

# 6th Annual CSR Insights Report

**SUMMER 2025**



# The 2025 Landscape

***The CSR Insights Report, published by the Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals (ACCP) in partnership with YourCause from Blackbaud, offers a snapshot of the evolving state of corporate social impact\*.***

Based on survey responses from 135 leading companies representing approximately \$1 billion in community investment, this year's findings underscore a profession under increasing pressure and growing strategic relevance.

As stakeholder scrutiny intensifies and the landscape becomes more complex due to economic and political factors, corporate social impact programs and initiatives remain central to how companies build brand loyalty, recruit and retain employees, manage risk, create business value, and make a meaningful impact on communities.

The report reveals a field responding with adaptability and resiliency:



**51% of corporate social impact professionals report being asked to tie their work more directly to business outcomes**, emphasizing the urgent need for data-driven storytelling and internal advocacy.



Companies are **realigning investments toward issue areas perceived as less politically sensitive but still salient to the business**, such as STEM and community revitalization, while reducing funding in areas like racial equity and gender equality.



The use of **artificial intelligence jumped dramatically**, with 73% of teams leveraging AI to improve communications, productivity, and data analysis, up from 53% in 2024.



Budget priorities are shifting: **employee engagement budgets increased the most**, while operations and grantmaking mainly remained flat. Foundation budgets saw a slight increase.



Despite increasing responsibilities, corporate social impact professionals report **greater visibility, career growth, and engagement**—signs that the function is gaining influence across the business.

The **CSR Insights 2025 Report** captures a pivotal moment for corporate social impact professionals. These practitioners are navigating operational and cultural complexity while doubling down on programs that align with business strategy and stakeholder expectations. As companies ask more from their CSR teams, the findings highlight a critical truth: **to secure the future of corporate social impact, teams must drive business results while delivering social value—proving their strategic importance to the organization.**

# SIX KEY INSIGHTS

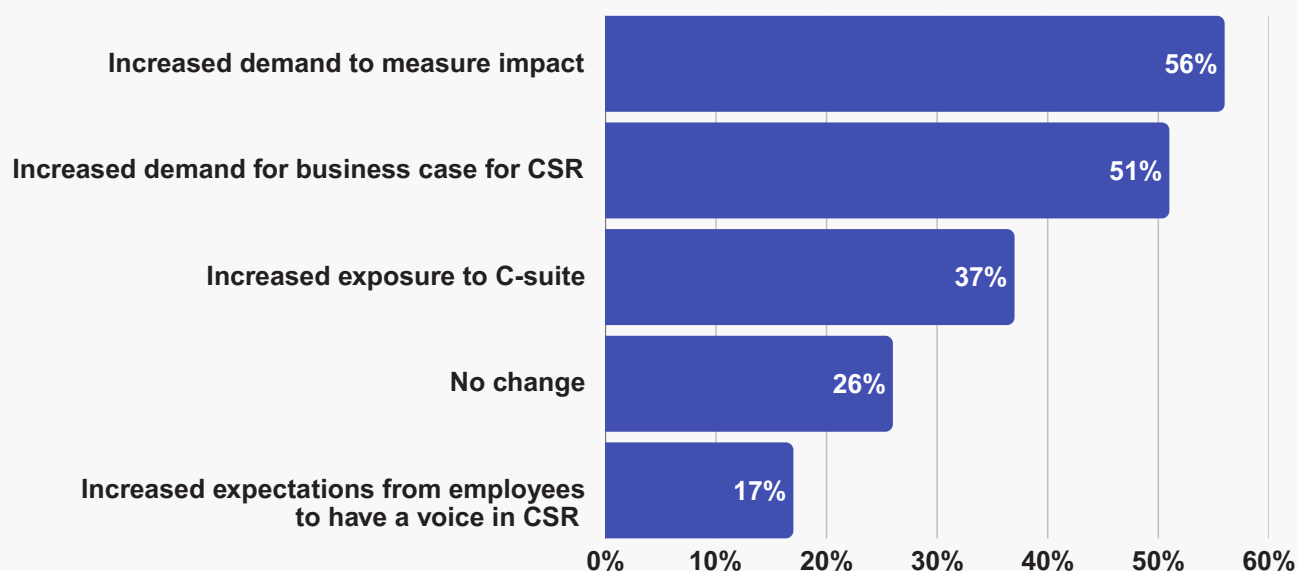
## 1. Increased Need to Make the Business Case

A majority of corporate social impact professionals (51%) say they experienced increased demand in the past 12 months to tie their work directly to business value—highlighting the urgent need for teams to justify their efforts in ways that resonate with internal stakeholders.

Another 56% report increased pressure to measure impact, underscoring a broader shift: CSR teams must not only do good but also demonstrate clear business value in addition to community impact.

To meet this demand, practitioners require the right data, language, and strategies to demonstrate how social impact drives company performance, meets stakeholder expectations, and enhances competitive advantage.

### How would you describe the changes your department has experienced in the past 12 months around Demands and Expectations?



## 2. Companies Are Shifting Priority Issue Areas

Companies are recalibrating their community investments to focus on issue areas that are more closely aligned with their business goals, less politically charged, and strengthen the talent pipeline for the jobs of the future.

This year, the top issue areas for community investment were workforce development, K-12 education, and food insecurity (all at 43%). In 2024, the top three issue areas were environmental sustainability (50%), job training and workforce development (50%), and K-12 education (47%).

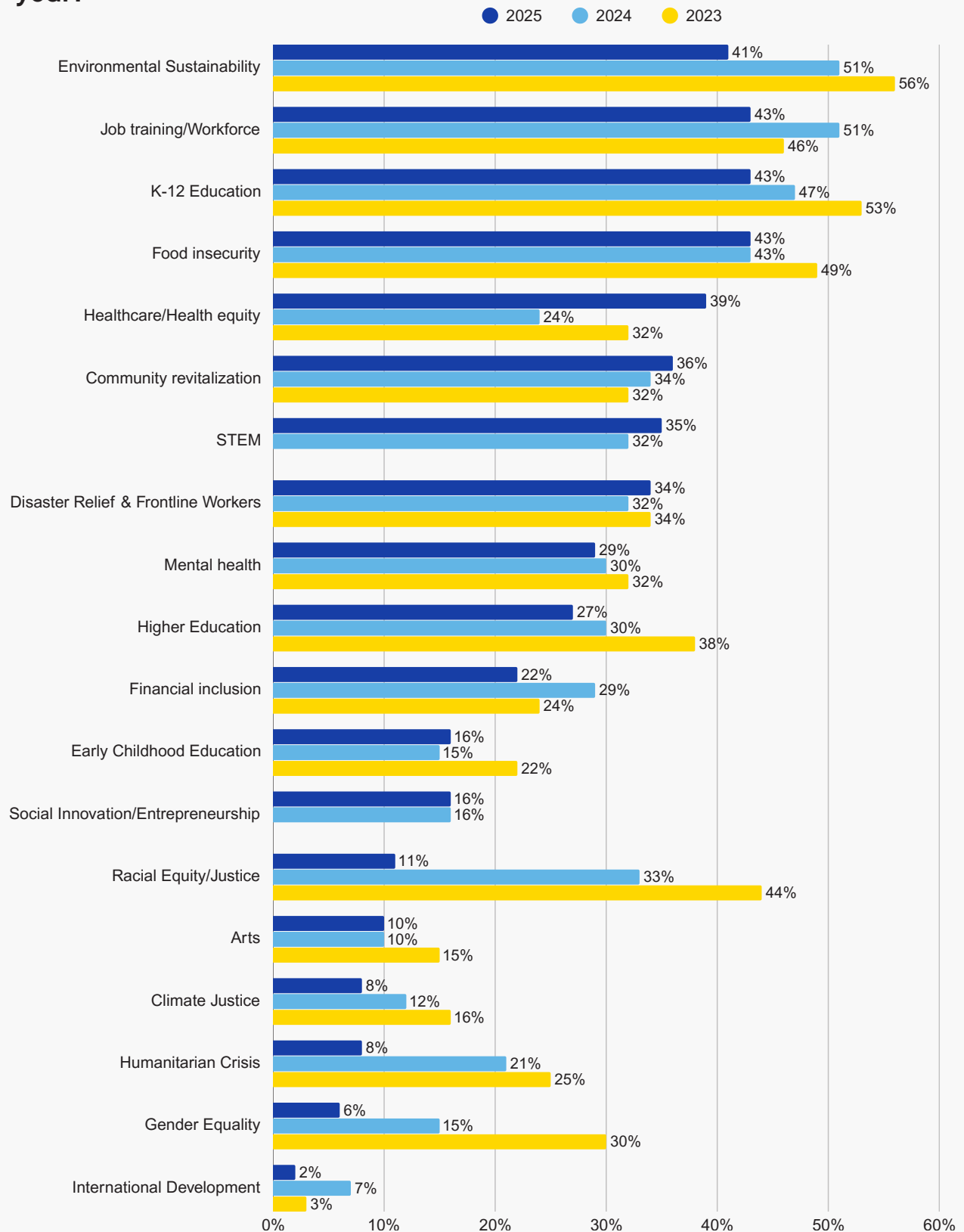
Issue areas that saw increases compared to the previous year included Healthcare (39% up from 24% in 2024), Community Revitalization (36% up from 34% in 2024), STEM Education (35% up from 32% in 2024), and Disaster relief (34% up from 32% in 2024).

Issue areas that saw a significant decline included:

- **Racial Equity/Justice:** 11% in 2025 (down from 33% in 2024)
- **Environmental Sustainability:** 41% in 2025 (down from 51% in 2024)
- **Humanitarian Crises:** 8% in 2025 (down from 21% in 2024)
- **Gender Equality/LGBTQ+ Rights:** 6% in 2025 (down from 15% in 2024).

The decline in more politically charged issue areas and the uptick in issue areas with clearer ties to business functions and the talent pipeline (like workforce development, technology/STEM, and local community support) illustrates a strategic shift in response to stakeholder scrutiny and reputational risk management. Companies may still be addressing issues like racial equity and sustainability but in a different way – for instance, through the lens of programs like workforce development.

## Which of the following social issues are priorities for your company this year?



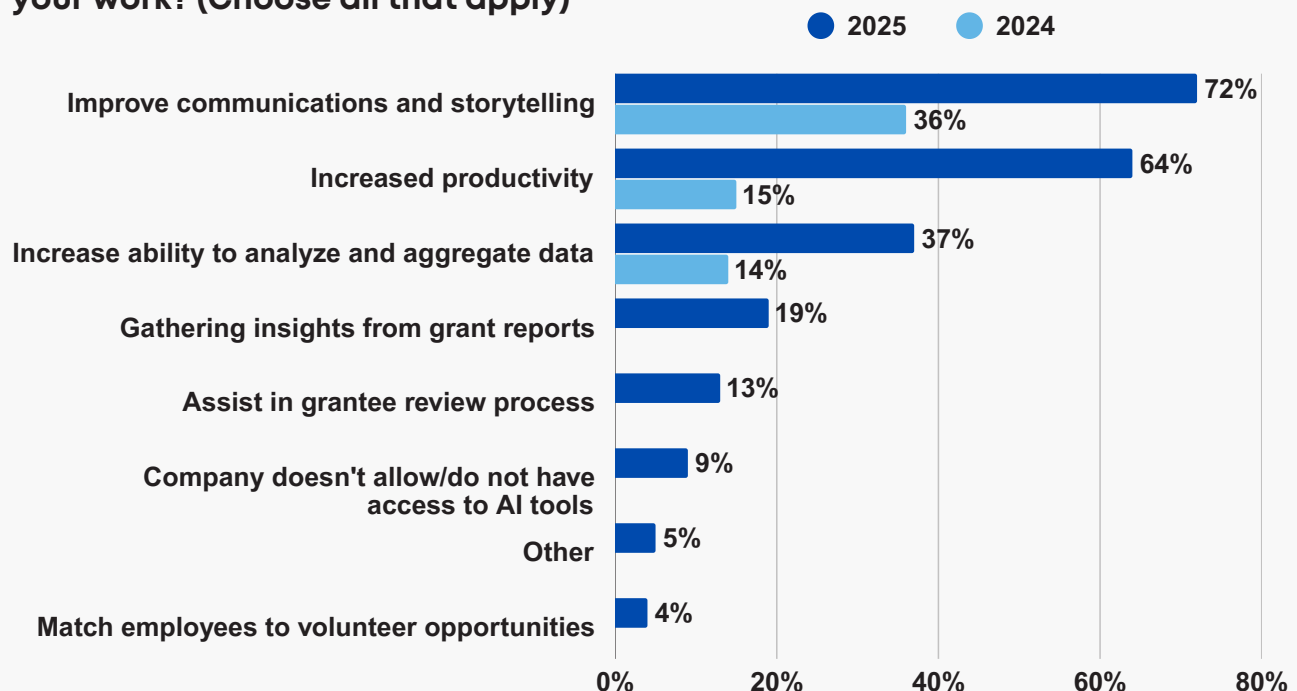
### 3. AI Is Reshaping Corporate Social Impact Work

Corporate social impact teams are increasingly integrating artificial intelligence into their day-to-day work, moving beyond exploration into real application:

- 73% of corporate social impact teams now report using AI tools in some capacity—up from 53% in 2024.
- AI use for increasing efficiency has surged to 64% in 2025, up significantly from 15% in 2024, making productivity gains the leading application.
- Storytelling and communications applications—such as drafting reports, social content, or messaging—are used by 72% of teams in 2025, doubling from 36% in 2024.
- Use of AI for data analysis and aggregation rose to 37% in 2025, up from 14% in 2024, helping teams better assess impact and streamline reporting. This remains a growth area as the field continues exploring the best applications of AI in impact measurement.
- In 2025, 43% of teams have implemented or are actively exploring new technology platforms, which is broadly consistent with the 44% reported in 2024.

