Telling Your Sustainability Story 2.0 Roundtable Series

Session One: The Current State of Corporate Sustainability Messaging & Stakeholder Engagement
February 27, 2025

Telling Your Sustainability Story 2.0

Roundtable Series

Session One: The Current State of Corporate Sustainability Messaging & Stakeholder Engagement

February 27, 2025

- Navigating Washington: Changing Context for Sustainability Storytelling
- Trends in Disclosure, Language, and Terminology
- Stakeholder Influence on Sustainability Communications

Session Two: Deepening Customer and Employee Engagement & Driving Meaningful Behavior Change

March 25, 2025

- Storytelling as a Strategic Tool to Enhance Customer and Employee Engagement
- Storytelling's Role in Helping to Align Efforts with Broader Business Goals
- Ways to Make Sustainability Data Both Credible and Compelling

Program Roadmap For You and Your Team

March 13

Structuring Your Sustainability Team for Greater Impact
Community Call

March 19

International Disclosures and Reporting, Session One:
Building Trust Through Assurance
Roundtable Series

March 25

Telling Your Sustainability Story 2.0, Session Two:
Engagement Strategies
Roundtable Series

April (TBD)

International Disclosures and Reporting, Session Two:
The Role of Digital Solutions in Reporting: Data Collection and Double Materiality Assessments
Roundtable Series

EMAIL JON.Y@TCB.ORG FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION

Changing Context

Trump has declared a 'national energy emergency.' What does that mean?

Trump administration cuts environmental justice programs at EPA, DOJ

Climate Resilience Gaining Momentum as an Environmental Priority

More than 75% of CFOs Expect to Increase or Maintain Sustainability Investment After Trump Election: BDO Survey

Companies boost social and climate reporting amid ESG backlash

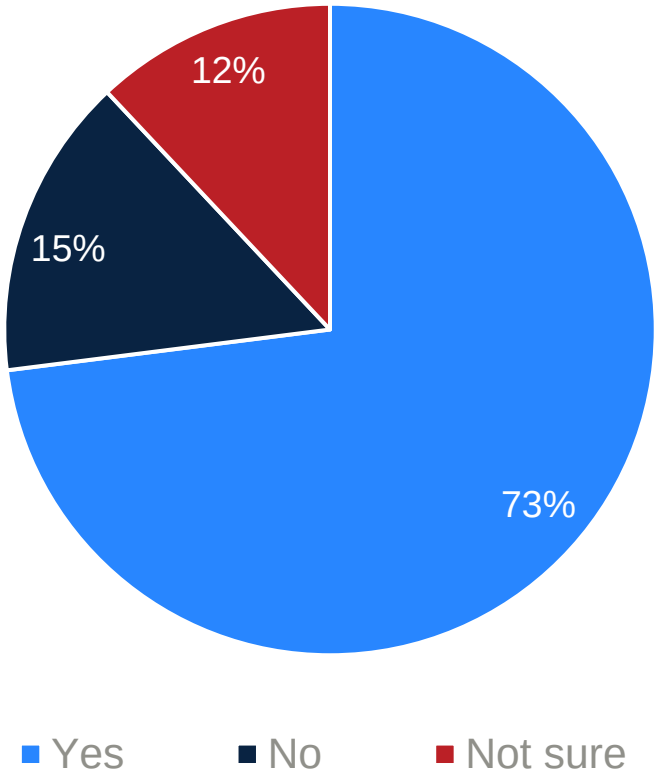
Changing Context

- Brands typically post an average of 5 times per week on Instagram and 2 times per week on TikTok.
- The average number of likes per post on TikTok is about 3,092, while Instagram posts receive approximately 395 likes on average.
- TikTok posts average 66 comments each, representing a 73% increase YoY, Instagram posts average 24 comments, showing a 33% increase YoY.
- Impressions on Instagram have increased by 13% YoY, while impressions on TikTok have remained relatively stable.

Source: 2025 Social Media Benchmarks Report, Social Insider

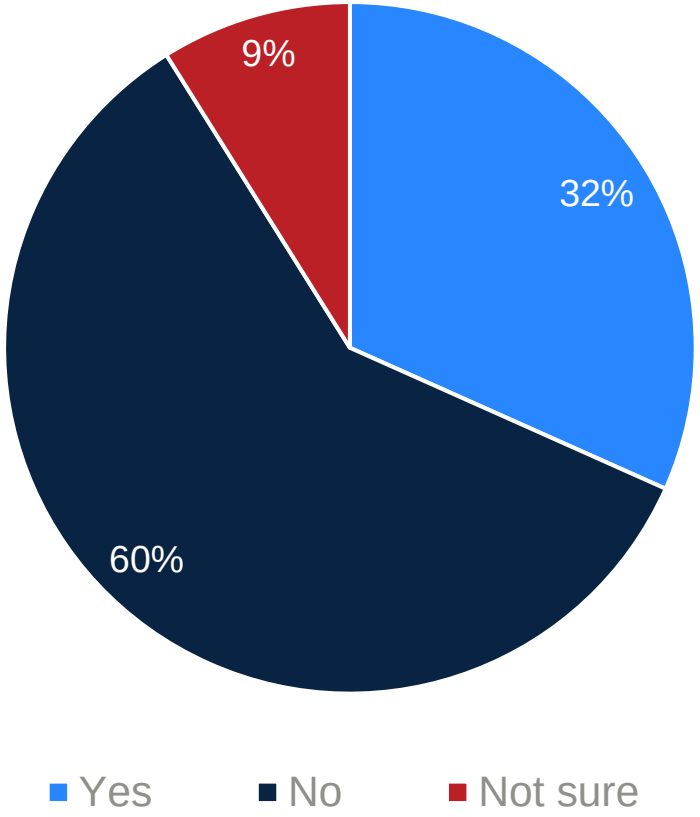
Zoom Poll Question #1

Do you believe your firm has a strong agreed upon definition of ‘sustainability’ internally across the business?



What Members Said in 2020

Do you believe your firm has a strong agreed upon definition of ‘sustainability’ internally across the business?



