

Sustainability in Belgian start-ups

Summary report



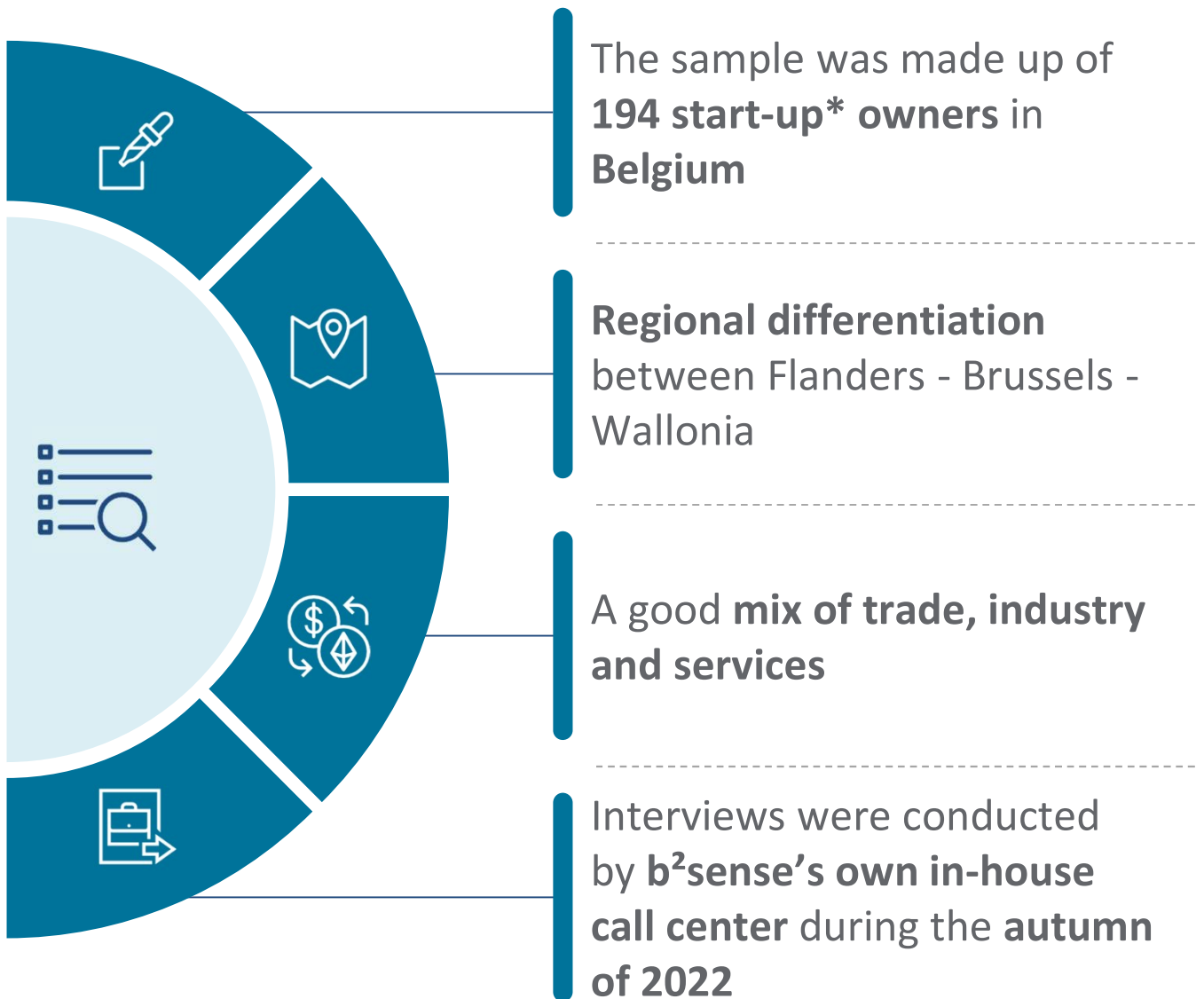
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What does sustainability mean for start-ups?