These numbers confirm that AI is no longer an experimental technology; it has become a mainstream tool and an essential, embedded part of how CSR teams improve performance, enhance storytelling, and scale their impact.

#### How are you and your team currently using AI technology tools to help with your work? (Choose all that apply)



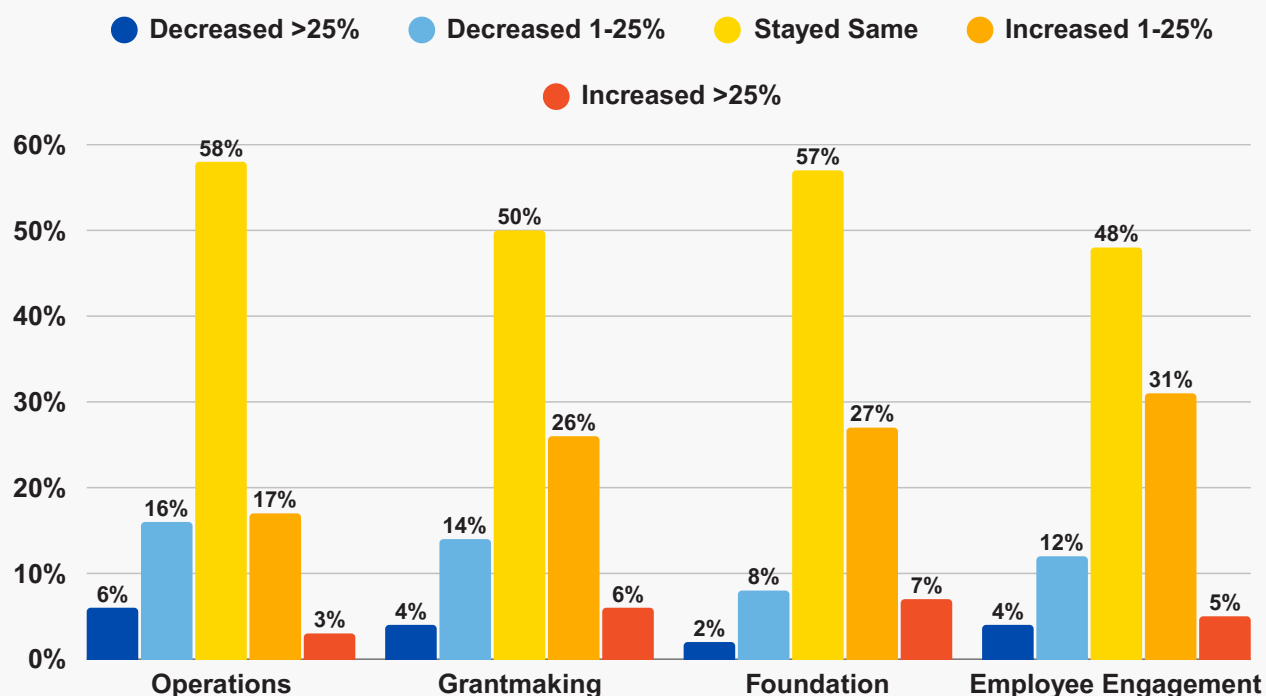
## 4. Shifts in Budget Allocation Reflect Strategic Priorities

In 2025, companies continued to recalibrate their allocation of social impact budgets, revealing evolving internal priorities and external pressures.

- Employee engagement budgets saw the most strength, with 36% of respondents indicating an increase in their employee engagement budget, indicating a strong focus on employee-driven impact and employee satisfaction.
- Foundation budgets also saw growth, with 33% of respondents reporting an increase in their foundation budget and only 10% reporting a decrease, suggesting a sustained investment in formal grantmaking channels—potentially to preserve social impact efforts or mitigate business risk.
- Grantmaking and operational budgets were a little more inconsistent, with significant percentages seeing both increases and declines.

The fact that most companies report a flat or increased budget for these areas shows a strong commitment to social impact work despite the uncertain political and economic landscape.

### How did your budgets for each of the following change compared to last year? Operations, Grantmaking, Foundation (if applicable), and Employee Engagement





## 5. Political Pressures Are Reshaping DEI Integration in CSR

As political scrutiny intensifies, corporate social impact professionals are navigating both real and perceived risks related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). While commitment remains, companies are shifting their approach to and communication of DEI efforts:

- 71% of CSR professionals report changing the language around DEI efforts.
- 44% have decreased external communications about DEI.
- 36% have seen increased legal oversight of DEI initiatives.

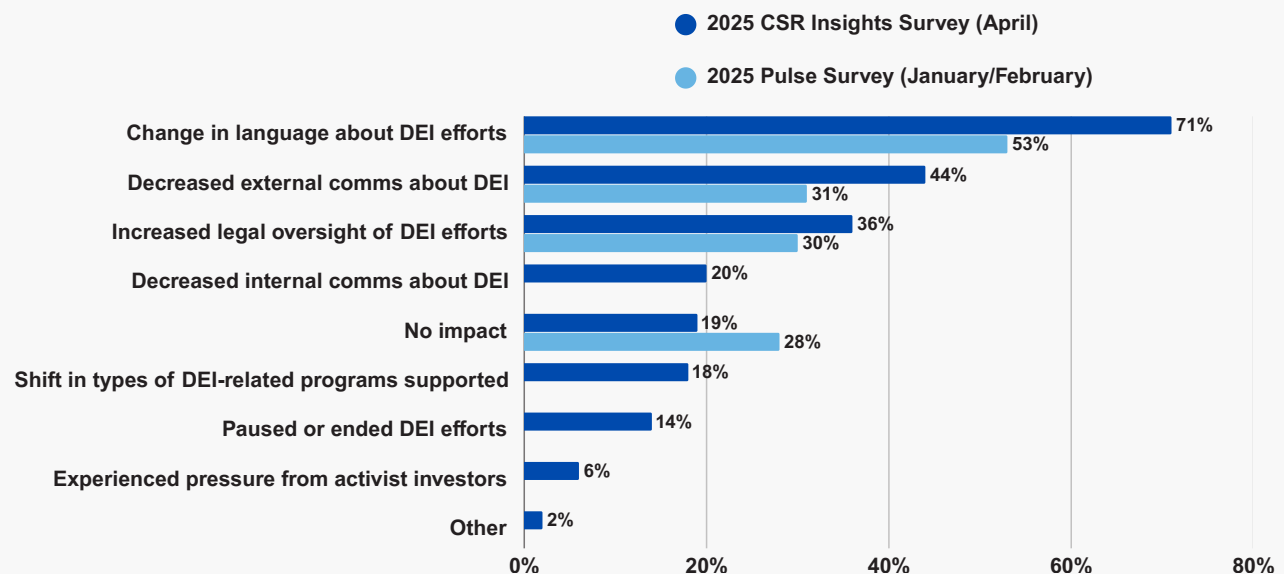
Additionally, 72% of CSR professionals report being somewhat to very concerned about the impact of executive orders and legal actions on their DEI-related programs. There has also been a notable decline in the integration of DEI into CSR efforts. Meanwhile, companies reporting decreased DEI integration rose from less than 1% in 2023 to 11% in 2025.

In 2022 and 2023, 51% of companies reported an increase in the integration of DEI into their social impact efforts:

- That number dropped to 22% in 2024.
- It falls even further to just 12% in 2025.

Political pressure and shifting public sentiment are actively reshaping internal strategies. Companies are reevaluating how inclusive efforts for their organization align with social impact, particularly in public-facing communications and community investments.

### How has the current political, legal, and news environment regarding DEI impacted your corporate social impact work?



## 6. Expanding Responsibilities, Growing Recognition

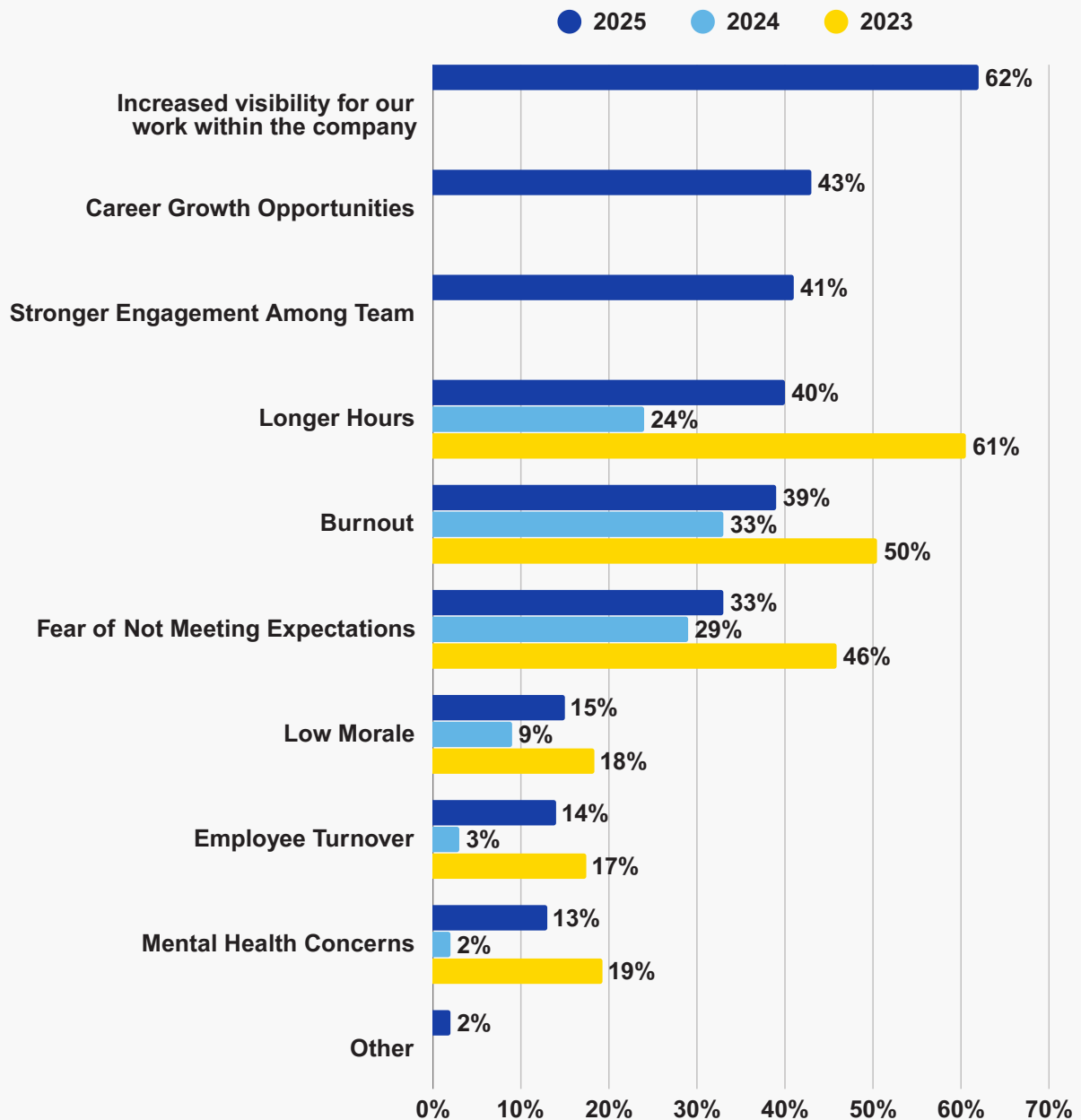
Corporate social impact teams continue to be asked to take on more responsibility — with 72% of respondents reporting an expanded scope of work in 2025. This is consistent with 2023 and 2024 levels (2024 also 72%; 2023 was 86%), suggesting a sustained trend toward greater expectations for corporate social impact teams.

Yet, with this increased workload, practitioners are also seeing tangible benefits:

- 62% say the visibility of CSR has increased within their company
- 43% report more opportunities for career growth
- 41% note improved team engagement and morale
- Only 14% flagged increased employee turnover
- Notably, while 39% did report burnout, it is slightly down from 43% in 2024.

These findings tell a nuanced story: while corporate social impact professionals are carrying more weight, many are also gaining recognition, influence, and internal support as their roles grow. It's a signal to leaders that investing in their CSR teams pays dividends—both in morale and strategic value.

## If your team has taken on more responsibility, what has been the biggest impact?



# FULL REPORT FINDINGS

*Note to reader: There is some duplication of the key findings in this full report findings section.*

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## What's in a name?

