

# INSIGHTS INTO SUSTAINABLE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**2019 STUDY ON THE P5™ STANDARD  
FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT**



**FROM THE GLOBAL AUTHORITY ON SUSTAINABLE PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

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# ABOUT GPM

Since 2009, GPM's standards, methods, and certifications have been the catalyst for the inclusion of sustainability in the project profession. Through our partner network of universities, training firms, and strategic partners, we have raised awareness and trained and certified thousands of individuals all over the globe.

As sustainability advocates we have collaborated with some of the largest firms in the world in developing the UN Sustainable Development Goals and are regular contributors on business to the UN Conference on Climate Change, better known as COP.

As we turn 10 years old, we are pleased with what we have accomplished. Looking towards the future though, we have ambitious goals as we look to focus more on regenerative development.

## ABOUT THE STUDY

*A deeper dive into how The GPM P5™ Standard for Sustainability in Project Management is impacting the profession*

In 2016, we began studying the impacts of our P5 Standard on the PM profession. The initial study, which surveyed individuals from a wide range of disciplines, provided us some basic information on how our standard was being utilized. Below are the key findings.

### 2016

39% Project Managers	38% The Americas	76% of downloaders put it into practice	93% who have adopted P5 saw a tangible increase in project performance	94% of Executives stated that projects and project management are integral to sustainable development
19% Academics	44% Europe			
11% Executives	10% Asia Pacific			
8% Training Providers	6% Africa			
6% Government Officials	2% Middle East			

For 2019, we had the benefit of surveying and interviewing a wider audience as our standard has enjoyed widespread distribution with over 150,000 downloads worldwide in English, Spanish, Polish, Russian, and Farsi. We included sustainability professionals in this year's study, and separated out Australia along with Oceania territories. There was a 6% increase in adoption, a 2% increase in project performance, and a 6% increase in the number of executives who believe that projects and project management are integral to sustainable development.

