

STATE OF PROGRESS: BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SDGS

A 2020-2021 study in support of the
Sustainable Development Goals

Developed by:



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Foreword

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established by the United Nations as the ambitious roadmap towards a sustainable future for all. While they were adopted by member states, the success of the SDGs hinges on the ability to engage the private sector to unleash their innovative power.

From the inception of the SDGs, GRI has highlighted the importance of the private sector's contributions to achieving the 2030 Agenda and, provided guidance for businesses on how to integrate reporting on the SDGs into their reporting process. It is clear that by embedding the SDGs within corporate disclosures, businesses can change their ways of working through embracing sustainable strategies and practices.

Reporting frameworks, such as the GRI Standards, help the private sector make progress towards the 2030 Agenda by:

1. Kick-starting companies' understanding of their SDGs contributions;
2. Providing global guidance as a common approach to achieving the 2030 Agenda;
3. Helping companies identify performance and business gaps as opportunities to improve, collaborate, innovate and gain business advantage;
4. Easing data comparability with other companies;
5. Helping companies establish a link between the SDGs performance and business performance¹.

This research seeks to clarify how a sample of GRI reporters are disclosing information on the SDGs, highlighting current trends in the SDGs reporting, and providing recommendations on how to strengthen the SDGs communication and performance.

We would like to thank Support the Goals, an initiative led by volunteer researchers who rate businesses based on the level of their support for the SDGs.

¹Driving Corporate Action Towards Accomplishing the SDGs,

p.10: https://globescan.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Driving_Corporate_Action_Towards_Accomplishing_the_SDGs_publication.pdf



Background

GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) is the independent, international organization that helps businesses and other organizations take responsibility for their impacts by providing them with the global common language to communicate those impacts. GRI provides the world's most widely used standards for sustainability reporting – the GRI Standards.

The GRI secretariat is headquartered in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, with a network of seven regional hubs that ensures that we can support organizations and stakeholders worldwide.

GRI continuously puts a spotlight on the impacts and the contributions of the private sector to the SDGs. It mainly does so by providing reporting tools on the SDGs for the private sector, hosting corporate programs to facilitate thought leadership on business reporting on the SDGs (Corporate Action Group for Reporting on the SDGs and Business Leadership Forum on Corporate Reporting as a Driver to Achieving the SDGs), and by promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships to facilitate the inclusion of the private sector's impacts in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

As part of this work, GRI, in collaboration with the UN Global Compact (UNGC) and other partners, has developed the following resources for companies:

- [Analysis of the goals and targets](#)
- [Integrating the SDGs into corporate reporting: A practical guide](#)
- [In focus: Addressing investor needs in business reporting on the SDGs](#)

GRI has commissioned Support the Goals to carry out this study, which highlights current trends in the SDGs reporting, and provides recommendations on how to strengthen SDGs communication and performance.

Support the Goals is an initiative that promotes and encourages business support of the UN Global Goals, composed of volunteer researchers who rate the business community based on their support of the SDGs.

One of the key ambitions of the initiative is to raise awareness of the Global Goals in the business community, as well as to promote a structured approach to planning, target setting and reporting on the SDGs.

The rating system used by Support the Goals analyses which businesses have put in place specific plans and commitments in relation to the SDGs, as well as those businesses that are making concrete actions towards their achievement and reporting on their progress. It also looks at businesses that encourage their suppliers to get involved, which is a fundamental step in raising awareness of the SDGs at scale. By building positive publicity, encouraging a race-to-the-top and promoting the scaling of activities across supply chains, the StG aims to engage as many companies as it can. In doing so, it is creating the world's largest research database that tracks business support of the SDGs, encouraging companies to get involved.

The key objectives of Support the Goals are to:

- **Raise awareness of the SDGs in the business community**
- **Promote a structured approach to planning, target setting, and reporting with respect to the SDGs**
- **Provide opportunities for young people to gain work experience in corporate sustainability so they can better understand how businesses can contribute to a better world**





Research Methodology

This report presents an analysis and evaluation of how a sample of 206 GRI reporters publicly communicate their support and actions in relation to the SDGs, based on published sustainability reports and information from their websites.




The researchers have a diverse and wide range of academic backgrounds, including, but not limited to geography, politics, international relations and environmental science. The research is peer-reviewed and discussed with the team members according to established guidelines, which are regularly kept up-to-date.

The research team used five evaluation criteria to measure the reporters' engagement with the SDGs. Each company was awarded either a green, amber or a red color rating for their support of the SDGs as seen in their sustainability planning, commitments and progress made, actions taken as well as the involvement of suppliers.

Companies are rated against five categories: **Plans, Commitments, Actions, Progress and Suppliers.** For each category, a traffic light system is applied to reward a company based on the achievements. A green rating in any given category equals to one star, so five stars mean that a green rating has been given in all five criteria.

To ensure objectivity in our rating system, we have carefully created the following guidelines that reflect the criteria when assessing the level of engagement.

Below is a breakdown of the traffic light system of achievements for each category.

Plans	 <p>A company that makes no statement with regard to social responsibility or corporate social responsibility, and does not reference the SDGs, is awarded a red rating. An example of a public statement that would receive a red rating is a phrase like 'we respect human rights, promote inclusion and champion diversity'.</p>
	 <p>A company that indicates overall support of the SDGs but does not mention or prioritize any specific SDG is awarded an amber rating. A statement such as 'we support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' is an example.</p>
	 <p>A company that makes a statement on the SDGs it prioritizes is awarded a green rating. A phrase such as 'we support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and we prioritize SDGs 1, 2 and 3' illustrates that.</p>

The word 'plans' refers to the statements of support for the SDGs made by a company.



Commitments



A company that mentions no measurable targets relating to the SDGs receives a red rating.



A company that includes measurable data alongside environmental and/or social commitments that tackle issues that indirectly support the Goals is awarded an amber rating, even if there is no explicit mention of the SDGs. A statement that illustrates this is 'we commit to reducing our carbon emissions by 50% by 2022'.



A company that mentions measurable targets that are explicitly aligned with any given Goal receives a green rating. An example of this is a statement such as 'we commit to ensuring equal gender representation across our Board of Directors by 2022, in line with our support of SDG5: Gender Equality'.

The word 'commitments' refers to the setting of measurable targets aligned to the SDGs.

Actions



A company that has no evidence of taking action to tackle environmental and/or social issues receives a red rating.






A company that provides evidence of actions taken but does not align them with the SDGs is awarded an amber rating. An example of this could be a report on the gender breakdown of the employees without any references made to the SDGs.






A company that provides evidence of the actions taken and explicitly links that to their support of any given SDG receives a green rating. A statement such as 'we have changed the way we recycle in our workplace in support of SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production' illustrates that.

The word 'actions' refers to the activities being undertaken by a company to contribute towards the advancement of the SDGs.



Progress	 <p>A company that states no measurable progress in its support of the SDGs would be awarded a red rating.</p>
	 <p>A company that provides measurable progress in tackling environmental and/or social issues, but does not explicitly link this to an SDG, would receive an amber rating. A statement such as 'In 2020/2021, we have reduced our emissions by 50%' is an example.</p>
	 <p>A company that mentions measurable progress that is aligned to an SDG would receive a green rating. The following statement illustrates this clearly: 'In 2020/2021, we have reduced our emissions by 50% in support of SDG13: Climate Action'.</p>

The word 'progress' refers to the publication of data that reflects the achievement of the social and environmental targets set.

