# Methods

## Data

We downloaded 172,557 papers from the Web of Science (on July 13 2017) using the query

SO=("Agronomy for Sustainable Development" OR "ACS Sustainable Chemistry & Engineering" OR "Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems" OR "Agronomy for Sustainable Development" OR "Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability" OR "Energy for Sustainable Development" OR "Environmental Progress & Sustainable Energy" OR "ENVIRONMENT DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY" OR "IEEE Transactions on Sustainable Energy" OR "International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability" OR "INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND WORLD ECOLOGY" OR "Journal of Renewable and Sustainable Energy" OR "Journal of Sustainable Forestry" OR "Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers-Engineering Sustainability" OR "RENEWABLE & SUSTAINABLE ENERGY REVIEWS" OR "Sustainability" OR "Sustainability Science" OR "Sustainable Cities and Society" OR "Sustainable Computing-Informatics & Systems" ) OR TS=("sustainab\*")

After downloading the papers, we read the abstracts of a random sample of 50, and found [83] % to be relevant. To distinguish between papers that engaged with sustainability as a concept and those which used “sustainable/sustainability” purely in the literal sense of long-lasting, we identified the words immediately preceding and following the word “sustainab\*”, in order to build targeted filters in fields of science characterised by a high proportion of irrelevant documents.

A sample of the health sciences showed only 28% relevant documents. This is due to the frequent use of sustainable to describe the duration of the effect of a treatment, e.g. “A few of those effects were sustainable”. However, there is a significant relevant literature that deals with, for example, health in the context of the sustainable development goals, or the effects on human health of environmental degradation. We identified sustainability collocates listed below, which suggested papers in the second group, and excluded health sciences papers unless they included any of these words. After sampling, included health sciences papers were assessed as 88% relevant, and excluded health science papers as 12% relevant.

The other field of science with significant literal use of sustainable, e.g. sustainable returns on invests, sustainable profits, sustainable competitive advantage, was Economics and Business. We identified a list of such collocates, and excluded documents from this field of science with those words.

A final exclusion was those documents which contained “self-sustainable” and no other use of the word sustainable.

After all exclusions, total relevance had increased to 88%.