

Trends & Foresight Audience Survey 2026

Prepared by GlobeScan

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Prepared for



CAPITALS COALITION

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Project: 4401

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Methodology



Method

- 10-minute online survey of senior professionals



Sample

- $n=163$, including both completes and partial completes, as a result, the sample size varies between 163 and 115 throughout
- 50% of respondents based in Europe and 50% across other regions globally
- Over 70% of respondents are senior manager level or above (incl. 41% C-suite)
- The data is unweighted



Fieldwork period

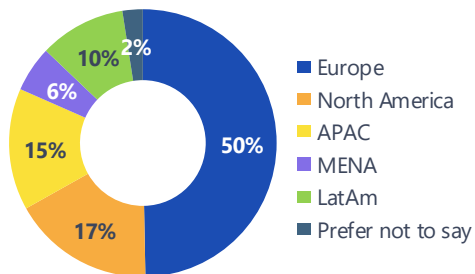
- 25th March – 21st May 2026

Notes

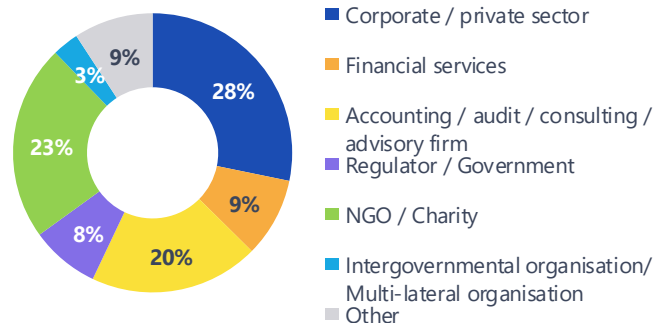
- All figures are given in percentages, unless otherwise stated
- Due to rounding, answers may not add up to 100%

Respondent Profile

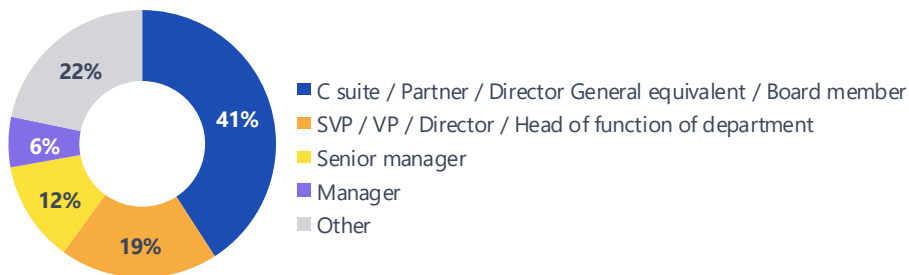
Region



Organisation type



Seniority



D1. In which country are you primarily based? $n = 163$

D2. Which of the following best describes your organisation? $n = 163$

D3. Which of the following best describes your role? $n = 115$

Executive Summary



Executive Summary: Testing Hypotheses (1/3)

Hypothesis 1: “Need for change” is real and widely felt: YES

80% see the current system as not fit for purpose, **93%** say the current system needs change.

Hypothesis 2: “Change is already happening” inside organisations: YES

79% say their organisation is already using environmental and social factors, **87%** say they should be used more.

Hypothesis 3: “Momentum is building across the wider system”: PARTLY

Progress, with room for improvement: while **80%** are aware of capitals application, only **28%** of them are aware of this outside their country and only **23%** outside their industry. A majority of respondents feel that factors like data quality, business support for capitals approaches and social impact have improved, but mostly this is seen as only ‘slight’ improvements.

This data can form a strong foundation to outreach by CapsCo, helping to spread the awareness that will bring confidence in wider application.

The next step is building confidence that the impact is large and inspiring, rather than a worthy approach that people support, but sideline.

Executive Summary: From data to buy-in (2/3)

Value of capitals approaches is seen as real but uneven:

- ▶ Strongest in resilience/risk, trust, and decision quality; weaker in traditional direct value creation/financial recognition like customer and investor acquisition.
- ▶ This is a challenge when the most motivating framings are around value creation and the least engaging are around risk management.

Capitals approaches are seen as logical and sensible, more than innovative or exciting.

- ▶ This strongly supports recent communications and conversations on how capitals approaches do not need to be daring and disturbing, they can be embraced by many.

Scaling impact is blocked by organisational buy-in, not technical details or individual confidence:

- ▶ Leadership support, integration into systems and politics are the biggest barriers, not data quality, case studies, confidence or complexity.
- ▶ The most motivating shifts are in changing decision making approaches, not standardising tools.

Future acceleration depends on regulation/standards + business-case evidence

- ▶ Better data and tools is the least important rated area

Key learnings on current barriers > Actions that can be taken

Current audience views that limit results	▶ Ideal informed audience outcome	▶ Therefore, when informing about Capitals approaches, we can
Impact: Vague/soft Value seen to come from trust, talent, resilience & decision-making. Not hard measurable growth/value.	Impact: Clear	Build confidence at how many major firms are wisely adopting this – but needs hard metrics to avoid impression of a similar ‘ESG bubble’. Prioritise case studies and evidence that demonstrate growth, capital attraction, quantified savings from risk management.
Understanding: Technical process Standardisation is one of the least appealing messages. It is a process, not where people want to end up, and doesn’t prioritise their agency.	Understanding Exciting outcome	Lead with outcomes, not methodology. Position standards and methodologies as enabling infrastructure operating in the background. Communications focus on the outcome of more confident decisions: unlocking the skills of leaders so they can be the hero who steers better business performance.
Confidence: Hard sell Biggest barriers are around internal persuasion/politics, not data quality.	Confidence: Easy chat	Building confidence is already a priority – but pay attention to confidence to advocate internally, in soft skills to persuade, not just data quality.
Uptake: Slow & complex There has been progress in data etc., but uptake feels slow and complex.	Uptake: Easy, no regrets actions	Make first steps feel easy, that there are ‘no regrets’ actions you can take to kick off the journey, that don’t need to wait for the whole infrastructure to improve.