Suppliers	 <p>A company that makes no mention of how they work with their suppliers to support the SDGs receives a red rating.</p>
	 <p>A company that does mention its suppliers and the way it works with them to tackle environmental and/or social issues is awarded an amber rating. An example of this is a company that addresses modern slavery.</p>
	 <p>A company that openly talks about the people involved in the supply chain and how it actively engages them in supporting the SDGs receives a green rating. A statement that represents this is: 'Our Supplier Code of Conduct is aligned with the SDGs to help educate suppliers about the Goals'.</p>

The word 'suppliers' refers to the way a company involves organizations in its supply chain in the achievement of the SDGs.





Summary of Findings

The research found that the SDGs that are given the greatest and least priority from businesses reflect a wider trend supported by research conducted by PwC and KPMG.

The SDGs that are prioritized reflect a strong understanding of economic growth, working conditions, the movement towards more responsible consumption and production, as well as the importance of climate action. Given the alignment of these SDGs with business priorities, this is not surprising. Nor is the fact that the least prioritized SDGs are concerned with human and marine activities, which many businesses may struggle to find as relevant.

Most businesses researched seem to have a good understanding of the goals, including identifying the ones which are most relevant to their business. However, the majority of businesses have yet to set targets that are explicitly aligned to the SDGs. This indicates a disconnection between the global aims of the SDGs and the individual aims of the businesses.

Number of companies stating their support of the Goals	83%	The vast majority of businesses in the research group are stating their support of the Goals. This is significant as the companies in this study recognize the value of aligning their sustainability plans with the SDGs.
3 most common Goals:		The most common Goals supported by companies mirror the priorities of previous research conducted by Support the Goals, and are SDGs 8,12,13.
3 least common Goals:		Goal 2: Zero Hunger is consistently the least reported across research conducted by Support the Goals. However, the support for SDGs 1 and 14 varies among research, and they are not always within the 3 least common Goals.
Companies that state which Goals are most relevant to their business	69%	The majority of the research group has taken time to understand which goals are most relevant to their business.
Companies that make measurable commitments to the Goals	40%	Nearly half of the assessed businesses make measurable commitments towards the SDGs. While there is room for improvement, this is a promising figure.

² The Time has Come, p49, <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2020/11/the-time-has-come.pdf>.

³ Navigating the SDGs: A business guide to engaging with the UN Global Goals, <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/sustainability/publications/PwC-sdg-guide.pdf>.

⁴ How are the UK's Biggest Companies Supporting the UN Global Goals?, Support the Goals 2020 Report, Available to Support the Goals members at <https://supportthegoals.org/join/>.



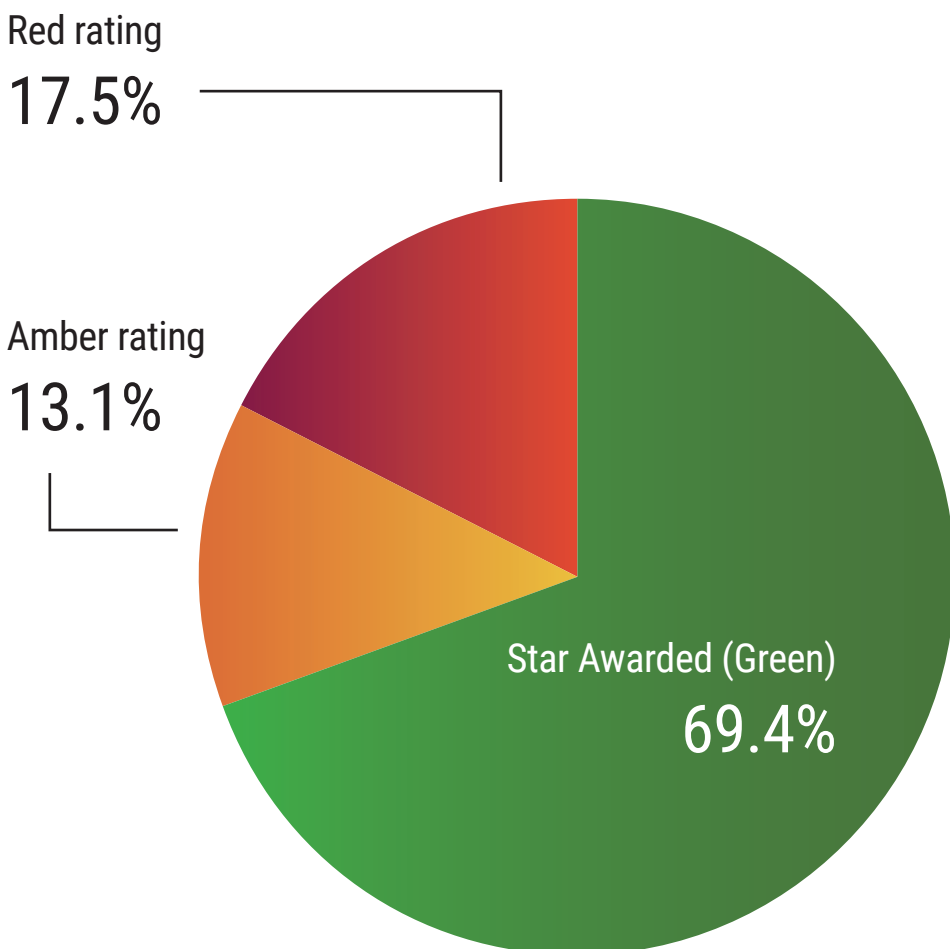
Reporting Trends

Plans

143 companies have been awarded a star for their statement of support for the SDGs, and for mentioning which Goals they prioritize. This is a significant proportion of the companies researched, with 69.4% achieving the highest rating.

27 of 206 companies (13.1%) were awarded an amber rating for expressing general support of the SDGs. While these companies have expressed general support for the Goals, they have been awarded amber ratings because they have not been clear about which SDGs are most relevant to their business.

In 2020, just 36 out of 206 businesses analyzed in this report were awarded red ratings for not having expressed any support statements for the SDGs – this is only 17.5% of the research sample



