

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AT WORK

CSR REPORT 2022



skillsoft 

Table of Contents

3	INTRODUCTION
4	THE CURRENT STATE OF CSR
7	DEFINING CSR PRIORITIES
9	WHO “OWNS” CSR?
10	REPORTING ON CSR EFFORTS
13	MEASURING CSR SUCCESS
15	WHERE DOES CSR STOP AND ESG BEGIN?
18	WHAT’S NEXT? OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT
19	THE FOUNDATION OF CSR: A GLOBAL CODE OF CONDUCT
20	CONCLUSION
21	RESOURCES
22	SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



INTRODUCTION

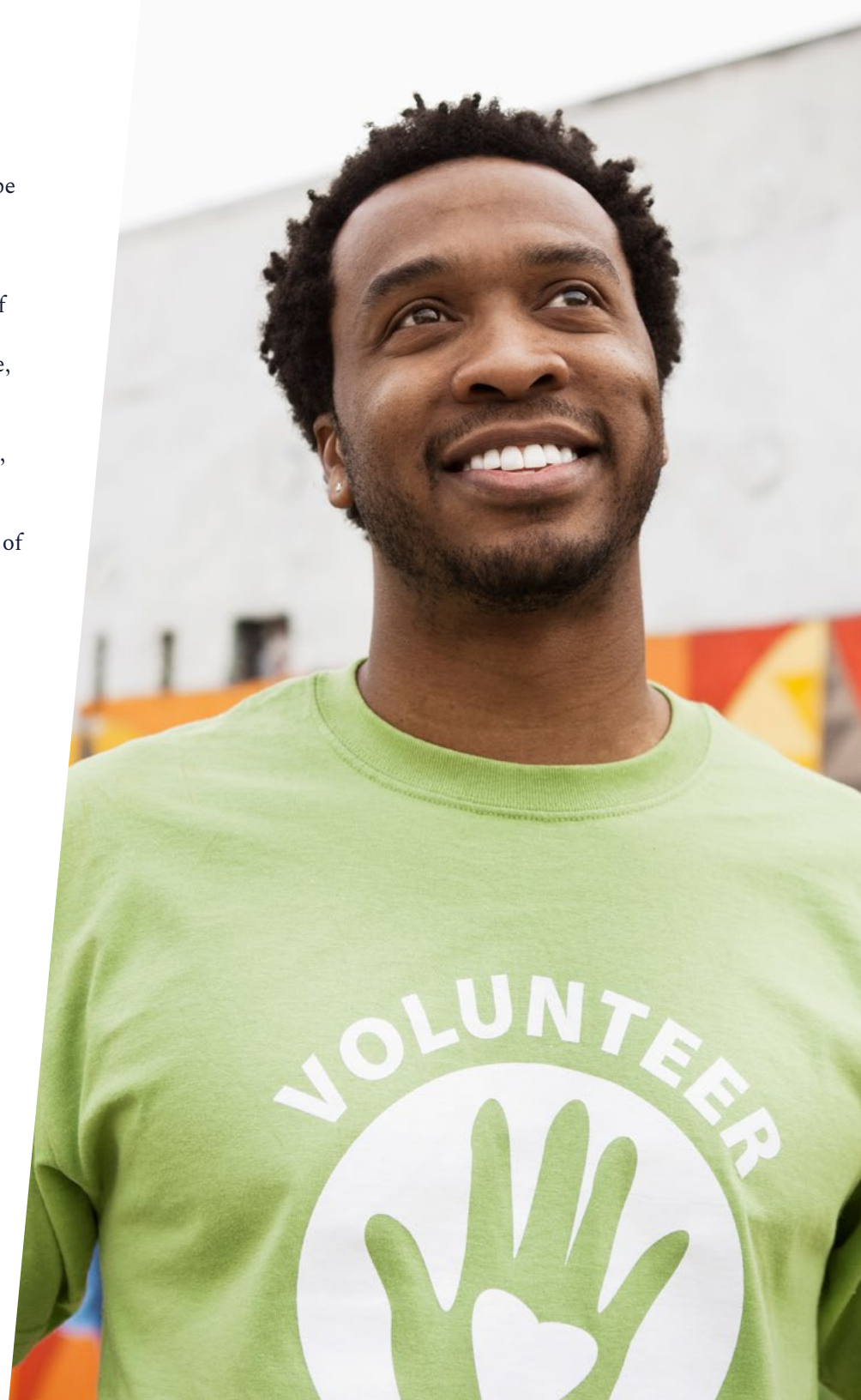
The phrase “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR) has emerged as a way to describe how organizations demonstrate accountability to society through economic, social, and environmental efforts.

While it’s certainly not a new concept, today’s CSR looks quite different from that of the past. In a world grappling with issues such as social justice, economic disparity, and devastating climate change, modern CSR initiatives balance profit with purpose, ultimately creating shared value for all stakeholders as well as for the environment.

We recently surveyed more than 1,000 people across various industries, geographies, and job roles, to learn how they believe the organizations they work for are making an impact with their CSR efforts, large and small. While CSR initiatives differ from organization to organization, one important trend we observed points to a new way of doing business.

“Doing the right thing” was cited as the top influencer of CSR priorities by 40% of respondents.

In the *Corporate Social Responsibility at Work* report, we provide an in-depth look at these responses, establishing a blueprint for what’s working today, recognizing areas for improvement, and illuminating provocative CSR trends across global organizations.



THE CURRENT STATE OF CSR

Survey responses build a more comprehensive picture of how both public and private organizations are approaching CSR. Not surprisingly, our respondents overwhelmingly agree that CSR efforts have grown since before the pandemic, with more than 72% reporting that not only has CSR become more important, but investment from both employees and leadership has also increased.

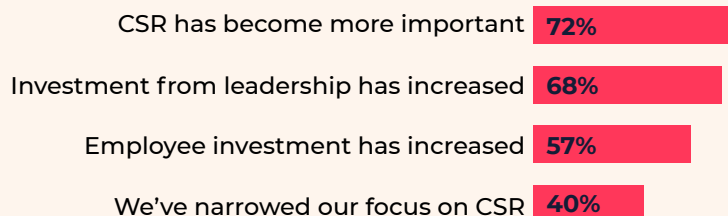
As post-pandemic life takes shape, both employees and consumers are demanding accountability from the businesses they work for and support — and will actively seek relationships with socially responsible organizations.

In fact, recent studies demonstrate that more and more workers are taking their company's ethics and values into consideration. [Just over three quarters \(76%\)](#) would consider looking for a new job if they discovered their company had an unfair gender pay gap or no diversity and inclusion policy.

