Teneo®

Insights

Staying the Course: Our Sixth Annual State of U.S. Sustainability Reports

September 2026

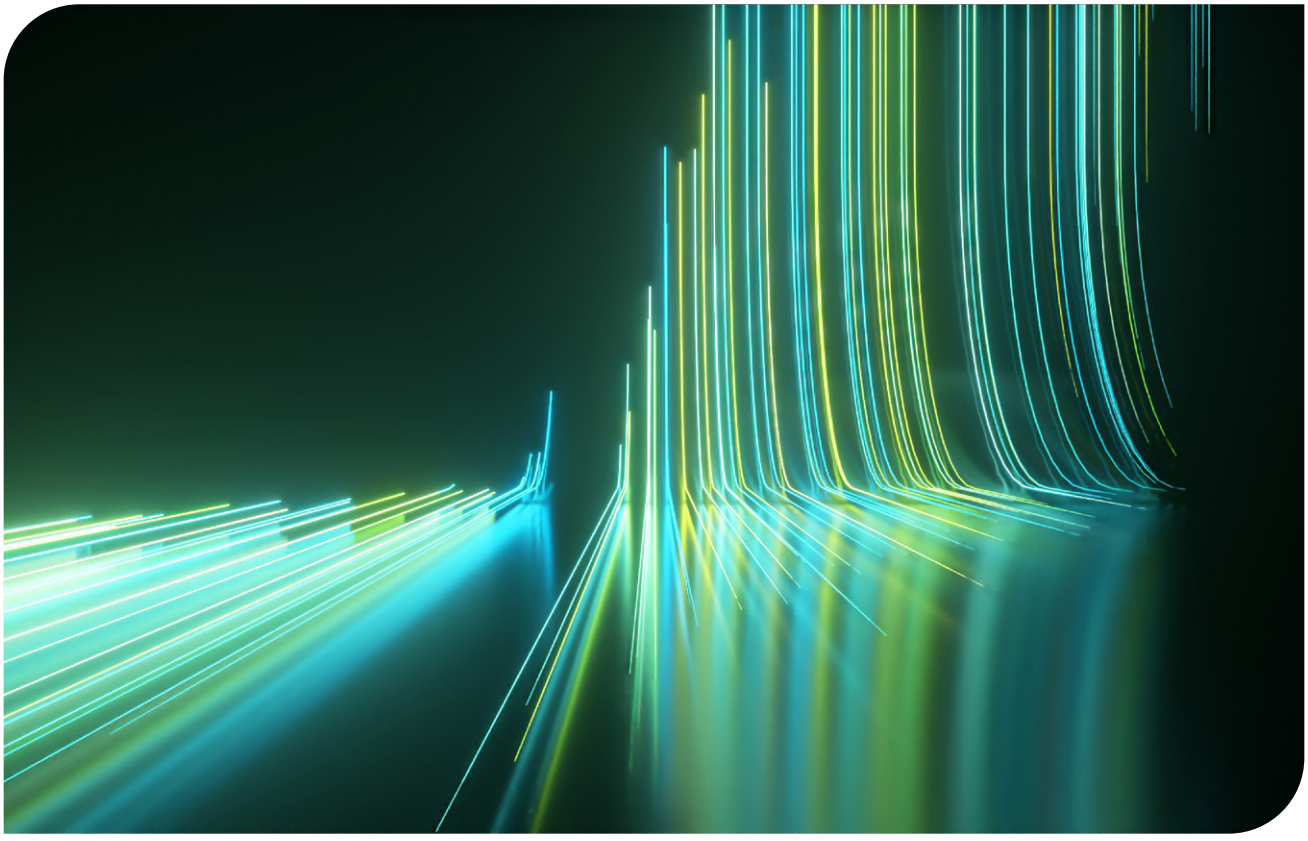


Introduction

It has been a year since we published our 2025 State of U.S. Sustainability Reports. The sustainability landscape remains marked by heightened scrutiny and uncertainty, as ongoing political conflicts and evolving global regulation continue to shape the expectations of key stakeholders.

For example, in the U.S., Republican state attorneys general continued to scrutinize company participation in climate initiatives, plastics and packaging and other sustainability-related activities. At the same time, California moved forward with mandatory climate disclosure requirements and Democratic states have scrutinized company rollbacks of diversity initiatives. Outside the U.S., the European Union continued efforts to simplify its sustainability reporting regime, while additional jurisdictions moved toward adopting disclosure requirements aligned with international frameworks (e.g., International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB)). **Amid this ongoing uncertainty and confusion globally, U.S. companies largely stayed the course on their sustainability reporting in 2026.**

To help companies plan for reporting in 2027, we analyzed 250 sustainability reports from S&P 500 companies published in 2026. In this report, we provide (i) our study methodology; (ii) our top 10 takeaways from 2026 sustainability reports; and (iii) key statistics of 2026 sustainability reports.