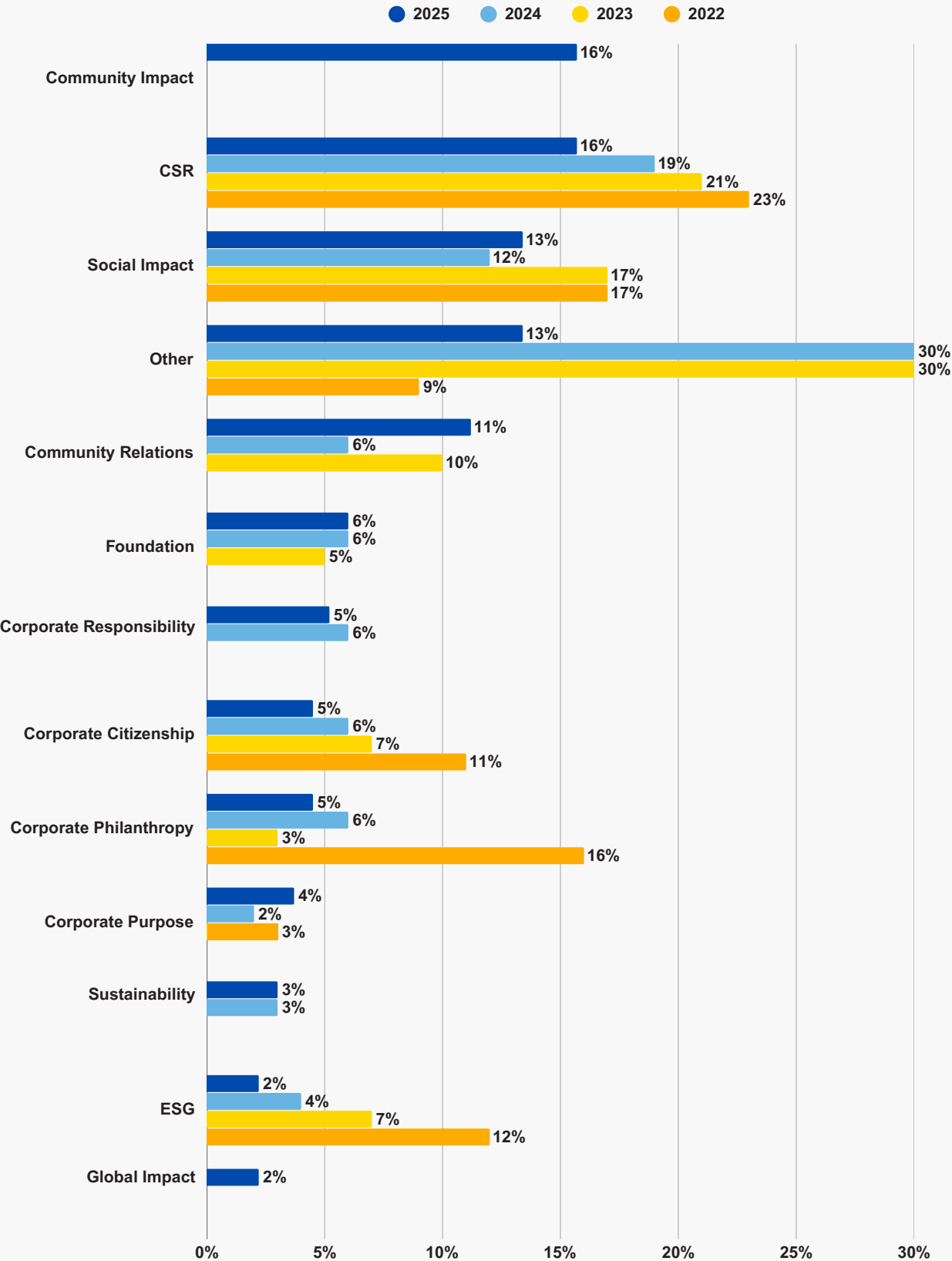
When asked what title your company uses to describe your team's work, no one answer garnered a majority. The wide range of responses reflects the continued lack of standardization in how corporate social impact functions are labeled across industries.

The three most commonly selected terms were:

- Community Impact – 16%
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – 16%
- Corporate Social Impact/Social Impact - 13%

This diversity underscores the evolving and often company-specific nature of the field. While “CSR” and “Community Impact” remain popular, many companies are experimenting with new language to better align with business strategy, global reach, and stakeholder expectations.

What title does your company use to describe your team's work?



## CSR Crosses Functions, Elevating Corporate Impact

There is a complex and varied landscape of corporate social impact ownership across organizations.

While many companies report having a broad range of social impact functions, not all of them fall under the CSR department's purview. Key insights include:

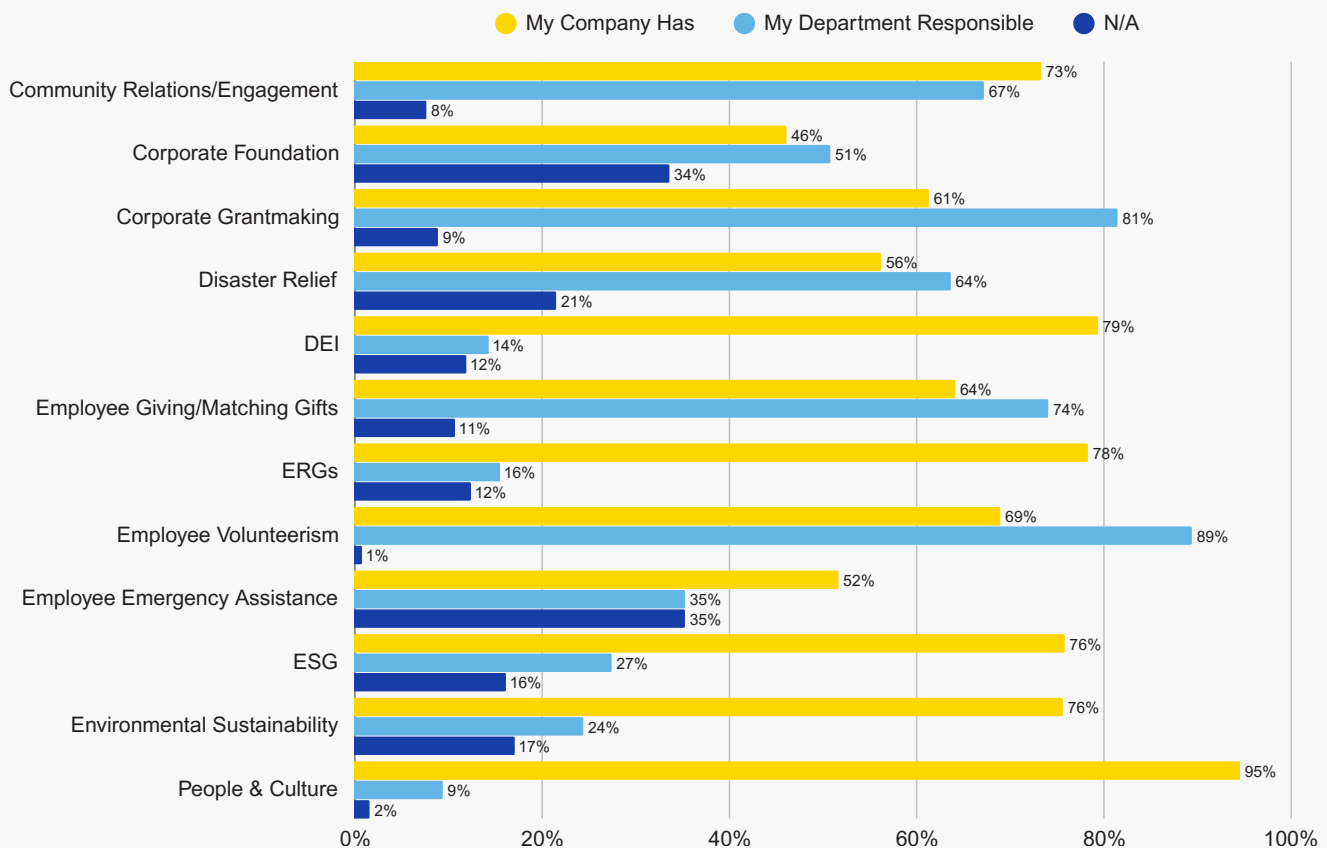
### Functions Most Commonly Managed by CSR Departments

- Employee Volunteerism – 89% of those that have it say it's a CSR responsibility
- Corporate Grantmaking – 82%
- Employee Giving & Matching Gifts – 74%
- Disaster Relief – 64%

The survey responses suggest that corporate social impact teams are frequently responsible for direct community engagement and employee-related giving. At the same time, areas such as ESG (27% CSR responsibility), DEI (14%), and ERGs (16%) tend to reside elsewhere—often within HR or DEI-related departments.

The division of responsibilities underscores the cross-functional nature of social impact work today. As expectations grow, collaboration across business units—especially with HR, Legal, and Sustainability—is essential to drive meaningful impact and alignment.

### Which of the following functions does your company have, and which fall under your department's responsibility?



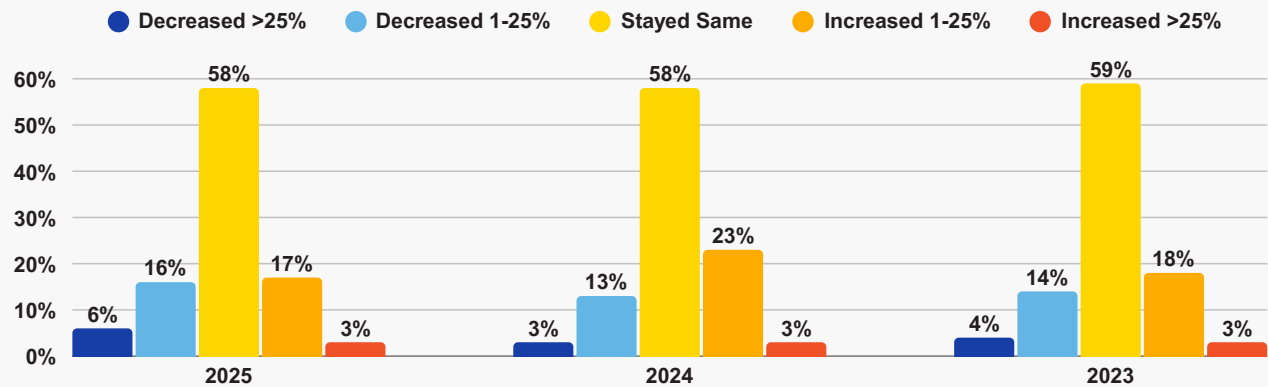
# CSR Budgets Mostly Staying the Same or Increasing

In 2025, companies continued to recalibrate their allocation of social impact budgets, revealing evolving internal priorities and external pressures.

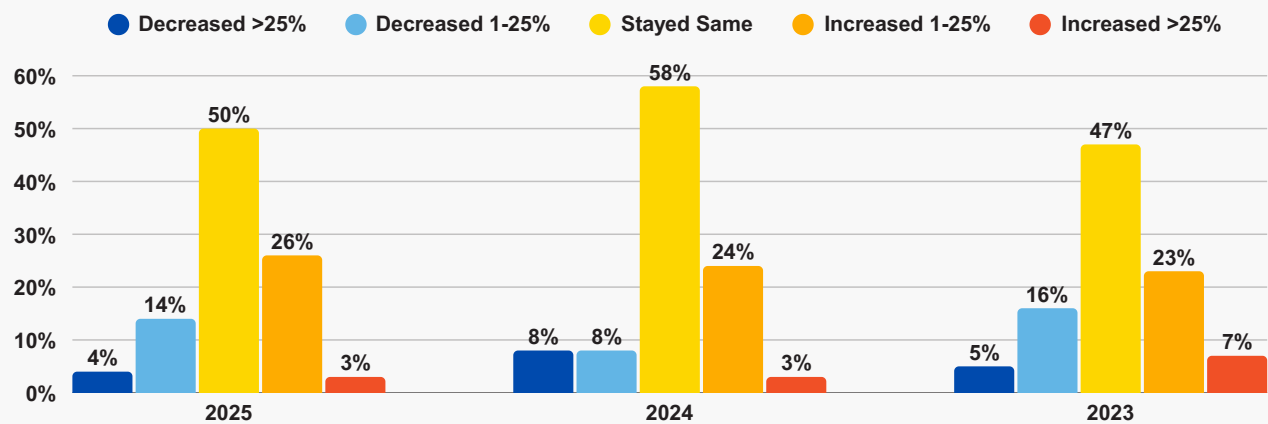
- Employee engagement budgets saw the most momentum, with 36% of respondents indicating an increase in their employee engagement budget, indicating a strong focus on employee-driven impact and employee satisfaction.
- Foundation budgets also saw growth, with 33% of respondents reporting an increase in their foundation budget and only 10% reporting a decrease, suggesting a sustained investment in formal grantmaking channels—potentially to preserve social impact efforts or mitigate business risk.
- Grantmaking and operational budgets were a little more inconsistent, with significant percentages seeing both increases and declines.

The fact that most companies report a flat or increased budget for these areas shows a strong commitment to social impact work despite the uncertain political and economic landscape.

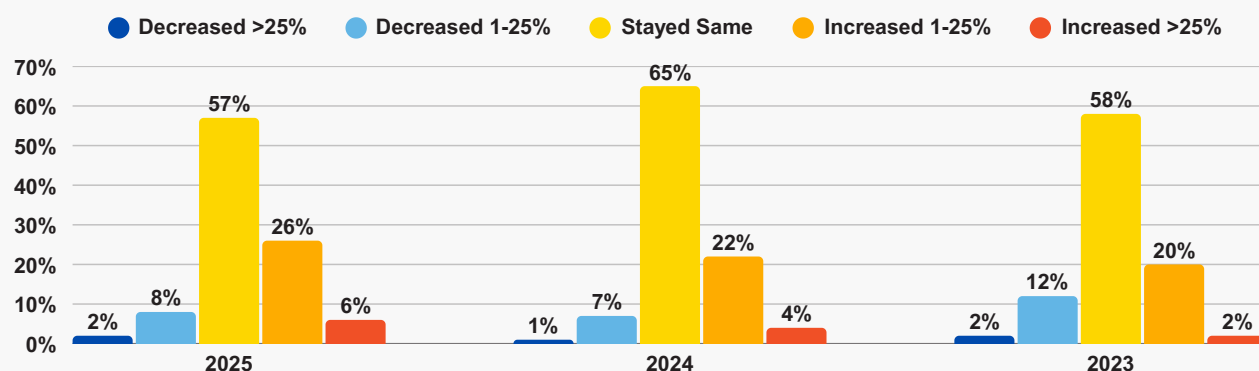
## How did your Operations budget change compared to last year?