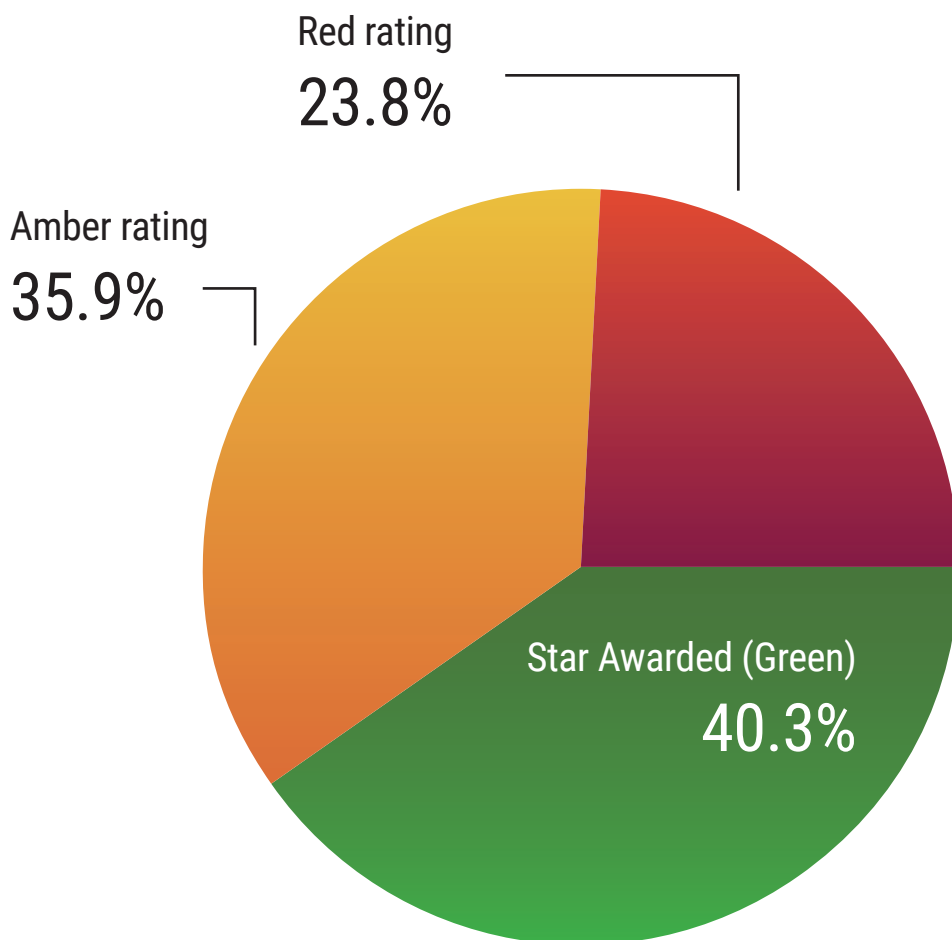


Commitments

A large percentage of companies researched have achieved a star for explicitly linking measurable commitments to the SDGs. A total of 83 companies were awarded a star, which results in 40.3% of 206 companies directly committing to the SDGs. This is very positive as it shows that not only are the researched companies recognizing the importance of aligning their sustainability strategy with the SDGs, but they are also creating measurable targets to truly have an impact.

Based on their commitments, 74 companies were given amber ratings. This equals to 35.9%, indicating measurable commitments being made by businesses to tackle social and environmental issues that indirectly support the SDGs.

49 out of 206 businesses were given red ratings for not having outlined any specific and measurable commitments to the SDGs. Red-rated companies made up the lowest percentage of the research group, with only 23.8% indicating no commitments whatsoever to the Global Goals.



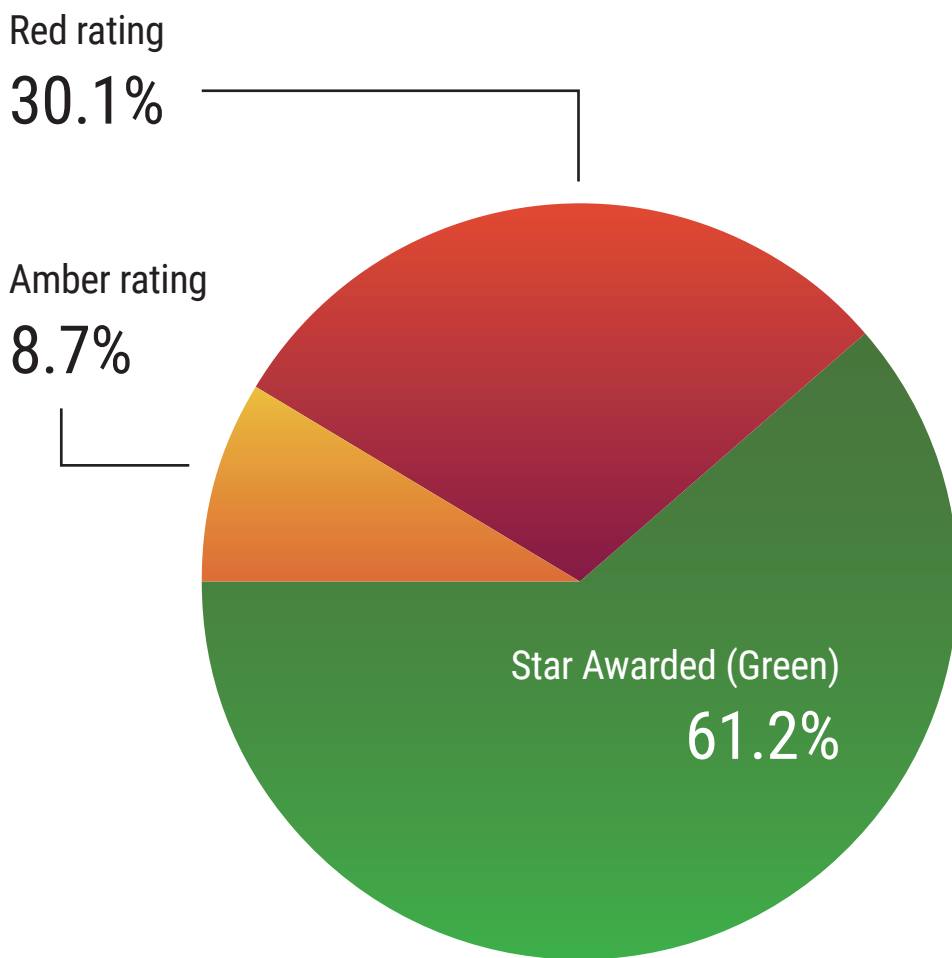


Actions

A total of 61.2% of those researched were awarded a star for showing how their actions support the SDGs. 126 companies were given a star for having outlined and taken concrete actions to tackle social and environmental issues, aligning those with a particular Goal.

62 out of 206 companies researched (or 30.1%) achieved an amber rating for publishing evidence of actions being taken to tackle both social and environmental issues, but not aligning them with a specific SDG.

A very small segment of the research sample was given a red rating for not having evidenced any actions in support of the SDGs. Only 18 companies, or 8.7%, were given this rating.