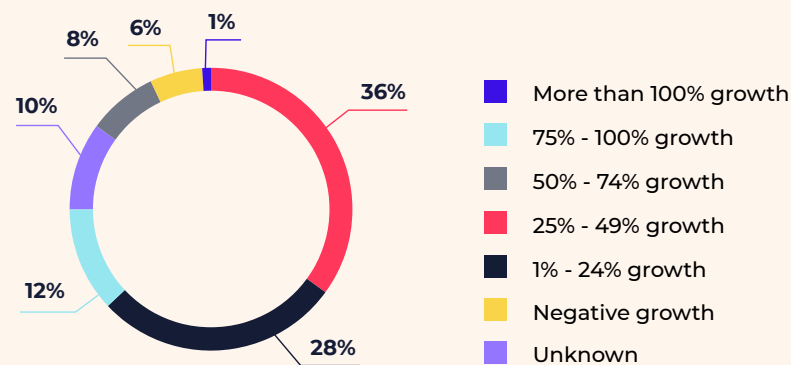
And, it's clear from the survey results that organizations that plan to incorporate CSR in their annual corporate initiatives see undeniable benefits — with 57% of respondents with a formal CSR program reporting 25% or more organizational growth year-over-year.



HOW HAVE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CSR COMMITMENTS CHANGED SINCE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC? (CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY)



WHAT PERCENTAGE GROWTH HAS YOUR COMPANY EXPERIENCED YEAR-OVER-YEAR (YOY)?

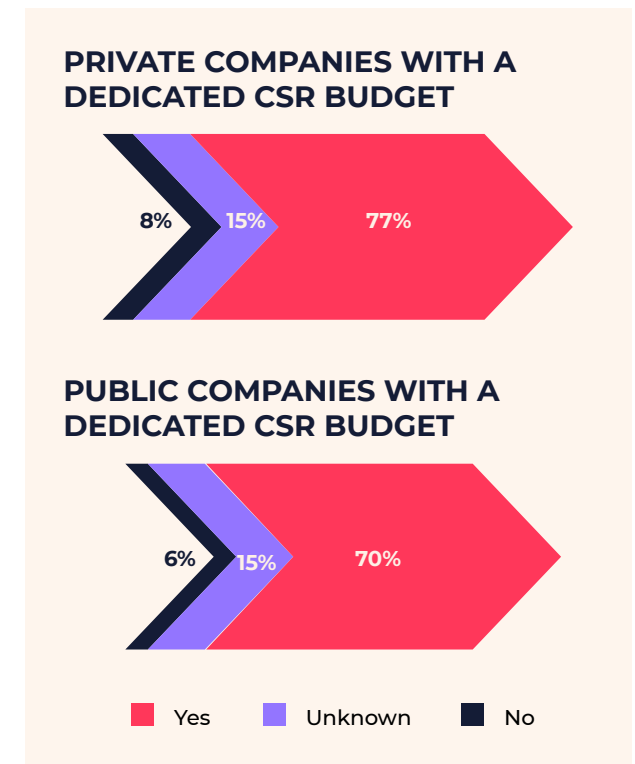


Focusing CSR activity to areas directly related to an organization's work — keeping purpose close to product — is a trend that makes sense. For instance, an industry that uses lumber might consider investing in sustainable forestry initiatives. An apparel company could look into developing safer dyes, paying garment workers a fair wage, or offering childcare. A concentrated CSR focus not only helps directly offset the negative impacts of doing business (doing good), but also helps clarify an organization's mission, strengthen its reputation, and gain a competitive edge (doing well).

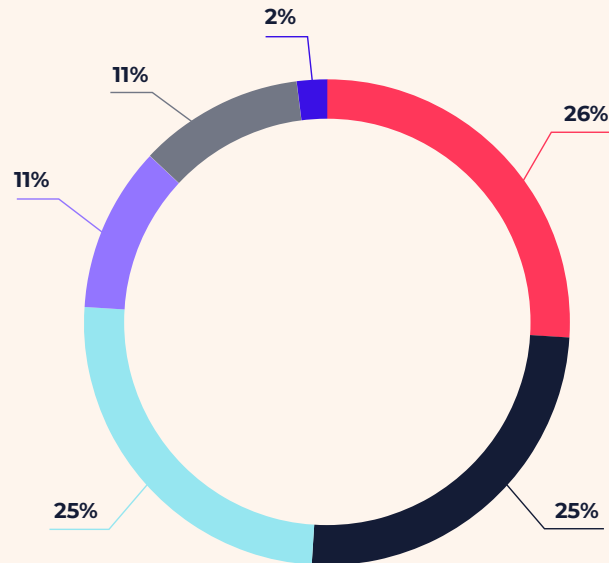
Additionally, we found:

- Private companies are more likely to have a dedicated CSR budget (77%) than public companies (70%)
- Companies in the industrial sectors report having more defined CSR programs (16%), while the agriculture, forestry, and mining sector reports being in the initial stages of their programs
- The majority of companies surveyed (75%) consider CSR efforts to be a part of their corporate governance program

Interestingly, despite the growth of CSR, only 54% of survey respondents say that their organization has an actual CSR plan for the coming year. This could be tied to confusion about who “owns” CSR in their organizations, changing labor and environmental regulations, or the process of clarifying priorities.



HOW MATURE IS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CSR PROGRAM?



- **OPTIMIZING:** you are continually improving your organization's CSR processes based on a quantitative understanding of business objectives and performance needs
- **QUANTITATIVELY MANAGED:** your organization has established quantitative objectives for CSR performance and uses these as criteria in managing processes
- **MANAGED:** work groups have been set up to establish a CSR strategy that aligns with your organization's policies
- **DEFINED:** your organization has a defined process for managing its CSR plan
- **INITIAL:** CSR initiatives are usually ad hoc and chaotic
- **UNKNOWN**



DEFINING CSR PRIORITIES

Of those planning or maturing CSR initiatives, program priorities include diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) (31%) and improving labor policies (26%). Very few organizations cite community and virtual volunteering (9%). Similarly, only 9% of organizations prioritize disaster relief and preparedness, which indicates that organizations have work to do when it comes to anticipating future public health and environmental crises.