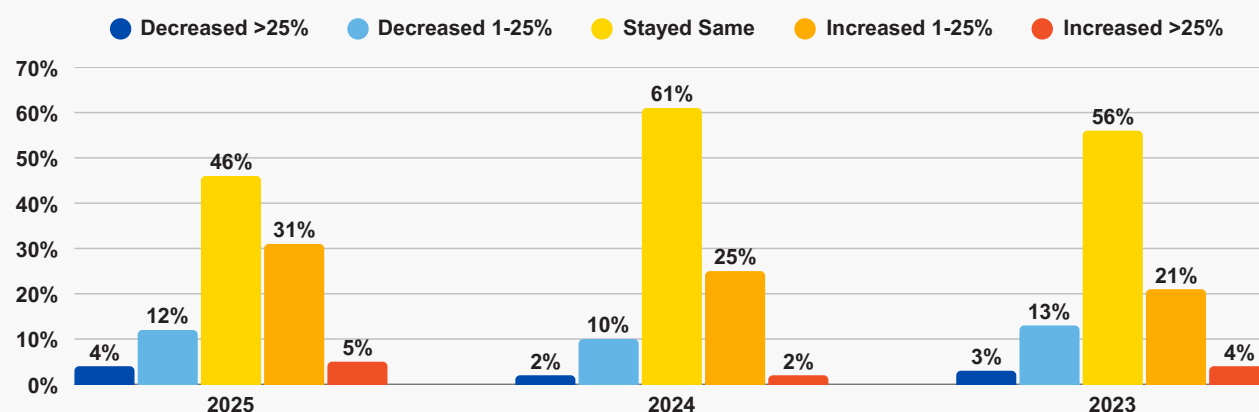
## How did your Grantmaking budget change compared to last year?



## How did your Foundation budget change compared to last year? (if applicable)



## How did your Employee Engagement budget change compared to last year?



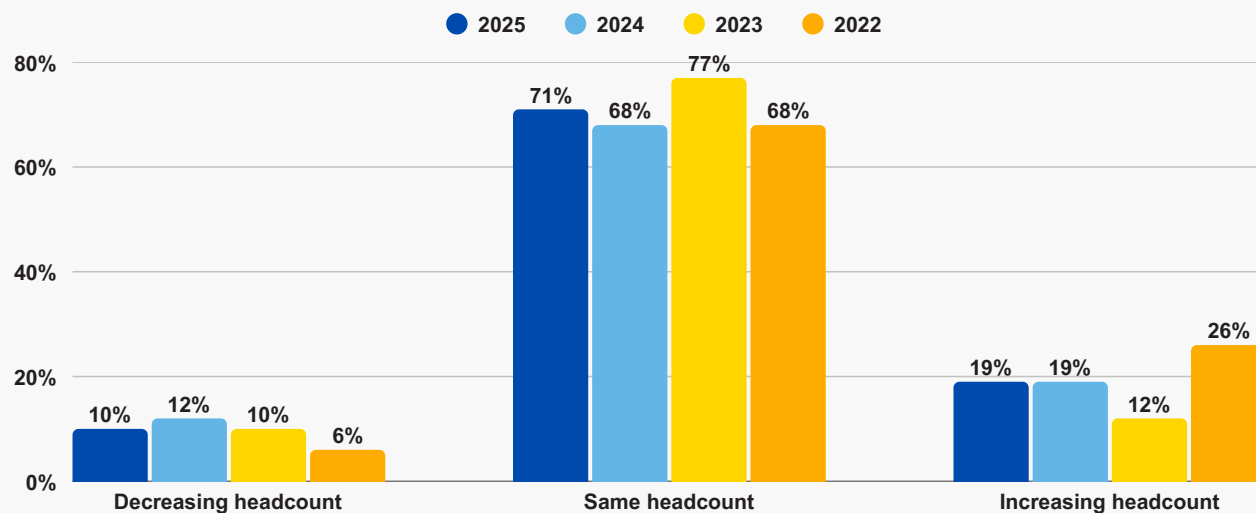
## Corporate social impact teams are staying the same or growing

This year, 71% of companies reported no change in CSR team headcount, continuing a trend of steady staffing levels. 19% saw increases—flat from 2024 and down from 26% in 2022. 10% reported a decrease in CSR staff, down from 12% last year.

While headcount remains largely steady, the flattening of team growth, combined with increasing responsibilities, underscores the importance of equipping existing staff with tools to maximize impact, demonstrate value, and ensure alignment between corporate social impact efforts and business goals—especially in leaner teams.



### This year, our corporate social impact team is:



## Corporate social impact teams continue to face steady internal change—reshaping how they are structured, led, and aligned within their companies

- 36% reorganized department roles
- 31% saw changes to the reporting structure
- 27% experienced staff turnover—up sharply from 4% last year
- 24% gained a new department leader

While those statistics are all steady from 2024, they do reflect broader organizational trends. In recent years, CSR teams have navigated ongoing leadership changes, adjustments in reporting lines, and role reorganizations. Companies are rethinking where corporate social impact fits within the enterprise—sometimes moving teams closer to functions like Sustainability, HR, or Corporate Affairs to strengthen strategic alignment.

The rise in turnover, combined with new leadership appointments, suggests a period of recalibration is underway. CSR leaders are adapting to changing expectations and evolving business priorities, ensuring that social impact remains integrated into company strategy. As roles and reporting structures continue to grow, the ability of CSR teams to stay agile and collaborative has never been more crucial.

Technology adoption also continues:

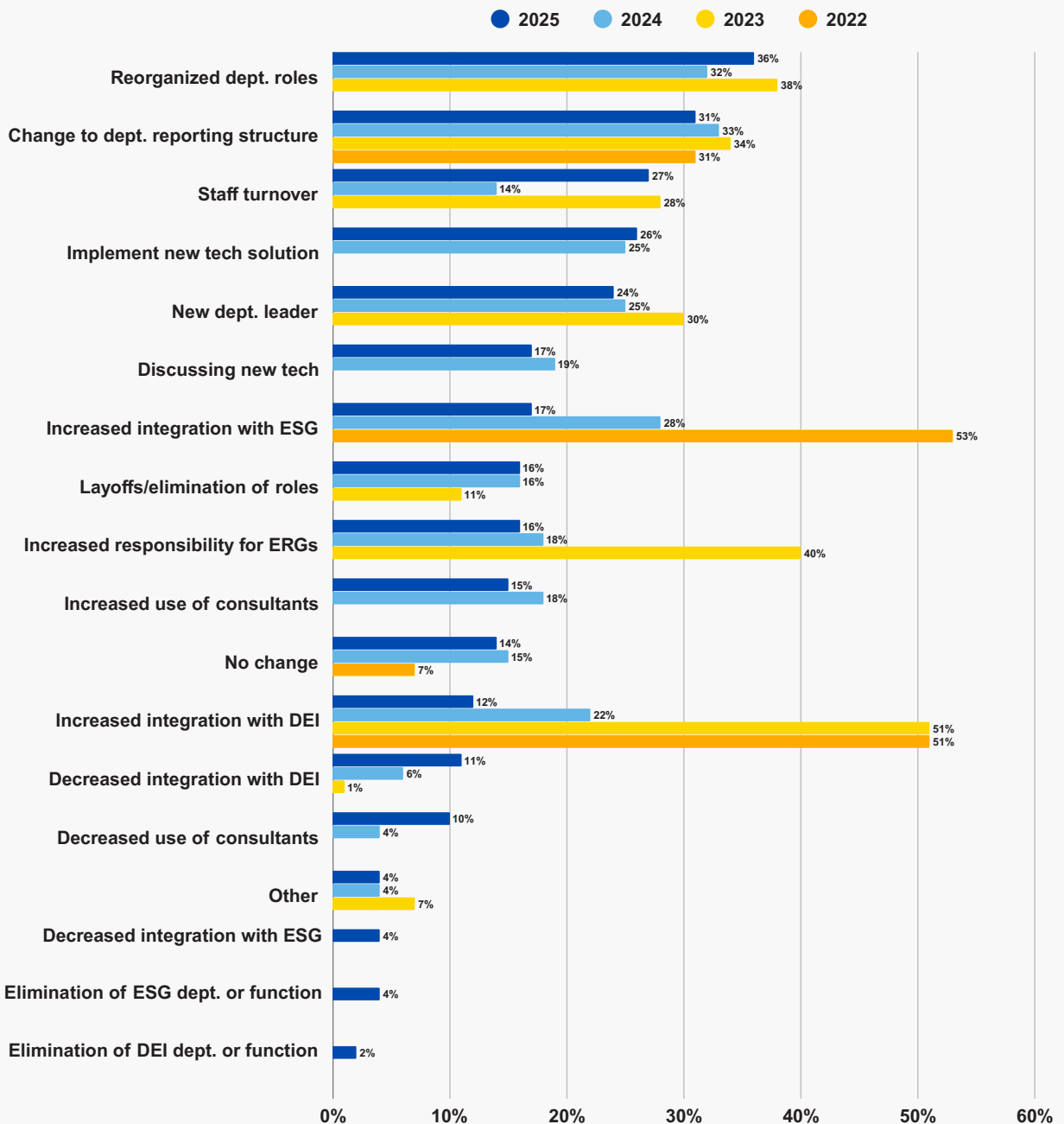
- 26% implemented new tools in 2025
- 17% are in the planning stages

Meanwhile, DEI integration is steadily declining:

- Down from 51% in 2023 to 22% in 2024 and just 12% in 2025.
- Those seeing decreased DEI integration jumped to 11% in 2025, up from 6% in 2024 and under 1% in 2023.

Persistent internal shifts—whether structural, technological, or leadership-driven—are challenging the ability of CSR teams to develop and execute long-term strategies. Sustained success will depend on adaptability, strategic alignment, and deep cross-functional collaboration.

### How would you describe the changes your department experienced in the past 12 months around Resources & Structure?



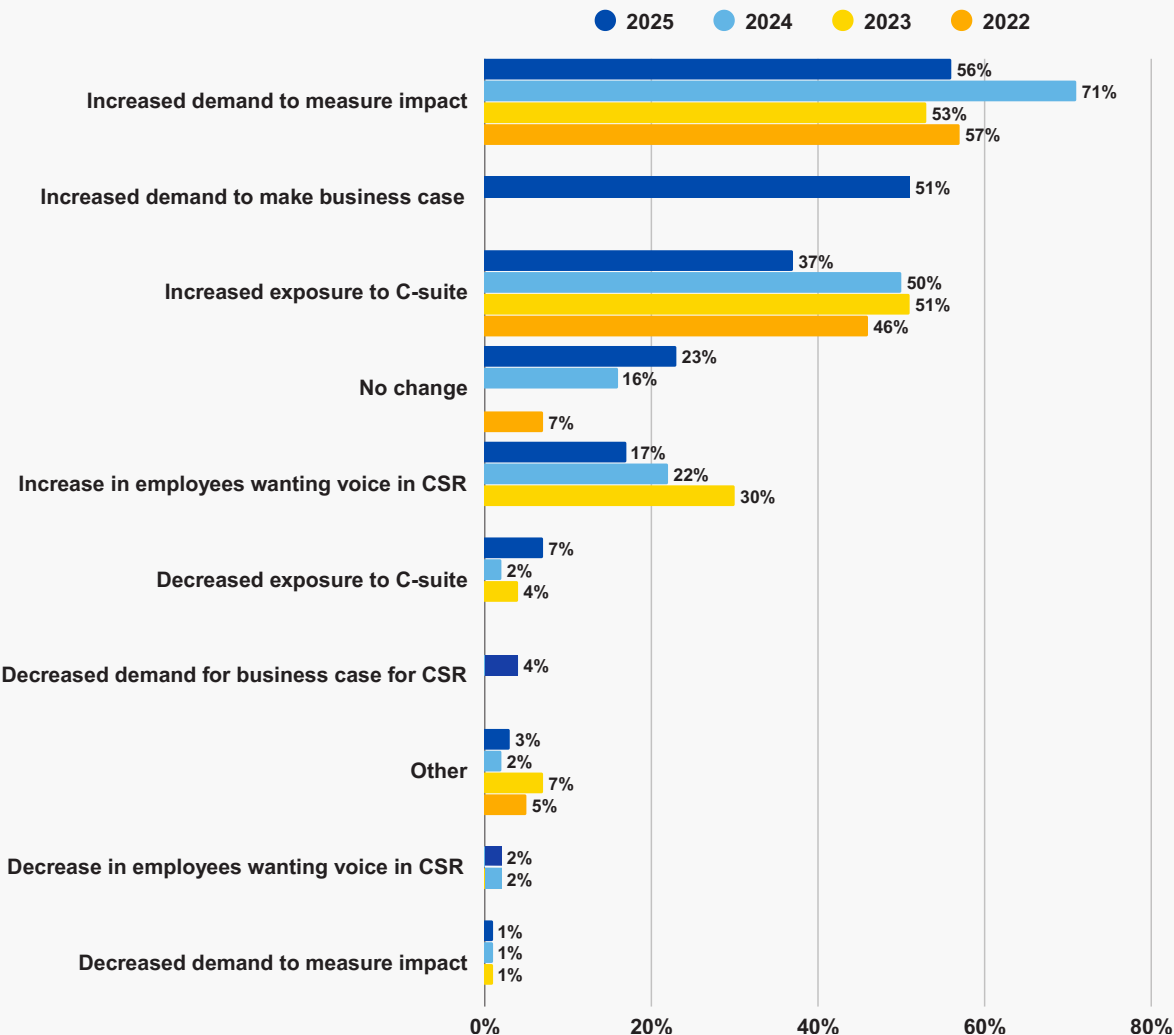
# Demand to Measure Impact and Make Business Case Continues

A majority of corporate social impact professionals (51%) saw an increase in demand to make the business case for the work—highlighting the urgent need for teams to justify their efforts in ways that resonate with internal stakeholders.