Defining Corporate Sustainability

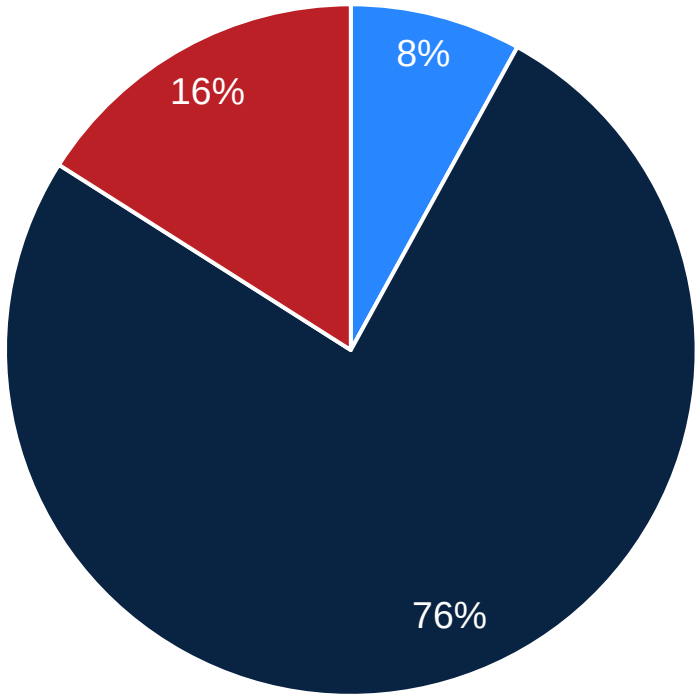
- A review of several definitions of corporate sustainability reveals some common elements:
  - ✓ Integration into business strategy and operations
  - ✓ Inclusion of financial, economic, social, and environmental factors
  - ✓ Addressing multiple stakeholders
  - ✓ Risks and opportunities
  - ✓ Promoting long-term value

- The Conference Board definition takes these elements into consideration:

“Sustainability encompasses the full range of initiatives designed to promote the long-term welfare of a company, its multiple stakeholders, society at large, and the environment.”

Zoom Poll Question #2

Is your firm reevaluating its definition of sustainability based on the policies of the new U.S. administration?



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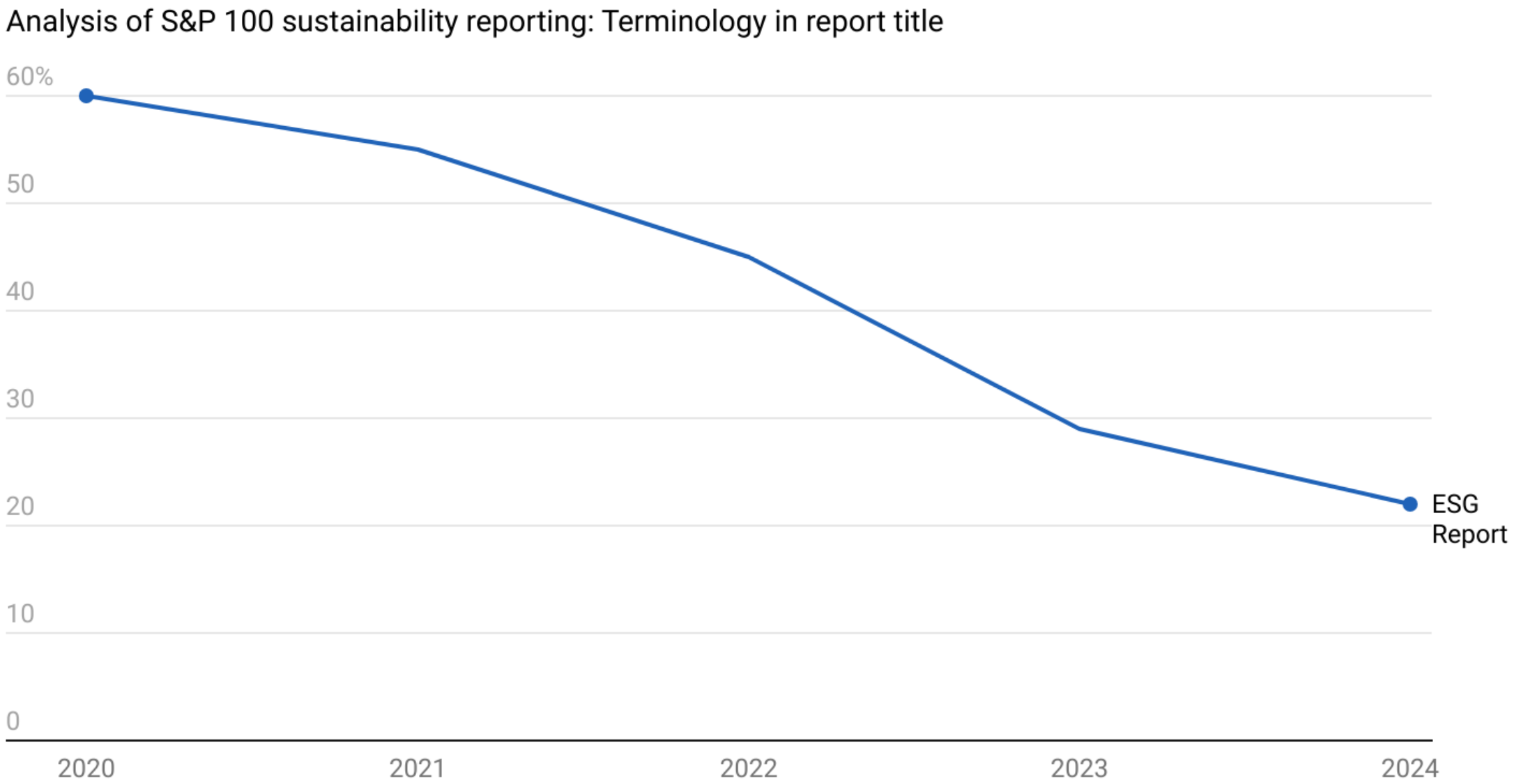
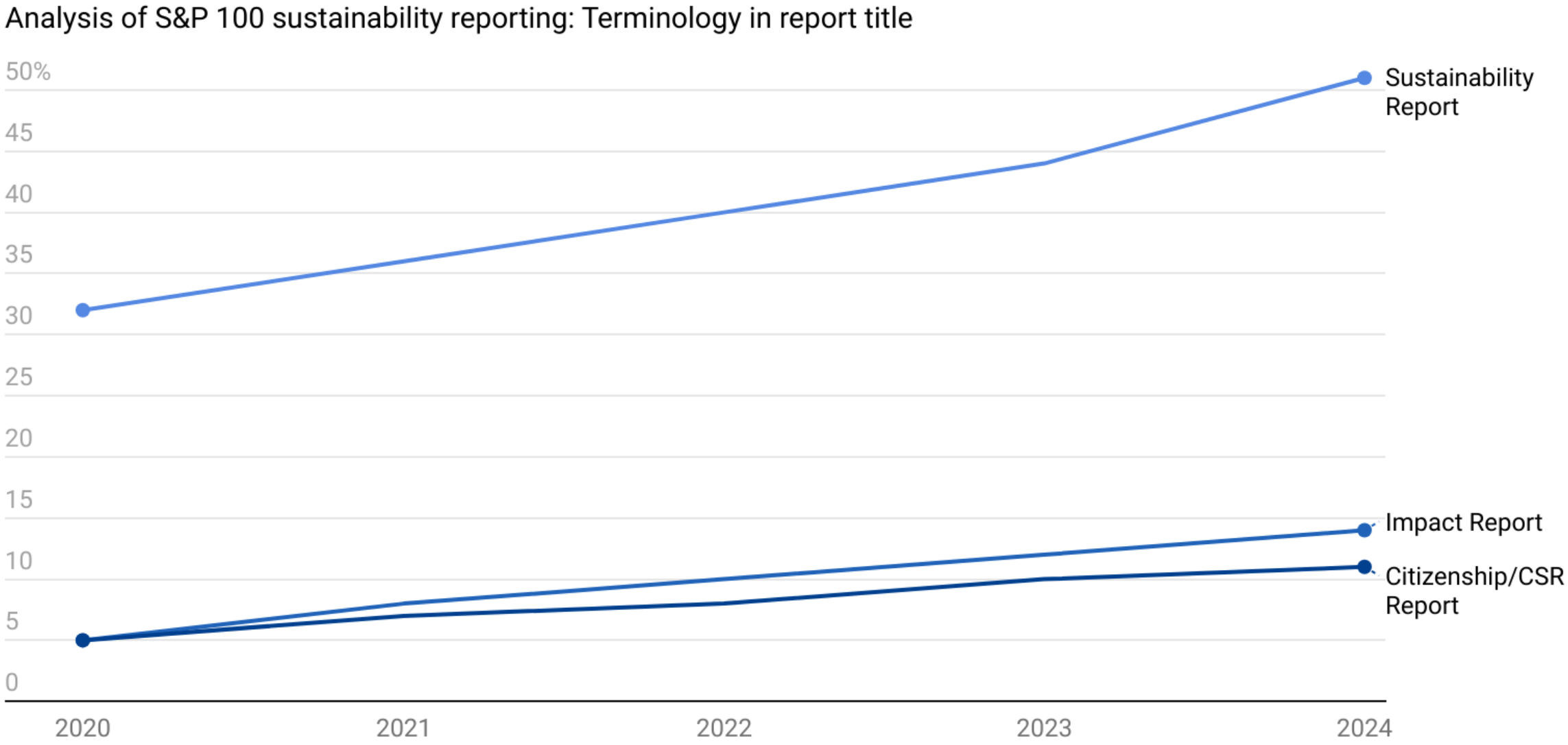
Terminology