Section 1

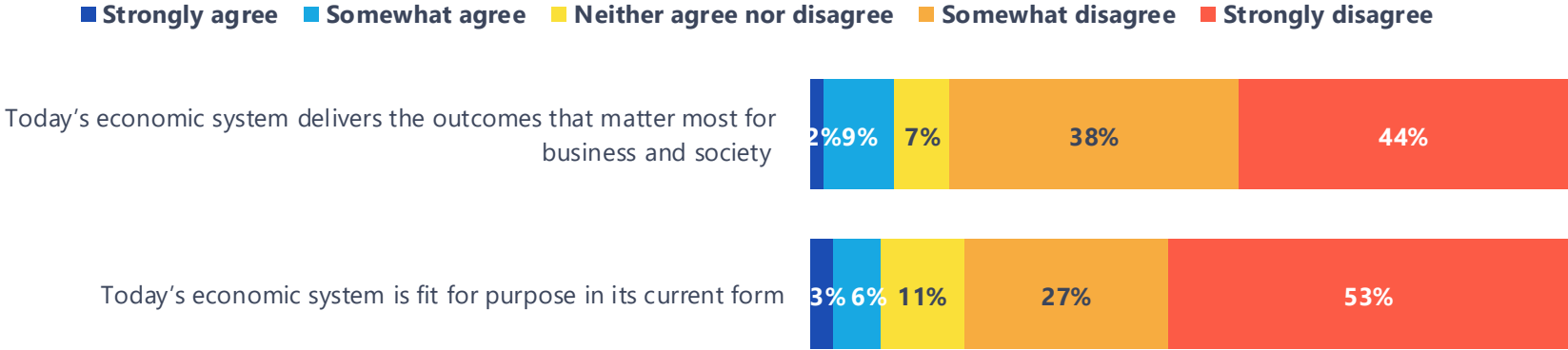
Is the current system seen as fit for purpose?



Across our sample of leaders, most think today's economic system is not fit for purpose and does not deliver the outcomes that matter most for business and society

Perceptions of the current economic system

Total, 2026



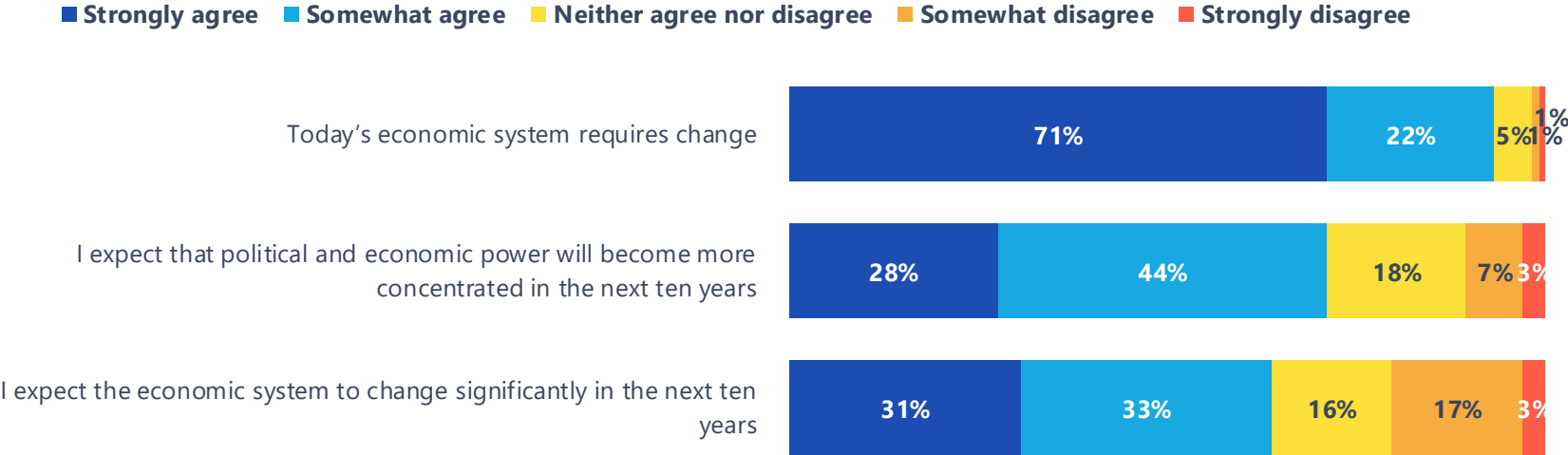
The small number of experts surveyed in in **MENA** (predominantly UAE) and **LatAm** are **more likely than other regions to favour the status quo**, and see the current system as fit for purpose and delivering key outcomes. In the case of MENA respondents, this could be because of the reliance on oil & gas sectors of many of the countries respondents were from.

Across organisation types, **financial services** stands out, with a slightly larger number than across other organisations thinking today's system delivers on what matters the most, potentially because they are more deeply embedded in the current system, which is arguably optimised for (short term) financial outcomes.

Over nine in ten respondents agree that today's economic system requires change; people expect significant structural shifts in the next ten years, but also more concentration of power

Perceptions of the economic system needing change

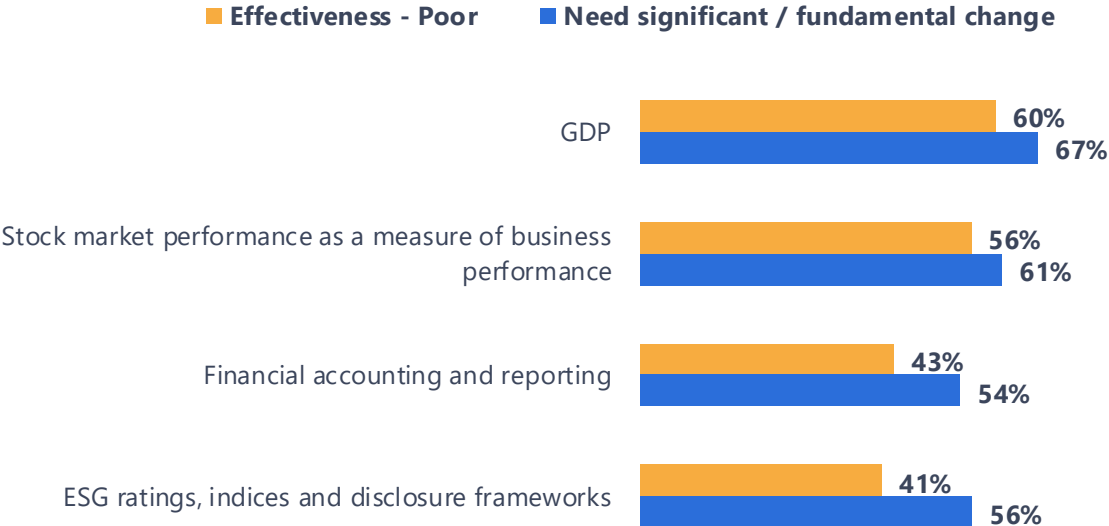
Total, 2026



In line with views of the economic system, current valuation systems are seen as misaligned with key outcomes for business and society, with most calling for significant or fundamental change

Perceived effectiveness of valuation systems (“poor”) vs need for change (“significant / fundamental change needed”)

Total, 2026



Views are aligned across regions and different organisation types.