Study Methodology

We analyzed the first 250 sustainability reports from S&P 500 companies published between January 1 and August 31, 2026. For the purposes of this report, "sustainability reports" refer to any annual sustainability disclosure report published in 2026, regardless of naming conventions. The majority of reports analyzed were published by large-cap companies with a sector profile similar to the S&P 500 Index.

Figure 1: Market Cap of Companies Reviewed (USD)

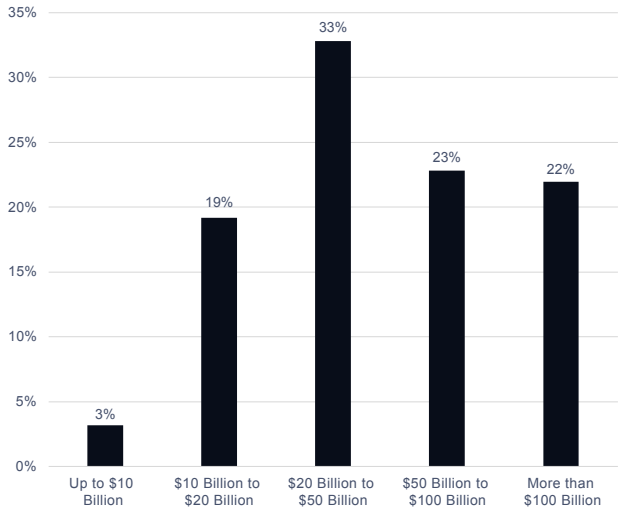
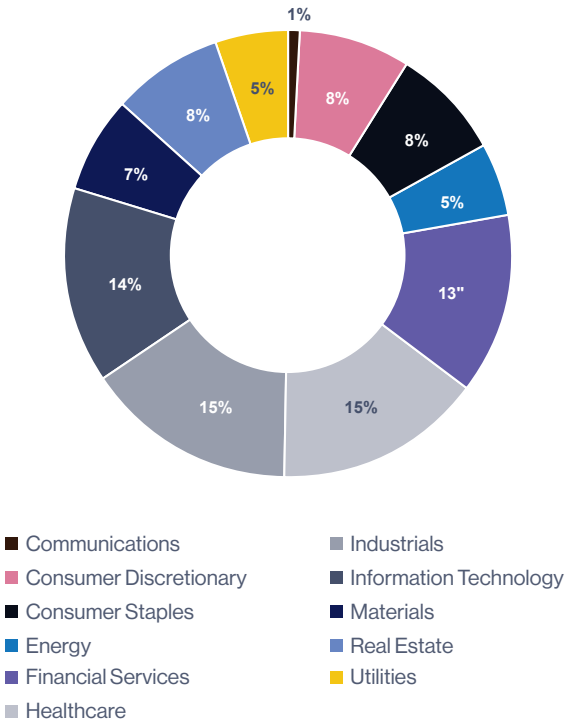


Figure 2: Sector Breakdown of Companies Reviewed



Top 10 Takeaways From 2026 Sustainability Reports

01

Companies continue to publish sustainability reports but with less fanfare.

87% of companies that published a sustainability report by this time last year also published a sustainability report this year to date. Many of those sustainability reports were published later than last year, likely due to additional legal and market review. Report length held steady year over year, with the average length at 69 pages, while only 32% of companies issued a press release announcing publication of their sustainability report, down significantly from its peak of 62% in 2022.

02

Sustainability vernacular continues to evolve.

While "sustainability" maintains its dominance, "impact" and "purpose" emerged as increasingly popular choices for sustainability report titles. Meanwhile, the use of the acronym "ESG" almost disappeared from report titles, dropping to just 4% after peaking at 35% in 2022. Similarly, "ESG" appeared just 10 times within sustainability reports on average, representing a 50% decline from 2025.

03

Double materiality maintains momentum.

70% of companies disclosed that they had conducted a materiality assessment and the proportion that had completed (or were in the process of completing) a "double" materiality assessment increased to 51% (up from 41% in 2025). Of those companies, 44% referenced the European Union Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (EU CSRD) requirements, signaling continued attention to evolving EU compliance requirements.

04

International disclosure frameworks are still top of mind for U.S. companies with global operations.