Another 56% report increased pressure to measure impact – and 71% of those in the Financial Services field said the same. This underscores a broader shift: CSR teams must not only do good but also demonstrate clear business value.

To meet this demand, practitioners require the right data, language, and strategies to demonstrate how social impact drives company performance, meets stakeholder expectations, and enhances competitive advantage.

## How would you describe the changes your department experienced in the past 12 months around Demands and Expectations?



# External Landscape Driving Change in Corporate Social Impact

External pressures are significantly shaping how corporate social impact teams operate. From terminology shifts to increased legal scrutiny, practitioners are navigating a new set of challenges that require agility, collaboration, and strategic adaptation.

Most notably, teams report changes in how they communicate and manage risk:

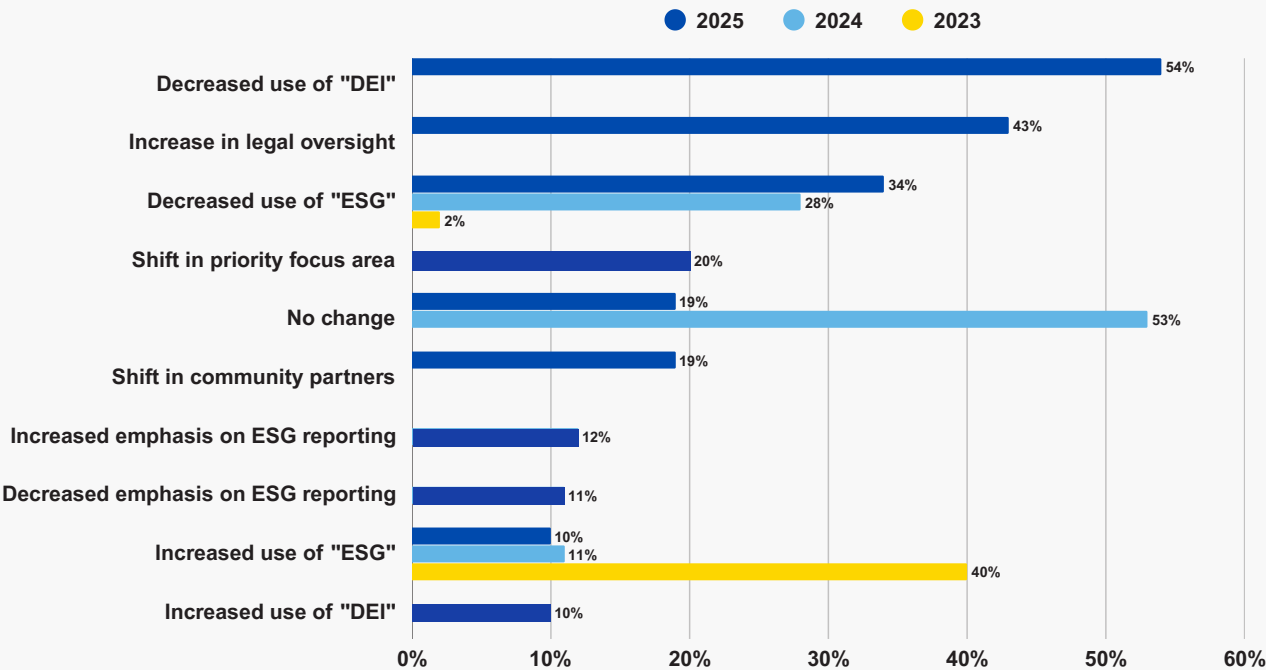
- 54% have decreased use of the term “DEI” in public language
- 43% report increased legal oversight of DEI-related programs
- 34% say they are using the term “ESG” less—up sharply from just 2% in 2023
- Only 19% of respondents said there was no change at all due to the external landscape

While most of these shifts are concentrated around language, external communications, and compliance, some companies are also making more direct programmatic changes:

- 14% of respondents have paused or ended DEI initiatives altogether
- 18% have shifted the types of DEI-related programs they support

This growing complexity underscores the need for internal alignment across departments, particularly with communications, government affairs, and legal teams, as well as a renewed focus on risk management and stakeholder trust. Social impact professionals are being called to walk a fine line: staying true to core values while adjusting strategy to reflect a fast-changing environment.

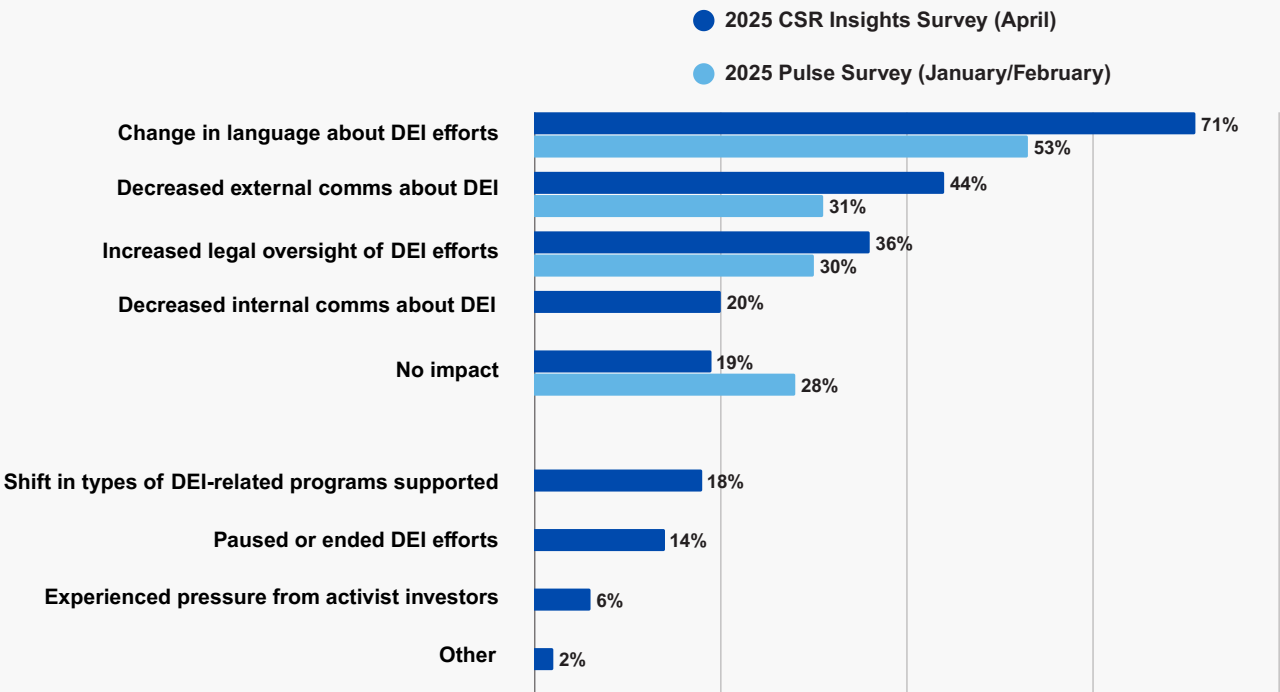
How would you describe the changes your department experienced in the past 12 months in Response to the External Landscape?



# The increased scrutiny of DEI is having an influence on corporate social impact programs and initiatives

- 71% of respondents said they are changing the language used to communicate about DEI efforts.
- 44% of respondents indicated decreased external communications about DEI efforts, and 20% said the same about internal communications.
- 36% said they are experiencing increased legal oversight of DEI-related initiatives.

## How has the current political, legal, and news environment regarding DEI impacted your corporate social impact work?



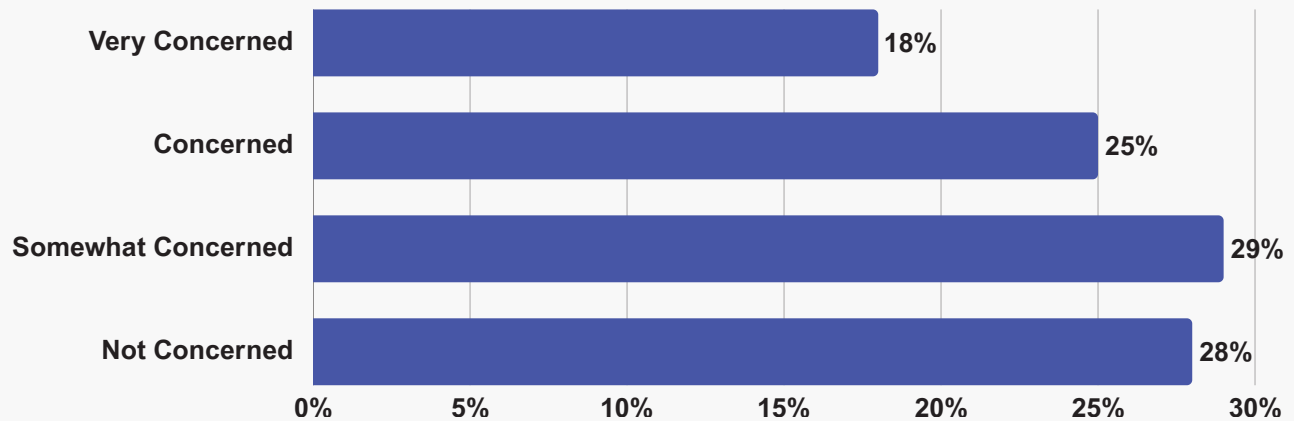
# Presidential Executives Orders Create Concern About Companies Sustained Commitment to DEI

When asked how concerned corporate social impact professionals were about the Executive Orders' impact on their company's commitment to DEI as it relates to their social impact programs moving forward, 72% stated they were concerned to some degree.

The extent of the concern varied, with 18% saying very concerned, 25% saying concerned, and 29% saying somewhat concerned. 28% responded that they were not concerned.

The responses indicate a reasonable level of confidence that their companies have sustained commitment, with 57% expressing either no concern or being somewhat concerned.

**How concerned are you that the recent Executive Orders from the new administration will impact your company's commitment to DEI as it relates to your social impact programs moving forward?**

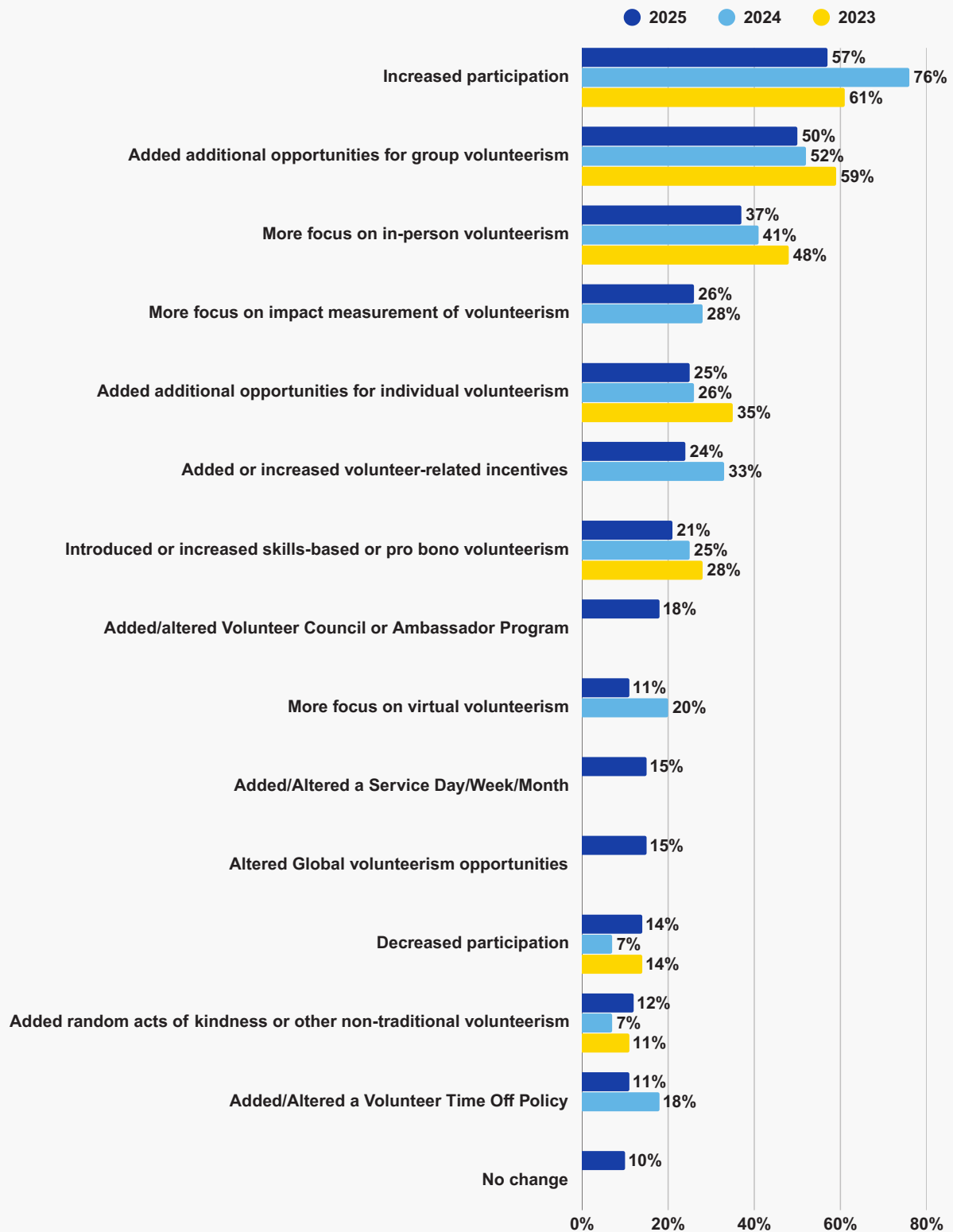


## **Volunteer Participation Continues to Grow, But the Rate of Growth Is Slowing**

Employee volunteerism remains a cornerstone of corporate social impact strategy. While participation continues to rise, new data from this year's survey suggests that momentum is easing.