WHAT ARE THE TOP CSR PRIORITIES AT YOUR ORGANIZATION? (CHOOSE TWO)

PRIORITY	PERCENTAGE
Diversity, equity, and inclusion	31%
Improving labor policies	26%
Participating in fair trade	25%
Reducing carbon footprint	20%
Charitable global giving	19%
Learning and education	16%
Health and wellness	15%
Corporate policies that benefit the environment	14%
Socially and environmentally conscious investments	11%
Community and virtual volunteering	9%
Disaster relief and preparedness	9%

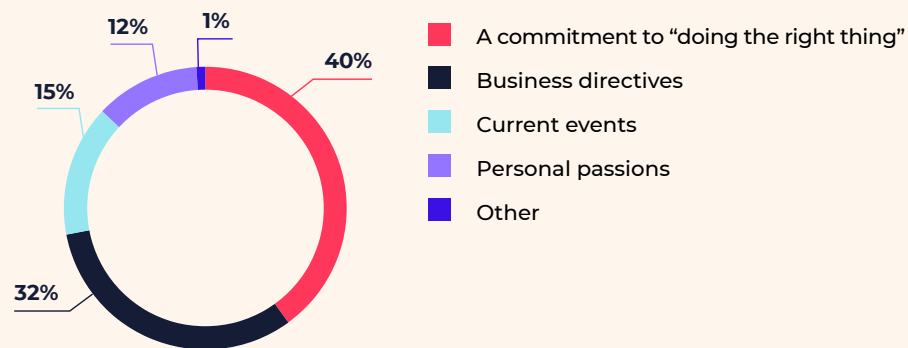


Understandably, top CSR priorities can differ by country and culture. For example, in India, one of the top CSR priorities is learning and education. In recent years, the government has made great strides in ensuring that education is available to all of the country's 199 million children. However, corporate CSR efforts have helped to address issues such as education quality, relevant curricula, and learning accountability. This reflects the still prevalent Gandhian theory of "[trusteeship](#)," in which "the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal greed." India is also the [first country in the world](#) to make CSR mandatory, following an amendment to the [Companies Act, 2013](#) in April 2014.

In the United States, top survey priorities include DEI, improving labor practices, participating in fair trade, and reducing carbon footprint. These priorities could be considered responses to a nationwide call for social justice, growing economic disparity, and consumer awareness of environmental issues threatening the future of our planet.

However, a significant percentage of survey respondents are aligned when it comes to the factor that primarily influences their CSR priorities: 40% of those who responded say it is a commitment to "doing the right thing."

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MOST INFLUENCES YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CSR PROGRAM?



WHO “OWNS” CSR?

Our survey shows there is no “typical” owner of an organization’s CSR program.

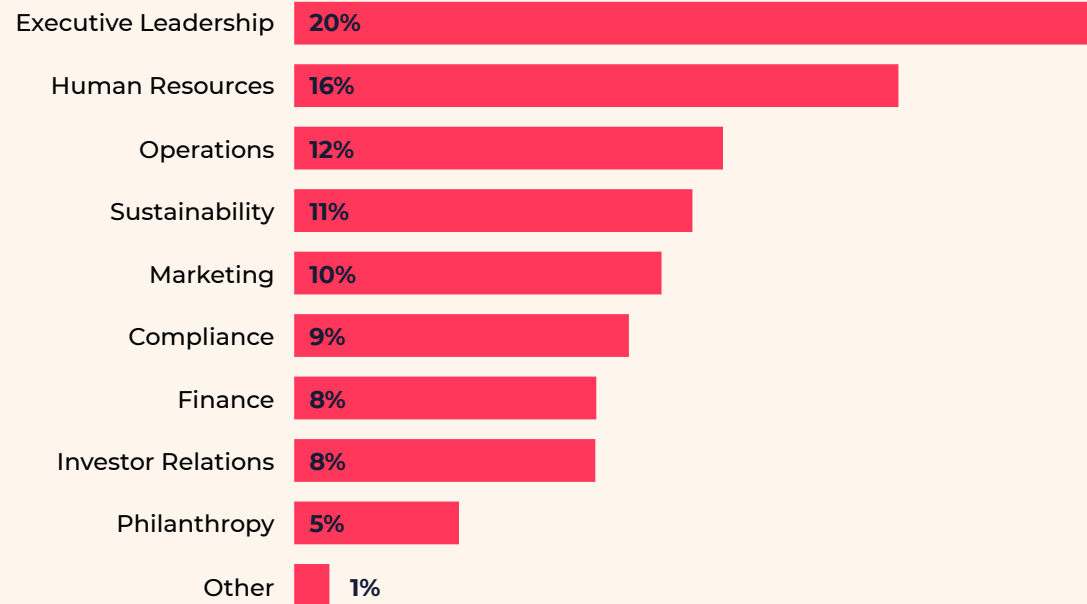
Executive leadership teams tend to define priorities and manage CSR programs (30%), followed by HR (16%) and operations (12%). Philanthropy (5%), investor relations (8%), and finance (8%) are not responsible for CSR programs as often.

Just as we are seeing a new era of CSR, we are also entering a new era of ethical leadership, which has greatly accelerated over the last few years. A [Deloitte](#) study found that CSR is now a “CEO-level business strategy — defining the organization’s very identity. CEOs and top executives play the most prominent roles in driving societal impact.”

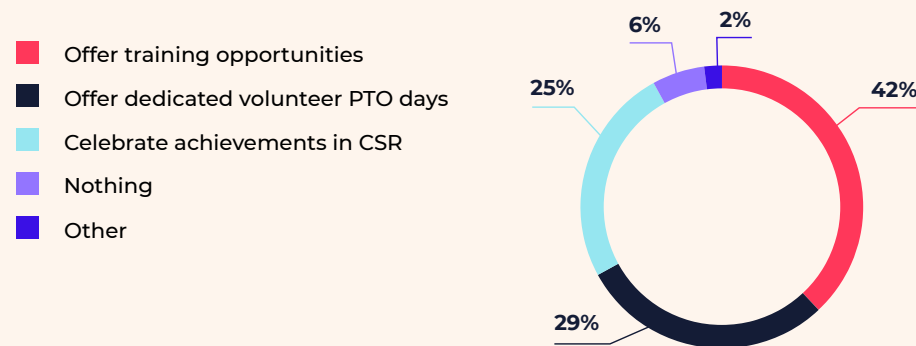
Regardless of who spearheads CSR efforts, getting employees on board is critical to long-term sustainability, whether individually or in teams or work groups. In fact, 42% of survey respondents say that offering training opportunities is the best way to engage employees in CSR efforts. And, nearly 36% of those surveyed feel their organization has reached a level of CSR maturity, either continually optimizing or quantitatively managing their programs for better performance.

Understandably, in public corporations, there is still some caution surrounding investment in CSR initiatives that don’t equate to immediate financial gains for shareholders.

WHICH DEPARTMENT(S) MANAGE(S) YOUR CSR PROGRAM? (CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY)



WHAT DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION DO TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES IN CSR INITIATIVES?



REPORTING ON CSR EFFORTS

In the United States, organizations are not required to report on CSR initiatives yet. However, some countries such as China, Denmark, Malaysia, and South Africa do have CSR reporting mandates in place. And, India requires CSR reporting by Indian central public sector enterprises (CPSEs).