There is almost as much perceived need to update ESG as there is to update GDP (the worst rated metric). While there are debates around whether ESG has been helpful or distracting, getting directly involved in these debates may not always be helpful.

Q3. To what extent do you feel the following valuation systems serve the outcomes you believe are most important for business and society? *n* = 147

Q4. How much, if at all, do you think the following valuation systems need changing? *n* = 147

Section 2

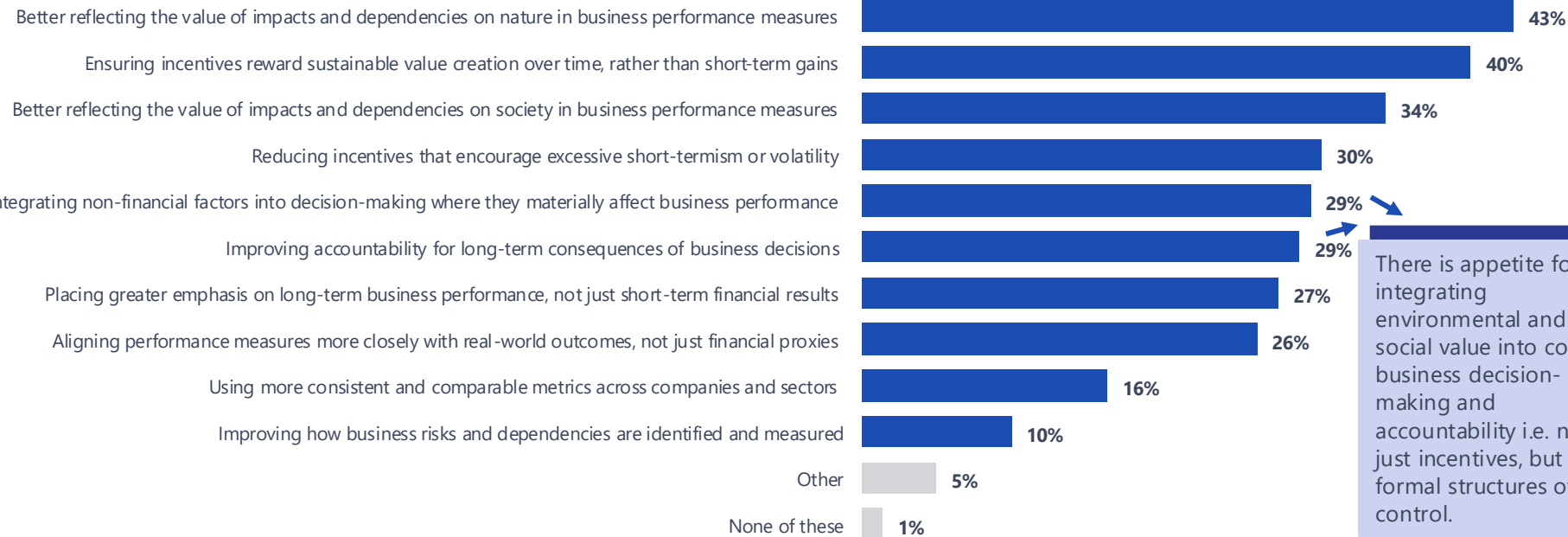
What needs updating in how value is defined and measured?



'Better reflecting the value of impacts and dependencies on nature' and 'ensuring incentives reward sustainable value creation over the long-term' are the top changes respondents think could improve how business performance is measured and incentivised

Prioritised changes to improve measurement and incentives

Total, 2026



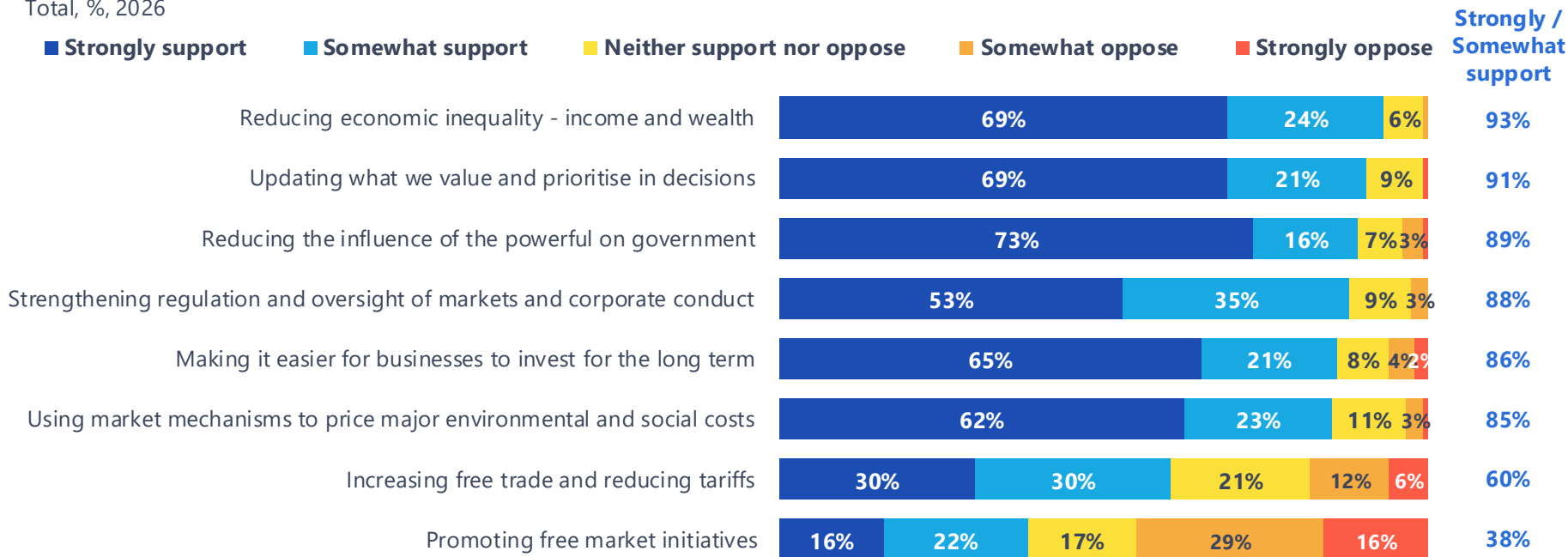
There is appetite for integrating environmental and social value into core business decision-making and accountability i.e. not just incentives, but formal structures of control.