- 61% of CSR professionals report increased employee volunteerism in 2025—down from 76% in 2024.
- Fewer respondents saw an increase in in-person volunteering over the previous year: 52% of companies emphasized it in 2025, down from 59% last year.
- Volunteer-related incentives dropped 9 percent, with only 24% offering new or additional incentives in 2025 compared to 33% in 2024.
- Individual volunteer opportunities are on the rise, jumping from 26% to 37%, as companies adapt to more flexible, personalized engagement options.

## In what ways has volunteerism changed in your company in the past 12 months?



## Companies are shifting priority issue areas

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Companies are recalibrating their community investments to focus on issue areas that are more closely aligned with their business strategy and less controversial.

This year, the top issue areas for community investment were workforce development (43%), K-12 education (43%), and food insecurity (43%). In 2024, the top three issue areas were environmental sustainability (50%), job training and workforce development (50%), and K-12 education (47%).

Issue areas that saw increases compared to the previous year included Healthcare (39% up from 24% in 2024), Community Revitalization (36% up from 34% in 2024), STEM Education (35% up from 32% in 2024), Disaster relief (34% up from 32% in 2024).

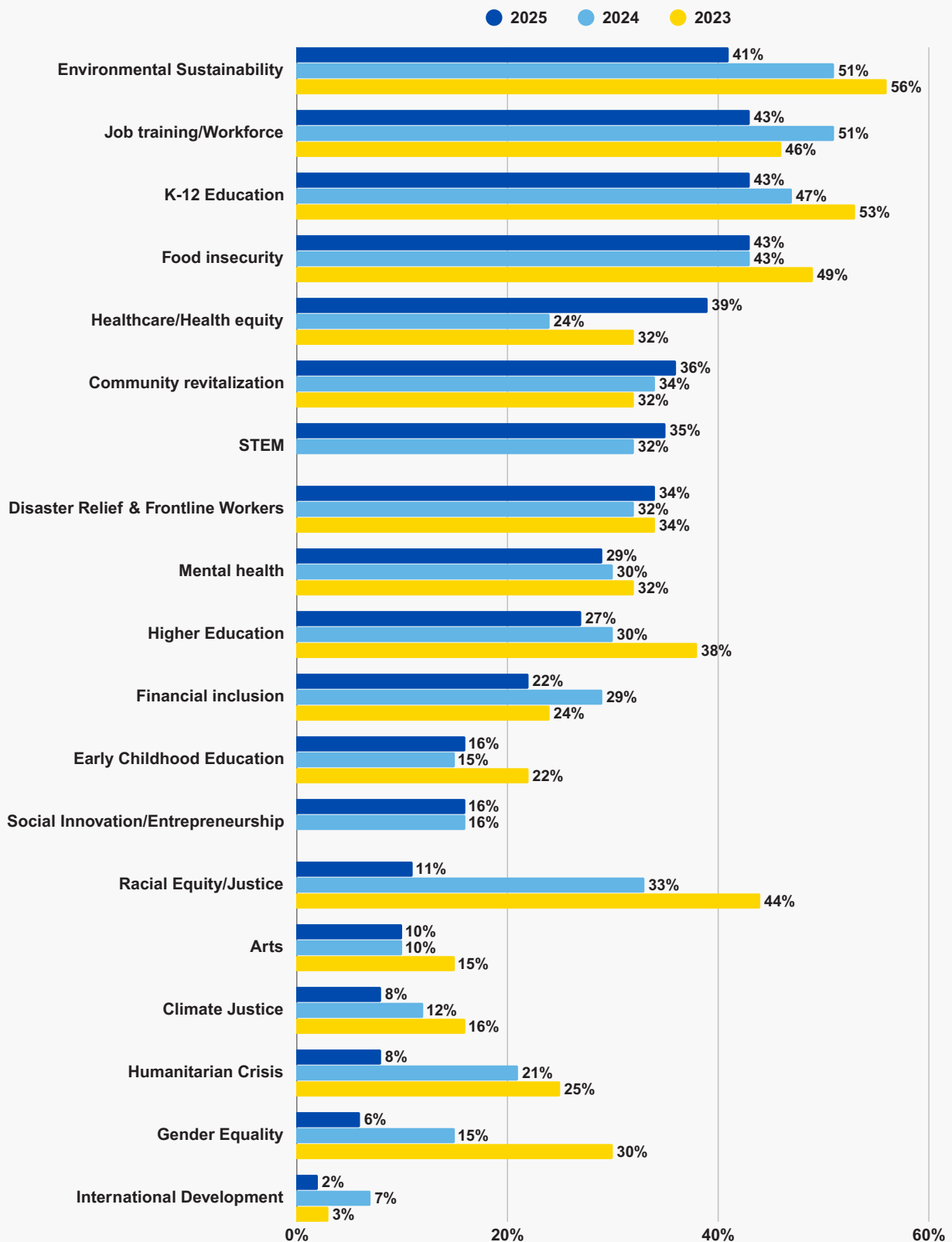
Issue areas that saw a significant decline included:

- Racial Equity/Justice: 11% in 2025 (down from 33% in 2024)
- Environmental Sustainability: 41% in 2025 (down from 51% in 2024)
- Humanitarian Crises: 8% in 2025 (down from 21% in 2024)
- Gender Equality/LGBTQ+ Rights: 6% in 2025 (down from 15% in 2024).

The decline in more politically charged issue areas and the uptick in issue areas with clearer ties to business functions (like workforce development, technology, and local community support) illustrates a strategic shift in response to stakeholder scrutiny and reputational risk management. Companies may still be addressing issues like racial equity but in a different way – for instance, through the lens of programs like workforce development.



## Which of the following social issues are priorities for your company this year?



# Corporate Grantmaking Trends Mirror Changes In Other Areas of CSR

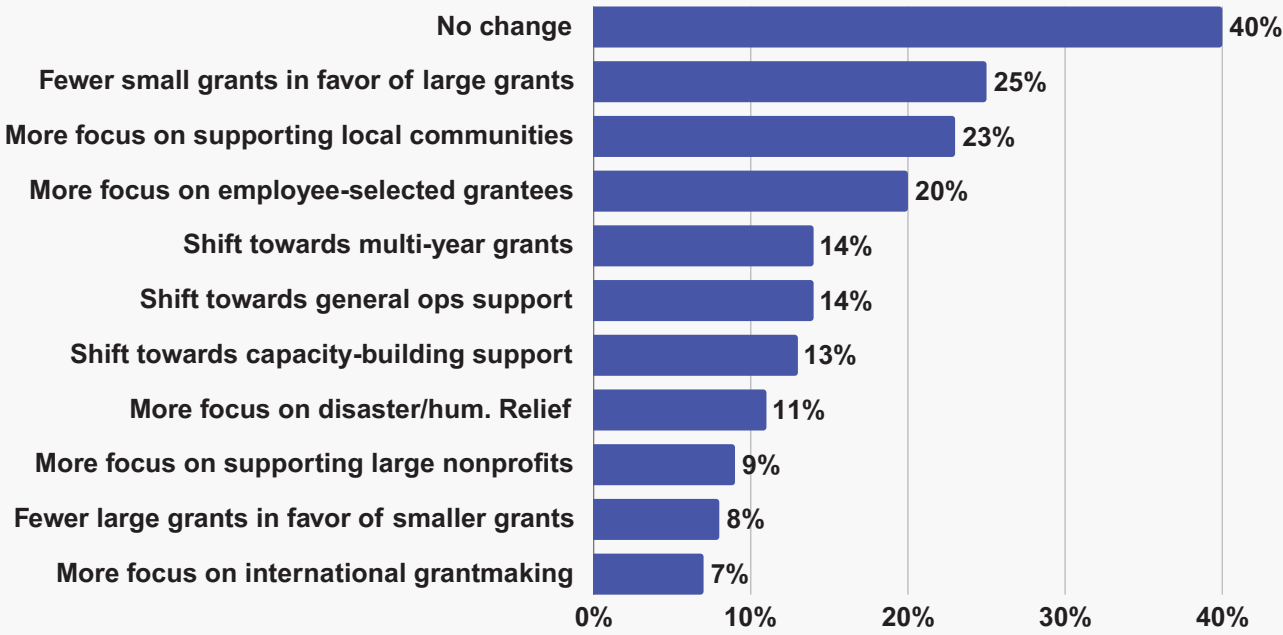
This year’s corporate grantmaking data shows an evolution of approaches consistent with the desire to report impact and focus on employee engagement, with 60% of companies reporting at least one shift in how they structure or prioritize funding. While 40% of respondents indicated no change, the remaining majority indicated shifts:

- 25% are moving away from small grants in favor of larger, more strategic ones.
- 23% report increased focus on local community support, suggesting more substantial alignment with place-based impact strategies. Interestingly, 50% of respondents from the Manufacturing sector indicated this same increased focus on place-based strategies, perhaps due to the importance of company reputation in their communities and their commitment to environmental and workforce issues.
- 20% say they’re prioritizing employee-selected grantees, reinforcing the role of employee voice in social impact decision-making.

Other emerging shifts include a pivot toward multi-year funding (14%), general operating support (14%), and capacity-building support (13%) - all signals of deeper and more trust-based approaches with their nonprofit partnerships.

These trends indicate an emphasis on fewer, more impactful partnerships tailored to internal priorities and external needs—particularly local and employee-driven giving initiatives.

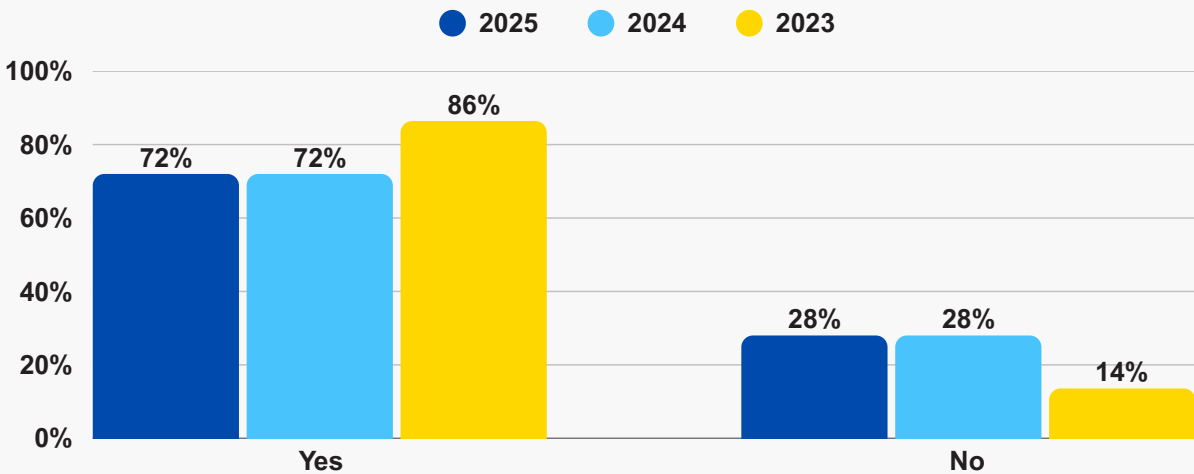
**In what ways has grantmaking changed in your company in the past 12 months?**



# CSR Teams Continue To Take On More Responsibility

Corporate social impact teams continue to be asked to do more—with 72% of respondents reporting an expanded scope of work in 2025. This is consistent with 2024 levels (also 72%) and 2023 levels (86%), suggesting a sustained trend toward greater expectations for corporate social impact teams.