What sustainable actions are being undertaken or planned?

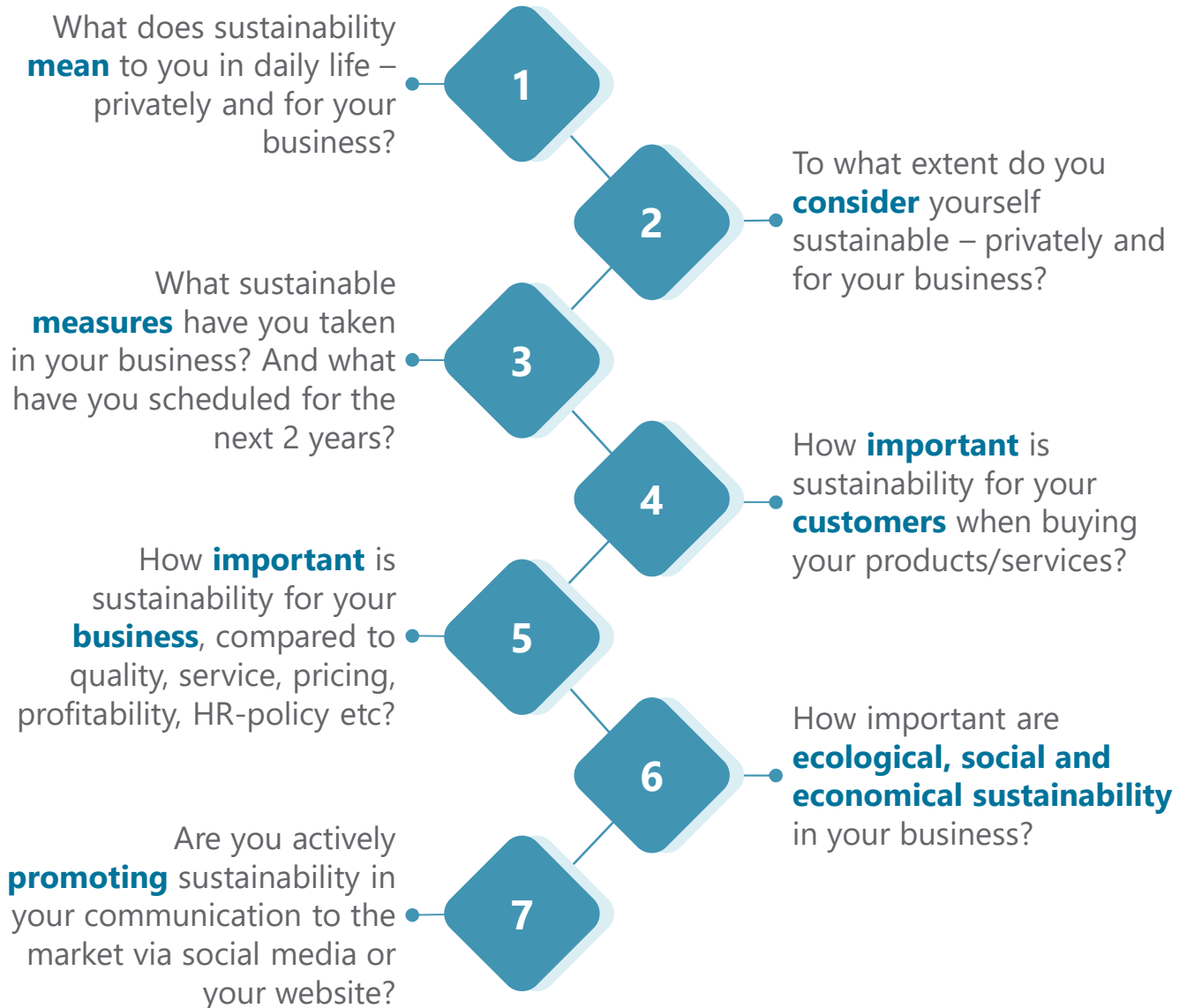
How important is sustainability for customers of start-ups?