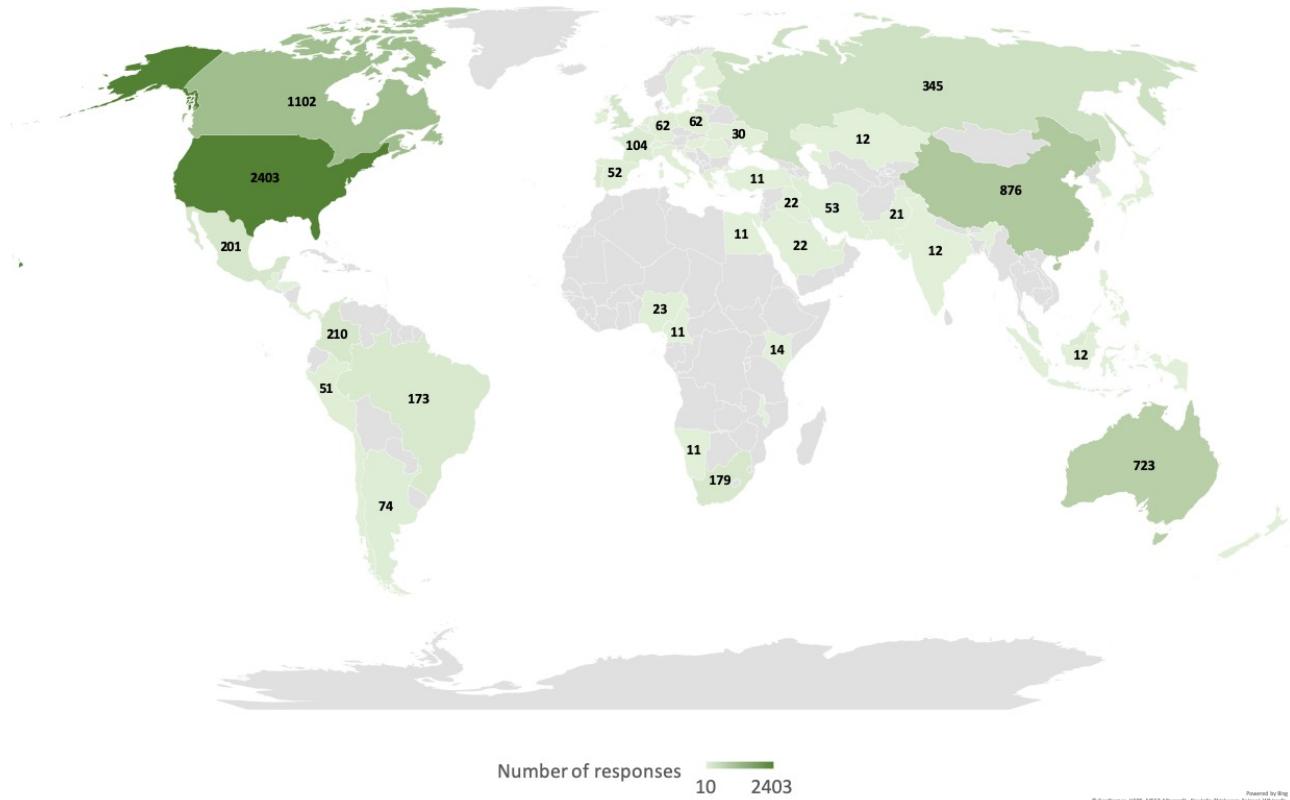
### 2019

32% Project /Program /Portfolio Mgr.	46% The Americas	82% of downloaders put it into practice	95% who have adopted P5 saw a tangible increase in project performance	100% of Executives stated that projects and project management are integral to sustainable development
23% Academics	19% Europe			
18% Government Officials	13% Asia			
15% Executives	9% Oceania			
6% Sustainability Professionals	3% Africa			
3% Training Providers	1% Middle East			

# RESPONDENTS

2019

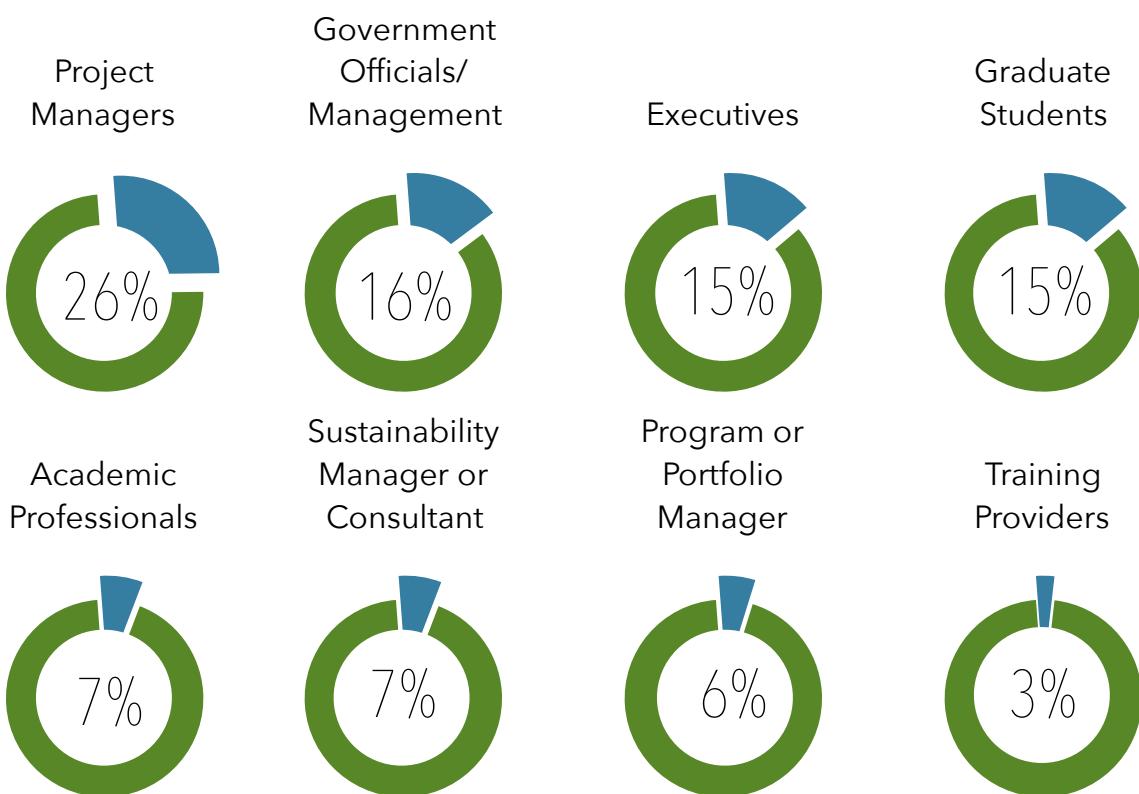
A total of 8,040 individuals from 64 countries took part in the study, making this the largest such dive into sustainability in project management to date. Responses per country ranged from 1 to as many as 2,400 representing every inhabited continent. Only countries with 10 or more responses are labeled.



