmental sustainability considerations?



Ideally, what types of changes or resources could help to embed consideration of sustainability issues?

■ Completely disagree
 ■ Somewhat disagree
 ■ Somewhat agree
 ■ Completely agree



Take home messages

- Familiarity but not confidence in NC
- Interest in doing more to embed sustainability
- Keen for more tools and data – but also other types of complementary changes.
- More needs to be done to make NC used in policy development
- Questions over whether to focus on ENCA, or whether other tools and datasets (e.g. NCAI) should also be directly useable.



Potential implications – to discuss

More effort to build awareness and confidence in working with ENCA

- Training provision, examples and capacity-building
- Team resources to engage and trial new approaches

Consider other opportunities to consider NC in policy development

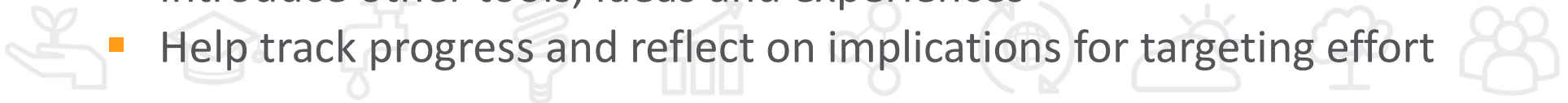
- Are datasets like NCAI and ONS something that could or should be directly useable? Are other approaches useful beyond ENCA?
- Consider institutional structures & mandates for working with NC

Expect a multi-faceted strategy to embed NC in policy development

- Plan to check, reflect and adapt targeting of efforts ('adaptive governance')

Collaborate with researchers - co-produce ideas and insights

- Introduce other tools, ideas and experiences
- Help track progress and reflect on implications for targeting effort



Part of  **Galvanising Change via Natural Capital**

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Check website or contact Kerry for more information and outputs as they become available; also for related work e.g. reviews of other countries' work to embed NC in policy. www.hutton.ac.uk/project/galvanising-change-via-natural-capital/

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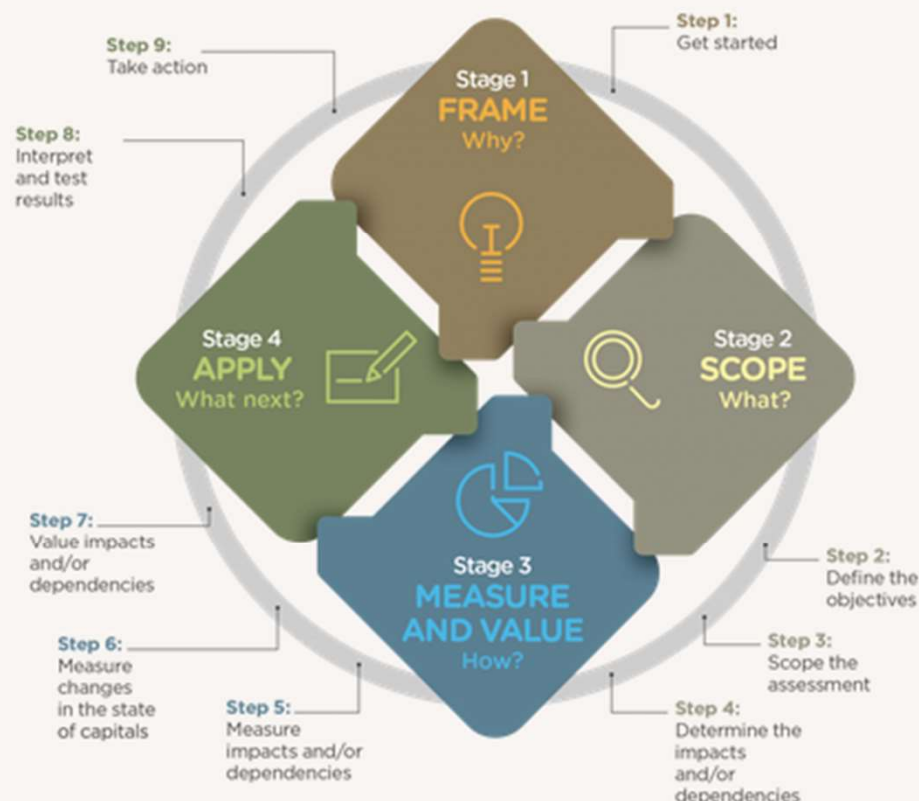


CAPITALS APPROACH

Natural Capital Protocol

[DOWNLOAD THE PROTOCOL](#)

The Natural Capital Protocol is a decision-making framework that enables organisations to identify, measure and value their direct and indirect impacts and dependencies on natural capital.



All organizations to varying degrees are dependent on the health of the natural world. Organizations also impact on nature's health, both positively and negatively.

Understanding the complex and dynamic relationships that organizations have with the health of natural assets and the ecosystem services they provide enables organizations to make more informed decisions. A capitals approach empowers organizations to deliver benefits their employees, society, the broader economy and the natural world alongside their businesses.