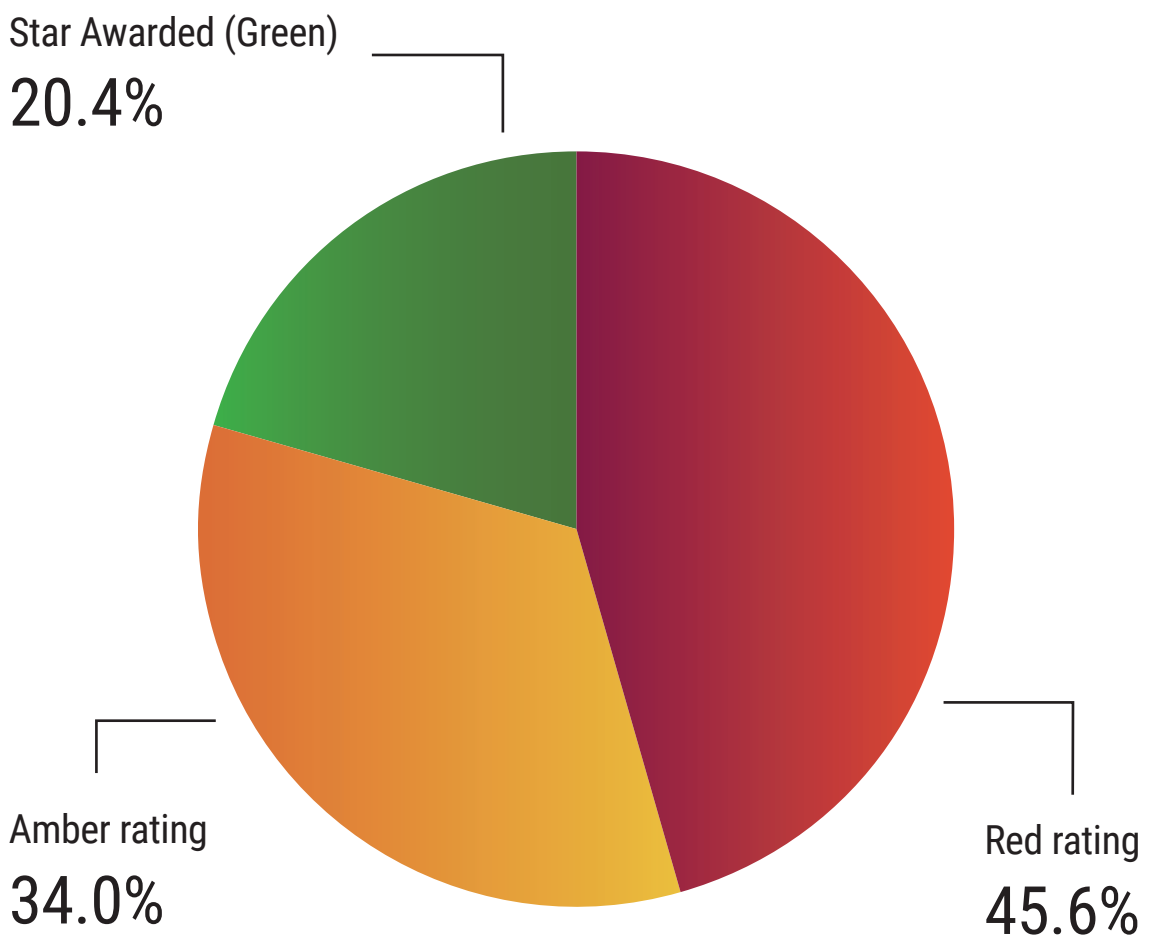


Progress

42 companies were awarded a star for their progress in support of the Goals. In 2020, 20.4% of the 206 companies reported their positive impacts by evidencing measurable data of their actions, explicitly aligning them to a specific SDG.

34.0% of companies researched achieved an amber rating for progress made towards achieving the Goals. A large number of companies researched - 70 out of 206 - evidenced measurable data, which suggests progress as well as actions taken to tackle social and environmental issues, but without an explicit link to any given SDG.

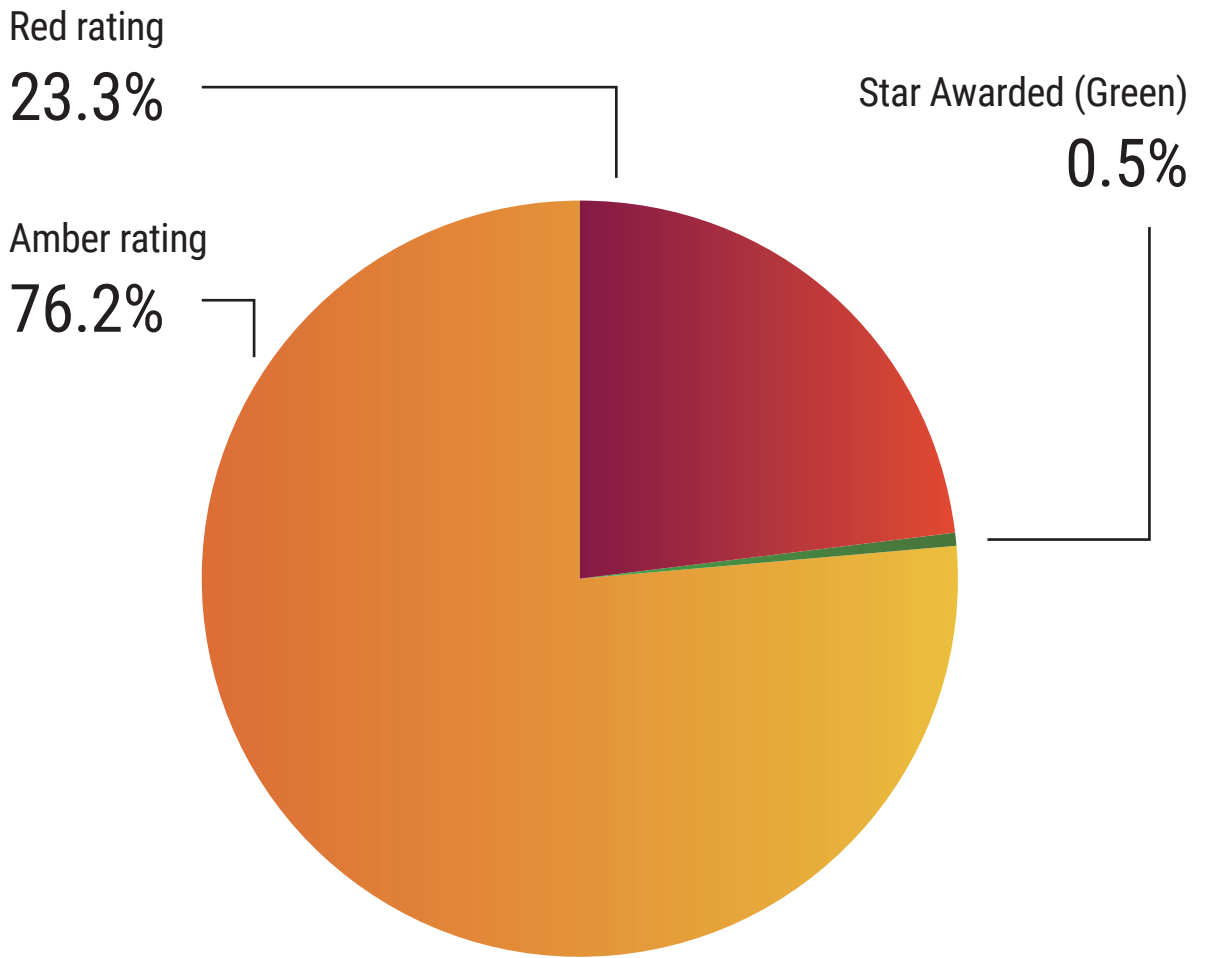
94 companies – or 45.6% - were given a red rating for their progress.





Suppliers

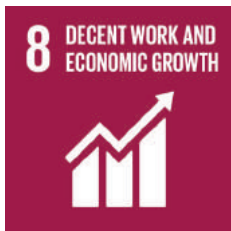
Only one of the companies in the research group has achieved a star for having encouraged their suppliers to explicitly support the Goals. 157 companies were awarded an amber rating, which indicates that the vast majority (76.2%) are working with their suppliers to address environmental and social issues. 48 companies – or 23.3% - were given red ratings for not having demonstrated or mentioned how and if their suppliers are supporting the Goals.





Which Goals Have the Greatest Support?

Although the relevance of the SDGs to businesses is varied, research indicates that Goals 8,12,13 have the greatest support. These three goals were prioritized by the sample businesses twice as often – or more – compared to other SDGs. These findings are in line with other research on the SDGs, such as KPMG’s ‘The time has come’ report.⁵



Decent Work And Economic Growth

Goal 8 was featured 154 times in either companies’ plans or commitments. Approximately 75% of researched companies align their plans with Goal 8. This may be explained by the economic growth being the primary focus of businesses along with HR practices of many businesses, e.g. health and safety, diversity and a minimum wage in the workplace.



