RSC Sustainability

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EDITORIAL

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Reflecting on the successes of *RSC Sustainability* in 2025 and looking forward to 2026

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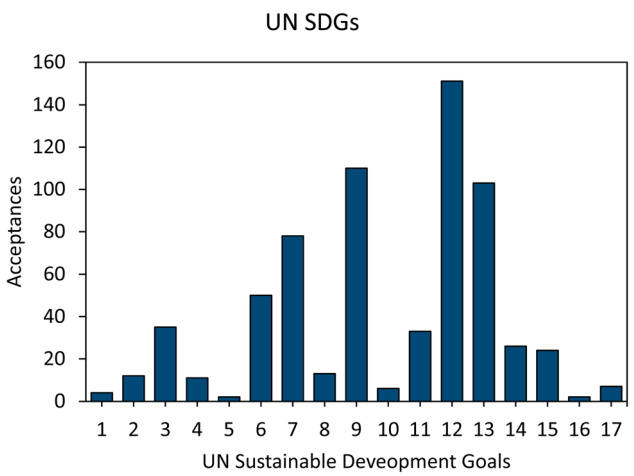
2025 was a difficult year for many of us working in and around sustainability. The very idea of the need to develop a sustainable future has been under attack and we have seen governments and corporations stepping back from sustainability actions. In the face of this, the sustainable chemical sciences community has shown great resilience and determination to continue our vital work. So it is with extra feeling that I would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and readers who have made the past year for *RSC Sustainability* such a success. This year, we have published 374 articles from authors based in 47 countries, across a wide range of sustainability topics.

2025 was an important year for *RSC Sustainability*. We moved over to our permanent Gold Open Access publishing model. That means that article processing charges are no longer waived, but you can find out about discounts and fee waivers here. We also received our first Impact Factor of 4.9. This is a great start and a testament to the quality and timeliness of the research that you have published with us. Now let's look at that research in more detail.

Authors are now asked to name which of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) their work is relevant to. You can see the distribution of these in the figure here.

The SDGs have been selected 667 times. While that is an average of roughly 2 per paper, many authors do still only select 1 SDG. Of course, it might be the case that your research is only relevant to one of the SDGs, but I do encourage you to consider whether your work touches on more. As with previous years, the most cited SDG is SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production). This was followed by SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy). This year we have seen more papers focussed on education, so SDG 4 (quality education) is appearing more often. To stimulate more on this important subject, we are going to have a themed collection on 'Chemical education for global sustainability'.

It is particularly encouraging to see that every SDG has been selected, and not just those that are obviously technical. I encourage us all to think about the potential impacts of our research beyond the laboratory or chemical plant. As an interdisciplinary journal, *RSC Sustainability* welcomes solutions-driven research on all global sustainability challenges, including unequal access to STEM, underrepresentation in decision-making, and inequitable distribution of resources. In 2025 we partnered with the RSC's Inclusion and Diversity Fund initiative. This initiative welcomes applications for and provides funds to support innovative products, activities and



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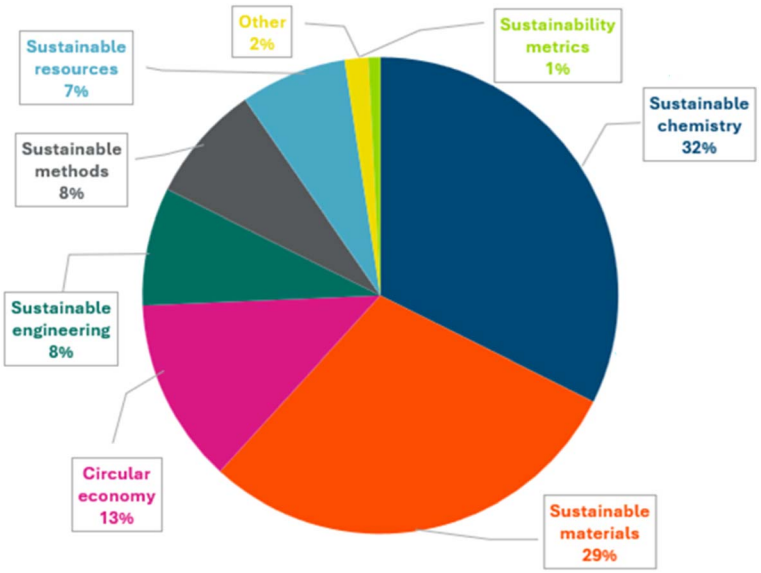

research projects that help make the chemical sciences community more inclusive and diverse (SDGs 4 and 10). In the coming year *RSC Sustainability* will showcase some of the work funded by this initiative in our new 'Inclusion and Diversity Fund Forums' collection. We look forward to sharing these articles with you as they are published later in the year.

Another way that we asked our authors to describe their research was to select a Sustainability Topic. You can see the distribution of these in the chart here.

The greatest contributions come from sustainable chemistry (32%) closely followed by sustainable materials (29%) and the circular economy (13%). As I look at these papers in more detail, I can see that most report the results of early stage 'discovery' research. If we are to build a sustainable future, we need to progress our science towards implementation in the wider world. With this in mind, I would greatly welcome manuscripts describing research to advance technologies up the Technology Readiness Levels towards commercial application. Our upcoming themed collection on 'Industrial perspectives' will shed some light on how corporations are working towards sustainable solutions.

I would like to bring to your attention once again our annual 'Young Voices in the Chemical Sciences for Sustainability' essay competition. This essay competition is organised in collaboration with the International Organization for Chemical Sciences in Development (IOCD) and is open globally to entrants under 35 years of age. The theme for the 2025 competition was: 'From waste to wealth: how chemical sciences can sustainably transform waste into valuable products'. The IOCD Essay Competition Winners (2025) collection includes an editorial introducing these.

The question for the 2026 competition is: 'How can the chemical sciences ensure sustainable access to clean water for all needs?' You can find all the details of how to apply here:

Global essay competition: *Young Voices in the Chemical Sciences for Sustainability*

Please do encourage anyone you know who meets the eligibility criteria to take part.

In 2025 we had themed collections on 'The Circular Economy', 'CO_2 Conversion', 'Energy Materials Redesign, Reuse and Repurpose', 'Defossilising Chemical Industries', 'Electrocatalysis for Energy Conversion Reactions', and we took part in the cross-journal 'Green and Sustainable Batteries' collection. The bringing together of papers in areas like these gives us the opportunity to see the links between different approaches to common problems. Two calls are still open for submissions for collections in 2026, 'Life cycle of chemicals in the transition to a sustainable society' and 'PFAS alternatives'. If these are relevant to you, please do consider submitting manuscripts to these. There will be more themed collections in the future; please feel free to suggest subjects for these.

I have good news to give you about the United Nations Science-Policy Panel for Chemicals, Waste and Pollution. This was agreed in the middle of 2025, and its first session will meet in the first week of February 2026. I would like to thank and congratulate the many scientists who, over many years, supported this process. It is currently still addressing how it is going to operate, but I hope that it will soon get on to the issues at hand. In previous editorials, I have encouraged you to submit your solutions-focussed research to enable the work of this panel. For example, it would be great to see papers assessing the readiness of sustainable chemical technologies for commercial application. This will be vital information for those seeking to displace unsustainable technologies.

Finally, my fellow co-editors and colleagues from RSC Publishing and I will be attending a number of conferences during 2026 to meet with the community of chemical scientists working in sustainability research. If you see us, please do come over to introduce yourself and discuss your interests and ideas for the journal.

Have a very happy and successful 2026.