# RESPONDENTS

## AREA OF FOCUS

The largest group of respondents were project managers totaling 2,090



# EXECUTIVES

*Executives provide input on the value of sustainability in projects and the P5 Standard*

## EXECUTIVE RESPONSES

The question of whether for-profit companies should place an emphasis on the common good was viewed in large part as a tradeoff between the pursuit of profit and social responsibility. Milton Friedman famously took a strong stance that corporations should think first and foremost about profits in a 1970 essay with the title, *The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase its Profits*. In his essay he stated “There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.”

This old school approach is largely dying off as the vast majority of executives understand that sustainability is the key to success.

Paul Polman, former CEO of Unilever and board member of the UN Global Compact, has been on record stating that ***“It is cheaper to attack the issues and invest in solving them than to deal with the costs.”*** Simply put, doing good is good for business.

According to our research, Mr. Polman is not alone. Among executives, over 1,000 surveyed, 100% believe that project managers should understand how important sustainability is to their project.

Among the same executives, 96% believe that projects and project management are integral to sustainable development, and 79% empower project managers to make strategic decisions. This number increased to 83% among government officials.

While the GPM P5 Standard was written for project managers, executives utilize it to aid in decision making:

- ◆ 49% use it a couple of times a year
- ◆ 47% use it once a month (or so)
- ◆ 2% use it weekly
- ◆ 1% had yet to open it (we assume they have now...)



# PROJECT MANAGERS

*Project Managers share their experience and insight on the P5 Standard*

## PM RESPONSES

The P5 Standard was first released as a concept and has evolved over the past ten years through various forms. It provides guidance on how to approach sustainability in projects and how to manage risks and opportunities.

Project Managers comprised the largest respondent group in our study with 2,090 responses representing 57 countries and territories.

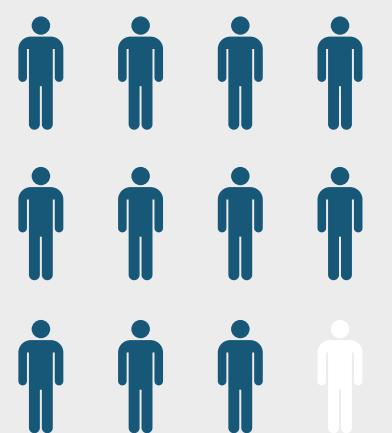
To better understand the impact of the standard, we asked why they initially downloaded it:

- ◆ 46% downloaded it to learn how projects and sustainability converge
- ◆ 26% wanted to measure projects for sustainability
- ◆ 23% wanted to manage risk and opportunity
- ◆ 5% were for doing research or for other purposes

Of the respondents, 99% found the standard useful, and 76% stated that they are actively using it in projects.

Of the project managers who are actively using the standard in project work:

- ◆ 41% use it for decision making
- ◆ 32% for training PMs and team members
- ◆ 18% for project governance
- ◆ 6% for sustainability reporting
- ◆ 3% for portfolio prioritization



**GLOBALLY, 9 OUT OF 10 PROJECT MANAGERS BELIEVE THAT PROJECTS ARE CRITICAL TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

Overall 71% reported that the standard improved sustainability in projects, while of the project managers who actively use it in projects, **95% were able to realize increased sustainability benefits.**

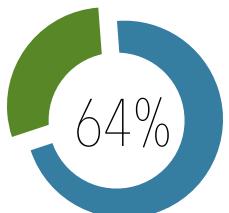
*"Stricter regulations have made it important to integrate sustainability into our projects. The standard has been critical to our success." - J. Pires (Brazil)*

*"Waste has been a growing concern [in our projects] as well as project team development. We use P5 primarily for these two purposes." - N. K. Hassan (UAE)*