Responsible Consumption And Production

The research found that Goal 12 was strongly supported by the sample businesses. It was mentioned close to 100 times as the most relevant goal for these businesses, with approximately 50 making measurable commitments that are explicitly aligned with this SDG.

Within Goal 12, target 12.6 encourages large and transnational companies to adopt sustainable practices and integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle (IISD 2020). An indicator of 12.6 specifically refers to companies that are valued at \$1 billion. In the research sample, those companies valued between \$1bn-\$50bn account for a larger proportion of the stars awarded.

It is worthy of note that there was a strong correlation between businesses highlighting the importance of SDG12.6 in their report and those that achieved a high rating of four or five stars.



Climate Action

With over 85% of the researched businesses showing plans and commitments for Climate Action, Goal 13 has the highest support than any other SDG.

⁵ Ibid p 49.



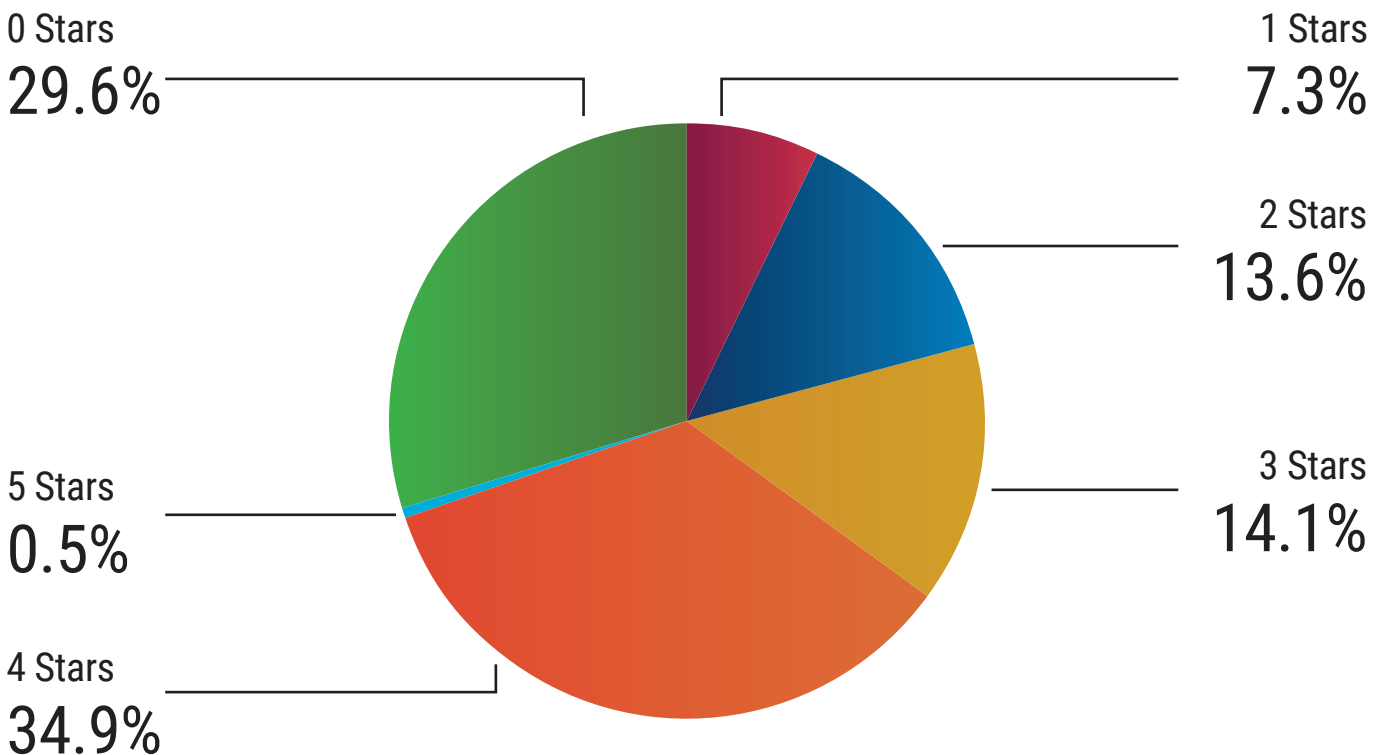
SDG Rating Performance

Out of 206 companies researched, 0.5% achieved five stars - representing the minority of organizations rated. On the other end of the spectrum, 29.6% - more than a quarter - were awarded zero stars. Despite the data indicating a lack of support for the Goals, the vast proportion of companies researched - 34.9% - achieved four stars, showing that several companies are one star away from optimally communicating the alignment of the SDGs in their corporate strategy.

Scoring four stars reflects taking progressive steps towards the 2030 Goals. It indicates that an organization is doing four of the following:

1. Stating that they support the SDGs in their plans.
2. Publishing measurable targets, linking them to specific Goals.
3. Describing the actions they are taking towards achieving them.
4. Giving evidence of sustainability progress in numerical, quantitative data.
5. Encouraging their suppliers to support the SDGs.

Ratings of businesses researched





5 Stars

The research indicates that many organizations are not educating their suppliers on the importance of the SDGs. With awareness of the goals being generally low, this is both an issue and an opportunity for rapid improvement. Only one business achieved this result in the research sample.



4 Stars

The largest group of companies (34.9%) achieved four stars, meeting almost all of the criteria. In most cases, educating suppliers about the SDGs - the fifth criteria - is the only omission that prevents organizations from gaining all of the stars. However, the achievement of four stars indicates that these companies are not only aware of the Goals, but they are aligning and committing to them in their business practices.



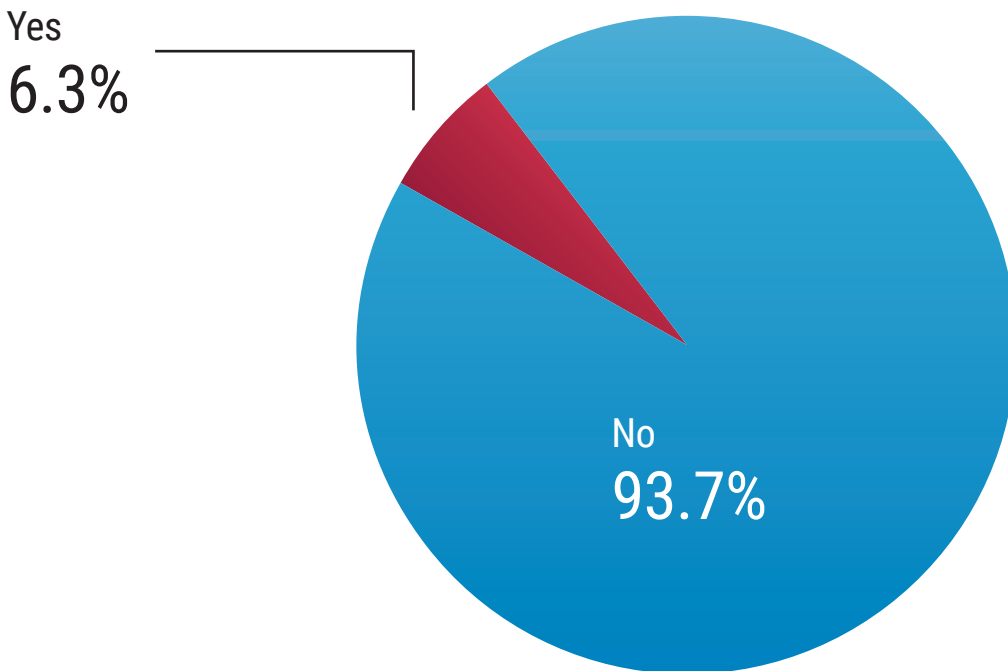


Breakdown by Negative Impacts

While it is important for businesses to share how they are positively contributing to the SDGs, it is also important to understand how they may have a negative impact on the Goals.

