2026 C-suite Sustainability Report

Sustainability in focus

Deloitte.

Together makes progress

Table of contents

Introduction

Looking back five years ago, Deloitte Global's C-suite Sustainability Report described a disconnect between sustainability ambition and impact. Executives were both concerned and optimistic, but many organizations had not yet embedded "needle-moving" actions, such as reconfiguring operations, infrastructure, and supply chains to be more resilient to extreme weather or developing new sustainable products or services, to turn intent into measurable results. Since then, the broader environment has become more complex, with competing demands on leaders' attention and mix of opportunities and challenges for sustainability actions.

What hasn't changed amid those competing demands? Deloitte Global's 2026 survey of more than 2,100 global C-suite leaders shows that sustainability remains a top business priority, most organizations continue to increase their investments, and sizable majorities expect the effects of climate change to significantly impact company strategy and operations.

However, there has been a notable shift in how many organizations are executing their sustainability efforts. Corporate sustainability has entered a more disciplined stage and become more embedded into operations. This year's survey results indicate that many organizations' approaches have become more focused, organization-oriented, and value-driven: fewer, more select initiatives, greater attention to return on investment (ROI), stronger emphasis on resilience, and deeper reliance on technology and data. In-depth interviews with almost a dozen C-suite leaders underscored these points, with numerous examples of sustainability initiatives directly driving business value—despite the diverse mix of sustainability actions prioritized and implemented across organizations.

The central challenge remains: Navigating the complexities of turning sustainability ambitions into disciplined action that creates long-term value for the organization and meaningful impact for the broader transition to a more sustainable world. There are many paths to meeting that challenge. Start by being clear about what sustainability aims to deliver, for your business and the planet. Then build a disciplined portfolio of initiatives based on a broad conception of value creation, underpinned by the appropriate enabling technologies and data. And keep an eye on the horizon as corporate sustainability continues to evolve.

Jen

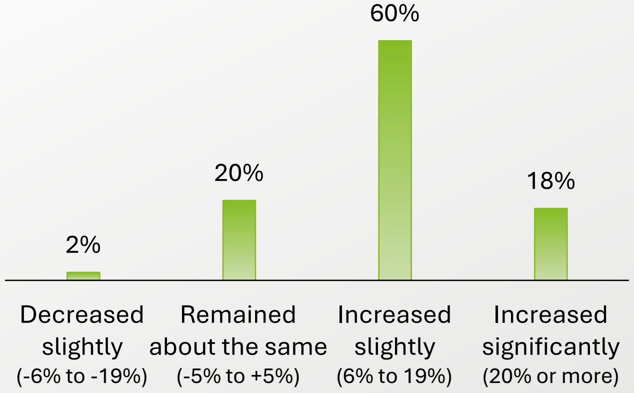
Jennifer Steinmann
Deloitte Global Sustainability Business leader

At a glance: Sustainability across the C-suite

Deloitte Global's 2026 survey of more than 2,100 C-suite leaders shows that sustainability remains a top business priority. Organizations continue to invest in sustainability, and most respondents see sustainability as a source of competitive advantage. A wide range of sustainability matters are impacting organizations, and stakeholder pressure has ebbed over the last five years.

78%

have increased sustainability investments in the last year



83%

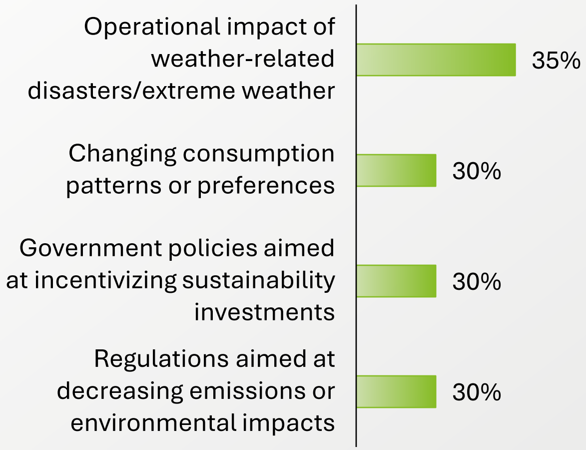
agree sustainability initiatives create competitive advantage for their organization

Top 3

Organizations' most pressing matters to focus on over the next year

Impacts

Top sustainability matters already impacting business

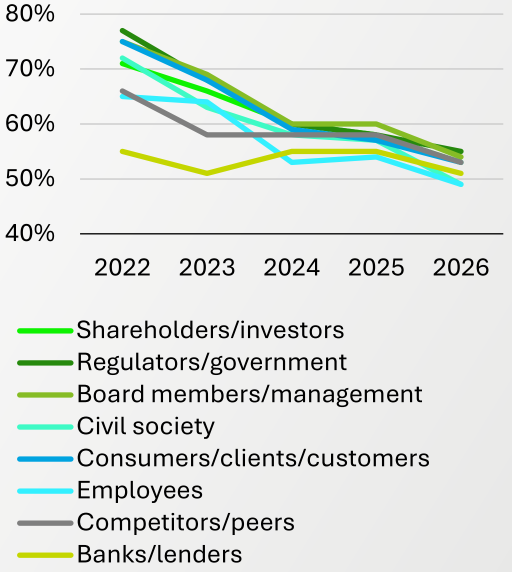


63%

of organizations expect effects of climate change to have a high/very high impact on strategy and operations over the next three years

Stakeholder Pressure

Pressure felt from stakeholders around sustainability efforts (to a moderate / large extent)



Key findings and insights

Corporate sustainability has moved from aspirational to operational

Deloitte Global's 2026 survey of more than 2,100 C-suite leaders suggests corporate sustainability has entered a more disciplined phase. Sustainability remains a top priority on the business agenda, but there has been a notable shift. Fewer organizations describe their approach as business-model transformation, while more are focused on embedding sustainability into operations as they pursue fewer initiatives, strengthen resilience, and seek to demonstrate financial value.

That discipline is visible in how executives characterize their organization's overall sustainability approach, a significant change compared to last year. Almost half (47%) describe their approach as embedding sustainability considerations across the organization, while another 30% say their efforts are primarily focused on incremental process or operational changes. Only 18% say their organization is transforming its business model to help address sustainability—notably down from 40% last year—and another 5% say the focus is mostly compliance, suggesting a shift from a broad approach to more selective investment in initiatives with clearer business relevance.