Fewer companies are publishing “ESG” reports



Note: Analysis of 96 S&P 100 companies, that issue an annual ESG/sustainability report in PDF format
Source: The Conference Board, 2025

“Sustainability” is the predominant terminology in report titles



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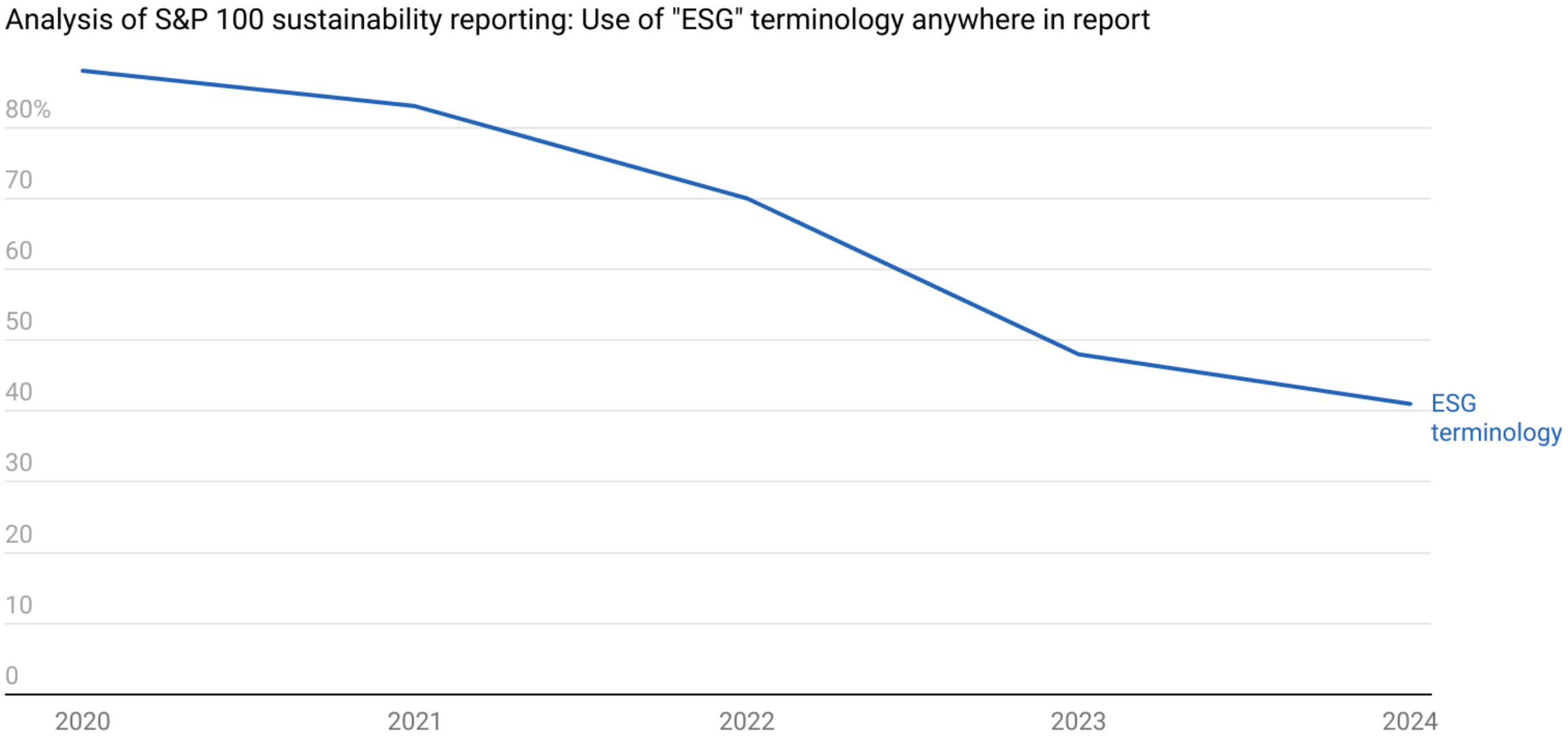
About 40% of S&P 100 firms still use the terminology of “ESG” in some fashion