Q5. From the following list, please pick up to three changes that you think would improve how business performance is measured and incentivised? $n = 143$

'Reducing economic inequality', 'updating what we value and prioritise in decision making', and 'reducing the influence of the powerful on government' are the most supported interventions to improve outcomes for business and society

Support for specific interventions to improve outcomes for business and society

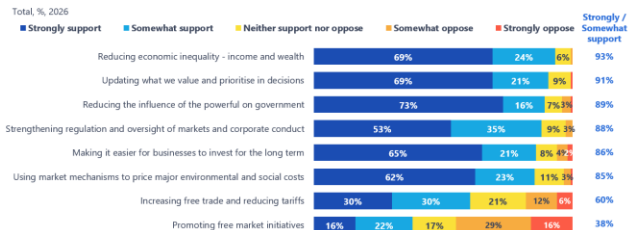
Total, %, 2026



Q2. To create better outcomes for business and society, how much do you support or oppose the following types of suggested interventions? *n* = 149

'Reducing economic inequality', 'updating what we value and prioritise in decision making', and 'reducing the influence of the powerful on government' are the most supported interventions to improve outcomes for business and society

Support for specific interventions to improve outcomes for business and society



The highest scoring areas covering inequality, influence of the powerful and what we prioritise suggests respondents expect deeper systemic reform, not just incremental market adjustment.

There is also strong support for ways to rebalance incentives e.g. 'making it easier for businesses to invest for the long term', 'using market mechanisms to price environmental and social costs', and 'strengthening regulation and oversight of markets and corporate conduct'.

Support is weaker for 'promoting free market initiatives' (38% support, 45% oppose) and more mixed for 'increasing free trade and reducing tariffs'.

Section 3

Is a broader approach to value creation gaining acceptance?

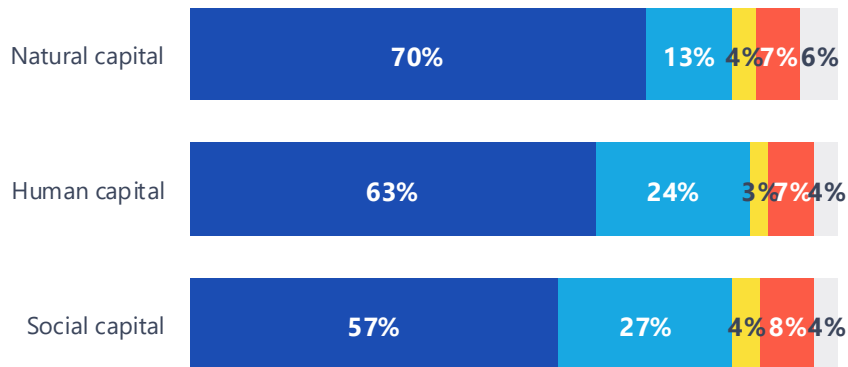


The capitals approach resonates strongly among the experts surveyed, with most saying it is very important to use natural, social or human capitals, when prompted with definitions

Importance of using natural, human, social capital in defining business value and decision making. Definitions for each were provided – see right

Total, %, 2026

■ Very important
 ■ Important
 ■ Neither important nor unimportant
 ■ Unimportant
 ■ Very unimportant
 ■ Don't know



Results are similar across types of organisations

Provided definitions:

Natural capital: The stock of renewable and non-renewable natural resources (e.g., plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people.]]

Social capital: The networks together with shared norms, values, and understanding that facilitate cooperation within and among groups.

Human capital: The knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that contribute to improved performance and wellbeing

Q8. How important or not is it that businesses use these factors in defining business value and decision making? $n = 142$; Corporate $n = 38$, Financial services $n = 14$, Accounting/Advisory $n = 31$, Regular/Govt/MLO $n = 16$, NGO/Charity $n = 32$

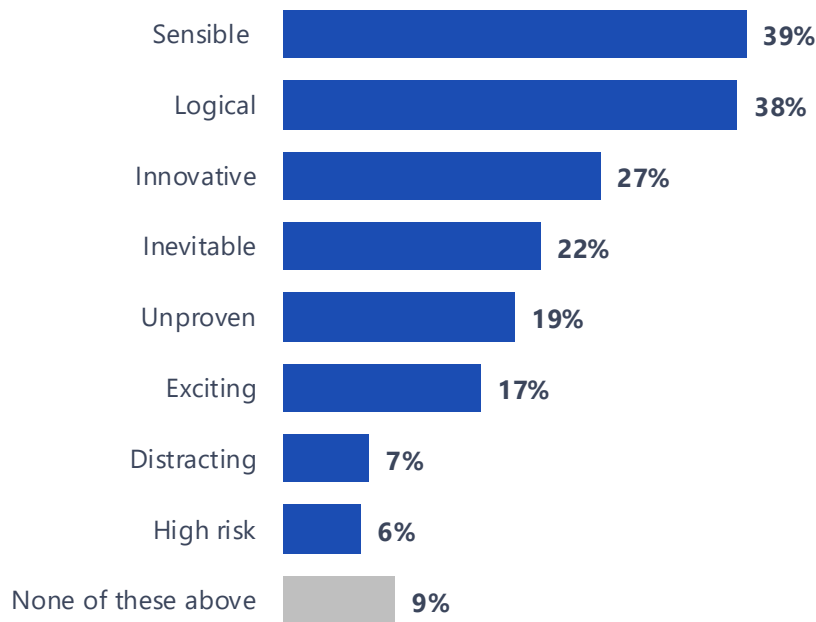
**Small sample size, should be treated as indicative only*

Within organisations, the use of environmental and social factors is most often seen as practical and rational rather than radical; The most selected descriptions are “sensible” and “logical” ahead of all other descriptors

How using environmental and social factors for measuring performance and making decisions perceived within organisation