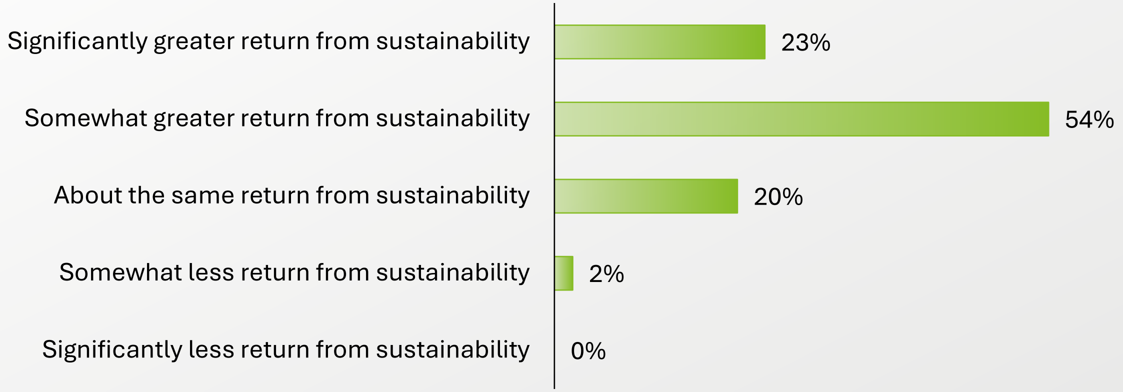
> *Sustainability cannot be treated as a standalone agenda separate from the business, or even a risk mitigation or a reporting-only function. It has to be directly embedded in the business and seen as business resilience.*
>
> **Luana Ozemela**
> Chief Sustainability Officer, iFood

Which of the following statements best describes your organization's current approach to sustainability?

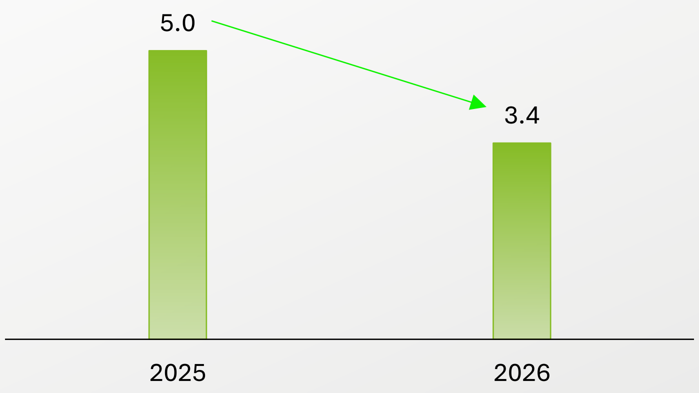
Most organizations continue to increase sustainability investment, and 77% of respondents say those investments deliver greater ROI than other business investments. But many organizations are applying more scrutiny to what initiatives they undertake. The average number of sustainability actions has decreased from the prior year, and across each of the dozen actions in the survey, fewer respondents say they are engaged in them this year. The result is a more focused sustainability agenda. In 2026, respondents report undertaking an average of 3.4 sustainability initiatives out of 12 options, down from 5.0 out of 12 the year prior. Nearly 60% report undertaking exactly three initiatives, while only 14% report undertaking five or more. That sharpening of focus came through in leadership interviews, as well. Ann Tracy, Chief Sustainability Officer at Colgate-Palmolive, notes that, "[Colgate-Palmolive's] 2030 Sustainability & Social Impact strategy is an evolution, not a revolution. We've learned from the past, and based on those learnings, we've streamlined our actions. We have fewer, more measurable targets designed to drive value, creating greater impact at scale."

> *Sustainability is now embedded across our business; we drove the early momentum from the center with an aim that it would eventually become part of business as usual. Now, it doesn't mean that there isn't a whole lot of work we still need to do, but enough of our partners across the business see the value to the point that it has organically taken hold and our various success cases have been adopted and proliferated. This evolution is just evidence of a maturation of sustainability and affirmation of successful execution.*
>
> **Marisa Drew**
> Chief Sustainability Officer,
> Standard Chartered Bank

On average, how would you assess the financial return on investment (ROI) of your organization's sustainability investments compared to its other business investments?



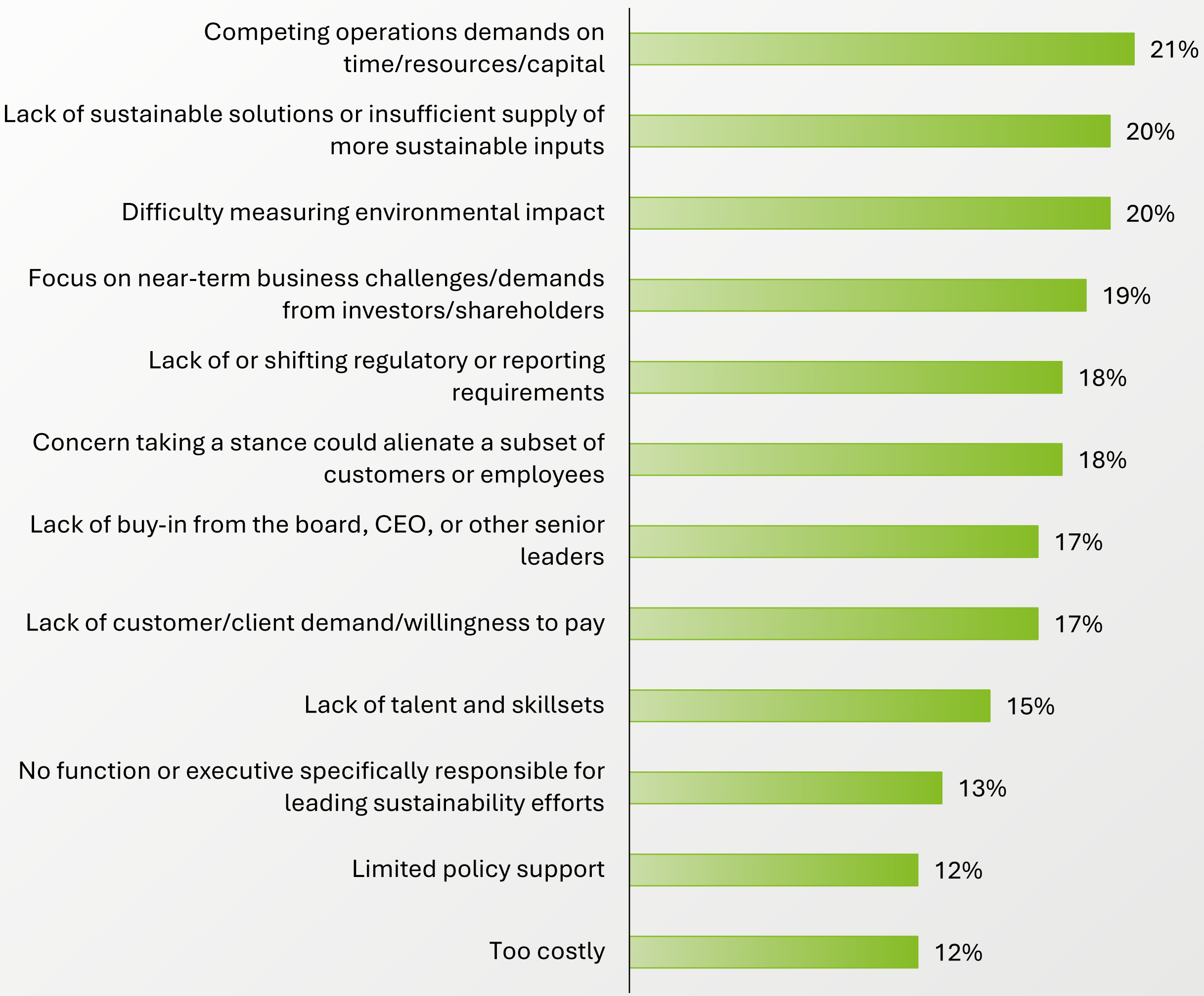
Average number of initiatives undertaken supporting sustainability strategy



The tightening of focus could also be, in part, a reaction to persistent obstacles organizations report facing in their sustainability efforts over the past five years. Among the most frequently cited challenges are competing demands on time, resources, and capital; difficulty measuring environmental impacts; a lack of sustainable solutions or insufficient supply; and a need to focus on near-term business challenges and demands from investors and shareholders. In response, organizations may be sharpening their efforts around sustainability initiatives that both help address pressing business needs and have available inputs and clearly measurable results.