14% of companies aligned their sustainability disclosures with the ISSB, almost double the number from last year. While most companies stopped short of confirming full alignment with the EU CSRD, 20% noted their ongoing monitoring of potential EU CSRD compliance requirements.

05

Companies continue to report on inclusion but with less supporting demographic data.

Most companies (72%) included dedicated inclusion-focused sections in their sustainability reports. Yet the share of companies disclosing workforce demographic data fell from 92% to 64%. Notably, standardized EEO-1 disclosure, which remained relatively resilient in 2025 despite broader changes to DE&I reporting, fell sharply from 78% to 21% in 2026.

06

Sustainability reports are now supported by more sustainability data overall.

While narratives remain an important part of reporting, companies are increasingly disclosing standalone sustainability data tables. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of companies included a sustainability data table in 2026, up from 57% in 2025. Commonly disclosed metrics included environmental data, such as greenhouse gas emissions, and metrics related to human capital management and employee health and safety. This shift has been accompanied by an increase in companies obtaining external assurance of their sustainability data.

Top 10 Takeaways From 2026 Sustainability Reports

07

External assurance is table stakes.

75% of companies obtained external assurance for data within sustainability reports, continuing a steady increase from 54% in 2022. Expected compliance requirements (e.g., EU CSRD) and political scrutiny have likely increased the focus on establishing the credibility of reported sustainability data.

08

General Counsels, Chief Sustainability Officers and Board Governance Committees are increasingly responsible for sustainability programs.

As sustainability programs become more operationalized and subject to varying compliance requirements across jurisdictions, management-level oversight is shifting accordingly. General Counsels now hold primary responsibility for sustainability oversight at 23% of companies. CEOs remain a leading choice at 19%, though their role as primary overseer declined notably from 28% in 2025. At the board level, sustainability committees are becoming less common, while more companies are assigning sustainability oversight to committees whose names include responsibility, safety or technology rather than sustainability.

09

While companies still disclosed goals, more companies signaled goals that were off track and/or repositioned them as deadlines approached.

The number of companies providing an ESG goals progress section remained steady at 30% year over year. However, the number signaling that at least one ESG goal was "off track" increased from 9% to 12%, while those reporting a repositioned goal increased from 2% to 12%. Two-thirds of off-track or repositioned goals were solely environmental, while 26% included both environmental and social goals.

10

A majority of companies mention their AI governance policy.

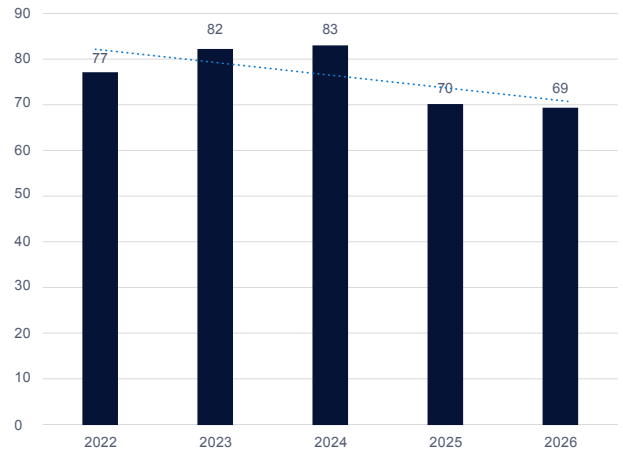
55% of companies referenced the existence of an AI governance policy in their sustainability reports, of which 12% providing specific details about their AI governance policies. Among companies that described their approach to responsible AI, information technology (25%) and healthcare (19%) companies were the most likely to provide such disclosures.



Key Statistics of 2026 Sustainability Reports

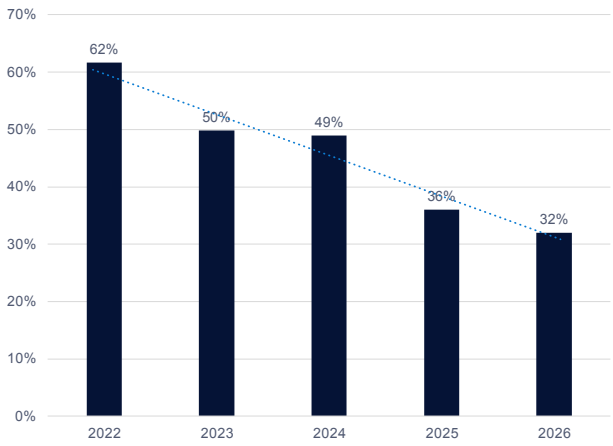
I. Sustainability Report Communications Characteristics

Figure 3: Average Length of Sustainability Reports (2022-2026)