By familiarity with CapsCo, 2026

Total, 2026



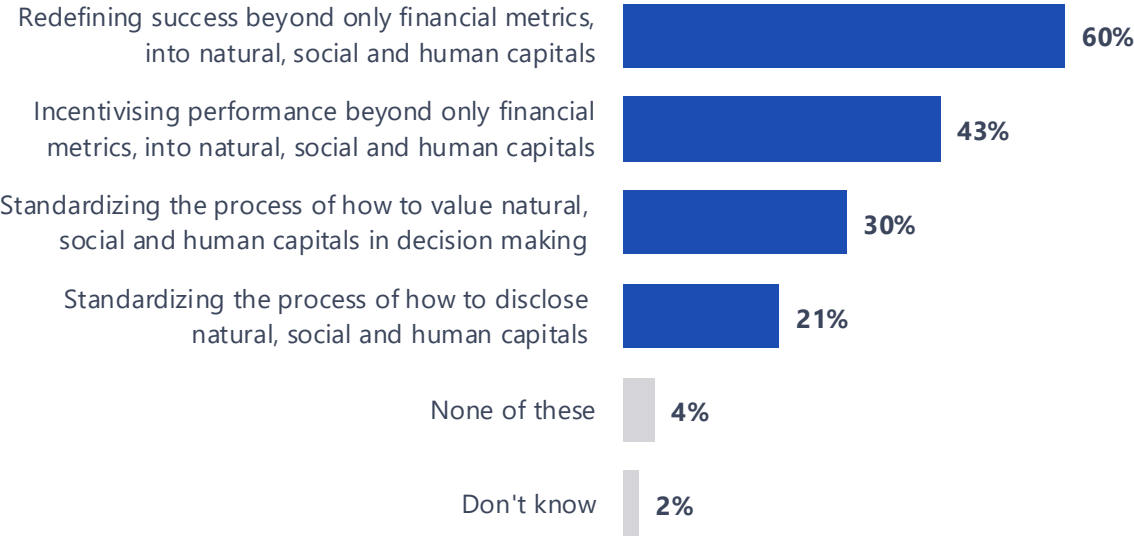
Sensible and logical are the leading associations across all regions and organisation types.

Scepticism exists, but it is not dominant. Negative perceptions such as “unproven” (19%), “distracting” (7%), and “high risk” (7%) are present, but they trail well behind the more positive or neutral descriptors.

Interest is highest in the more inspirational framing of system improvements tested: redefining success beyond only financial metrics into natural, social and human capital drives most engagement

Effectiveness of messaging in driving interest and engagement

Total, 2026



‘Redefining success beyond only financial metrics’ drives most interest across all organisation types and regions, and regardless of level of familiarity with CapsCo.

The only exception is **North America**, where interest is slightly higher in **‘incentivising performance beyond only financial metrics into natural, social and human capitals’** (54% vs 50% interested in redefining success beyond only financial metrics).

Q7. Below are different ways people describe suggested improvements to how value is measured, understood and created. If you saw these descriptions, which would most make you interested to find out more? *n* = 142

Section 4

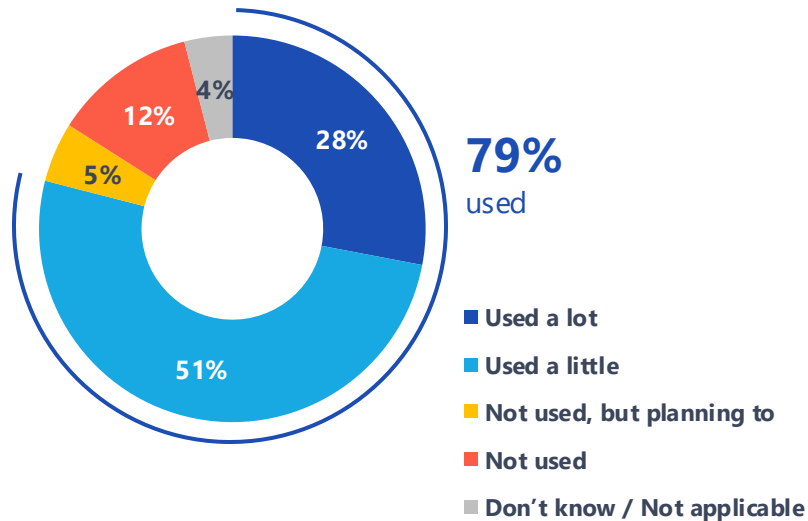
Are organisations already changing how they make decisions?



Across the corporates, financial services and accounting or advisory organisations surveyed, uptake of environmental and social factors for measuring performance and making decisions is already high

Current use of environmental and social factors

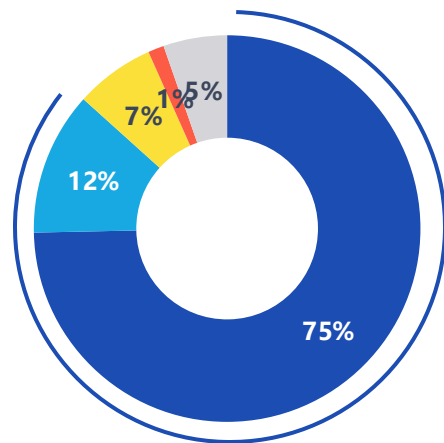
Corporates, financial services, accounting/advisory, 2026



Close to nine in ten experts in corporate, financial services, accounting or advisory roles think environmental and social factors should be used more; and confidence is high in ability to drive further adoption among those who already use these

Perceptions on whether environmental and social factors should be used more or less

Corporates, financial services, accounting/advisory, 2026



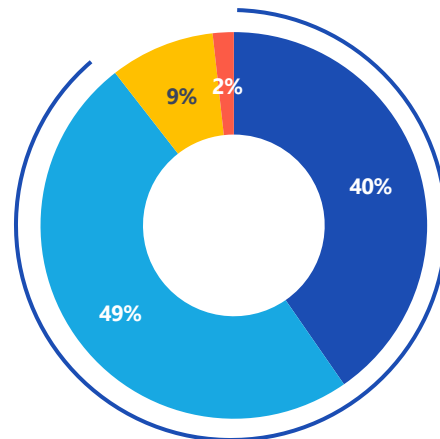
87%
should be
used more

This sentiment is shared
even among those whose
organisations do not
currently use or plan to use
social and environmental
factors for measuring
performance and making
decisions.

- Should be used much more
- Should be used a little more
- Already used the right amount
- Should be used a little less
- Don't know / Not applicable

Confidence to drive further adoption

Those in corporate, financial services, accounting/advisory roles, whose organisations are using environmental and social factors, 2026



89%
High/some
confidence

- High confidence
- Some confidence
- Very little confidence
- No confidence at all
- Don't know / Not applicable

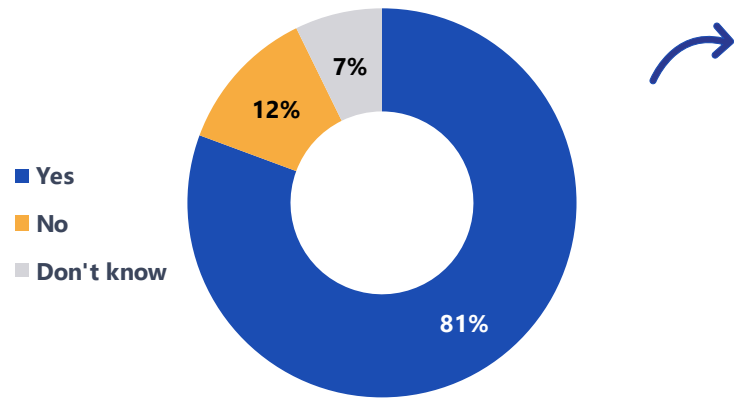
Q11. Do you personally think that environmental and social factors should be used more or less for measuring performance and making decisions in your organisation? $n = 75$