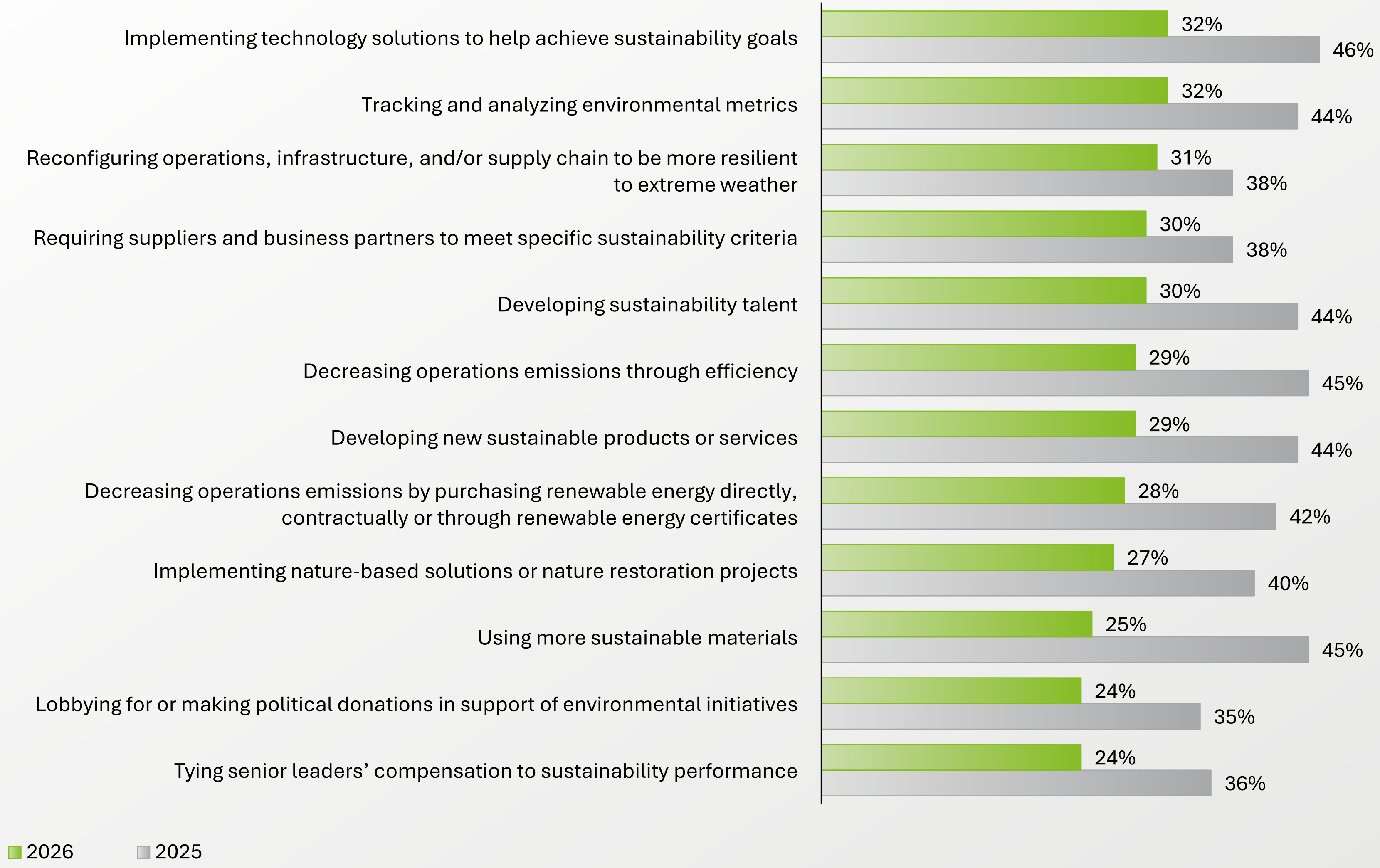
> *Sustainability alone is not always a strong driver for stakeholders, so we have started to use terms like resilience and economic security together with sustainability to communicate our holistic strategy.*
>
> **Yumi Otsuka**
> Senior General Manager of Sustainability, Toyota Motor Corp.

What are the top obstacles to deploying sustainability initiatives at your organization? (select top two)



That could prove more durable as the broader environment continues to grow more complex and to present competing demands on leaders' attention. But with this increased focus and prioritization of initiatives with the clearest near-term financial case, leaders should be cautious not to lose sight of opportunities to invest in the longer-horizon innovation that could create outsized impact for both the business and the planet. Amelia DeLuca, Chief Sustainability Officer at Delta Air Lines, explains, "We're setting up processes that allow us to not be so focused on just our work that we lose sight of the external environment. We always have to be open to the fact that there will be new products coming in that we can't even imagine today." Among the initiatives that saw the largest drop in engagement are those focused on new product and service innovation, sustainable material use, and emissions reductions.

Which of the following initiatives has your company undertaken as part of its sustainability strategy?