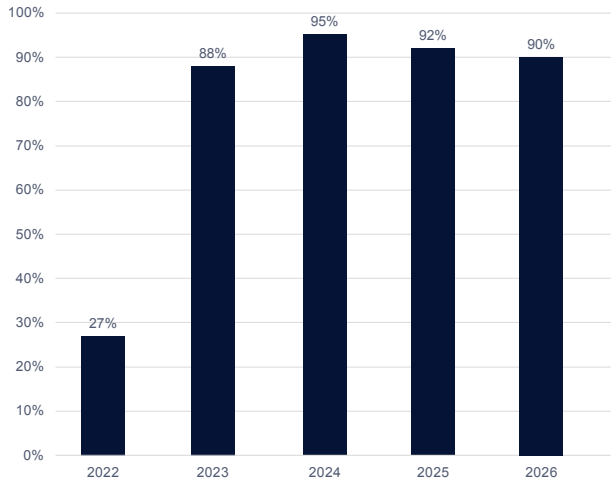
The average length of 2026 sustainability reports held steady from last year and continued to vary widely, ranging from nine to 252 pages.

Figure 4: Issued Press Release With Sustainability Report (2022-2026)



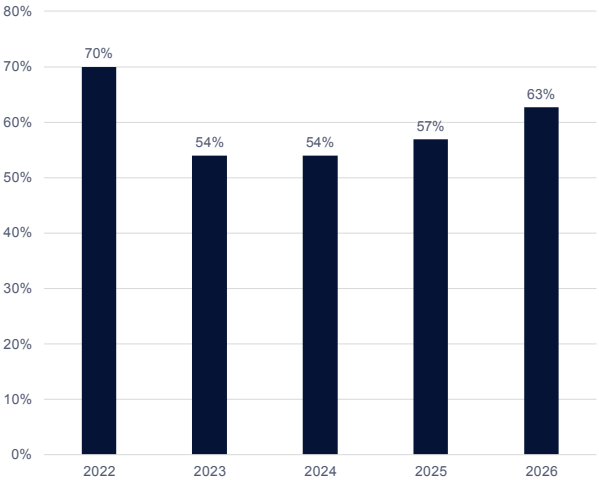
Companies continued to shift away from issuing press releases alongside their sustainability reports.

Figure 5: Corporate Website Included Sustainability Microsite (2022-2026)



Most companies maintained a sustainability microsite within their corporate website.

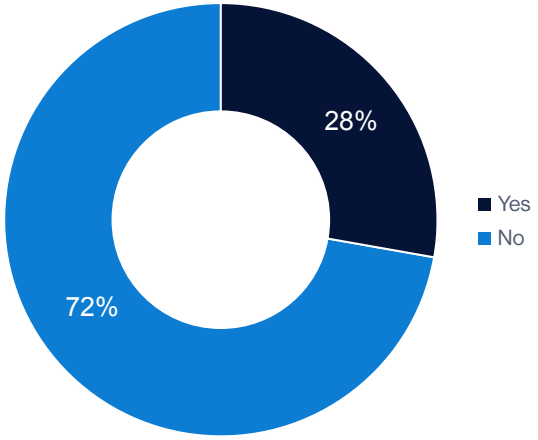
Figure 6: Included Sustainability Data Table Within Sustainability Report (2022-2026)



Standalone data tables are making a rebound, with 63% of companies including them in 2026.

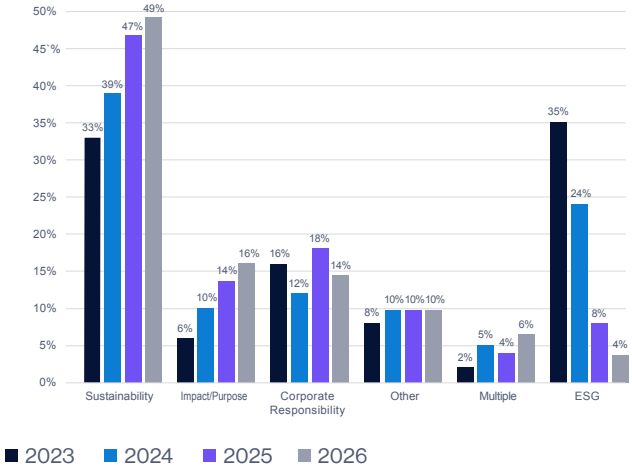
Key Statistics of 2026 Sustainability Reports

