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Product Circularity, Strategies, Indicators and Challenges: Insights from Industry.

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The use of the concept of 'circularity' within government, policy, industry, and academia, has grown exponentially in the last decade, alongside a growth in the development of tools and methodologies to measure circularity. However, the levels of implementation and measurement of product circularity across industry remain unknown. The Centre for Sustainable Design ® at the University for the Creative Arts conducted 21 in-depth qualitative interviews with companies that claimed to have a core circular economy business strategy. The data collected from the interviews was analyzed using a thematic coding methodology to 1) gain insights into how product circularity (PC) is understood by industry, PC strategies currently being implemented across various sectors; 2) identify barriers for implementation that can enable further discussions for theoretical and conceptual innovations for remanufacturing, reuse, refurbish and repair and new ways for production and consumption, and 3) contribute to the development of methodologies and tools for measuring product circularity beyond recycled inflows and outflows. A key finding was the lack of harmonization of the concept of PC and CE more generally across different sectors. Moreover, to date, the development of methodologies that seek to quantitatively assess PC performance for internal decision making and external communications, have focused primarily on assessing the use of recycled material inflows and outflows; thus, positioning circularity as synonymous to recycling. Conversely, measuring use phase related PC issues e.g., repair, reuse, etc. is still in the early stages due to a lack of data on customer use by companies.