## Has your team taken on more responsibility this year?

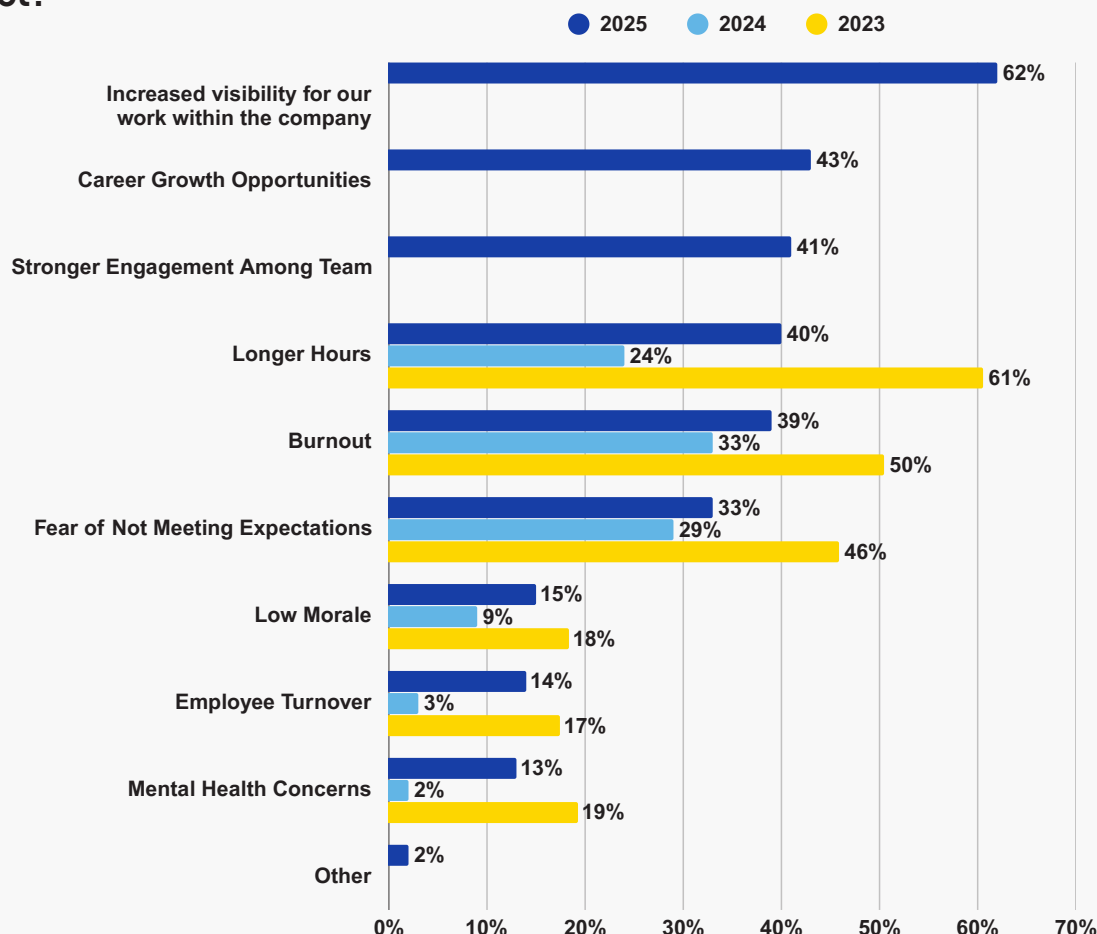


For those practitioners who are experiencing this increased workload, they are also seeing tangible benefits:

- 62% say the visibility of corporate social impact has increased within their company.
- 43% report more opportunities for career growth.
- 41% note improved team engagement and morale.
- 14% flagged increased employee turnover, which is up from 3% in 2024
- Notably, while 39% did report burnout, it is slightly down from 43% in 2024.

These findings tell a nuanced story: while CSR professionals are carrying more weight, many are also gaining recognition, influence, and internal support as their roles grow. It’s a signal to leaders that investing in their social impact teams pays dividends—both in morale and strategic value.

## If your team has taken on more responsibility, what has been the biggest impact?



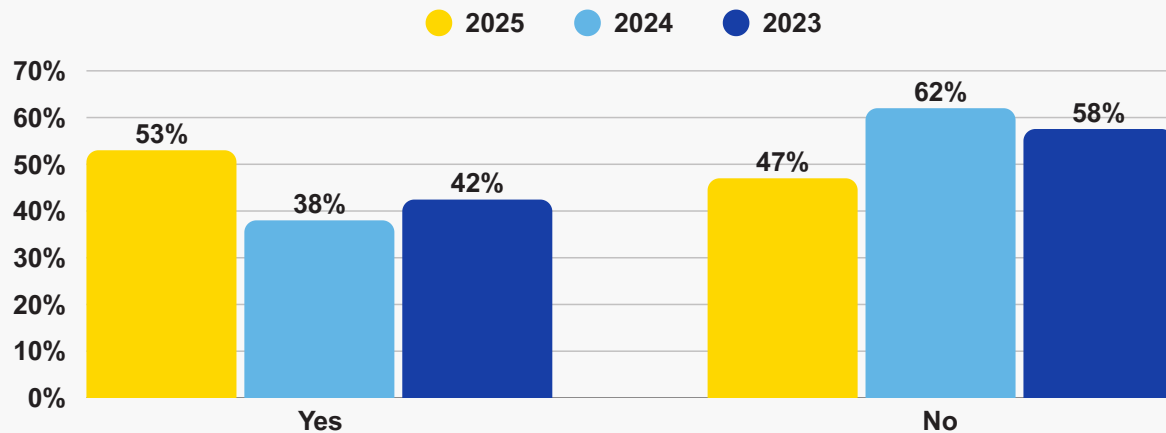
## A Majority Believes They Have The Resources Needed To Meet The Moment

This year, 53% of corporate social impact professionals report that their team has the necessary resources—staff, budget, and expertise—to meet demands and expectations. This marks a significant 15% increase from 38% in 2024 and an 11% rise from 42% in 2023.

Conversely, only 47% report lacking sufficient resources this year, a sharp decline from 62% in 2024 and 58% in 2023. However, 23% of respondents in the Manufacturing sector reported a lack of resources.

While nearly half of teams still feel under-resourced, this is the first time in three years that a majority feel equipped to meet expectations, suggesting that strategic investments, operational adjustments, or more focused priorities are helping to close the gap. This shift is a positive sign of resilience and adaptation in the field.

### Do you believe your team has the resources (staff, budget and expertise) to meet demands/expectations?



## Top Resources Needed Stayed Consistent – with a Few Exceptions

Among corporate social impact professionals who say they lack the resources to meet expectations, the top needs in 2025 remain consistent—but some notable shifts have emerged.

### Most Cited Needs (2025):

- More headcount – 55% (down from 67% in 2024 and 58% in 2023)
- More financial resources to invest in community and priority issues – 41% (down from 48% in 2024)
- More focus or buy-in from executive leadership – 36% (a 10% drop from 46% in 2023)

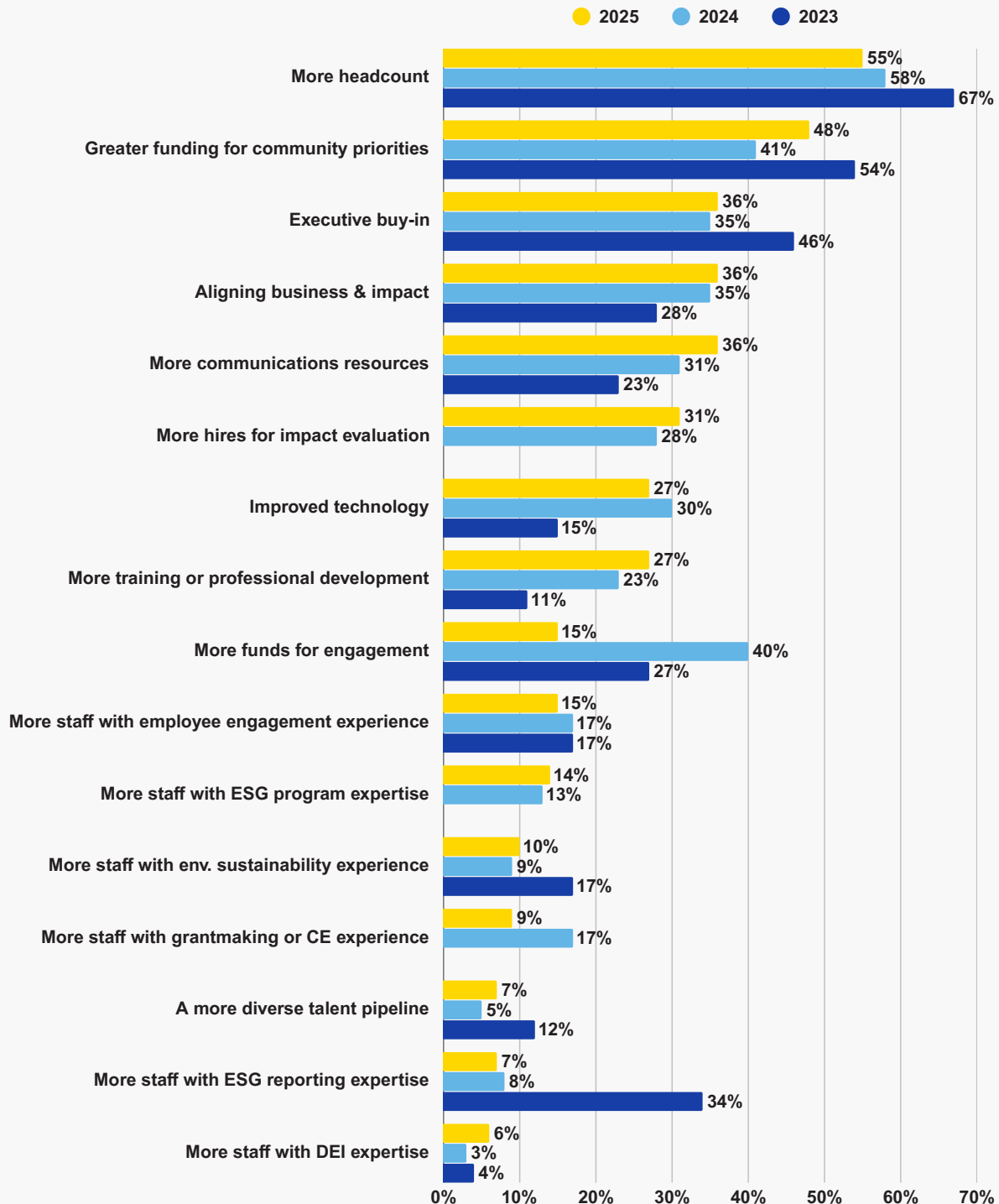
This downward trend suggests companies may be making incremental progress in addressing resource gaps, particularly staffing. However, executive alignment remains a significant barrier.

### Additional 2025 Insights:

- Improved technology needs rose to 27%, up from 15% in 2024—reinforcing the growing role of digital tools and AI in CSR work.
- Communications resources and impact measurement expertise each hold steady (31%), pointing to continued challenges around storytelling and proving value.
- Needs related to employee engagement (15%) and training/development (27%) saw declines compared to 2024, indicating a potential shift in focus toward systems-level needs like alignment, funding, and tech.

While foundational needs, such as headcount and funding, remain, the growing emphasis on technology and communications suggests that corporate social impact leaders are seeking to modernize their operations and the communication of impact. The year-over-year improvements suggest some progress—but significant resource constraints persist.

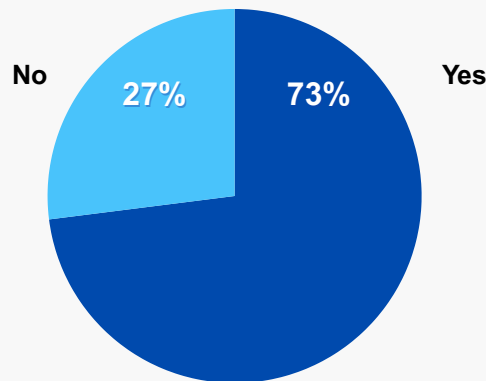
## What resources are needed to meet demands/expectations?



## A Growing Number of CSR Teams Are Using AI

73% of teams now report using AI tools in some capacity – up from 53% in 2024.

**Have you and your team started to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to support your work?**



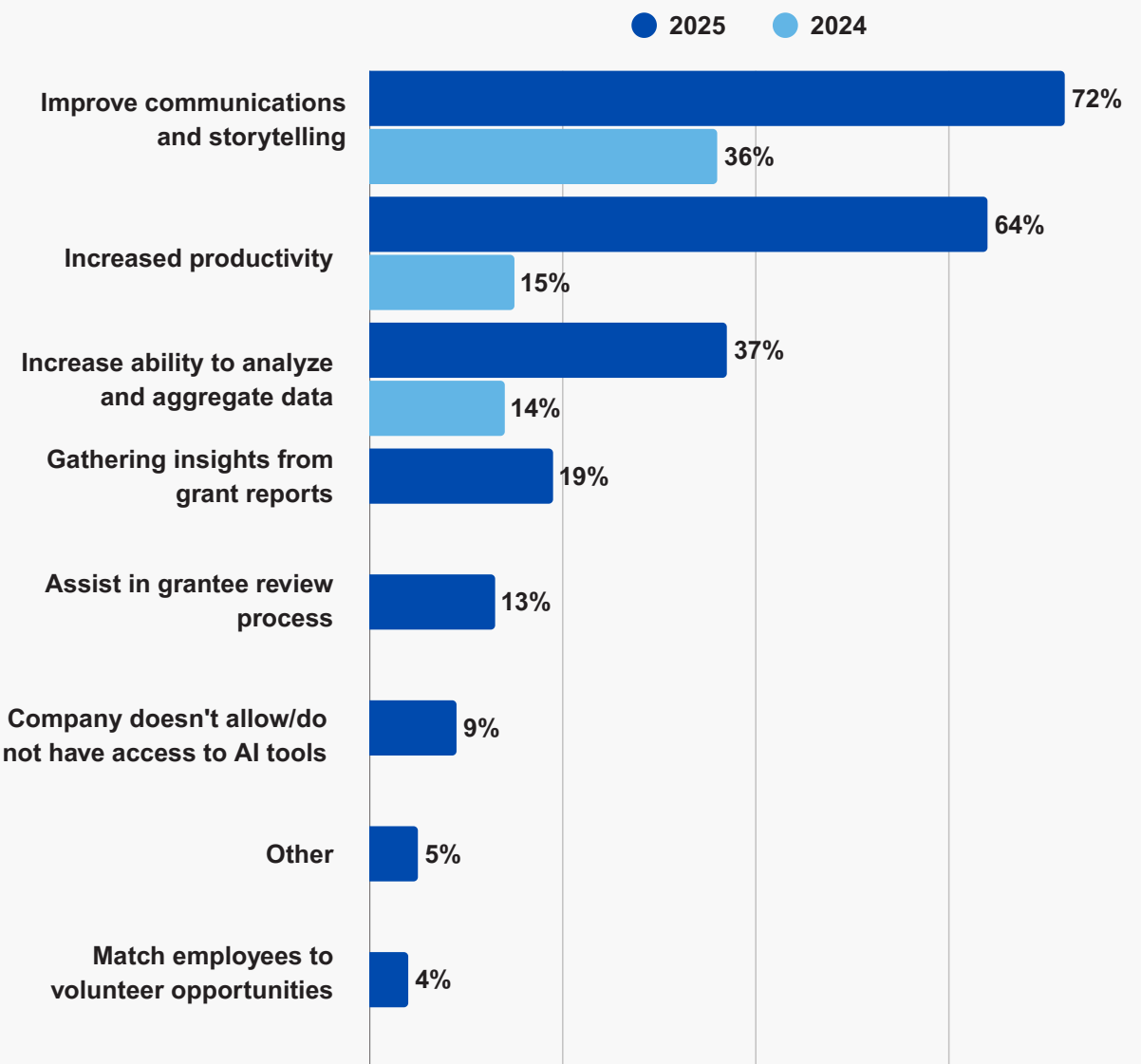
## Teams are Using AI in Various Ways for Their Work

Corporate social impact teams are increasingly integrating artificial intelligence into their day-to-day work, moving beyond exploration into real application:

- Productivity gains are leading the way, with AI use for increasing efficiency rising from 15% in 2024 to 64% in 2025.
- Storytelling and communications applications—such as drafting reports, social content, or messaging—jumped from 36% in 2024 to 72%.
- Data analysis and aggregation also saw notable growth, increasing from 14% in 2024 to 37%, allowing teams to assess impact better and streamline reporting.
- Meanwhile, 43% of teams have either implemented or are actively exploring new technology platforms, consistent with the 44% who reported the same in 2024.