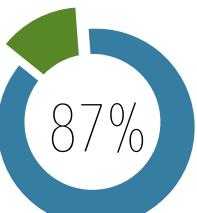
# PROJECT MANAGERS

Project Managers who actively use P5 in their projects

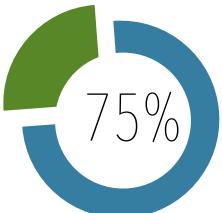
North America



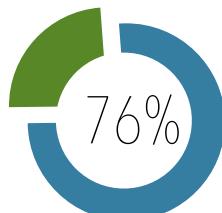
Latin America



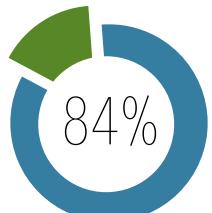
Oceania



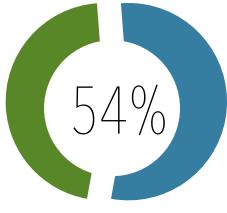
Africa



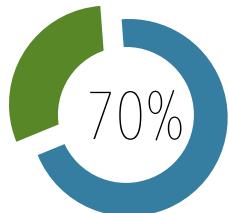
Asia



Europe

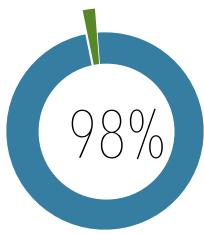


Middle East

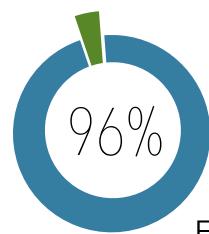


Average project performance increase reported by P5 users

North America



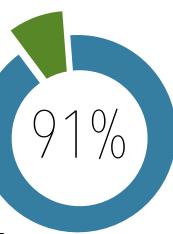
Latin America



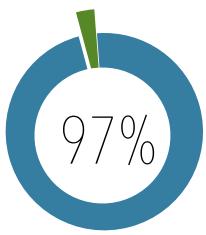
Oceania



Africa



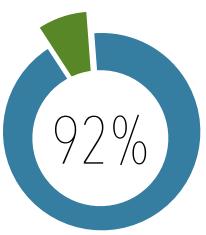
Asia



Europe



Middle East



# PROGRAM AND PORTFOLIO MANAGERS

## *P5's uses outside of project work*

Program and Portfolio Managers comprised of 6% of our respondents. Through follow ups, it was recognized that a sub section of project managers manage programs, and several perform the functions of a portfolio manager. For this study however we are only reporting on individuals who reported that 90% or more of their responsibility is as either a Program or Portfolio Manager.

100% of these respondents have had to adjust standard practices to accommodate requirements around sustainability.

Among Program and Portfolio Managers:

- ◆ 25% use P5 for portfolio prioritization
- ◆ 39% use P5 for project governance
- ◆ 35% use P5 for training PMs and team members
- ◆ 1% use P5 for sustainability reporting

"[We use P5] because tomorrow, only the options that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable will be market valuable."  
-P. Lucas (Portugal)

"Informed, relevant, critical to quality (CTQ) baselining, important to clients, educational. I also use it as a reference in my college class, which includes CSR, Corporate Ethics, Stakeholder Engagement, Governance and Sustainability themes." - S. Lynn (USA)

"P5 is very helpful in integrating Sustainability aspects in the day-to-day life of project management."  
-P. Van der Spek (Netherlands)

"P5 was integral in mitigating environmental risk in a capital roads project of 150 KM"  
- J. Aguado (Colombia)

# SUSTAINABILITY PROFESSIONALS

*Sustainability professionals provide input on the value of the P5 Standard in their work*

## INSIGHT FROM SUSTAINABILITY PROS

The rise of project work in skilled positions has sparked a dramatic shift in the workforce. For organizations who place an emphasis on sustainability, disruption in business as usual (BAU) in order to adapt to different ways of working has become more the norm.

For sustainability professionals, who over the past decade have been transitioning from the marketing department into more strategic roles, the importance of project skills and standards that speak to their needs has never been more important.

We had the opportunity to gather feedback from a large group of sustainability professionals who shared some insights on how the P5 standard has impacted their work.

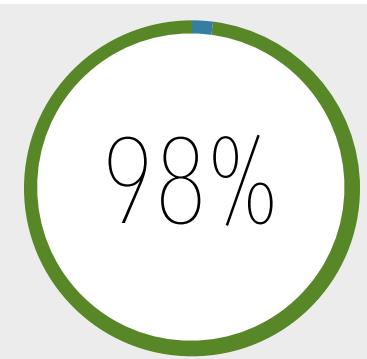
It is important to note that sustainability professionals accounted for 7% of our respondents, a little more than 500 individuals.