Figure 7: Included Tagline in Title of 2026 Sustainability Report



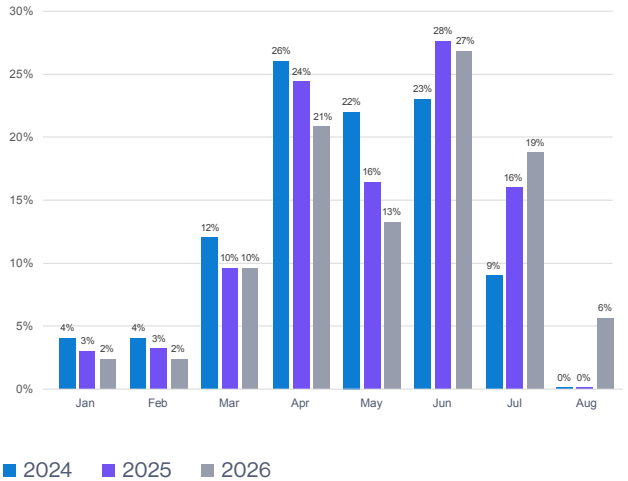
While some companies utilized sustainability reports as a branding opportunity, nearly three-quarters of companies did not include a tagline in the title of their 2026 sustainability report.

Figure 8: Keyword of Sustainability Report Titles (2023-2026)



While "sustainability" continues to be the vernacular of choice at almost 50%, companies also increasingly used alternative terms such as "impact" and "purpose."

Figure 9: Publication Date of Sustainability Reports (2024-2026)

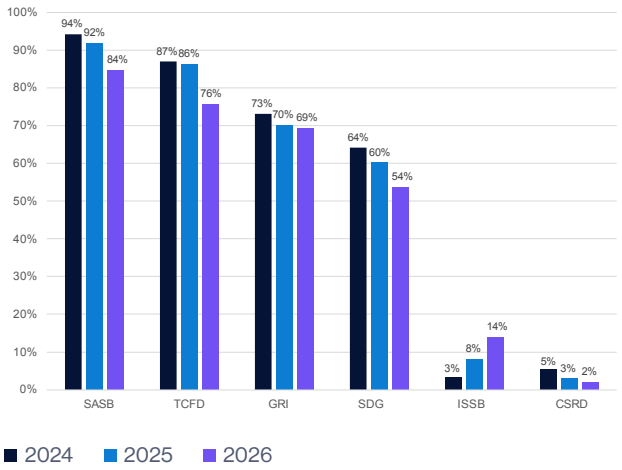


Continuing the same trend as last year, companies are publishing their sustainability reports later than in previous years, perhaps due to increased legal and market review.

Key Statistics of 2026 Sustainability Reports

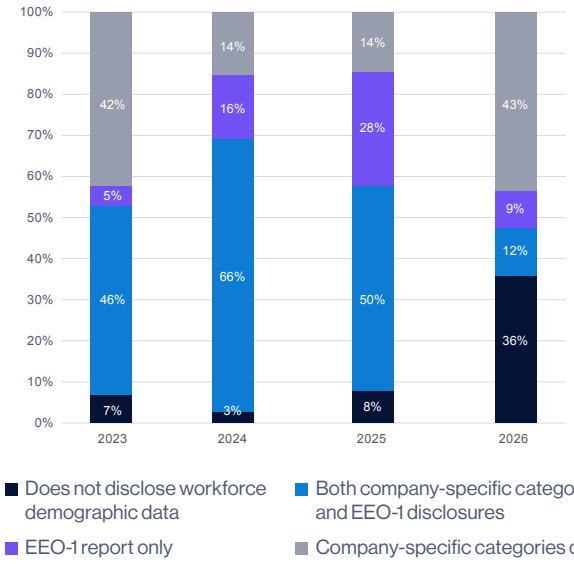
II. Sustainability Report Content Characteristics

Figure 10: Disclosure Frameworks Aligned in Sustainability Reports (2024-2026)



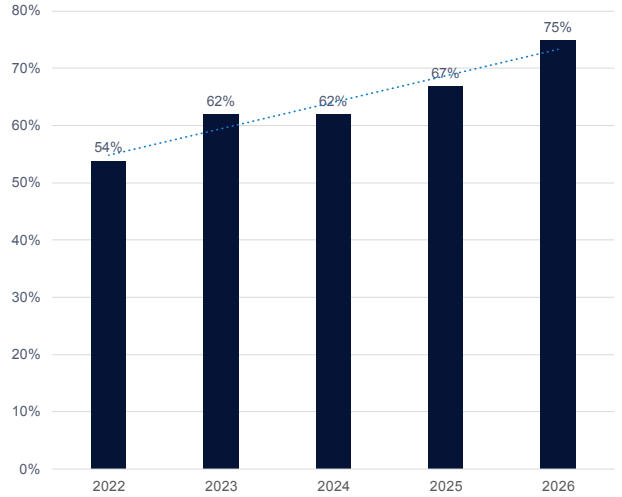
SASB and TCFD remain dominant, while ISSB continues to gain momentum.