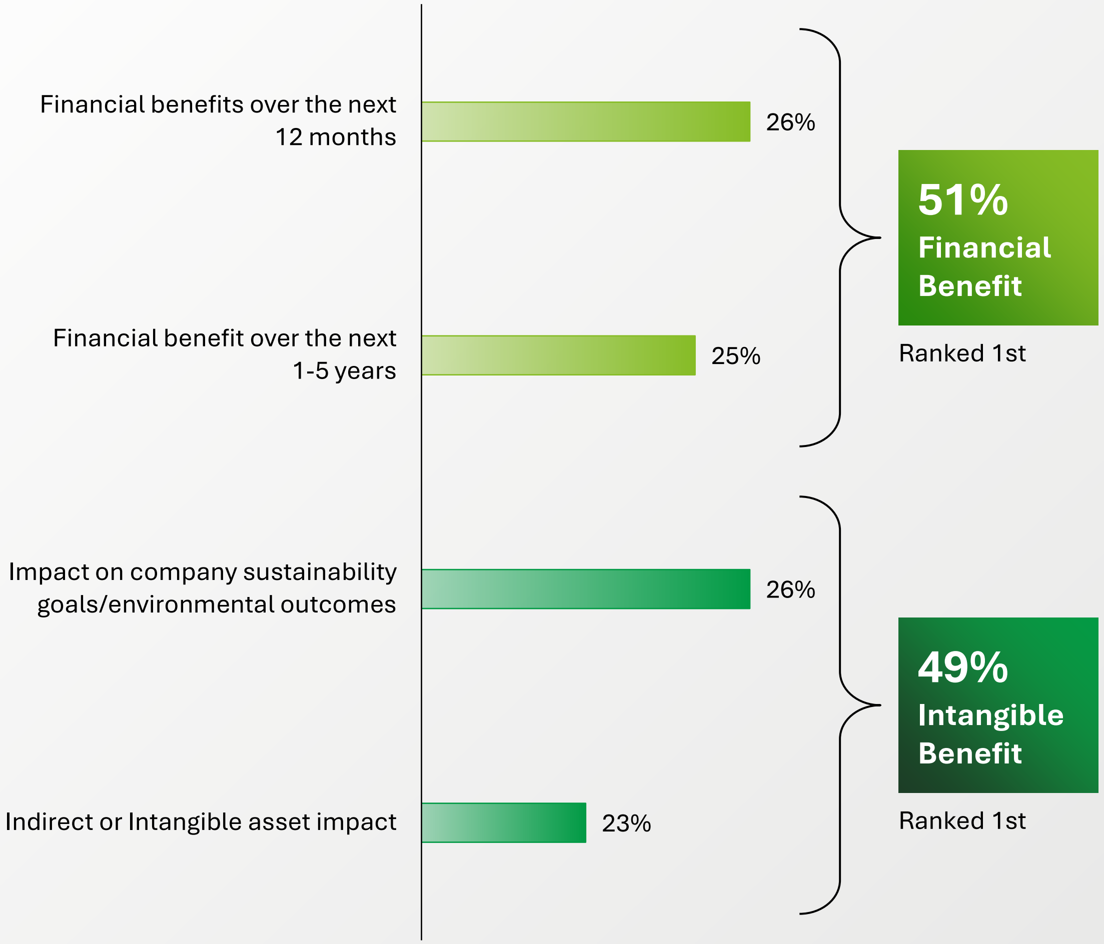
Sustainability's business benefits accompany value discipline

As organizations focus their sustainability actions, the data suggests they are applying a more explicit business value lens.

Fifty-one percent of executives say short- or long-term financial benefit is the top factor influencing sustainability investment decisions. CEOs and CFOs are particularly likely to say financial benefits in the next 12 months are the most influential driver of decision-making (29% and 33%, respectively, versus 26% for the sample overall). That may help explain why 77% also say their sustainability investments deliver greater financial ROI than other types of business investments. That does not necessarily mean executives see sustainability only through a financial lens, or that only those who do see business benefits. It does suggest that sustainability initiatives are often expected to be justified in terms consistent with the rest of the enterprise: cost reduction, risk mitigation, returns, growth, resilience, and competitive advantage.

> *The plethora of externalities that we're competing with on a day-to-day basis makes it increasingly important to anchor our work in value creation and key value drivers. Our updated strategy is focused on three buckets: dollars created, dollars saved, and dollars protected. By establishing clear, measurable targets, we ensure our work is creating impact and accountability.*
>
> **Ann Tracy**
> Chief Sustainability Officer,
> Colgate-Palmolive

When assessing potential sustainability initiatives and investments, which outcomes are most influential in driving decision-making? (ranked first)



The business benefits reported by respondents are broad rather than concentrated in a single area. Large majorities say their strategic sustainability initiatives have had positive effects on revenue generation, cost reduction, risk and resiliency, brand and reputation, and regulatory compliance and governance. Half of respondents rate all five of those dimensions as at least somewhat positive, and more than seven in 10 rate at least four of the five positively. Sustainability value is rarely just cost savings, just revenue, or just compliance.

As organizations exercise portfolio discipline, initiatives that don't have clear business results may be getting filtered out, but they should avoid conflating "easy to measure" with "most valuable" and potentially forgoing investments that could create significant impact but are harder to quantify. Some initiatives may have a direct line to cost reduction or margin improvement; others may strengthen customer trust, risk resilience, data infrastructure, innovation capacity, or long-term market position. Even as they focus their efforts, leaders should think expansively and holistically about how sustainability contributes to enterprise performance.

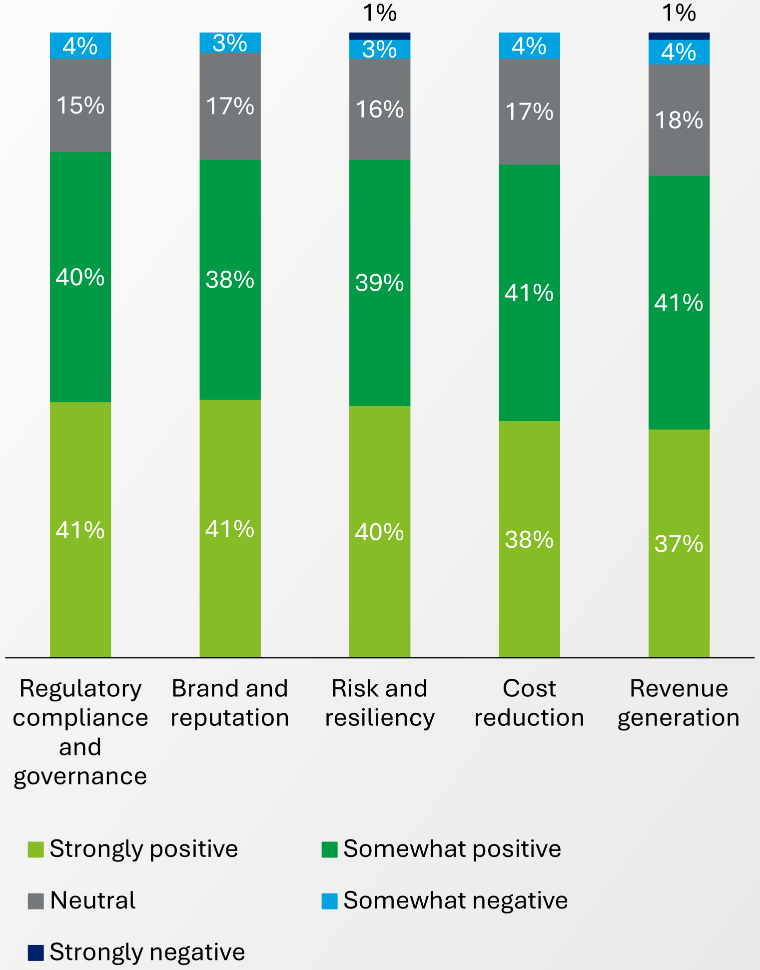
One challenge and opportunity is gaining C-suite mindshare and having the opportunity to speak to the senior-most leaders of a company about sustainability in a way that reveals the strategic imperative of investing, rather than just a compliance mindset or as a nice thing to do, but peripheral to the business.