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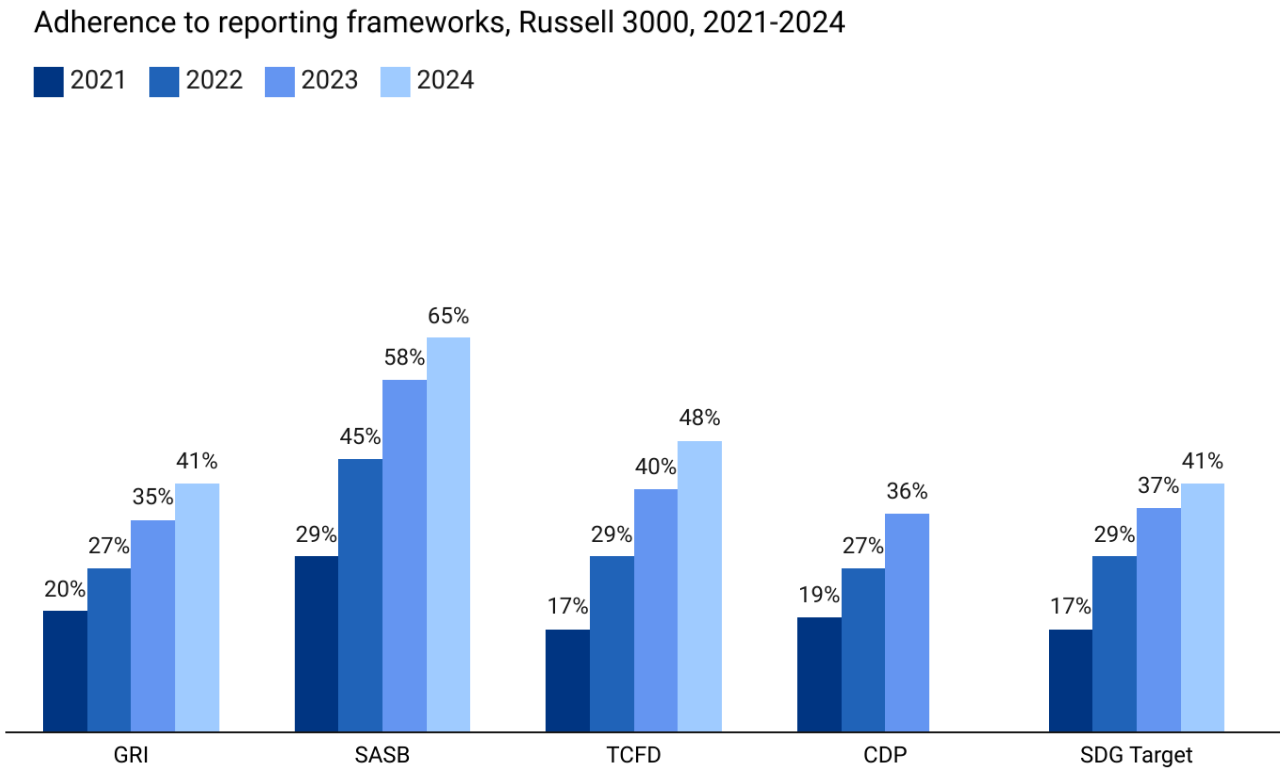
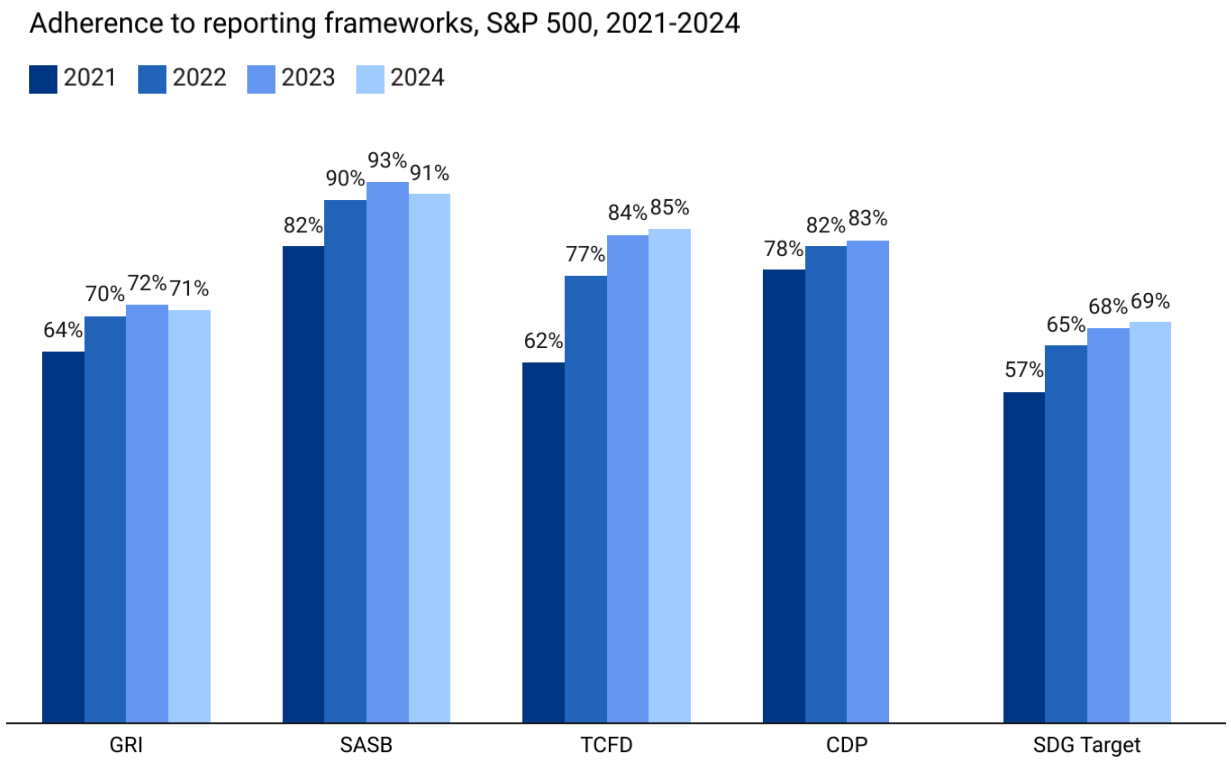
Frameworks and Regulations