Given the range of CSR activities, there is not yet a global, cross-industry structure for CSR reports. However, most organizations tend to showcase their CSR in similar ways, including:

- Letter from CEO or Director, articulating the organization's vision
- Statement of purpose that explains the organization's CSR mission
- Contextual narrative for the organization, its industry, and its constituents
- Sustainability metrics that demonstrate improvement over time
- Informative graphics that visualize relevant company data
- Engaging stories of employee involvement and impact

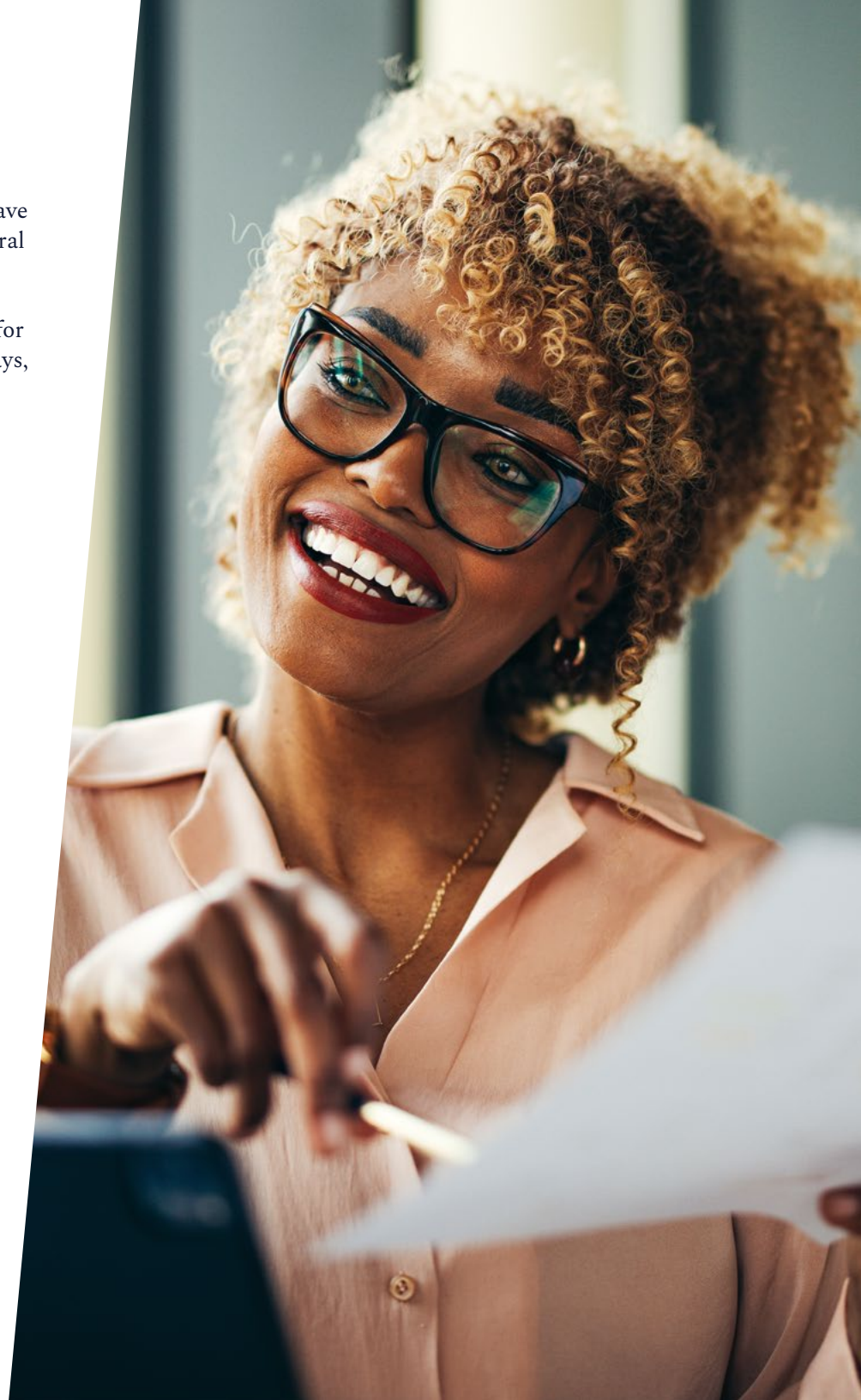
No matter how an organization's report is structured, it serves three important purposes.

COMMUNICATE KEY INFORMATION

An annual CSR report helps to highlight accomplishments, serving as an opportunity to generate positive publicity and improve customer loyalty and brand recognition.

CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Recently, there has been a cross-industry focus on the environment. Many sustainability reports make commitments to reach specific goals in terms of reporting the organization's ability to affect climate change or reduce its carbon footprint within a certain timeframe. Making these goals public encourages the organization and its employees to actively work toward them.



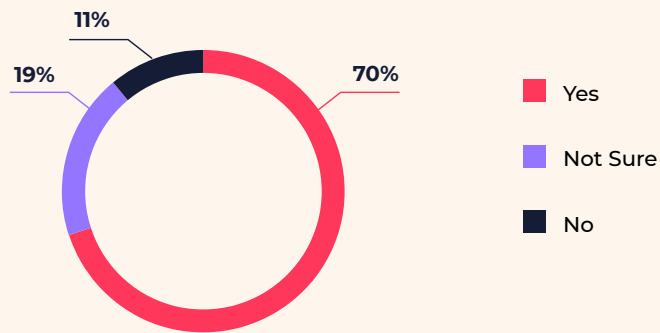
SHOWCASE AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Collecting CSR data points on a regular basis provides an opportunity to assess an organization's CSR budget and goals and recalibrate efforts in reaching them.

Despite these benefits, only 70% of survey respondents say their organization publishes an annual CSR report. And of those respondents, we learned that 57% work for private organizations and only 43% work for public organizations.

Private organizations are more willing to “lift the curtain” and reveal passion projects that reflect their overall mission and align with customer values. In contrast, short-term market conditions legal obligations to shareholders can impede public corporations from assigning resources to CSR efforts, despite good intentions.