Only 13 of businesses researched - or 6.3% of 206 businesses in total - reported that their current operations may have a negative impact on one or more of the SDGs.

Does the research sample report their negative impacts towards the SDGs?



Breakdown by SDG Targets

Although the 17 SDGs have high-level objectives, they are supported by 169 targets. Businesses should take time to understand these targets and identify how their efforts contribute to these, as doing this will provide greater focus. 12.1% of businesses researched - 25 out of 206 - stated how their commitments relate to a specific target.

This is a key area for improvement on reporting, as mentioning specific SDG targets helps companies act on them and progress with their commitments. This is vital for the overall progress and the achievement of the goals.



Breakdown By Industry, Geography and Company Turnover

By Industry:

The businesses analyzed in this report have been grouped by industry, with the findings demonstrated in the graph below. It has been previously noted that 34.9% of 206 businesses rated in this study achieved 4 stars. Dividing these businesses by industry further reveals the distribution of stars awarded, demonstrated in the graph below.

The Non-Profit and Commercial Service were below average in their communication of the SDGs. However, the results were far better in other industries

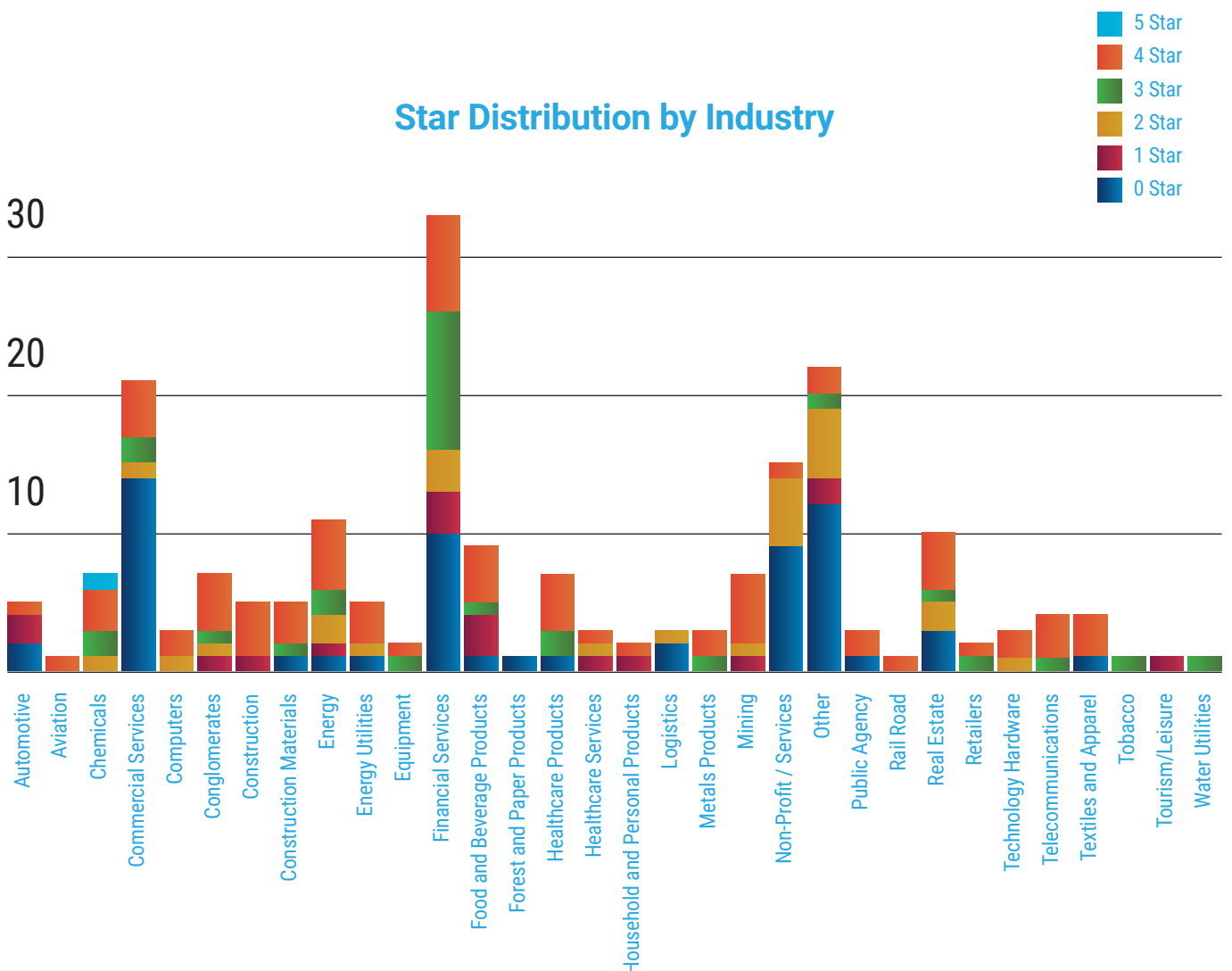


Figure 1 for Star Distribution by Industry



Plans

The majority of companies researched have included a plan to support the SDGs in their reporting, including details of the goals they have identified as priorities for their business. A star for plans towards the SDGs has been awarded for businesses across at least 16 different industries.

One third of businesses rated in the Commercial Services industry did not identify the relevant SDGs to their business. Similarly, 37.5% of businesses rated in the Non-Profit sector, and 66% of the businesses rated in the Logistics sector, did not identify the goals which they could impact the most. These industries have an opportunity for improvement as they can begin to align their reporting with the SDGs.

Commitments

Over half of the businesses researched have published social and environmental targets, with 40.3% of these explicitly making measurable commitments to support the SDGs. In this context this criterion is of particular significance as it is important that businesses not only set social and environmental targets, but also align these with the SDGs.

100% of companies in the Aviation, Railroad, Technology Hardware, and Tobacco industries received a star for having measurable commitments to explicitly support one or more SDGs. A star was also awarded for this criteria to 80% of Energy Utilities companies, 75% of companies in both the Telecommunications and Textiles & Apparel industries, and 71.4% of Conglomerates, Chemicals, Healthcare Products, and Mining companies.

Industries that performed less well against this criterion included those in the Non-Profit / Services and 'Other' industries, with 62.5% and 54.5% of these receiving red ratings respectively, indicating that no environmental and/or social targets were published.

Actions

Reporting how their positive actions contribute to the SDGs is an important step for businesses. By understanding and reporting this information, they demonstrate that their actions have positive consequences, which are linked to the global goals.

Out of 32 industries researched in the report, companies belonging to 26 of these were given either amber or green rating, with only six industries containing companies which were rated red for not publishing any actions in support of environmental social governance.