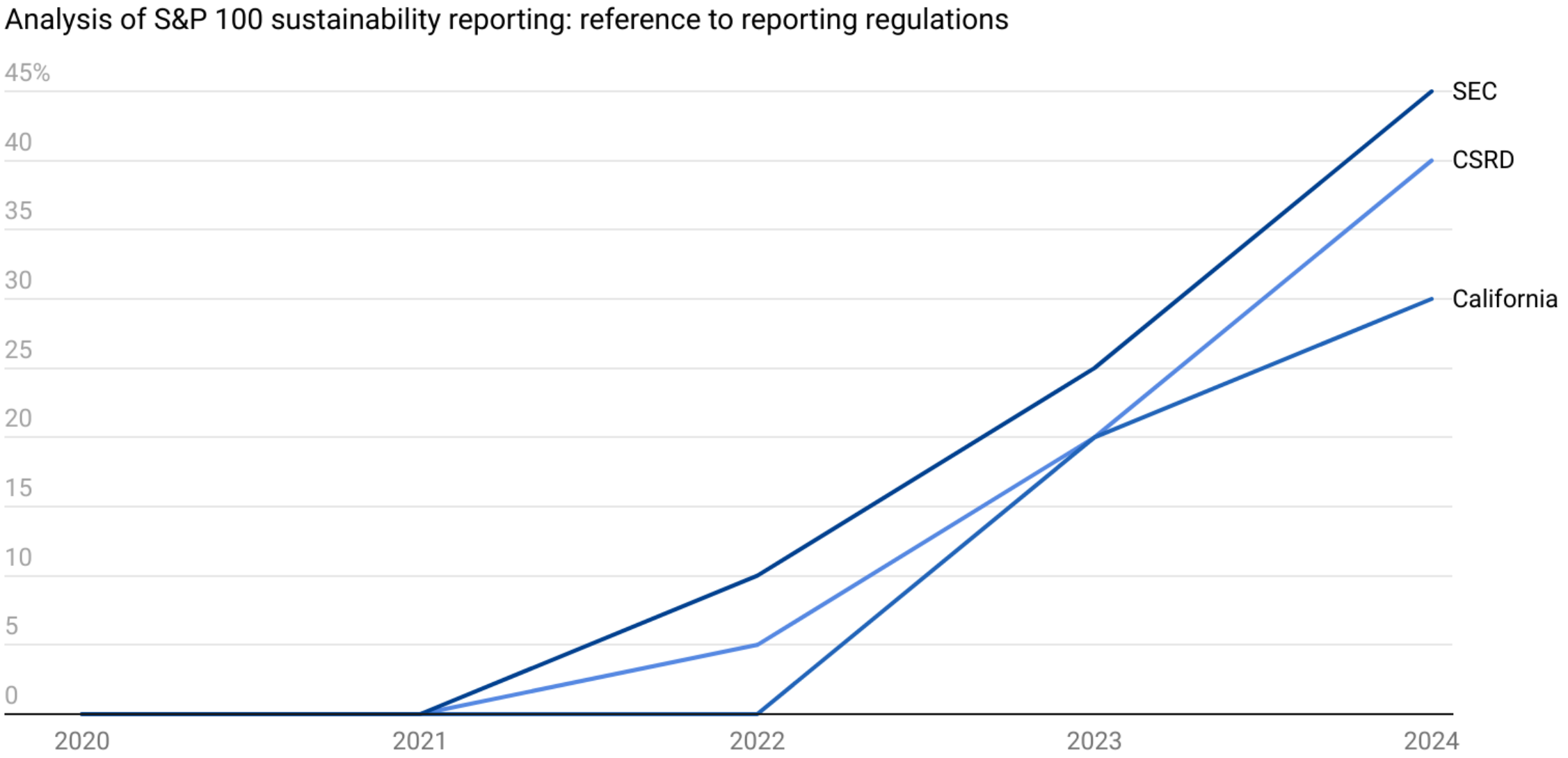
Most US public companies adhere to voluntary reporting frameworks