These numbers confirm that AI is becoming an essential, embedded part of how corporate social impact teams improve performance, enhance storytelling, and scale their impact.

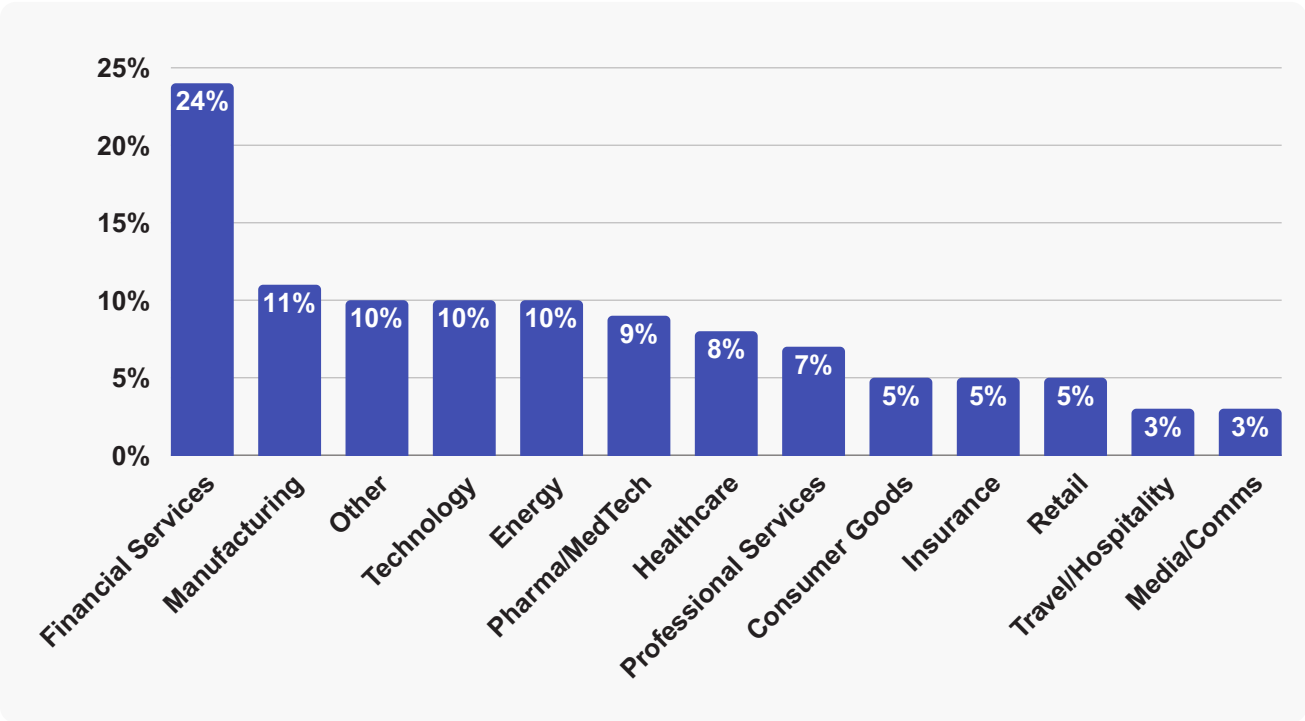
How are you and your team currently using AI technology tools to help with your work? (Choose all that apply)



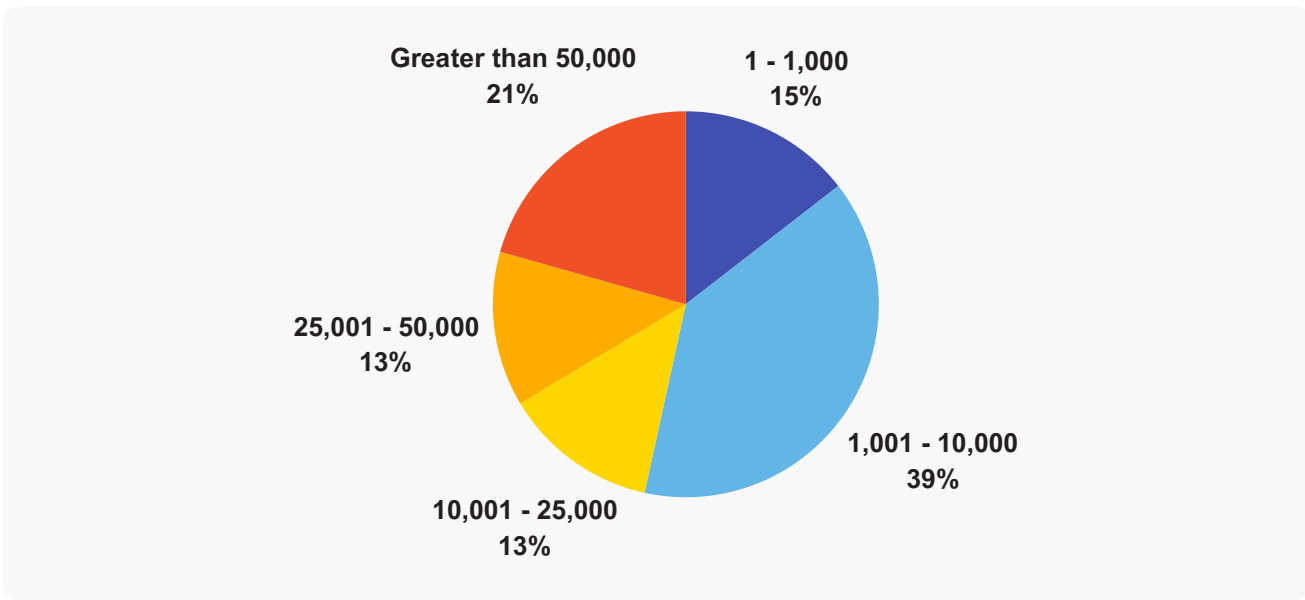


# RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

## Industries Represented

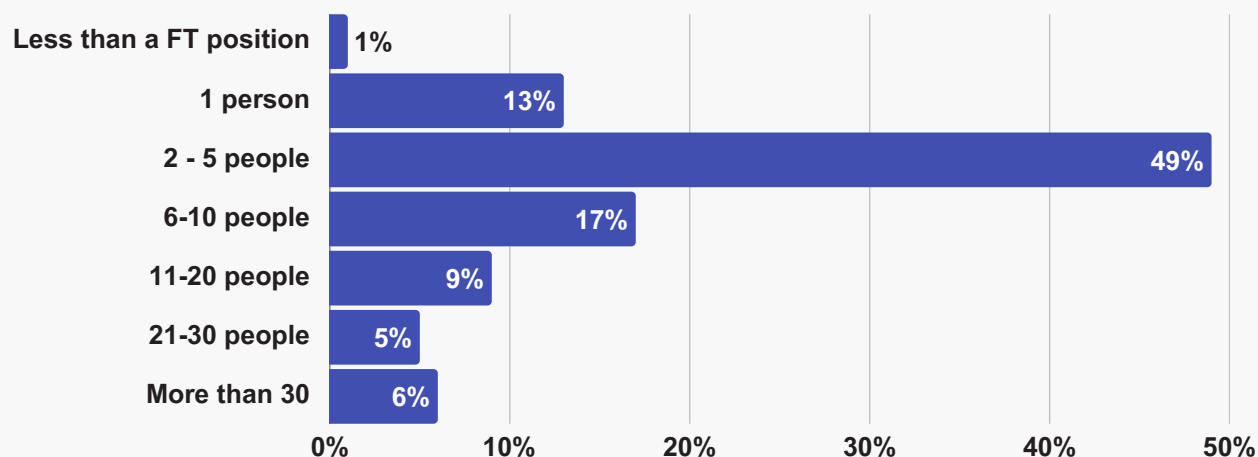


## Company Size by Number of Employees



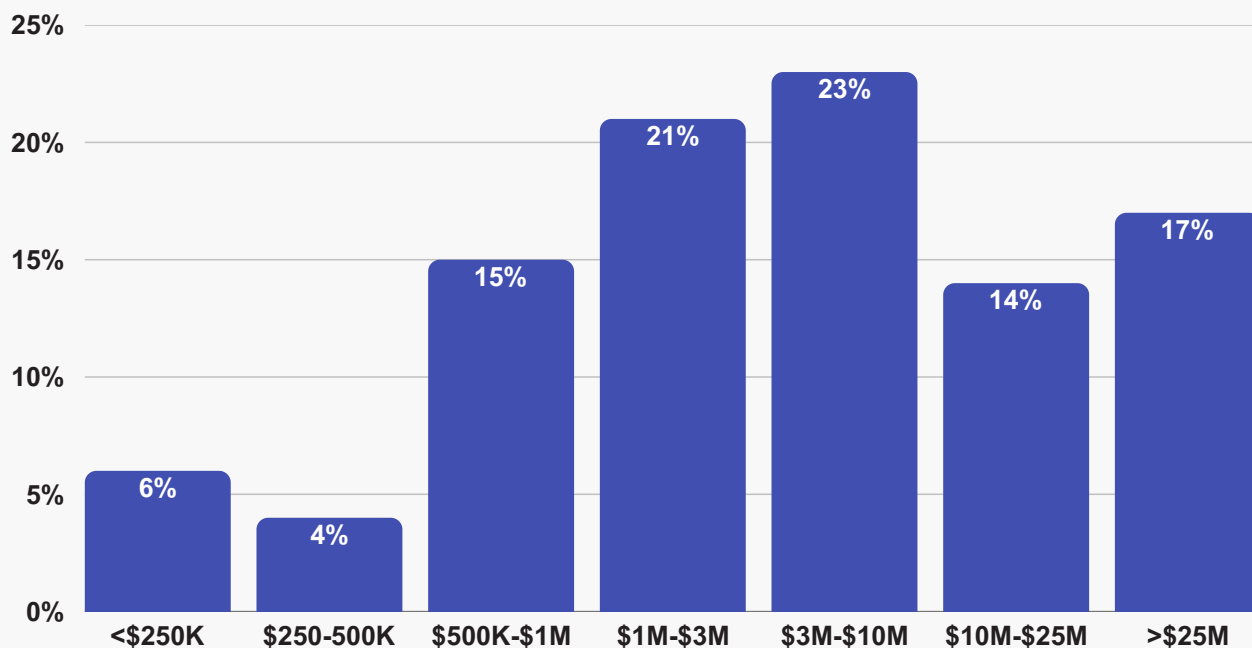
## Team Size

### How big is your team? (including foundation employees)



## Size of Grant Budget

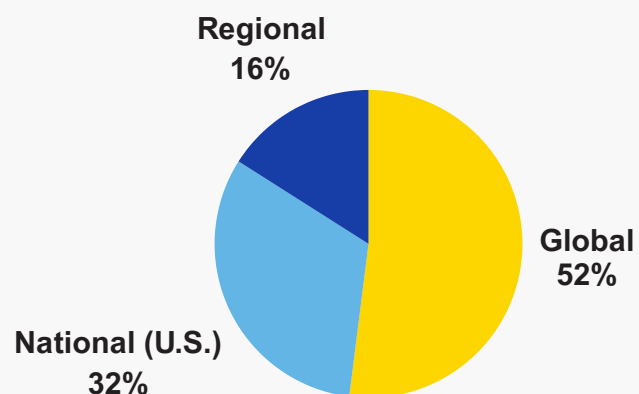
### What is your annual budget for grants and community investments? (excluding in-kind or product donations)



## Geographic Footprint

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**Describe your company's footprint**





### **Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals (ACCP)**

The Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals (ACCP) is the preeminent membership organization advancing the practice of corporate social impact. ACCP increases the effectiveness of CSR & ESG professionals and their companies by sharing knowledge, fostering solutions, and cultivating inclusive and supportive peer communities. ACCP amplifies the voices of its practitioner network to elevate strategies that work, provide innovative solutions, and expand impact.



### **YourCause from Blackbaud**

YourCause from Blackbaud is the leading global provider of software and related services designed specifically for corporate social responsibility organizations through our CSRconnect and GrantsConnect products. Our products and services enable these organizations to increase donations, employee engagement, and the impact of grant dollars. Blackbaud has focused solely on the philanthropic market since we were established in 1981 and have developed our suite of products and services based upon our extensive knowledge of the operating challenges facing social good organizations.

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