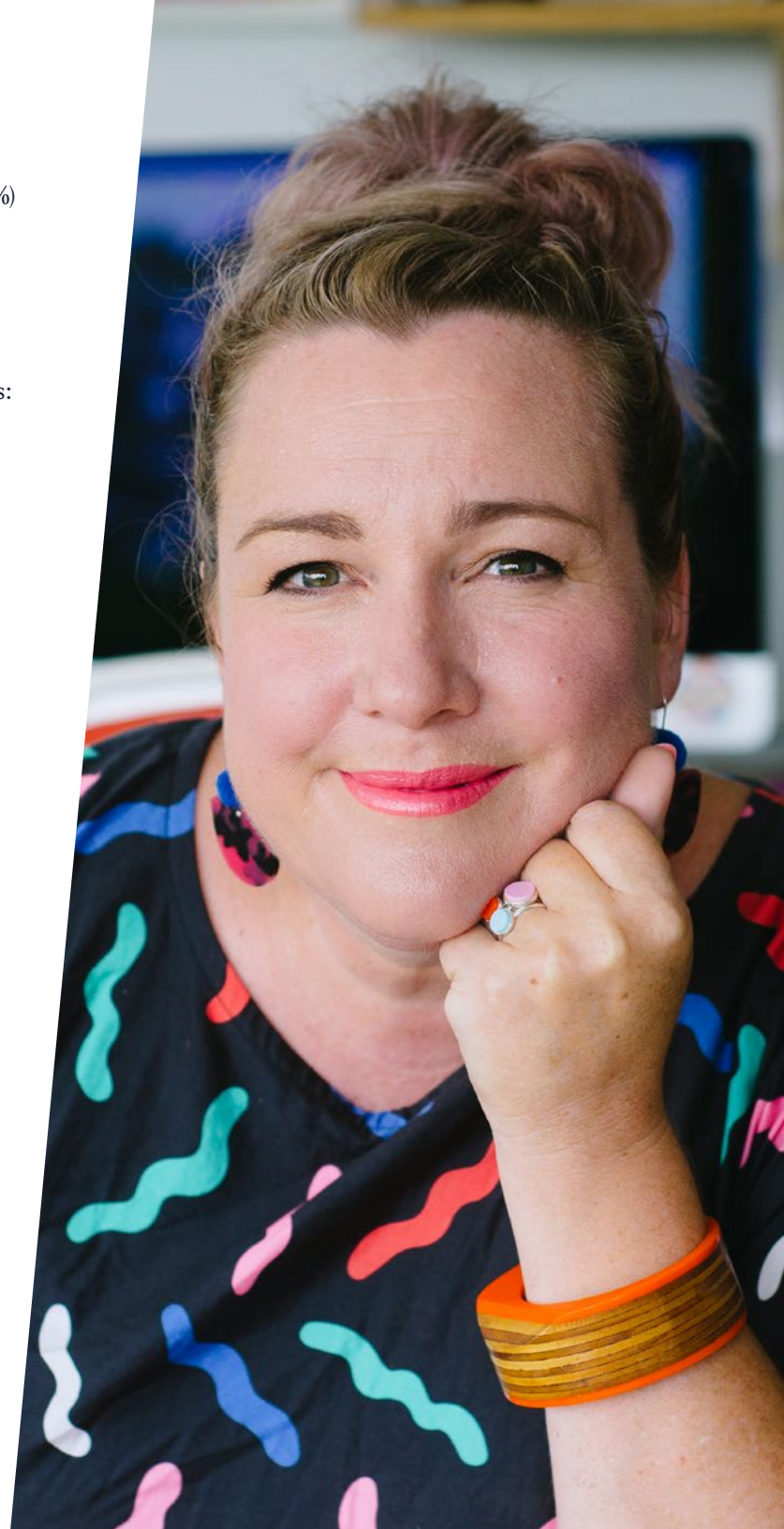
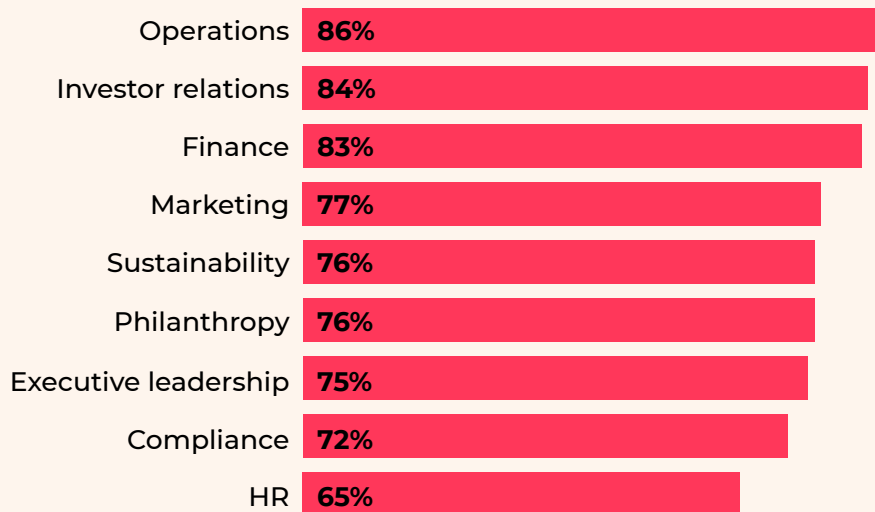
DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION PUBLISH AN ANNUAL CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REPORT WITH THE GOAL OF SHARING ITS SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS AND RESULTS?



The department within an organization that “owns” CSR has an impact on the likelihood that an annual CSR report will be published. We found that operations teams are the most likely (86%) to publish a CSR report when they are responsible for CSR efforts, followed by investor relations (84%) and finance (83%). HR (65%) and compliance (72%) are the least likely to publish an annual report when they are responsible for an organization’s CSR efforts.

It’s clear from these responses that leaders across all departments understand that it is critical for organizations who want to stand at the vanguard of responsible businesses to communicate their vision to the world. And in the new age of socially responsible investing, it’s simply smart business: [73% of investors](#) believe that CSR efforts contribute positively to financial returns.

DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR CSR EFFORTS: DO YOU PUBLISH A CSR REPORT?



MEASURING CSR SUCCESS

CSR investments by their very nature require long-term vision. So, it's not always easy to quantify short-term gains. Then how do organizations measure whether their CSR efforts are successful?

According to survey respondents, workplaces most commonly measure success by the following:

1. The overall health and security of employees and community members (27%)
2. Social contributions (24%)
3. Greenhouse gas emissions (19%)

Overall, organizations reported that they are NOT measuring CSR success by the following:

1. Employee satisfaction ratios (3%)
2. Number of social activities completed (4%)
3. Community members reached (4%)

HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION MEASURE CSR SUCCESS? (CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY)



HEALTH AND SECURITY ARE MOST IMPORTANT

The number-one success measure was the health and security of both employees and community members. As we strive for solid ground after the changes of COVID-19, it's imperative to ensure mental and physical health and workplace safety as we face the next normal, whether working on site or remotely.

Interestingly, top barriers to implementing a successful CSR program include regulations and standards (20%), customer awareness (19%), and reputation value (19%).

WHAT ARE THE TOP BARRIERS YOUR ORGANIZATION FACES TO A SUCCESSFUL CSR PROGRAM?