Katie McGinty
Vice President and Chief Sustainability and External Relations Officer, Johnson Controls

Sustainability is cemented as a business advantage. Anything we're doing from the sustainability lens, we're really thinking about the co-benefits, whether it's the aircraft of the future or how we're operating. It's trying to make it a better experience for everyone. Sustainability and some of the innovators in this space just happen to be the unlocks the industry has been looking for for a long time. And that is a really exciting part of this body of work that goes beyond just compliance or even altruism.

Amelia DeLuca
Chief Sustainability Officer,
Delta Air Lines

How would you assess the impact of your organization's strategic sustainability initiatives on the following dimensions?



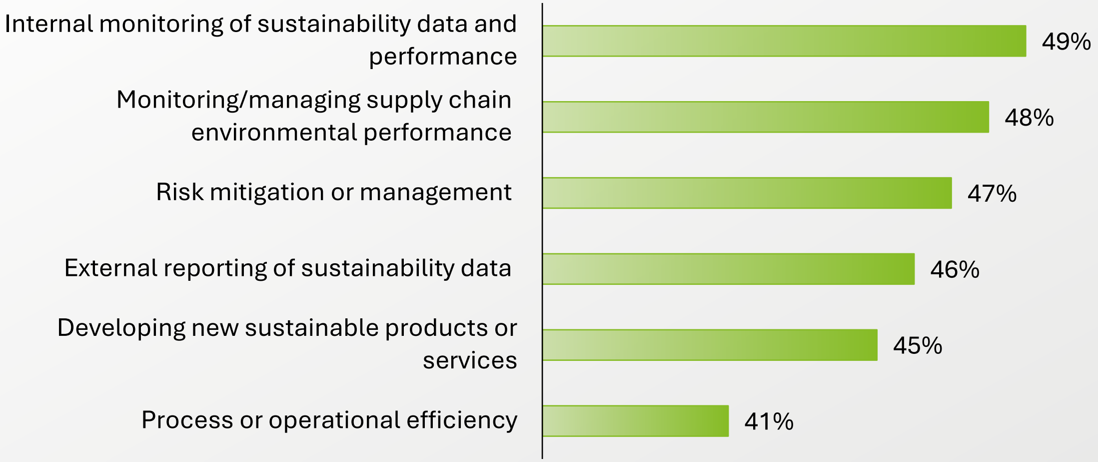
Technology remains a top enabler of sustainability execution

With tighter focus, corporate sustainability is continuing to lean on technology, including AI, as a key enabler—another sign of sustainability's evolution.

iFood's Chief Sustainability Officer, Luana Ozemela, underscored the complementarity, saying, "For us, there is absolutely no trade-off between investing in technology and sustainability. We choose both at the same time. To advance our sustainability goals, we cannot do it without technology because of the scale of our ecosystem and the constant search for efficiency."

Implementing technology solutions is the most-commonly cited sustainability initiative (as it was last year). Organizations report applying technology across a wide range of use cases: internal performance monitoring, supply-chain environmental data, risk modeling, external reporting, sustainable product development, and operational efficiency (the latter a particular emphasis for those in finance and operations roles). Chief Sustainability Officers, in particular, report technology's benefits in monitoring and managing supply chain environmental performance and scope 3 emissions.

In which areas is your organization implementing technology solutions to help achieve sustainability goals? (select all that apply)

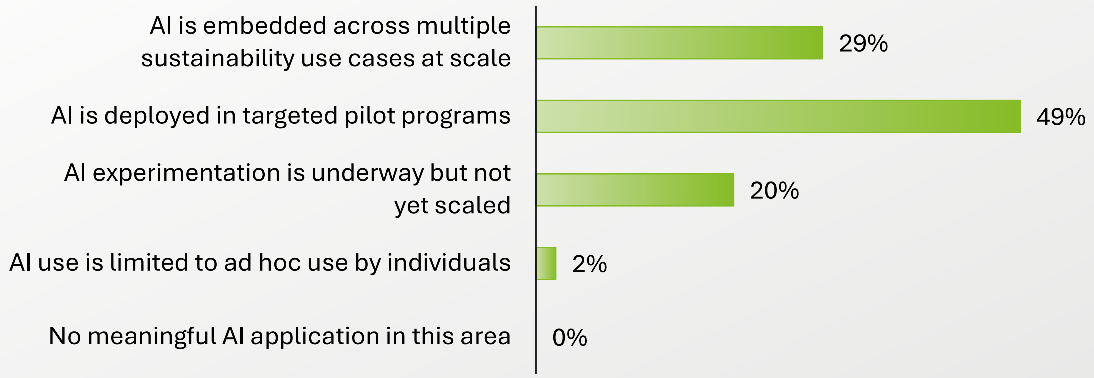


AI use is commonplace but not yet mature. Last year, 81% of respondents said they were already using AI to further their sustainability efforts. Going deeper in this year's survey, 42% say they are using Generative AI and an equal percentage say they are using AI agents, but more than 70% of respondents say that AI usage for sustainability overall remains in pilots, experimentation, or ad hoc stages. Jitesh Shetty, Credibl CEO, highlighted a few areas where companies tend to have more hesitancy with AI output: "One is in areas where the data is more sensitive, for example, when it comes to sharing supply chain data. Another is where the inference is highly actionable in the near term."

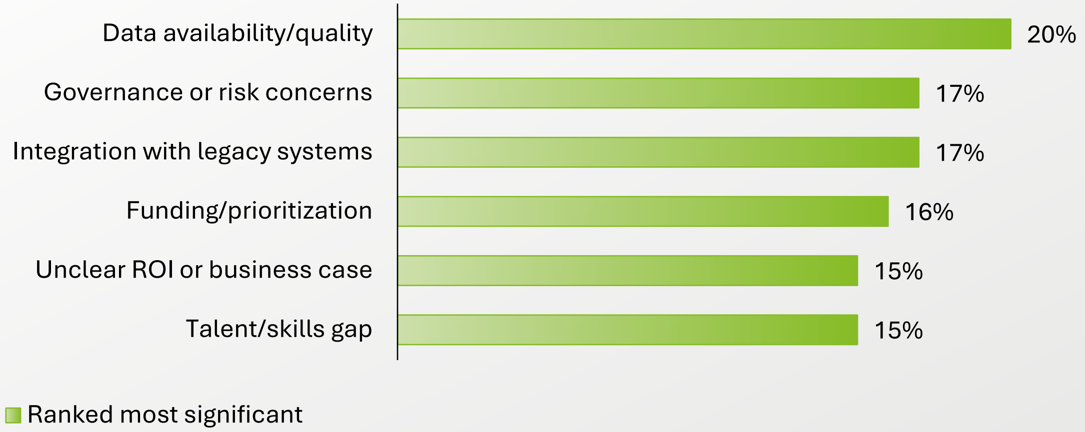
Twenty-eight percent say sustainability is formally embedded as a decision criterion when making enterprise AI decisions. The barriers to scaling AI for sustainability are likely familiar to anyone deploying AI anywhere in the enterprise: data quality, governance, integration with legacy systems, and unclear ROI.
The relative importance of those barriers varies somewhat by role, with CEOs more likely to cite data quality (25% versus 19% of all respondents) and CSOs highlighting funding and prioritization (19% versus 15% of all respondents).