The most common response was that the Standard assisted in bridging the gap between the two disciplines and allowed greater collaboration between project focused individuals and sustainability professionals.

While the GPM P5 Standard was written for project managers, sustainability professionals utilize it for the following purposes:

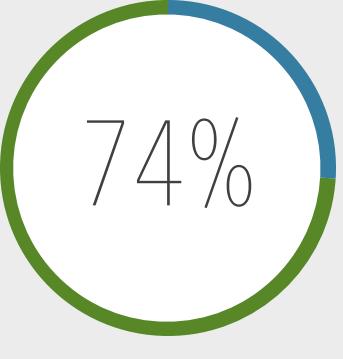
- ◆ 50% for decision making
- ◆ 30% for sustainability reporting
- ◆ 10% for governance
- ◆ 10% for training

*"Thanks to what we learned in P5, while servicing plots in Otjiwarongo, we cleared the land but did not cut down trees. This was used as a measure of reducing the project's environmental impact."*  
- I. Muchenga (Namibia)



98%

**SUSTAINABILITY  
PROFESSIONALS BELIEVE  
PROJECTS AND PROJECT  
MANAGEMENT ARE INTEGRAL  
TO SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**



74%

**SUSTAINABILITY  
PROFESSIONALS THAT HAVE  
SEEN AN IMPROVEMENT IN  
SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING  
DUE TO PROJECTS UTILIZING  
THE P5 STANDARD [AND  
SHARING DATA]**

# ACADEMICS

*Academic professionals provide input on the value of the P5 Standard in their work*

## INSIGHT FROM ACADEMICS

Project Management has gained tremendous benefits from the collaboration between academics and practitioners.

GPM collaborates with many universities around the world, and our structured courses are used as part of undergraduate and graduate programs. As the standard is a complimentary download understanding how it is used by academics is important to how we make plans to improve it to be more useful.

In our study, responses from academic professionals comprised 23% of the respondents, up 4% from the previous study, totaling 1,849.

100% of academics stated that the standard was helpful to their work and, 82% reported that the Standard had made positive contributions to their work.

60% of academics use the standard a few times a year while 38% use it monthly, and 12% use it weekly.

Academics reportedly utilize it for the following purposes:

- ◆ 58% for research
- ◆ 32% for curriculum
- ◆ 11% for project work
- ◆ 9% to learn how projects and sustainability converge

*"I apply the principles in creating sustainable approach to a new way of teaching and employability opportunities for students and conducting research with societal benefits"*

*- K. Johan (Malaysia)*

*"If you picture project management as a tree, P5 would be the root system"*

*- E. Jacobs (Italy)*



100%

**ACADEMICS BELIEVE THAT PROJECTS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT ARE INTEGRAL TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



91%

**ACADEMICS BELIEVE THAT P5 HAS MADE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEIR WORK.**

# CONCLUSIONS

The numbers speak for themselves: over 150,000 downloads of the standard and 8,040 individuals from over 64 countries generously donating their time to contribute to our study. This is a clear indication that sustainability is a critical aspect of projects and project management.

The diversity in respondent type was intriguing as it allowed us to follow up and gain insight from different role perspectives both horizontally and vertically. Project managers accounted for 26% of the respondents, followed by Government Officials (16%), Executives (15%), Graduate Students (15%), Academic Professionals (7%), Sustainability Professionals (7%), Program and Portfolio Managers (6%), and Training Providers (3%).

To our knowledge, there has yet to be a survey or study on this topic that has as large and diverse of a response.

The overwhelming response was that projects and project management are integral to sustainable development. As well, the P5 Standard was found to be a foundational element in empowering project managers to meet project-level sustainability targets in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In short, the P5 Standard is a proven approach to increase sustainability benefits.

A fascinating insight was that P5 was found to be especially useful in decision making, governance, and prioritization. As an example of P5's decision-making guidance, the current version of the standard recommends:

- ◆ Decisions that impact the project team should be made without bias
- ◆ Assigning project work should be based on skill and ability
- ◆ Compensation should be equally paid based on skill and ability

Lastly, it was intriguing to see that the standard bridges the gap between project professionals and sustainability professionals.

GPM and our partners around the globe are available to help you benefit by making your projects more sustainable through the applicable of the P5 standard.

[www.greenprojectmanagement.org](http://www.greenprojectmanagement.org)

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