Source: ESGAUGE/The Conference Board, 2025

References to new or impending disclosure regulations are increasing



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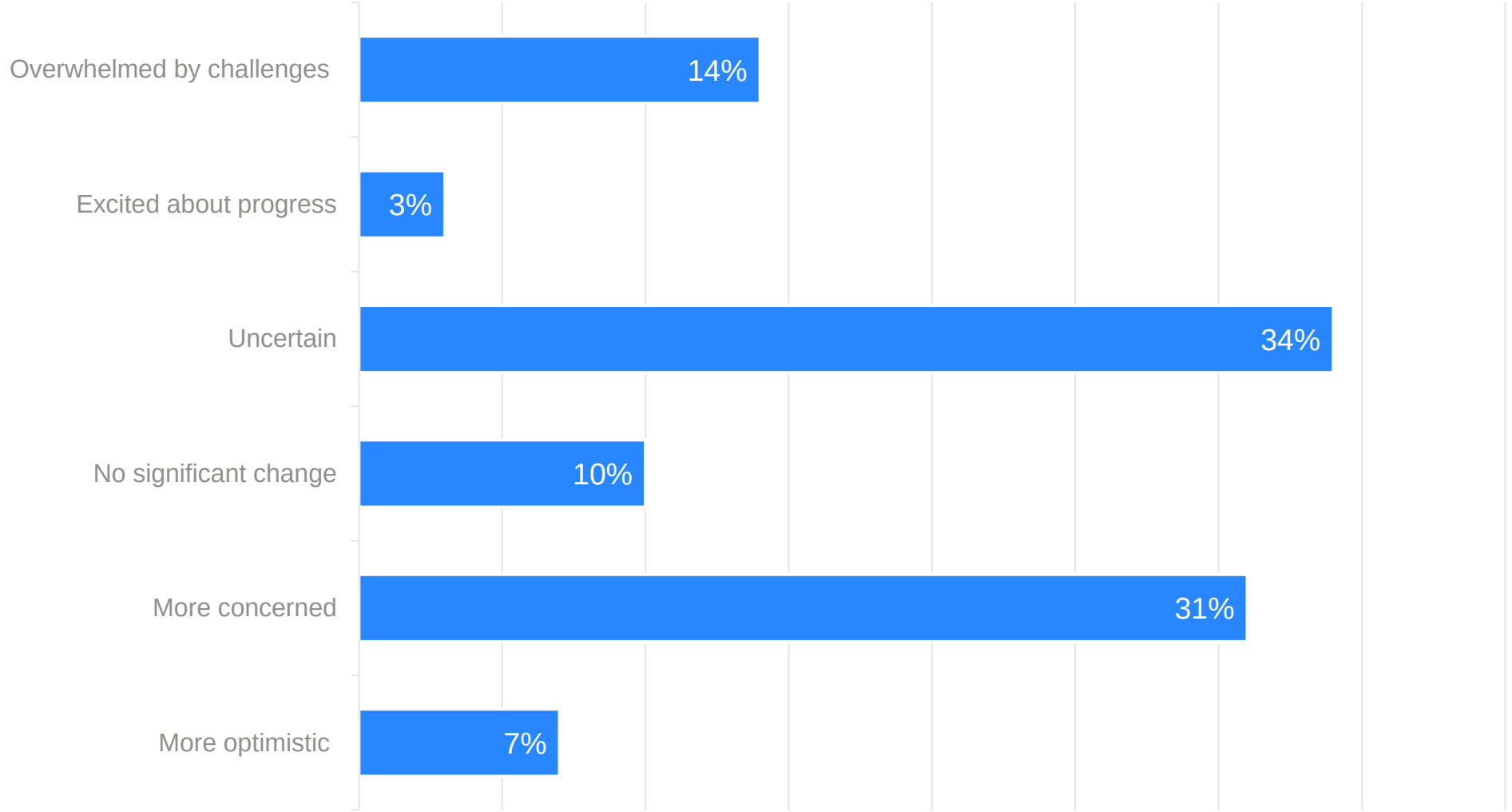
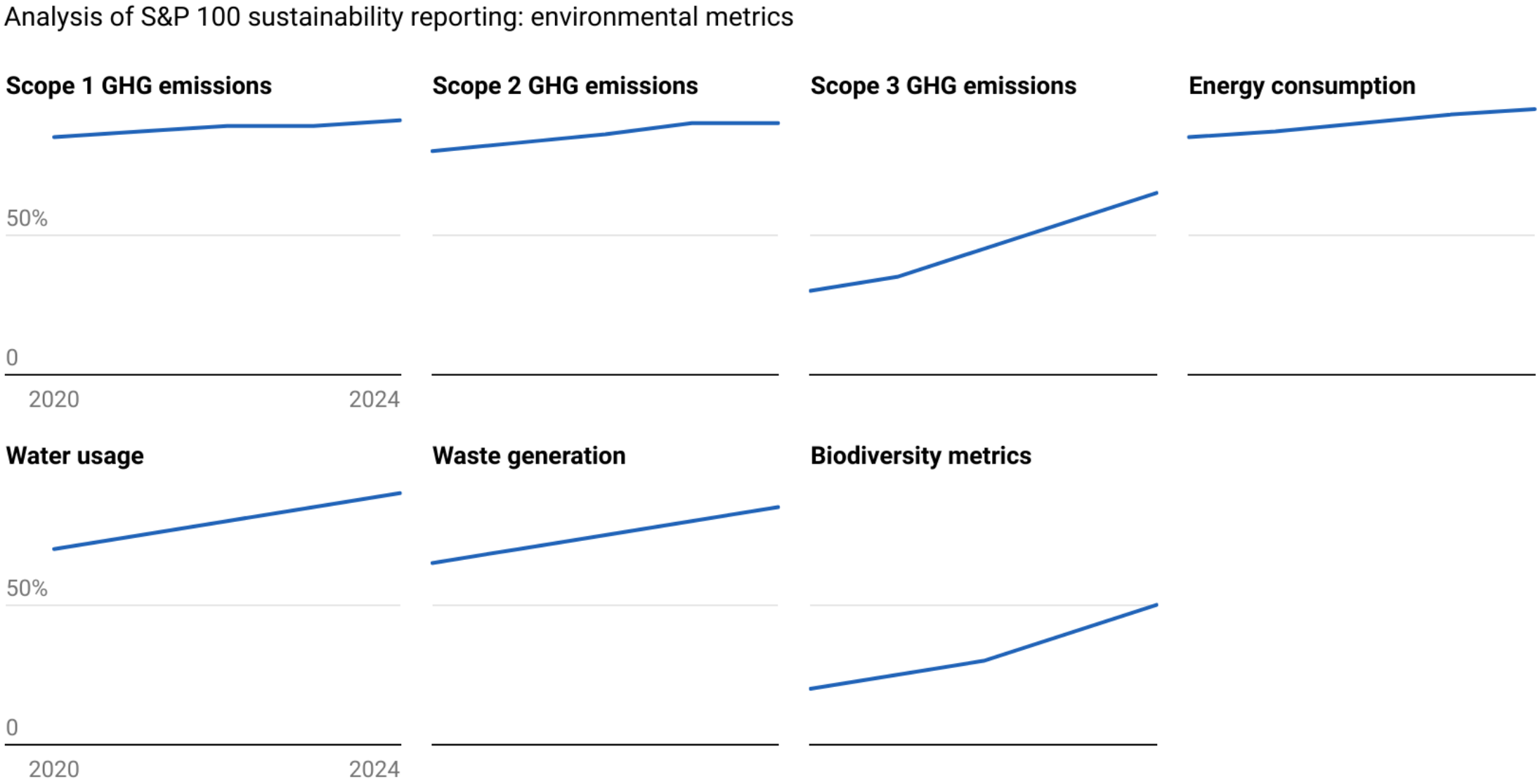
Metrics and Targets

Zoom Poll Question #3

How would you describe your feelings about sustainability reporting compared to last year?