> *There's a tremendous opportunity with predictive AI. We've already seen how AI can help people work more effectively, but what's most exciting is how it can help us tackle challenges that once felt out of reach. For sustainability, AI has the power to make the invisible visible. It can uncover patterns, risks, and opportunities we couldn't see before, giving us the insights we need to make better decisions and drive meaningful change.*
>
> **Alanna Boyd**
> Senior Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer, Sun Life Financial Inc.

How would you describe your organization's maturity in applying AI to sustainability initiatives?



What factors most limit your organization's ability to use AI in sustainability initiatives? (rank order)



Resilience is becoming a sustainability focal point

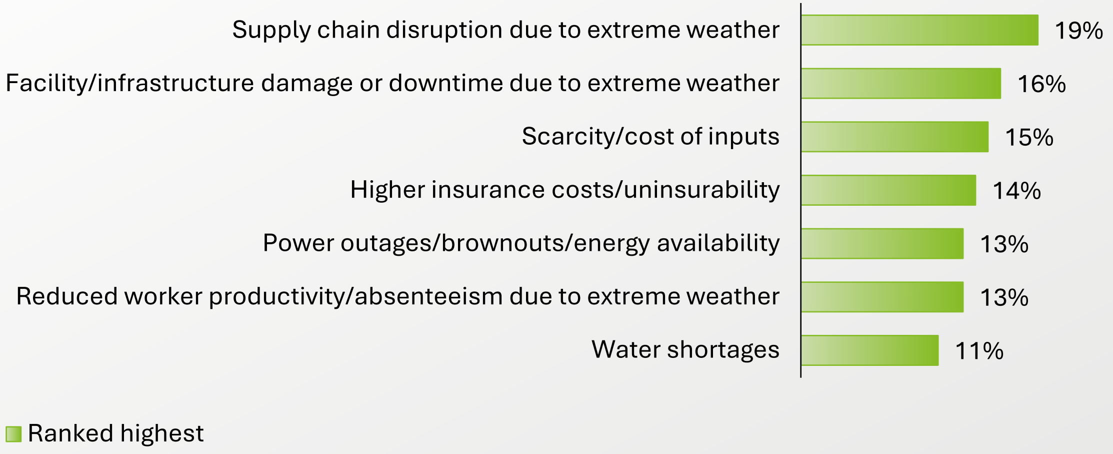
Sustainability and resilience are increasingly intertwined.

Organizations report sustainability-related physical risk as the greatest sustainability matter currently impacting them and the greatest near-term sustainability-related threat, particularly for their supply chains. Respondents highlighted improved resiliency as among the top benefits of their organizations' sustainability initiatives.

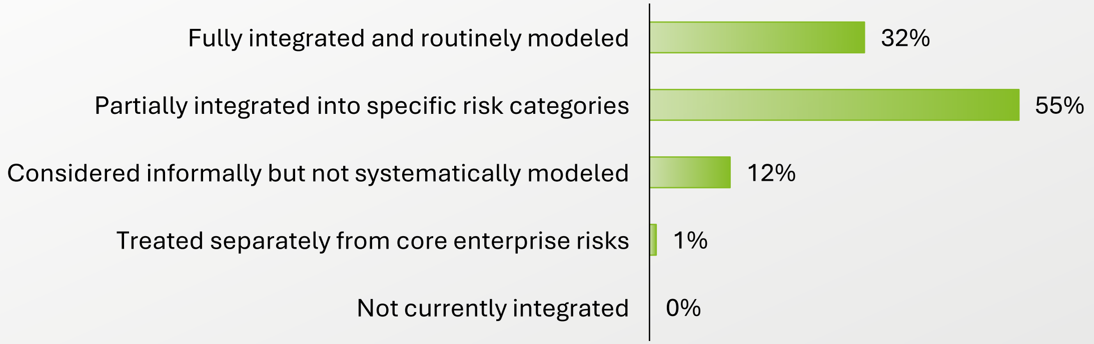
Overall many respondents feel confident in their readiness, but that confidence may mask underlying challenges. Seventy-five percent or more of respondents say they are very or somewhat prepared for a variety of risks—yet only approximately one-third say sustainability-related risks are fully integrated and routinely modeled in their enterprise risk management processes. Nearly half say their visibility into supply chain environmental performance doesn't extend beyond their immediate suppliers. And around 20–25% of respondents on average said their organization was minimally prepared to deal with their greatest sustainability-related physical risk.

> *One thing we have seen over the last year is that supply chain, resilience and risk have become much more important. Sustainability is extremely complex across a few vectors, including regulation, materials, supply chains and climate risk.*
>
> **Jitesh Shetty**
> Founder & CEO, Credibl

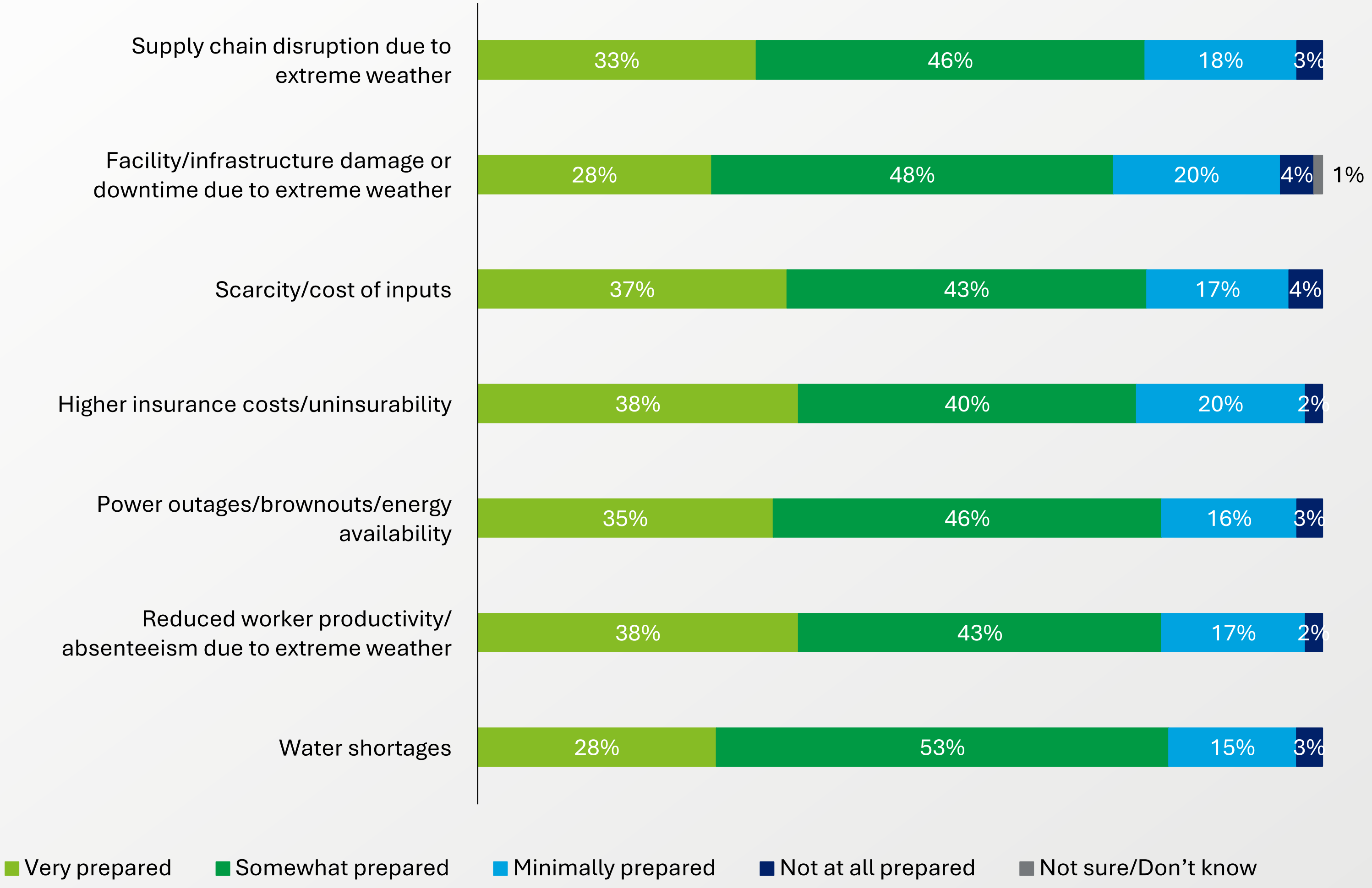
What do you see as the greatest sustainability-related physical risks to your organization over the next 3-5 years? (rank order)