From 26 industries with companies receiving an amber or green rating, there were eight that had companies achieve a star for publishing actions that aligned to the SDGs. These industries were Aviation, Chemicals, Computers, Construction, Equipment, Metals Products, Railroad, Retailers and Telecommunications.



Progress

75% of industries researched in this report had companies that were rated amber or higher, meaning that businesses in 24 industries published progress on their environmental and social actions.

100% of companies within the following industries received a star for reporting progress on their contribution to the SDGs : Aviation, Equipment, Railroad, Retailers and Water Utilities. The Textiles and Apparel and Mining industries also performed well, with 75% and 71.4% receiving a star respectively.

25% of industries researched saw companies receive a red rating for their reporting efforts and progress made, but the proportion within each industry was relatively low. Only four industries saw more than 25% of companies receive a red rating.

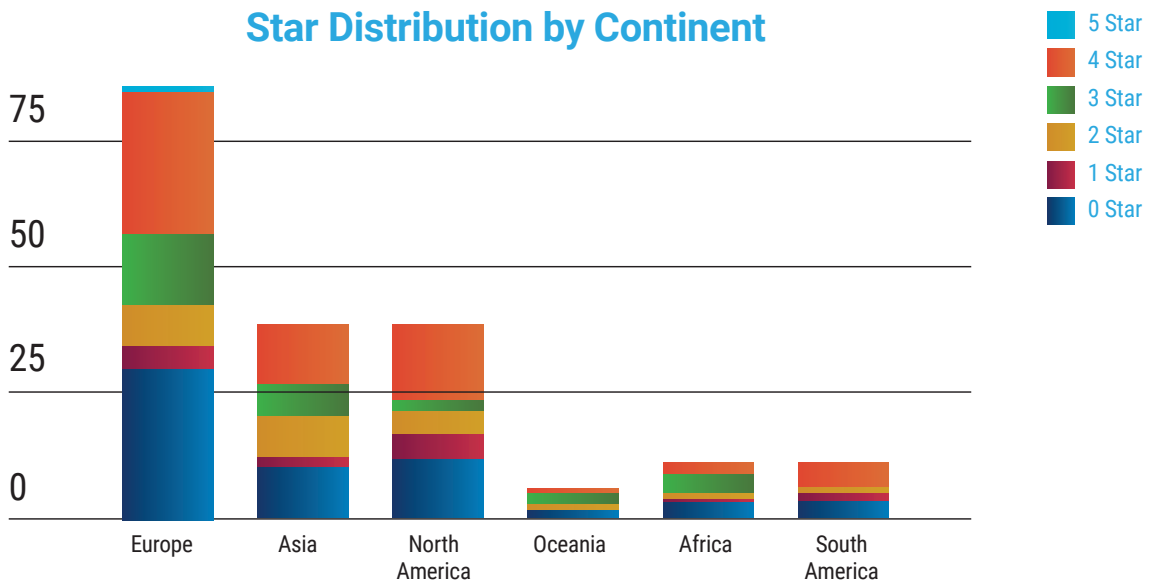
Suppliers

Awareness of the SDGs is worryingly low in most geographies, particularly amongst smaller businesses. This criterion analyzes which businesses are reporting on their efforts to educate suppliers about the Goals. Amber ratings are given for those that, while not sharing their efforts to educate suppliers on the SDGs, are at least reporting their discussions with suppliers on environmental and social issues

Industries that did particularly well in this criterion were Chemicals and Other, as they were the only ones that saw companies receive a star in this category. The percentages were 14.2% and 4.5%, respectively.



By Geography:



For this analysis, companies were organized by the continent where they are registered.

Asia:

Asia is the leading continent for the number of stars awarded to businesses. The average number of stars stands at 2.2 and is made up of 40 registered companies that are located in 17 countries. Companies with the highest ratings are in Bahrain and Pakistan, and the lowest-rated companies are in Japan, South Korea and Vietnam.

North America:

North America was represented by 39 companies across the USA and Canada. Canada scored higher than the USA, with an average of 4 stars against 2.02. At the continental level, North America's average stands at 2.13 - just 0.01 stars lower than the global average.

South America:

In this analysis, South America was represented by 11 companies across five countries. The average number of stars received is 2.18, which is slightly higher than that of Europe. Companies registered in Brazil did particularly well, all achieving four stars. Only three companies researched were awarded zero stars.

Europe:

The European average number of stars was 2.1, ranging from four to zero. Countries with the highest star numbers are Norway and Russia. The lowest number (an average of 0) is seen in Austria, Denmark, Georgia and Slovenia. Europe had the largest data set of 19 countries and 86 companies.

Africa:

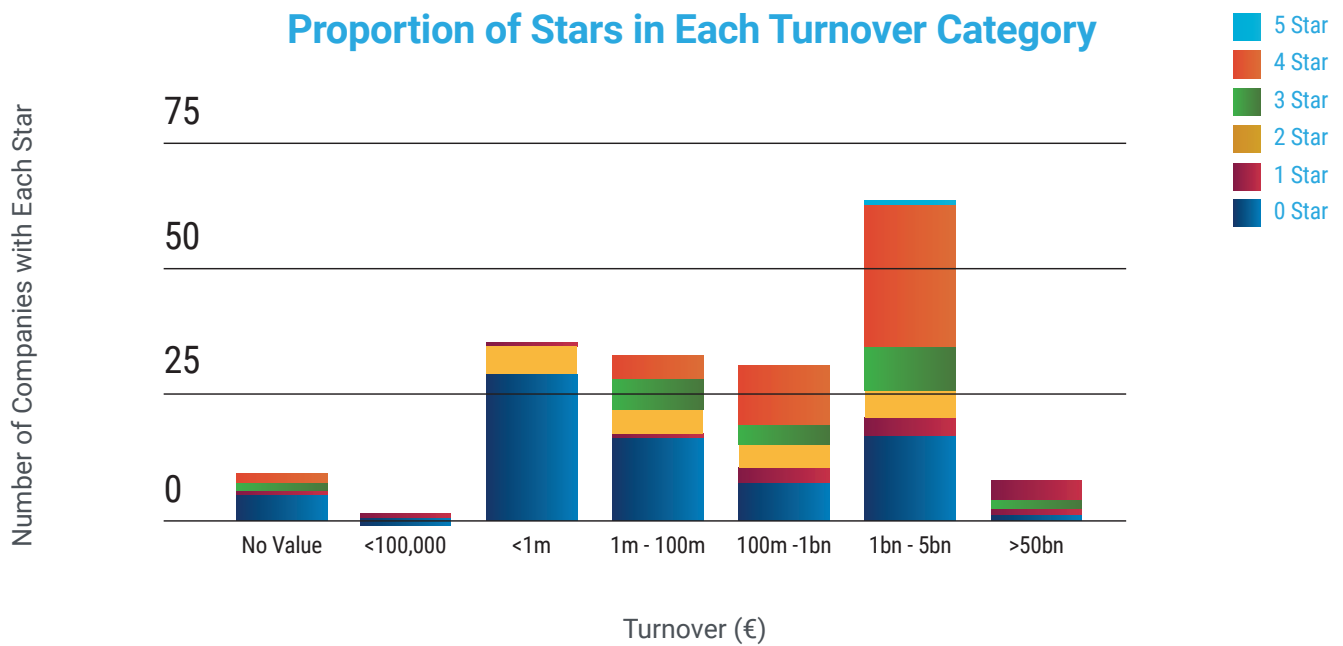
The analysis of the African continent comprises 13 companies across five countries. The average number of stars is 2.08. When looking at the average number for each country, the range was 1.5-3, with those respective figures being achieved by South Africa and Kenya.