Figure 11: Workforce Demographic Data Disclosure Methods (2023–2026)



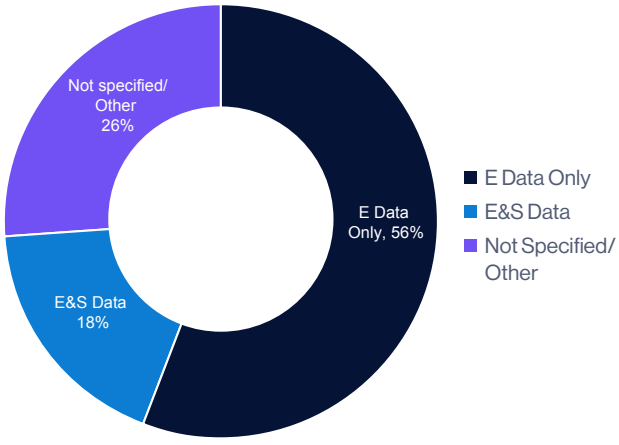
Companies moved away from standardized EEO-1 disclosure in 2026, with more companies reporting only company-specific demographic categories or not disclosing workforce demographic data at all.

Figure 12: External Assurance Provided for Data Within Sustainability Reports (2022-2026)



Independent external assurance of sustainability data is increasingly becoming standard practice, with three-quarters of companies obtaining assurance in 2026.

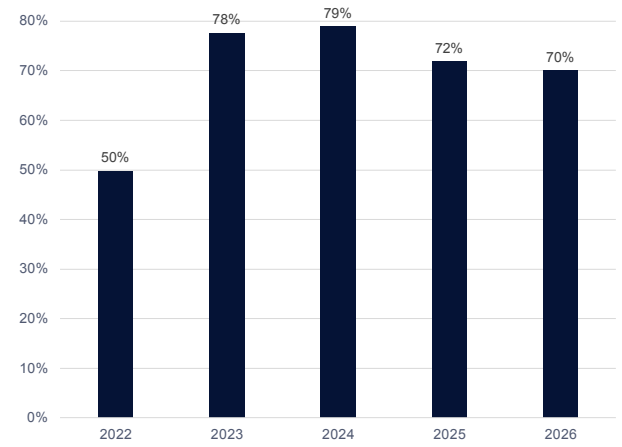
Figure 13: Type of Sustainability Data Assured (2026)



While companies continued to prioritize external assurance of environmental data, transparency around the specific data being assured declined year over year, likely reflecting ongoing political scrutiny and evolving EU CSRD requirements.

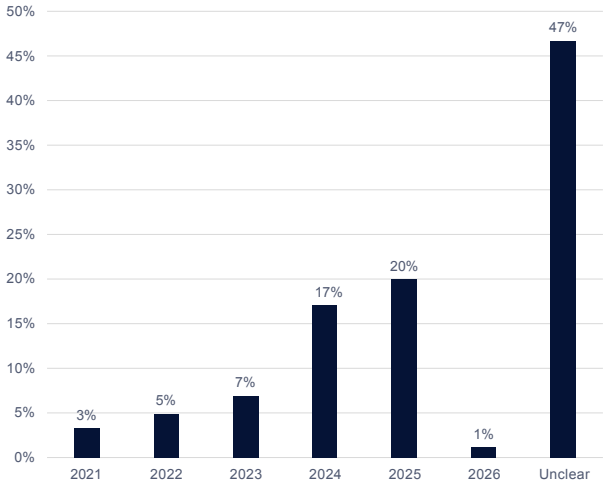
Key Statistics of 2026 Sustainability Reports

Figure 14: Referenced a Materiality Assessment (2022-2026)



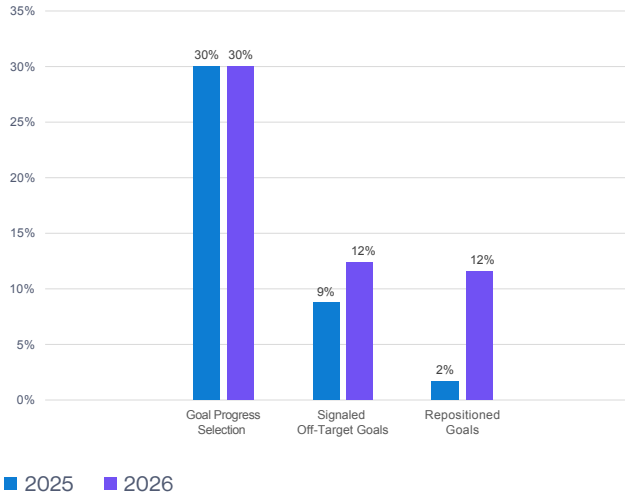
Companies continued to use materiality assessments as an important anchor for their sustainability strategy and disclosure.