Q12. How confident are you that you could help your organisation to use environmental and social factors more consistently for measuring performance and making decisions? $n = 57$

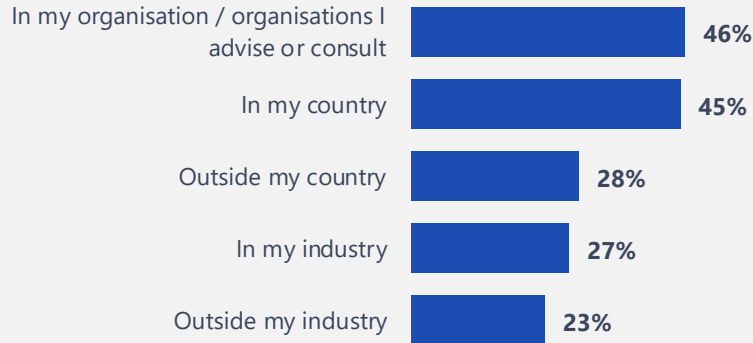
Over four in five respondents have seen at least one real-world example of organisations using environmental and social factors for measurement & decisions

Exposure to real-world examples of environmental and social factors adoption

Total, 2026



Among those exposed to examples of E&S factors adoption, 2026



Q18. In the past twelve months, have you seen any examples of organisations using environmental and social factors for measuring performance and making decisions? *n* = 124

Section 5

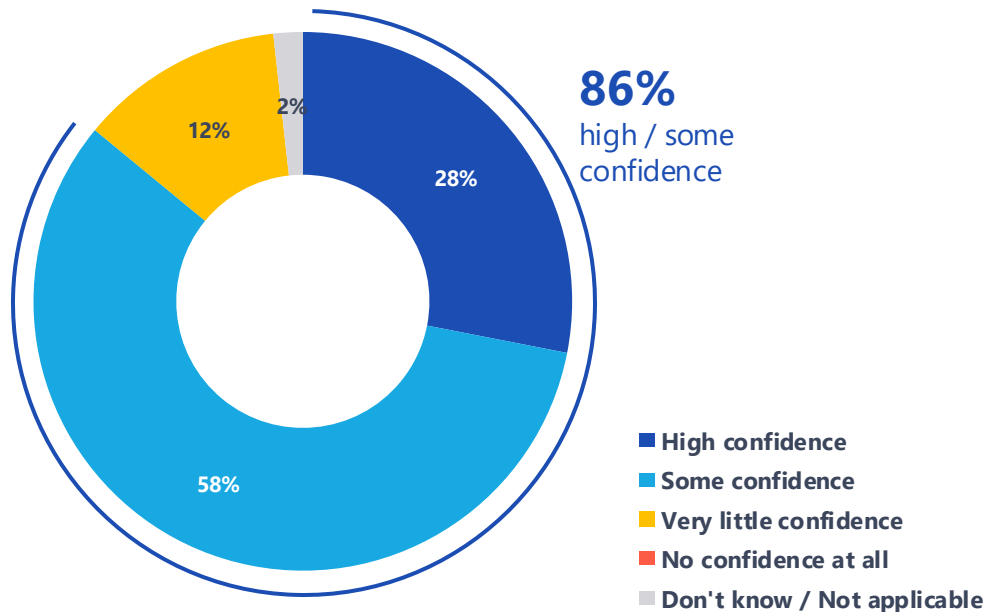
Is this approach delivering business value?



There is cautious confidence in future business value, rather than full conviction

Confidence that this approach will deliver tangible value in next 5 years

Corporates and financial advisers already using environmental and social factors, 2026



High confidence is slightly stronger among those in financial services and accounting or advisory organisations than among corporates.

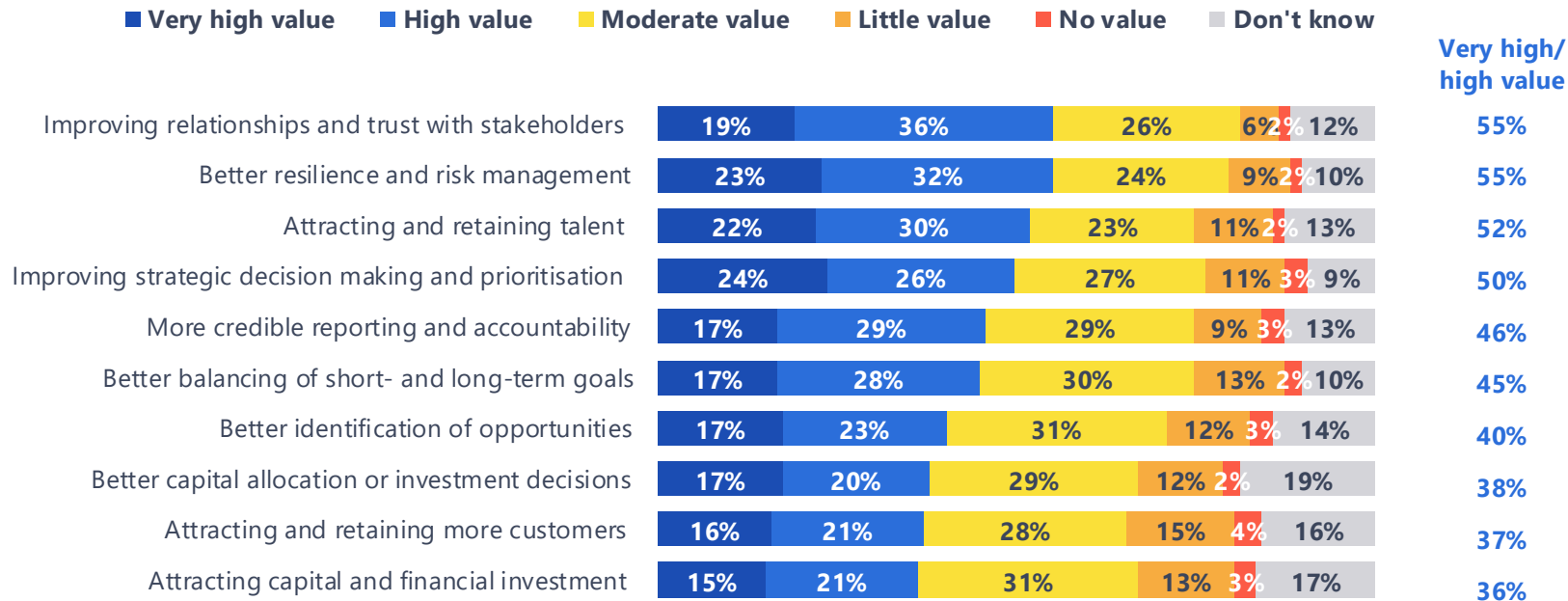
This implies a tension where many people working in corporates are acting on a loose belief – which suggests that it will be easier to get sidelined if there are other shocks e.g. financial difficulties.