To what extent are sustainability-related physical risks formally integrated into enterprise risk management processes?



How prepared is your organization to avoid, withstand, and recover from sustainability-related physical risks over the next 3–5 years?



Many pathways exist to sustainable value creation

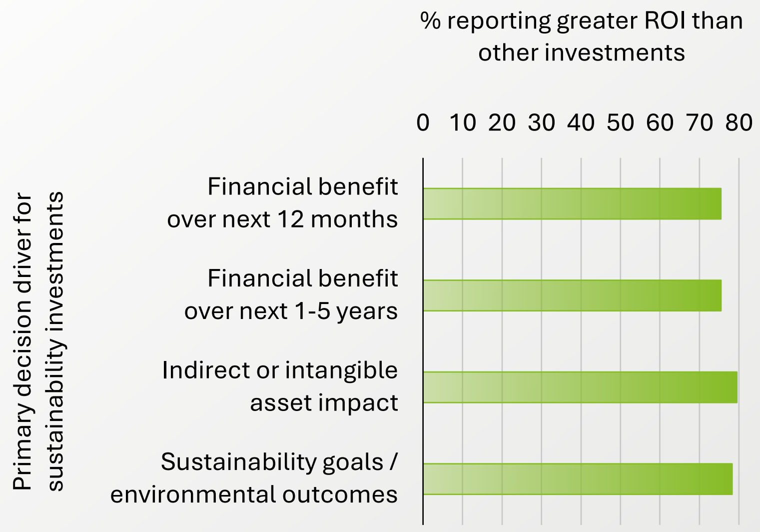
There is no clear playbook that consistently points to stronger sustainability results or impact that emerges from this data.

Executives are almost evenly divided on which outcomes most influence sustainability investment decisions, with roughly equal percentages giving top priority to near-term and long-term financial results, sustainability outcomes, and indirect or intangible benefits. Regardless of which decision lens was prioritized, respondents cited similar gains in financial ROI, competitive differentiation, brand and reputation, and other dimensions of business value. Deloitte Global interviews with nearly a dozen sustainability leaders across geographies and industries underscored the point. While there were some commonalities, each organization was charting a unique course.

Executives reported undertaking 800 unique combinations of the dozen sustainability initiatives the survey asked about. The most common combination of actions was only shared by 15 executives (less than 1% of the sample). There is no particular mix of actions identified that is reliably associated with value creation or impact. Rather, organizations appear to be building more tightly-focused portfolios of actions that suit their business needs and ambitions.

> *As we approach 2030, everyone is trying to see the reality, see the bottom line of competitiveness. In general, our clients are not at all abandoning their ambitions. Some, such as the technology solution providers, are all the more encouraged by the path to 2050. Others, such as the hard-to-abate sectors, are thinking about a different set of constraints along with competitiveness and economic security issues and being able to explain this reality, the ambition, and the next set of realistic steps that they can make.*
>
> **Megumi Muto**
> Deputy Chief Sustainability Officer,
> Mizuho Financial Group

Sustainability investment decision drivers and reported ROI



Given the myriad of ways sustainability efforts can translate into enterprise impact, the leadership task should be to identify the pathway that fits the business, understand its tradeoffs, and build the capabilities required to execute on that portfolio, whether through efficiency, growth, resilience, governance, data, or broader integration. To that end, executives should:

1. **Define and articulate what sustainability is meant to deliver for the business.** Decide whether the primary objective is reducing or avoiding costs, protecting revenue, or driving growth[1]—and how those aims could complement or conflict with sustainability goals such as emissions reductions. Apply that lens to both the overall program and individual efforts. A sustainability agenda without a clear value objective could risk becoming a collection of disconnected initiatives.

2. **Build a focused portfolio, and make difficult choices.** Treat sustainability initiatives like other investment portfolios. Scale the actions with a clear business case and sustainability impacts, pause those without a defined owner or measurable objective, and reserve selective funding for longer-term opportunities that may not yet have a proven return profile.

3. **Move resilience from strategic vision into operating routines.** Assign clear ownership for physical risks, stress-test critical assets and suppliers, integrate those risks into enterprise risk management and capital planning, and define risk thresholds that could trigger action.

4. **Build the sustainability data foundation as AI scales.** AI and digital tools are important to sustainability execution. To overcome barriers to adoption and advance from experimentation phase, define priority use cases, clean and govern the data behind them, connect sustainability data to enterprise systems, and scale those tools that improve decision-making—such as supplier selection, risk modeling, reporting, product design, or capital planning.

5. **Measure the full range of value created.** Consider and track how sustainability affects business outcomes in areas like revenue, costs, risk, resilience, compliance, customer relationships, brand, supply chain performance, and competitive positioning, so valuable initiatives are not dismissed simply because their benefits are harder to quantify. Some outcomes are quantifiable and can be credibly translated into cash flows, while others are directional and best captured with explicit strategic judgments about their value.

At the same time, leaders should be careful not to lose sight of the broader transition and the opportunities it might present.

As a company with a diverse business portfolio, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Yet over the past five years, we have evolved into a more connected and cohesive group under one umbrella. This shift has been driven not only by our group-wide sustainability strategy PLEDGES, which enables us to take a holistic view of value creation, but also by the change in business environment which we try to leverage to accelerate and reinforce our transformation.

Megumu Tsuda
Deputy Chief Sustainability Officer, Hitachi

I believe sustainability will move in a direction influenced by the plummeting price of renewable energy and energy storage, plastic and packaging, and physical climate risk. That is where we should be focused and where we should be articulating the value to the business.