Oceania:

Oceania was represented by seven companies, all of which are registered in Australia. The average number of stars was 1.71, the lowest achieved. Despite this, four out of seven companies received two or more stars. This indicates positive signs of incorporating the SDGs.



By Company Turnover:



Only two companies analyzed in this study had a turnover of less than €100,000, with these being awarded a two-star and a zero-star rating.

Among those with a turnover of less than €1 million, the average star rating was 0.375. While this figure is low, within this group, 14.5% of companies received a two-star and a four-star rating.

For those with a turnover between €1 million and €100 million, the average star rating was approximately 1.36. In terms of specific star ratings, one one-star rating, six two-star ratings, nine three-star ratings and five four-star ratings were awarded, illustrating that nearly 50% of companies in this bracket have demonstrated some alignment with the SDGs.

Among the companies researched with a turnover between €100 million and €1 billion, the average star rating was approximately 2.29. Approximately 40% in this group achieved a four-star rating, which is a positive indication of the SDGs alignment. At the same time, however, approximately 24% achieved zero stars.

The average star rating among those with a turnover between €1 billion and €50 billion was very similar to that of the €100 million - €1 billion bracket, but slightly higher, standing at about 2.48. As demonstrated by the bar chart above, this collection of companies achieved the largest proportion of four-star ratings.

Out of all companies analyzed with a turnover higher than €50 billion, the average star rating is the highest compared to all other brackets, standing at approximately 2.55. While this group was the second smallest in terms of the number of companies included, it is promising to see such a high figure, with approximately half of the companies achieving four stars. This is encouraging as companies with high turnovers are in a key position to deliver the system-level change needed to achieve the SDGs.



SDG Priorities

According to an Ipsos survey conducted in 2019 for the World Economic Forum, members of the public see the three most important SDGs around the world as Goal 2: Zero Hunger; Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; and Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being.

Interestingly, the scope of this research and others done by Support the Goals identifies Goal 8, 12, 13 as the most prioritized goals by businesses. The top three priority SDGs in the research group are Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; and Goal 13: Climate Action.

Public opinion contrasts with companies' prioritization of the above goals to an extent that one of the lowest priorities for companies in this research, Goal 2, is regarded as a high priority by the public. Equally, Goal 12 is one of the least important SDGs to the population of the 28 countries surveyed in 2019, yet it is one of the most common goals reported on in this study.





Conclusion

“The SDGs are unprecedented in their ambition – but the fundamental ways that business can contribute remain unchanged.”

António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations

The challenges to meet the 2030 Agenda should not be underestimated, and neither should the role of businesses in meeting this Agenda. While businesses have been continuously transforming their behavior towards more responsible and sustainable practices, the SDGs clearly show the need to redefine what sustainable priorities are among businesses, and their vision of the future.

The increasing need for greater transparency on the SDGs has been accelerated by social movements such as the Black Lives Matter and the ‘Me Too’ movement, as well as increased regulatory disclosure requirements.

The research indicates that businesses are starting to integrate the SDGs into their corporate reporting, with the majority of these highlighting which goals are most relevant to their business as well as the actions they’ve taken to support them.

Although many businesses have set targets that are explicitly aligned with the SDGs, in this research, the majority have not. The overwhelming majority of businesses are also not yet reporting data on progress towards the SDGs.

It is also clear that the largest businesses appear to have more developed reporting against the SDGs. Whereas this might immediately appear to be because of the greater resources available to these companies, smaller businesses should still be able to demonstrate their plans, commitments, actions, and progress.

Businesses in Asia Pacific demonstrated the highest level of reporting against the SDGs, particularly those in Central Asia. These results align with research from Ipsos Mori which indicated that countries in Europe and South-East Asia have lower public awareness of the Goals.

The research also shows that more businesses need to report on how their operations can have a negative impact on the Goals and highlight how their work contributes to the individual SDG targets. Without this level of detail and understanding, it becomes difficult to draw a clear link between business operations and the detailed ambition of the goals.

Strong international cooperation is needed now more than ever to ensure that we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the SDGs. The global community and businesses alike play a vital role in the recovery, and the 2030 Agenda provides an action plan they require to create a more equitable and sustainable post-Covid world.

⁶ Ipsos Mori. (2019). “United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Global attitudes towards its use and regulation”.



Recommendations

The following recommendations should be observed to strengthen the use of the SDGs in business sustainability reporting.

- 1 Companies should document the process for determining which SDGs they are able to contribute to the most (using the resource Integrating the SDGs into corporate reporting: [A practical guide](#))⁷. Along with documenting the process of determining material topics.
- 2 Company targets to support the SDGs should be stated, with particular consideration for those SDGs which the company is most able to contribute to through its activities, products, and business relationships. These company targets should show how they align with the targets of the SDGs.
- 3 Reporting on positive actions carried out by companies should demonstrate how these are making a positive impact on the SDGs, indicating a contribution to specific targets.
- 4 Companies should make easily accessible data on their contribution to the SDGs, aligning these with internationally recognized frameworks and Standards, such as the GRI Standards.
- 5 Companies should indicate how they identify, prevent, and address their actual and potential negative impacts on the SDGs and highlight what these may be. Customers, investors, and governments are increasingly interested in understanding the negative impacts a business has, and reports with this level of transparency will lead to a greater trust and accountability as well as an increased ability to understand how these impacts can be mitigated.
- 6 Inter- and intra-industry collaboration up and down the value chain should be encouraged so that companies can share practices on reporting towards the SDGs, and use internationally recognized frameworks and Standards, such as the GRI Sector Standards where appropriate.
- 7 Companies need to consider their wider value chains to help raise awareness of the SDGs and encourage clear reporting. Reporting should indicate how suppliers have been engaged on the subject of SDG reporting, along with other key stakeholders such as data users, investment portfolio companies and customers.

⁷ Integrating the SDGs into Corporate Reporting: A Practical Guide.

<https://www.globalreporting.org/media/0sxj0ewa/gri_ungc_reporting-on-sdgs_practical_guide.pdf>

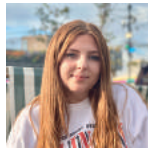


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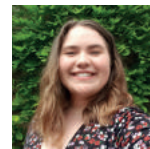
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Sources and Notes

Notes

Industry	Number of Companies
Automotive	5
Aviation	1
Chemicals	7
Commercial Services	21
Computers	3
Conglomerates	7
Construction	2
Construction Materials	4
Energy	11
Energy Utilities	5
Equipment	2
Financial Services	34
Food and Beverage Products	9
Forest and Paper Products	1
Healthcare Products	7
Healthcare Services	3
Household and Personal Products	2
Logistics	3
Metals Products	3
Mining	7
Non-Profit / Services	16
Other	22
Public Agency	4
Railroad	1
Real Estate	10
Retailers	2
Technology Hardware	3
Telecommunications	4
Textiles and Apparel	4
Tobacco	1
Water Utilities	1



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- ⁷ GRI & UN Global Compact. (2018). "Integrating the SDGs into Corporate Reporting: A Practical Guide". Business Reporting on the SDGs. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.globalreporting.org/media/0sxj0ewa/gri_ungc_reporting-on-sdgs_practical_guide.pdf>.

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