WHERE DOES CSR STOP AND ESG BEGIN?

Many companies have only recently established CSR programs, yet they now face expectations to have measurable Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) commitments and related reporting. How do CSR and ESG initiatives compare, and can they coexist — especially when 54% of our survey respondents report using the terms CSR and ESG interchangeably?

Our survey addresses the crucial questions organizations are grappling with to meet the changing expectations of stakeholders, including employees, customers, partners, communities, and investors.

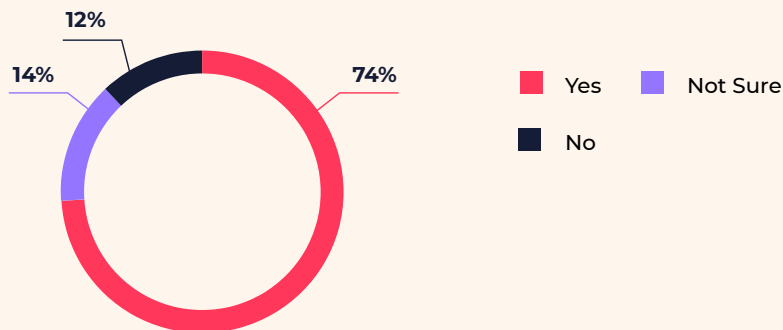
- 84% of respondents who report having a CSR program at their organization ALSO report having an ESG program
- 74% of respondents report having an ESG program in general

While the ways that organizations are addressing CSR and ESG vary, we can pinpoint some key trends:

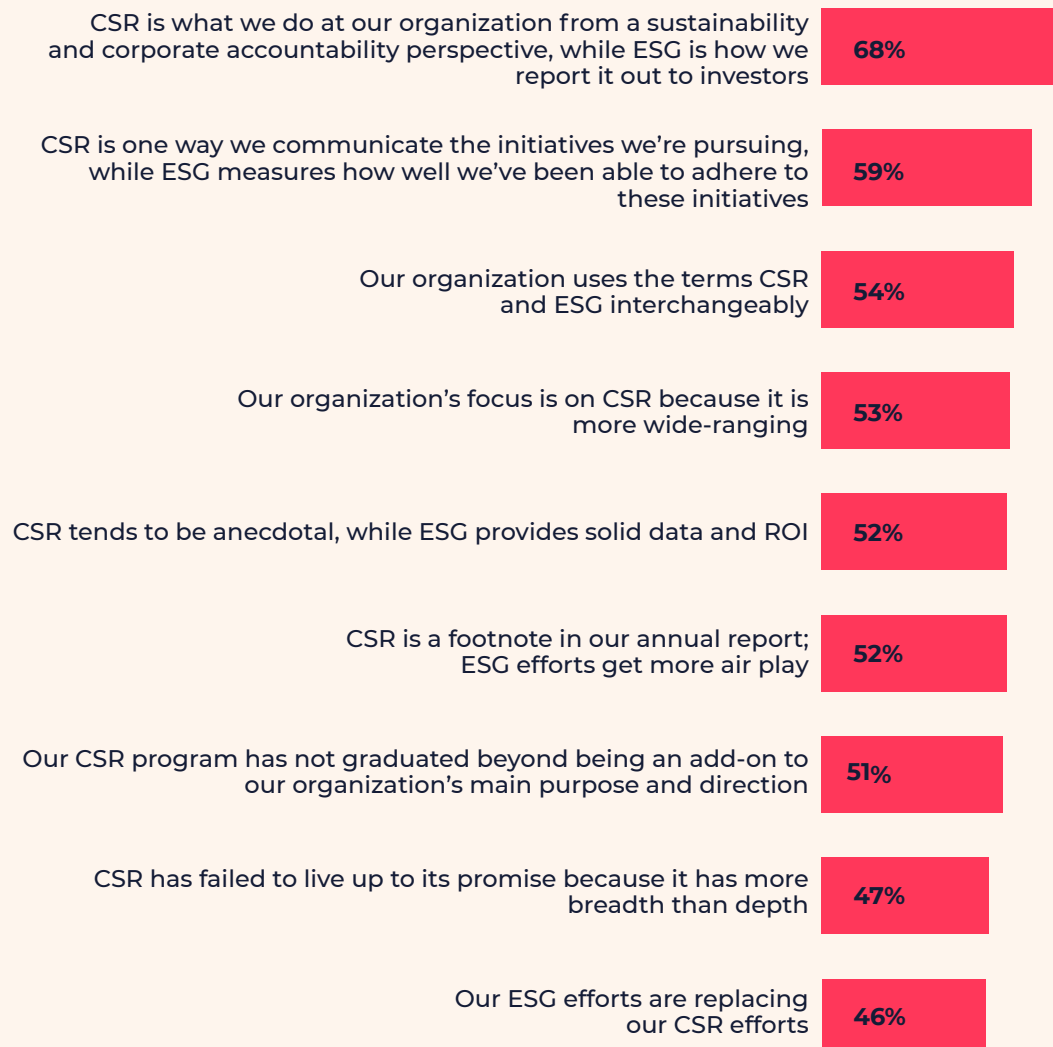
CSR EFFORTS ARE STILL PREFERRED.

The majority (53%) of our survey respondents say their organization's focus is still on CSR because it covers a greater range of issues than ESG. CSR efforts are typically broader than ESG efforts, and CSR efforts can be reported anecdotally.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE AN ESG PROGRAM?



HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ESG PROGRAM TIE IN TO ITS CSR INITIATIVES?



BUT, THE BENEFIT OF ESG IS INCOMPARABLE.

Fifty-two percent of survey respondents say that CSR serves as only a footnote in their annual report; ESG efforts get more airplay because they provide quantifiable examples of how the organization is making an impact.

However, it's challenging to establish an effective ESG program and the necessary tracking mechanisms to measure progress.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway is that many organizations are rapidly moving to ESG. In fact, 46% of survey respondents say their ESG efforts are replacing their CSR efforts. Why?

Around the globe, society is increasing pressure on companies to make quantifiable data against a set of standards a priority. And, this isn't just about customers; organizations are getting pressure from their own teams as well. For example, according to [Fast Company](#), 70%+ of millennials would choose to work at a company with an environmental agenda and 40% would take a pay cut to do so.

Of course, CSR can still serve as an internal framework. And, there is great power in the "personal." But ESG provides solid data points and ROI for all stakeholders: employees, customers, partners, communities, and investors. These tangible data points can reduce the temptation to "greenwash" results and instill confidence in investors and the broader world.