How we conducted the study



**started a new business activity during the past 24 months*

We asked start-ups 7 questions



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Business profile of the sampled start-up's

- > Mainly active in services
- > Mostly sole proprietors (1 person)
- > 2/3rd of business owners are men
- > Half is younger than 35 years
- > This is in line with data provided by UNIZO's starter guide 2022



Most start ups attribute a meaning to sustainability

1 out of 3 uses sustainability actively as part of their marketing communication (especially in industry & trade)



1 out of 4 does not feel particularly involved with sustainability in the business context (1 out of 5 in private sphere)

3 out of 4 of start-ups attribute a meaning to the concept sustainability (36% in business claim to be very sustainable; 19% in private)



Only minor differences exist between the business and private spheres in terms of what makes up sustainability. Private involvement is predominantly higher (compared to business) on three areas of sustainability :



Efficiency & green energy

(close windows/ doors, put out the light, led lamps, light sensors, reduce the temperature, burn wood/ pellets)



Recycling

(waste sorting, waste management, reuse, recuperation)



Sustainable/ mindful consumption of food & products

(buying/ selling ecological products, thinking before buying, adjusting behaviour, climate, spending less) no meat/vegetarian, organic food, no waste/ excesses, eat less

In the business sphere, areas of sustainability are slightly more fragmented

The principal domains are:



Energy

- buy green energy, close windows/ doors, put out the light, led lamps, light sensors, reduce the temperature, burn wood/pellets



Recycling, waste management

- waste sorting, waste management, reuse, recuperation
- use less paper, avoid kitchen rolls, print less
- plastic avoidance/ reduction, sustainable packaging, glass bottle
- economical with water, well/ pump



Buying behavior

- ecological/ sustainable/ recyclable products that last a long time, 2nd hand, recycle, don't buy unnecessary things, don't order/ manage too much stock
- buying European/ Belgian/ local/ family business
- buying/ selling sustainable/ ecological products, thinking before buying, adjusting behaviour, climate, spending less
- no meat/ vegetarian, organic food, no waste/ excesses, eat less



Transportation

- limit movements, no unnecessary movements, riding together, using public transport, on foot, by bike
- buy electric/hybrid car



Building efficiency

- insulate house, solar panels, battery pack, solar/ heat pump water heater

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Only 30% uses green modes of transport (public transport, (e)bike) for commuting, with a predicted further uptake of only 4% in the next two years



Some concrete **'sustainable' actions are undertaken by more than 3 in 4 businesses**, but refer predominantly to own behaviour that is **easy to perform, and maintain** as well as requires little to no (financial) effort

Easy actions include:

- Save electricity as much as possible by switching off the light when not necessary
- Actively recycle and manage waste
- Reduce paper usage drastically
- Turn the heating lower

Actions that require more profound behavioural changes or changes that require financial investments are much less undertaken. Also, little appetite exists to change this during the next two years.

Unpopular actions include:

- Install solar panels
- Install a charging station at my business
- Buy at suppliers that consider sustainability important or are certified
- Buy green energy
- Do as many movements as possible by bike or public transport
- Only buy or lease electrical cars



According to start-ups ...



Customers are not that concerned about sustainability as almost 50% of customers does not attribute **significant importance** to sustainability when purchasing services or products. A nuance exists for the trade sector, where about 25% finds sustainability to be of importance.



Sustainability is considered to be one of many important components in doing business with 1 in 2 considering it very important (less for the region Brussels)



All three pillars of sustainability (social – economic – ecological) are equally important

- The ecological pillar is more important for industry
- The social pillar is more pronounced in trade and the region of Brussels

**Do you want to learn more
about how our market
research on sustainability can
help your business?**

Get in touch with us!

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