Disclosure of environmental metrics is a common practice



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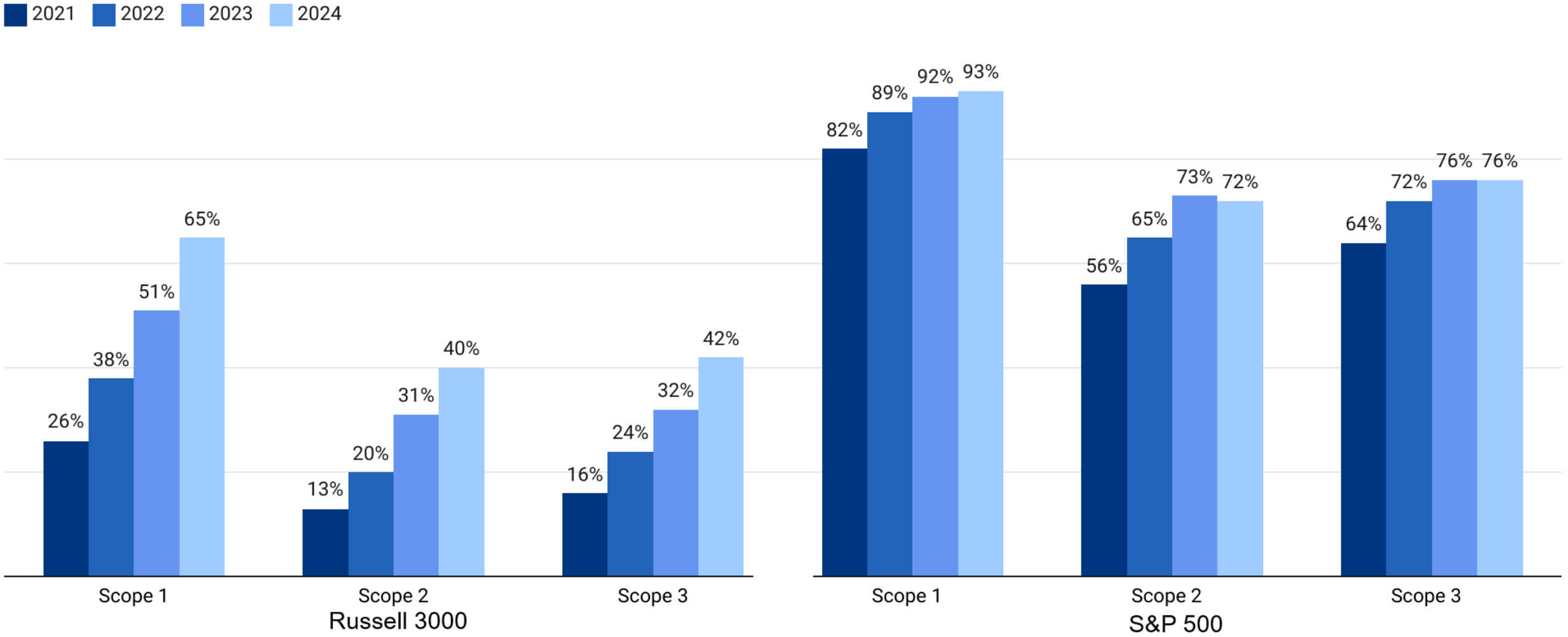
Source: The Conference Board, 2025

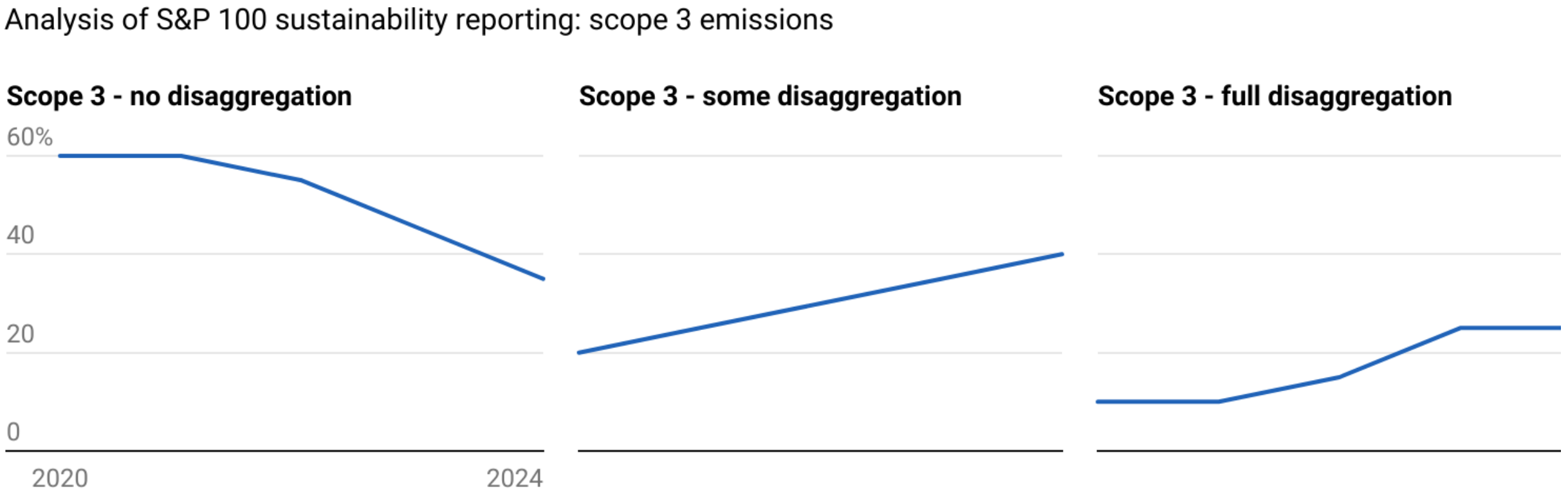
The proportion of companies disclosing GHG emissions has steadily increased

Percentage of companies disclosing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, by scope and index, 2021 – 2024