WHAT'S NEXT? OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

While many (36%) organizations report a level of maturity in their CSR programs, some (11%) report that initiatives are still largely ad hoc and chaotic, leading to internal confusion and lack of cohesion. Respondents let us know how their organizations plan to address issues related to CSR:

1. OFFER TRAINING TO EMPLOYEES (42%)

There is a new social compact between employer and employee, and it's fundamentally changing how people view their work. Companies that create cultures of learning and talent development not only support individual employee growth, but also see better business outcomes that propel the organization forward.

2. COMMIT TIME AND PEOPLE RESOURCES, NOT JUST MONEY (34%)

Employees thrive when given opportunities to be part of something "greater." Organizations can offer incentives for participation and recognize achievements.

3. INVEST IN LONG-TERM PLANS, NOT SHORT-TERM CAMPAIGNS (33%)

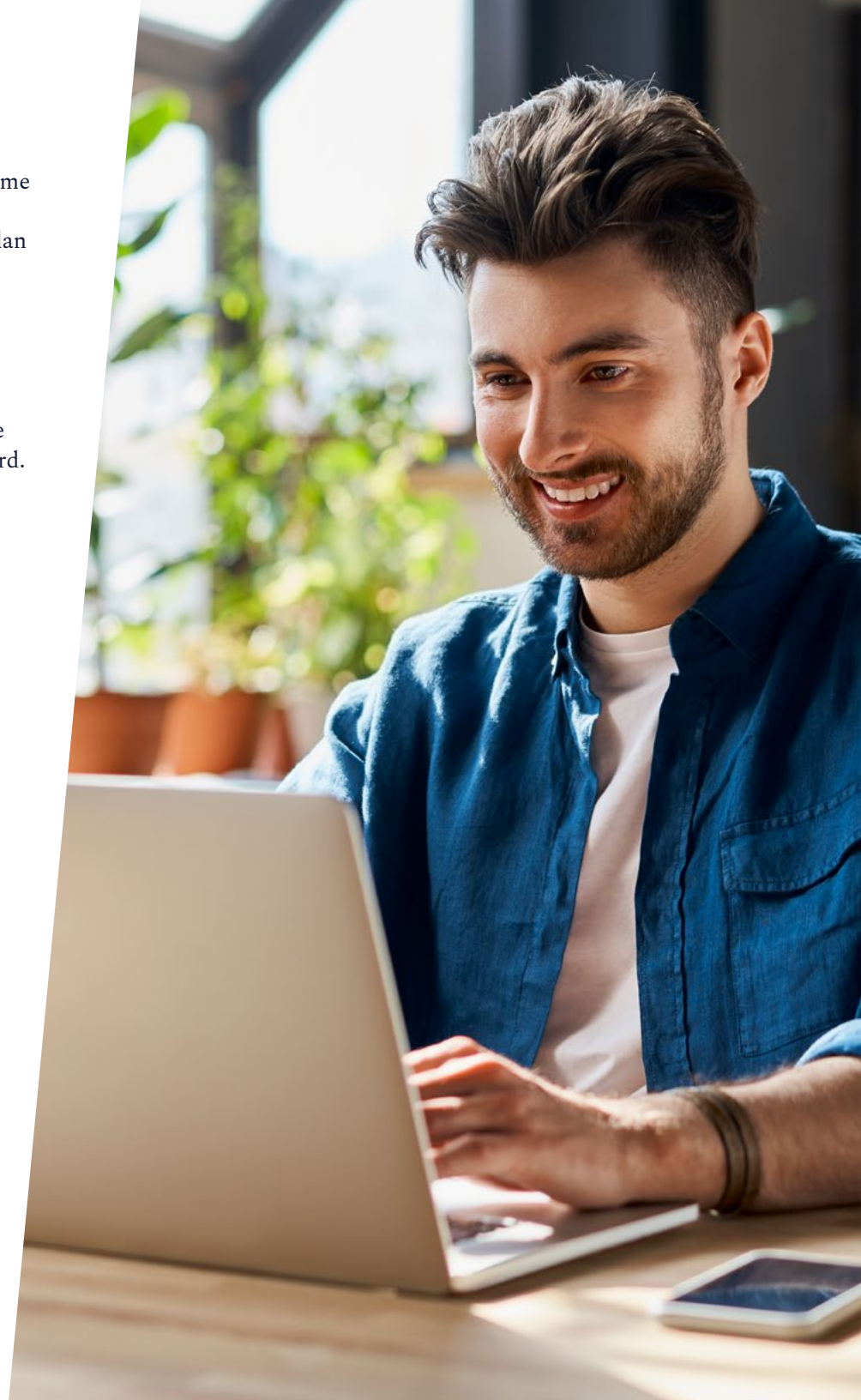
This is an extension of each organization's purpose beyond profit. Where can they predict positive impacts in one year, three years, or five years? When initiatives are planned sustainably, reporting is simplified, too.

4. CREATE AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS (20%)

Authenticity is more than a buzzword. Consumers judge businesses not only by their actions, but by the company they keep. Organizations must consider how partners, suppliers, or affiliates add positive value to their presence in the world.

5. BREAK CSR SILOS AND INTEGRATE CSR THROUGHOUT ALL DEPARTMENTS (13%)

A healthy CSR program should be a core foundation across the organization. Leaders must promote a healthy workplace culture and communicate strategy clearly to department heads, who can then nurture employee development.



THE FOUNDATION OF CSR: A GLOBAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Despite differences in CSR priorities by geographical region, survey respondents are aligned when it comes to the factor that primarily influences their CSR priorities: 40% say it is a commitment to “doing the right thing.”

But what does it really mean to do the right thing? In speaking with our clients, the Skillsoft team has learned that this means something different to everyone. So, it becomes the organization’s role to define “the right thing” for its employees through teaching a comprehensive [Global Code of Conduct](#) that articulates what it is, what it believes, how it conducts business, and what it expects from both employees and business associates.

How do you create and invoke a shared company purpose, or Code of Conduct, that serves as the catalyst for focused CSR initiatives? Outline your organization’s “why,” or reason for being. According to [GBES](#), 85% of employees working for organizations with a strong ethics culture indicate observing favorable outcomes when it comes to compliance, an integral part of CSR.

As your organization evolves its Global Code of Conduct, and shapes its own CSR program, here are some key considerations to keep in mind.

WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ECONOMIC IMPACT?

- Are you paying workers a fair wage?
- What is the value of the good and services you’re putting out into the world?

WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S SOCIAL IMPACT?

- Are you a good steward in your community?
- How do you lessen the negative impact of doing business?

WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT?

- Have you reduced electricity usage?
- Are you measuring your carbon emissions?



CONCLUSION

Although there's certainly more than one way to approach CSR, we heard a common message from everyone we surveyed. Now more than ever, organizations and the people who lead them want to “do the right thing.”