Sophia Mendelsohn
Chief Sustainability and Commercial Officer, SAP

[1] To learn more about how about how sustainability can translate into the business value, see https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/what-we-do/capabilities/sustainability/content/sustainability-fusion-framework.html

Managing sustainability in a way that is more consistent with other business functions can bring helpful discipline and a focus on execution. But in important ways, sustainability is different from HR, finance, or marketing. Each function is focused on business value. But sustainability is also about building a world where the needs of the present can be met without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the future. Doing so will likely reshape wide swaths of the economy, presenting organizations with new but potentially unproven opportunities in the process.
The challenge for executives is to keep one eye on that horizon, even as they execute today's sustainability agenda.

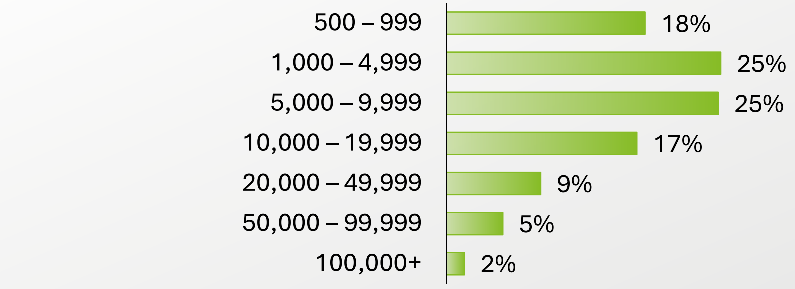
Methodology

Methodology and business profile

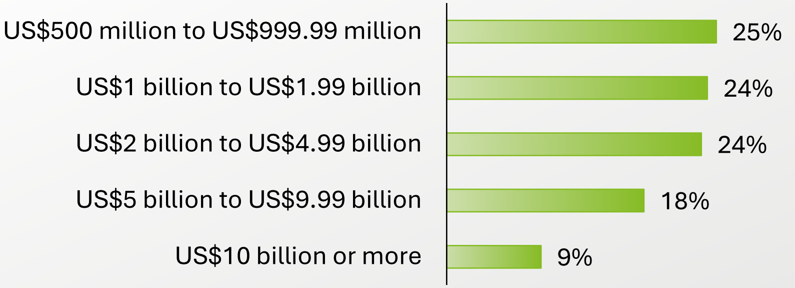
The report is based on a survey of 2,156 C-suite executives, conducted by KS&R Inc. on behalf of Deloitte Global, and was administered in a double-blind manner during May and June 2026, ensuring impartiality and confidentiality for both respondents and researchers. The survey polled respondents from 29 countries: 39% from Europe; 17% from North America; 27% from Asia-Pacific; 7% from Middle East and Africa; 10% from Central and South America. Each of the major commercial industry sectors were represented in the sample. Additionally, Deloitte Global conducted select, one-on-one interviews with C-suite executives globally.

Countries polled: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States.

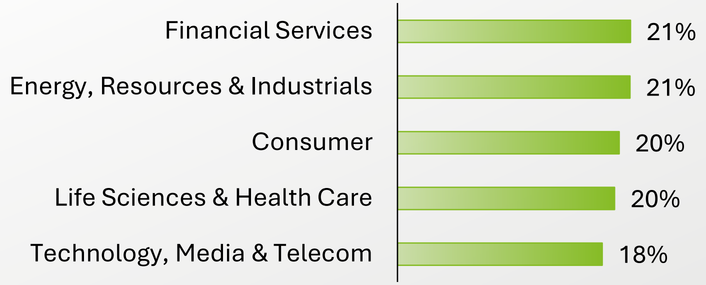
Number of employees



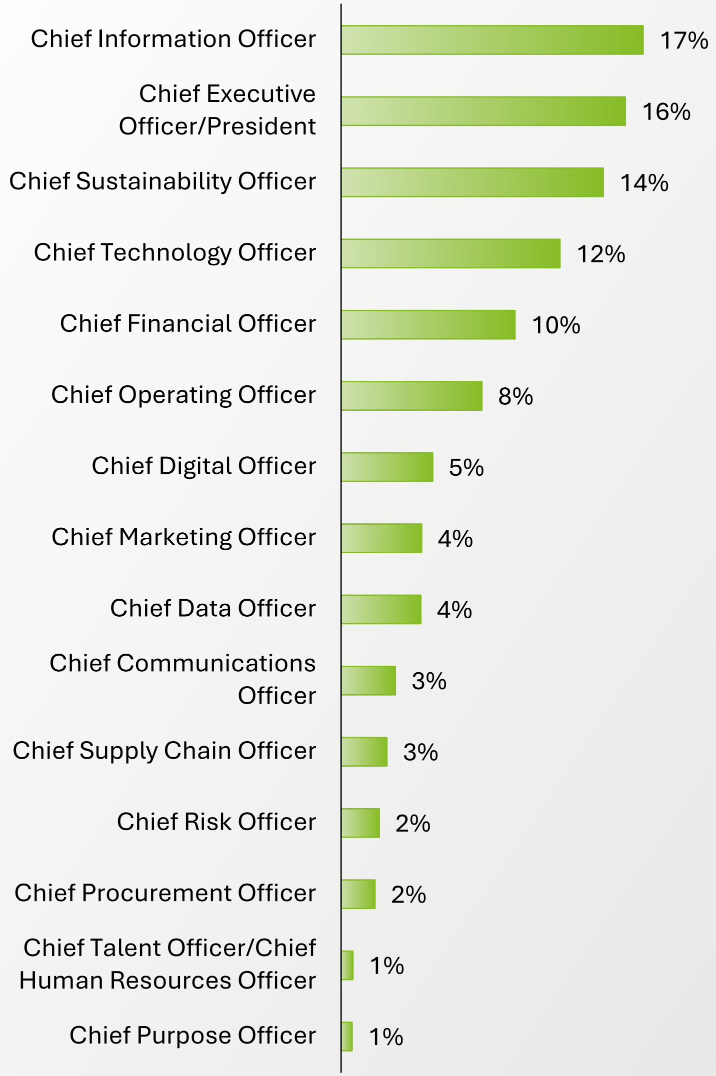
Annual Revenue ($US)



Industry



Job title



Contacts

Jennifer Steinmann
Deloitte Global Sustainability Business Leader
jsteinmann@deloitte.com

A special thanks to the following individuals and organizations who provided the support to make this report possible:

Aditi Vashishtha, Deloitte Services LP
Ashish Gupta, Deloitte Global
Blythe Aronowitz, Deloitte Global
Derek Pankratz, Deloitte Services LP
Grzegorz Jurczyszyn, Deloitte Poland
KS&R
Michelle Varney, Deloitte Global
Uttkarsh Shardool Ashar, Deloitte Global
Rachael Ballard, Deloitte Global
Pia Basu, Deloitte Global
Sue Harvey Brown, Deloitte Global
Stu Kerr, Deloitte Global
Tracey McQueary, Deloitte Global

Deloitte.

Together makes progress