This could be a valuable area for CapsCo to focus on, to build resilience and accelerate adoption beyond those who are already motivated.

Stakeholder trust, resilience and risk management, talent attraction and strategic decision making are seen as the greatest sources of value from using environmental and social factors in measurement

Value delivered to organisations / businesses so far

Total, %, 2026

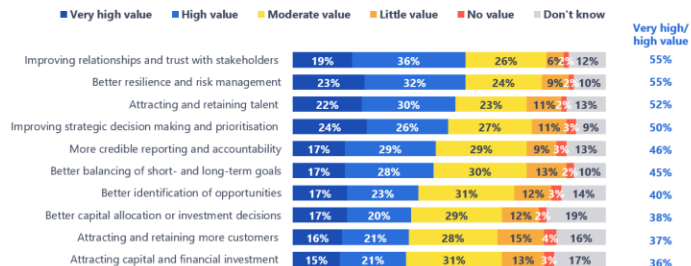


Q14a/b. Please rate how much value using environmental and social factors for measuring performance and making decisions has brought to your organisation so far in each of the following areas? Total $n = 127$

The value delivered so far is recognised mostly in areas that are less quantifiable, or 'softer', compared with e.g. attracting and retaining more customers

Value delivered to organisations / businesses so far

Total, %, 2026



While relatively high numbers are promising, this shows a pattern that can explain slow adoption.

The higher scores are often in 'softer', or 'defensive' metrics e.g. around better relationships, retaining talent and better risk management.

By comparison, the 'harder' metrics and those around specific financial gain e.g. identifying opportunities, attracting customers and capital, all score lower. In many organisations, these are the metrics that are critical for senior management buy-in and for accelerating progress. This is similar to a pattern GlobeScan has observed in its other research on the [Sustainability Value Triangle](#).

Building confidence and evidence around these harder, growth-oriented metrics becomes a useful focus, to ensure buy-in throughout the business.

Resilience and risk management also lead future value; emphasis on stakeholder relationships and employee retention are lower than today

Expectations of most value over next 5-10 years (respondents pick up to three)

Total, 2026



Future value is expected to come from similar places, again more risk-management and decision making than opportunity identification and revenue/capital generation through more customers.

The 'better understanding of long-term value creation' is promising, but still requires translating into action.

This suggests that people may welcome the clarity that using a multiple capitals approach can bring, but are not yet certain on what the impact will be. This may hold back engagement until there are very clear examples that are quantified, not just expressed as theoretical gains.

Section 6

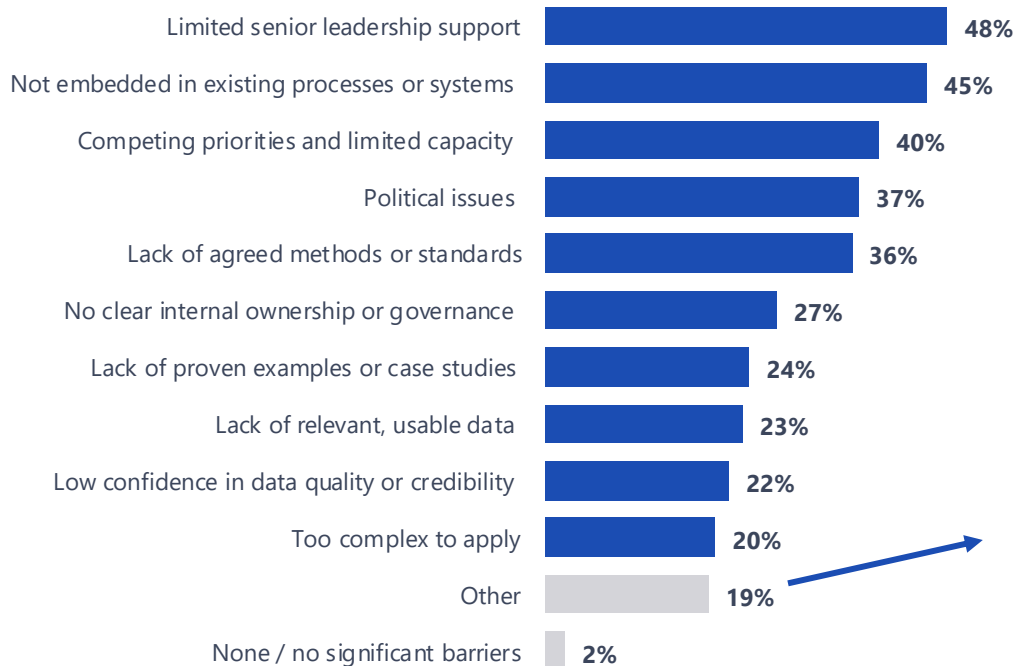
Barriers and enablers of wider adoption



The highest rated barriers to using environmental and social factors for measuring performance and making decisions are around 'lack of senior support', 'process embedding', 'competing priorities' and 'political issues'

Key barriers to adoption

Total, 2026



Other barriers (open-ended responses) highlight:

- Short-term incentives and profit focus
- Lack of regulation and leadership
- Low perceived business relevance
- Capability and knowledge gaps
- Systemic and cultural resistance

Stakeholders are not questioning the “why”, they are constrained by missing standards, weak incentives, limited data, and an unclear financial case

Information, support, resource needed for using environmental and social factors

Analysis of open-ended responses

Standardisation & Clear Metrics

Standardised methodologies and disclosure frameworks;
Common language, protocols, and KPIs;
Integration into financial/accounting systems;
Cross-capital valuation approaches (trade-offs, aggregation)

Regulation, Mandates & System-Level Incentives

Mandatory reporting and compliance requirements;
Integration into accounting/tax systems (internalising externalities);
Government incentives and policy alignment; Level playing field across competitors/sectors

Data Availability, Quality & Tools

Reliable, granular, geolocated data (especially nature/biodiversity);
Cost/access barriers (especially in emerging markets);
Digital tools, models, and scenario capabilities;
Integration into systems (ERP, decision-making tools)