As business leaders, we have myriad options when it comes to giving back. Whether you're just starting your CSR journey, adding to an existing program, or finessing a mature and robust commitment, we applaud your efforts.

Your thoughtful CSR strategy will enable your organization and your workforce to navigate — and positively contribute to — our rapidly changing world.

Thank you for reading our first annual CSR at Work Report. We hope you've gained fresh insights into how your organization can move forward, concurrently “doing well” and “doing good.”



RESOURCES

[LIVING OUR VALUES](#)

A Responsible Business for a Sustainable Future, Skillsoft's first annual ESG Impact Report.

[DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION LEARNING CENTER](#)

Find valuable tools on timely topics, like "Inclusion Without Exception," "The Pink Pandemic," and "Effective Allyship."

[SUSTAINABILITY AND RESTORING OUR EARTH](#)

This Aspire Journey will help you understand business sustainability and how to make it part of your organization's, vision, and strategy.

[BUILDING A STRATEGIC COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY](#)

In this video series, learn how to identify areas where you can implement sustainable business practices right now.

[THE RESPONSIBLE CORPORATION IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY](#)

This audio book examines the increasing importance of global economic governance and the role played by major corporations.

[THE EDGE PODCAST](#)

Guests engage in thought-provoking conversations on learning and growth.

[SKILLSOFT BLOG](#)

Insights and thought leadership on the latest learning trends, and timely tips for success.

[SKILLSOFT PERCIPIO VIDEO](#)

Skillsoft's intelligent learning platform helps adapt, evolve, grow, and thrive.

[CASE STUDIES](#)

How organizations in every industry make learning a powerful competitive edge.

[INVESTOR RELATIONS](#)

The latest news, financial results, stock data, and other resources.

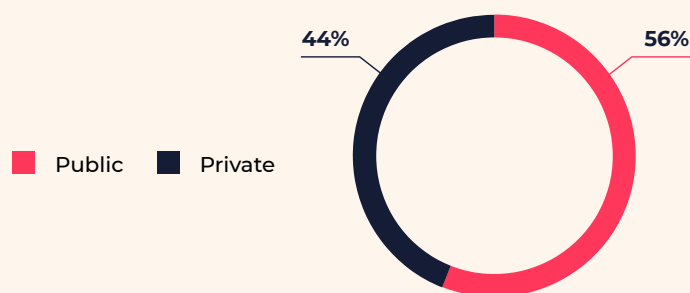


SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

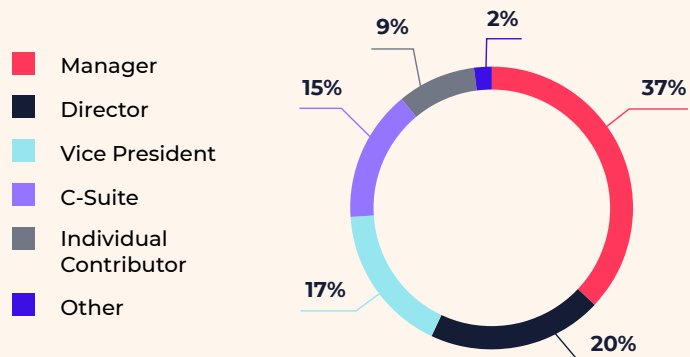
In order to get a more complete picture of the CSR landscape, we surveyed more than 1,000 people in diverse roles across various industries from 82 countries.

The charts following offer an overview of respondents, from U.S. Executives to HR pros in India:

IS YOUR ORGANIZATION PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?



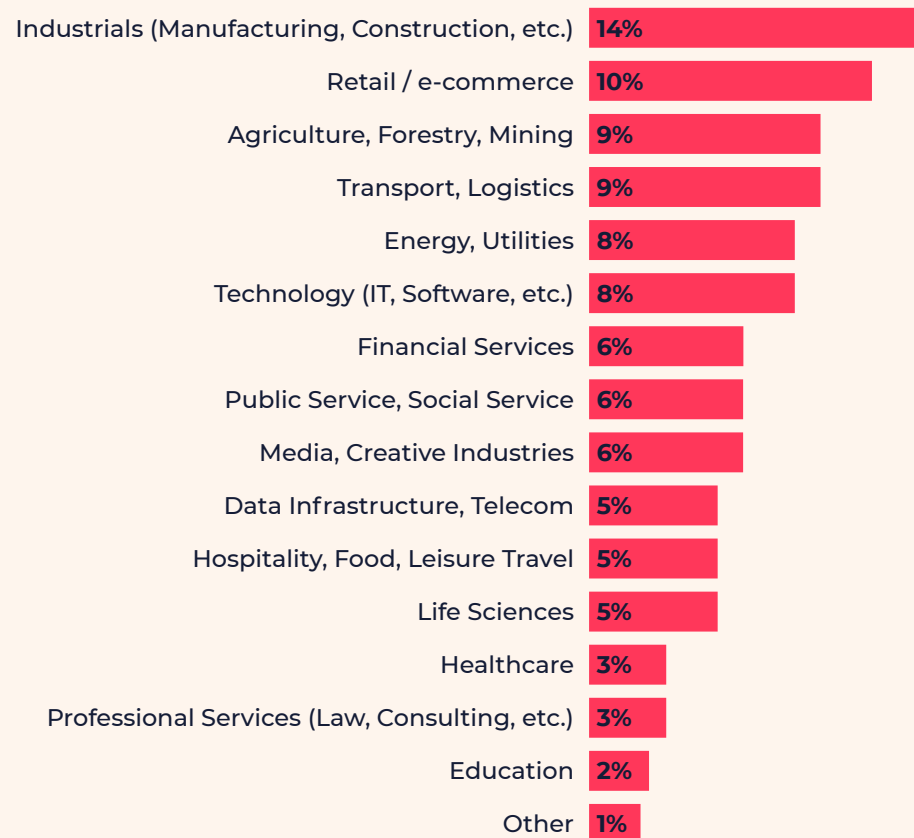
WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?



WHAT IS YOUR FOCUS?



IN WHAT SECTOR IS YOUR ORGANIZATION?



About Skillsoft

Skillsoft (NYSE: SKIL) delivers transformative learning experiences that propel organizations and people to grow together. The Company partners with enterprise organizations and serves a global community of learners to prepare today's employees for tomorrow's economy. With Skillsoft, customers gain access to blended, multimodal learning experiences that do more than build skills, they grow a more capable, adaptive, and engaged workforce. Through a portfolio of best-in-class content, a platform that is personalized and connected to customer needs, world-class tech, and a broad ecosystem of partners, Skillsoft drives continuous growth and performance for employees and their organizations by overcoming critical skill gaps and unlocking human potential.

Learn more at www.skillsoft.com.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Please contact Cameron Martin
cameron.martin@skillsoft.com