Figure 15: Year of Companies' Last Materiality Assessment (2026)



About half of the companies disclosed when they last conducted a materiality assessment. Among those that did, 72% conducted an assessment within the past two years.

Figure 16: ESG Goals Characteristics (2025–2026)

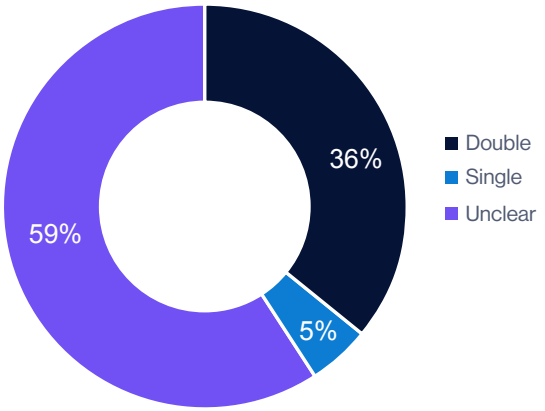


More companies signaled that goals were off track or repositioned them as 2025 deadlines approached.

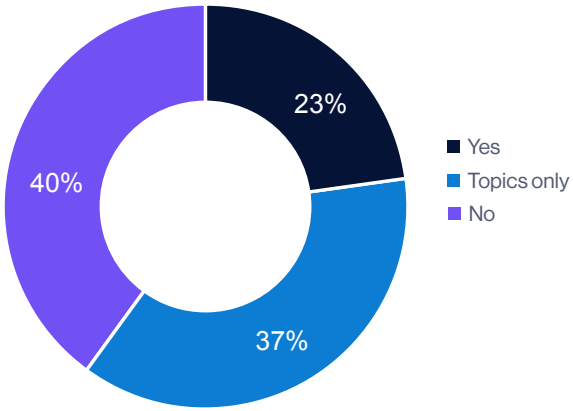
Key Statistics of 2026 Sustainability Reports

Figure 17: Other Materiality Assessment Characteristics (2026)

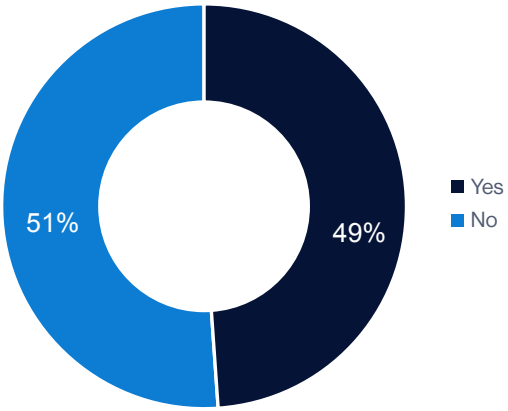
Type of Materiality Assessment



Included Materiality Matrix



Included Legal Disclaimer

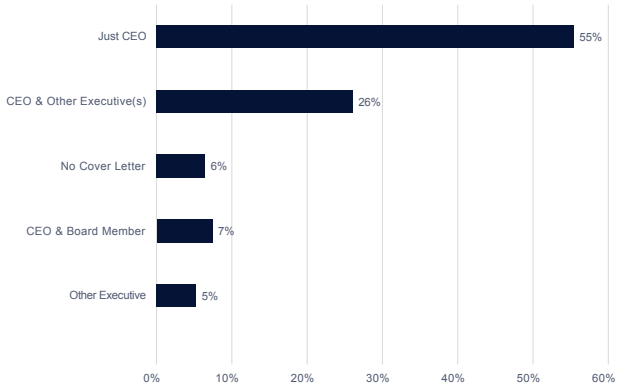


The average number of material issues listed by companies in 2026 sustainability reports was 16 while the average number of stakeholders engaged was seven.