Clear Business Case & Financial Relevance

Evidence connecting E&S to profit, cost, risk, capital access;
Translation into financial metrics (PPP, valuation, income/cost flows);
Visibility in financial statements (beyond disclosures);
Forward-looking cost-of-inaction modelling

Practical Guidance, Capability & Culture Change

Practical application methodologies (sector/size-specific);
Case studies, peer examples, toolkits;
Training, internal awareness, leadership buy-in;
Cultural/systemic shifts (beyond technical fixes)

Section 7

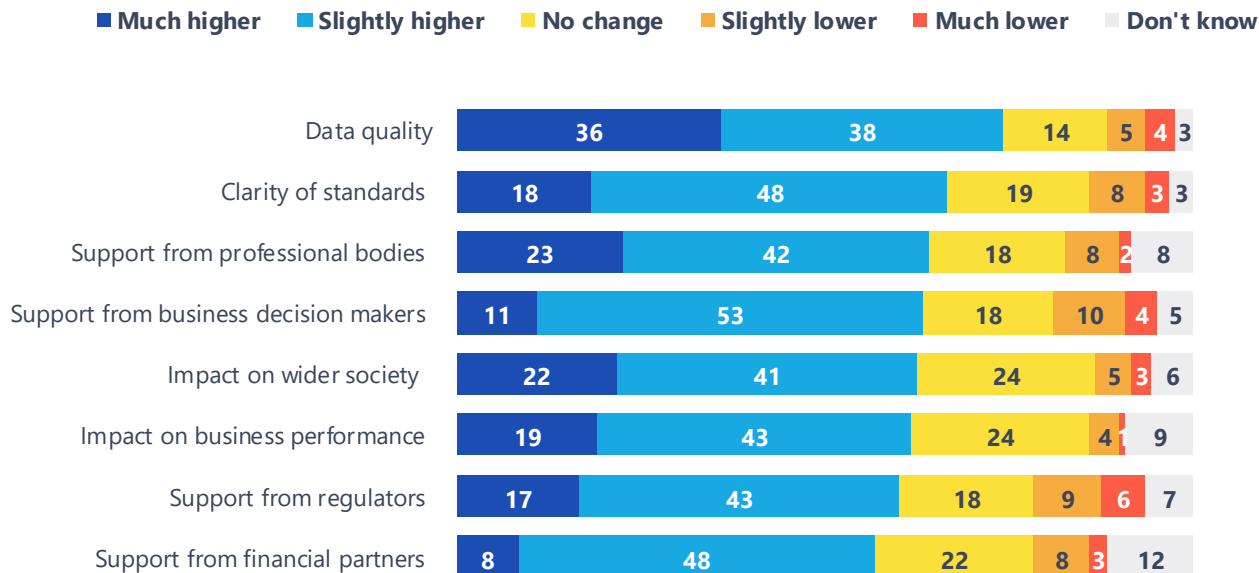
Is momentum building across the system?



The last decade has seen improvements in all areas, especially data quality, standards clarity, and support from professional bodies around applications of environmental and social factors

Changes in system over time

Total, %, 2026



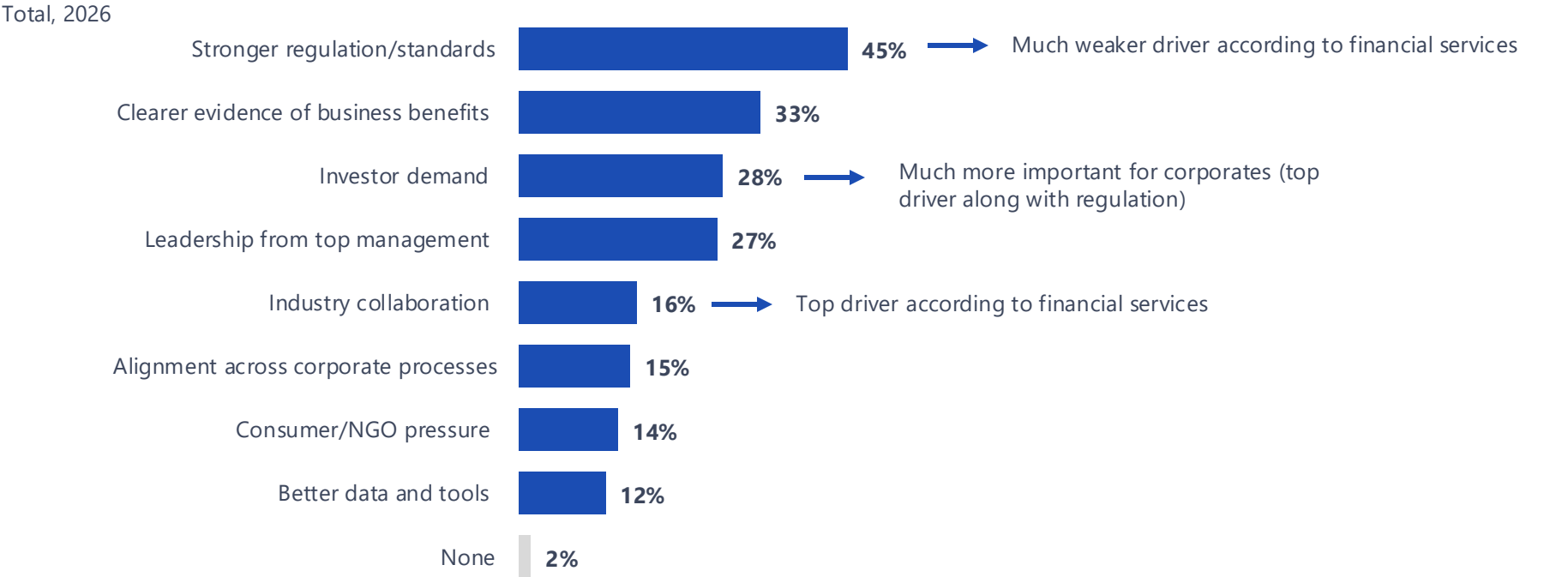
Data quality has improved the most – a necessary shift to guide application, but not sufficient.

Support from financial partners is the weakest area, suggesting that these organisations can remain one of the major gatekeepers to progress.

Q20. Thinking about the past ten years, how do you think that the use of environmental and social factors for measuring performance and making decisions has changed? Is there a higher or lower level of the following? $n = 120$

Regulation or standards, business benefits, and investor demand are the most important factors to scale up the use of environmental and social factor in the next decade

What will drive adoption at scale in the future





Know your world.
Lead the future.

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We equip clients with insights to navigate shifting societal and stakeholder expectations, crafting evidence-based strategies that reduce risks and create value for their organizations and society.

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