Key Statistics of 2026 Sustainability Reports

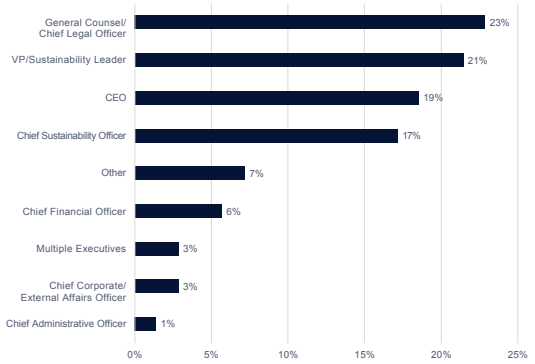
III. Sustainability Report Governance Characteristics

Figure 18: Sustainability Report Cover Letter Signatory (2026)



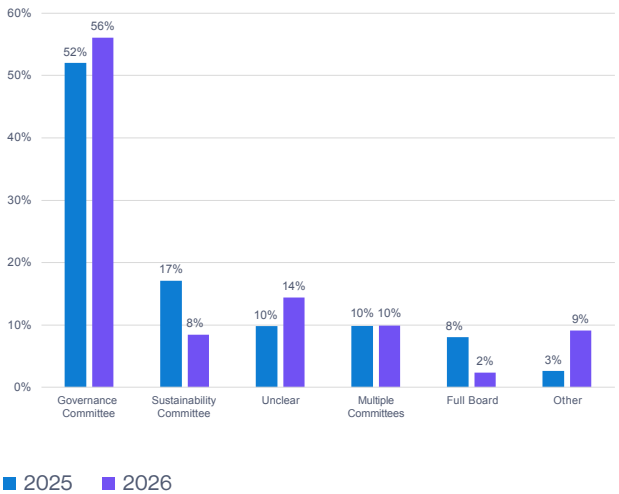
CEOs remain the primary signatories of sustainability report cover letters.

Figure 19: Executive With Primary Sustainability Oversight Responsibilities (2026)



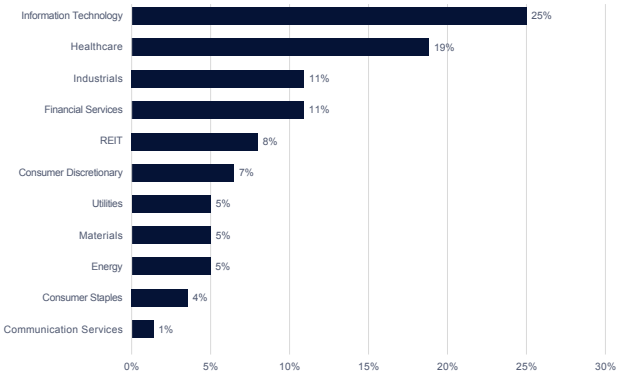
General Counsels increasingly assumed the lead role in sustainability oversight, indicative of a compliance-driven approach amid heightened scrutiny. Additionally, the growing prevalence of VP/Sustainability leaders overseeing entity-level sustainability points to a shift toward more operational oversight.

Figure 20: Board Committee With Primary Sustainability Oversight Responsibilities (2025-2026)



The Governance Committee continued to hold primary responsibility for board-level sustainability oversight. More companies incorporated responsibility, safety or technology into the names of the board committee accountable for sustainability oversight, rather than explicitly referencing sustainability.

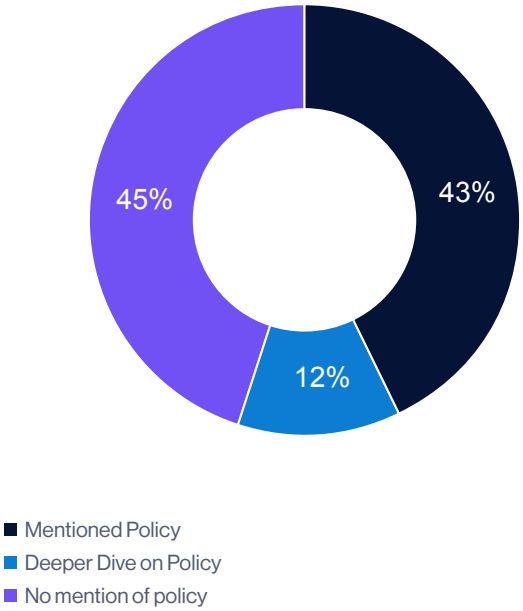
Figure 21: Percentage of Companies Discussing Responsible Use of AI (By Sector, 2026)



Discussion of responsible AI was more prevalent among companies in sectors that frequently handle personally identifiable information.

Key Statistics of 2026 Sustainability Reports

Figure 22: AI Governance Policy (2026)



A majority of companies confirmed the existence of an AI governance policy, with a smaller subset disclosing details on the contents.

Note: Some statistics throughout the report may not total to 100% due to rounding.

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