Source: ESGAUGE/The Conference Board, 2025

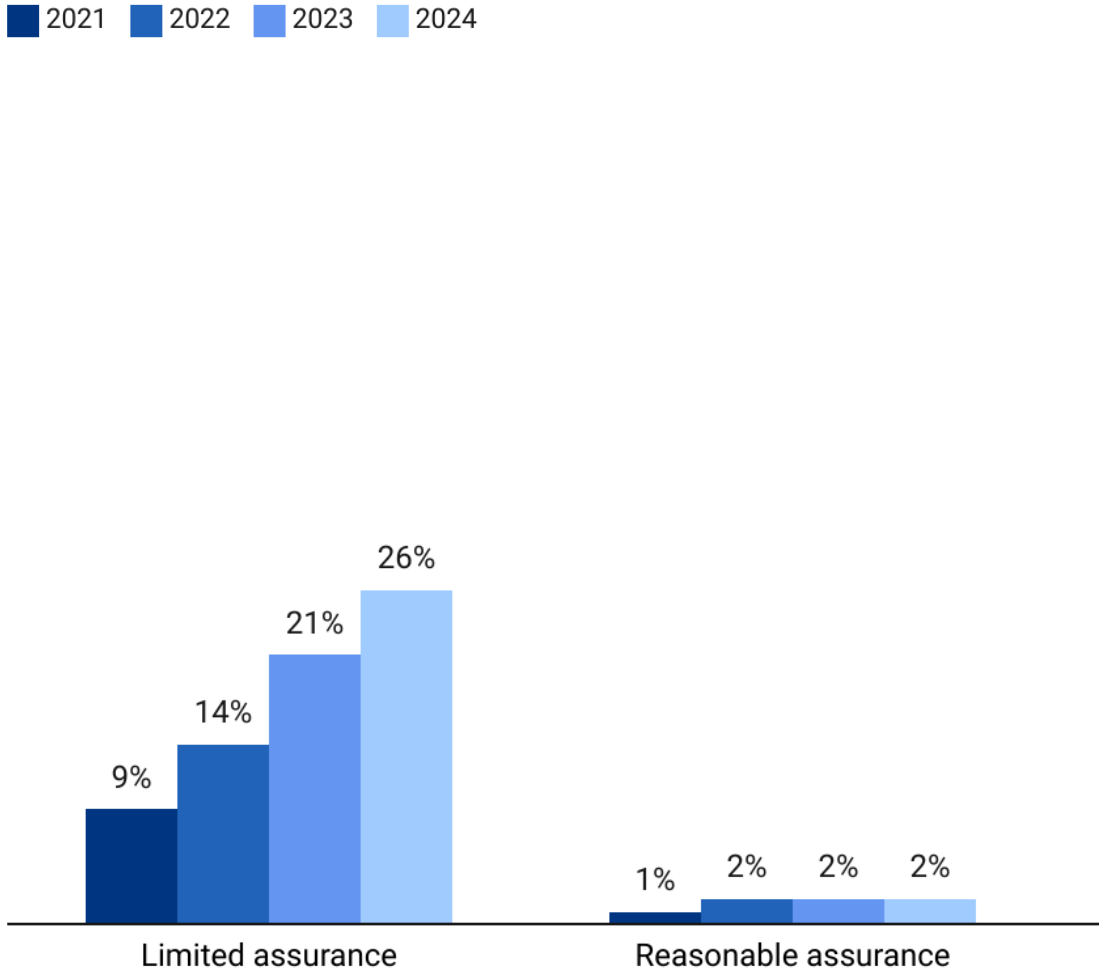
The largest companies are increasingly disaggregating scope 3 into categories



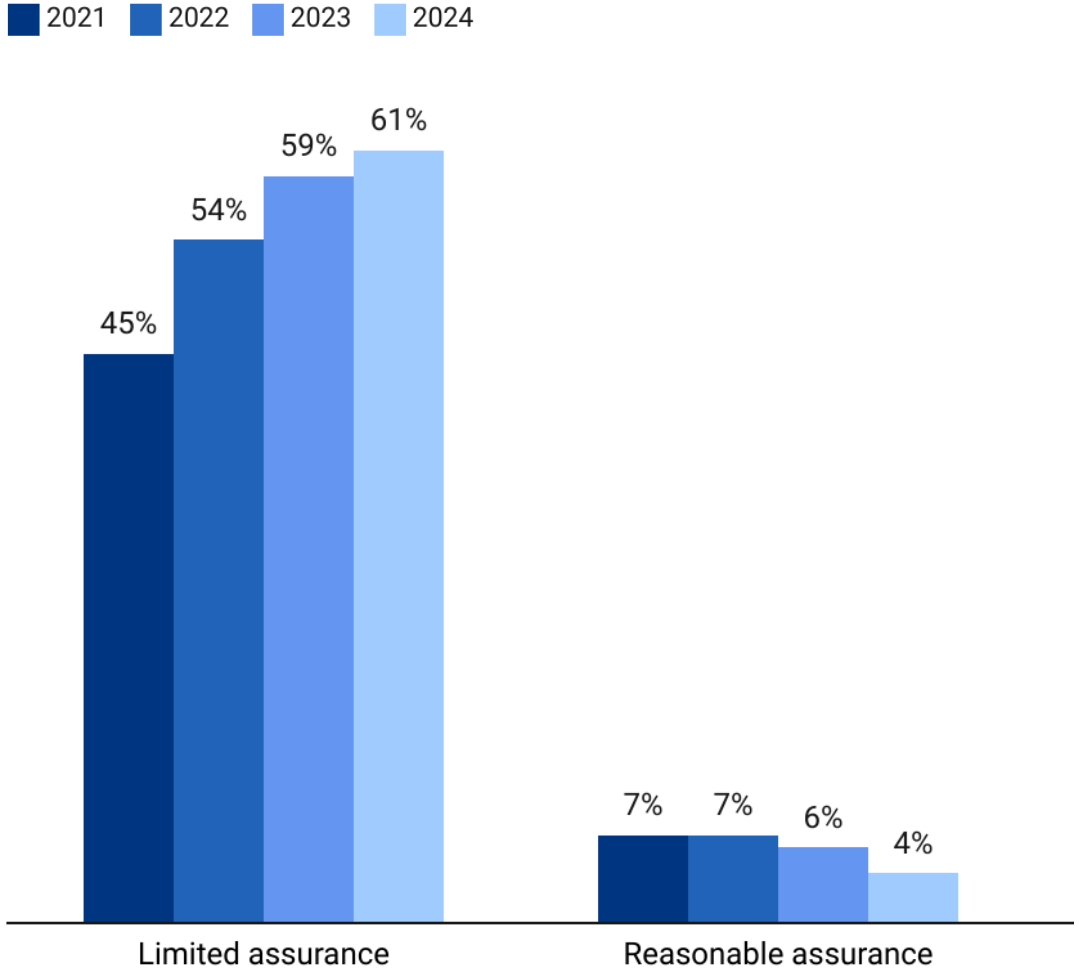
Note: Analysis of 96 S&P 100 companies, that issue an annual ESG/sustainability report in PDF format. Analysis only reflects those companies that disclose scope 3 emissions data.
Source: The Conference Board, 2025

Disclosing external assurance for GHG emissions is on an upward trend

Disclosure of assurance for GHG emissions data, Russell 3000, 2021-2024

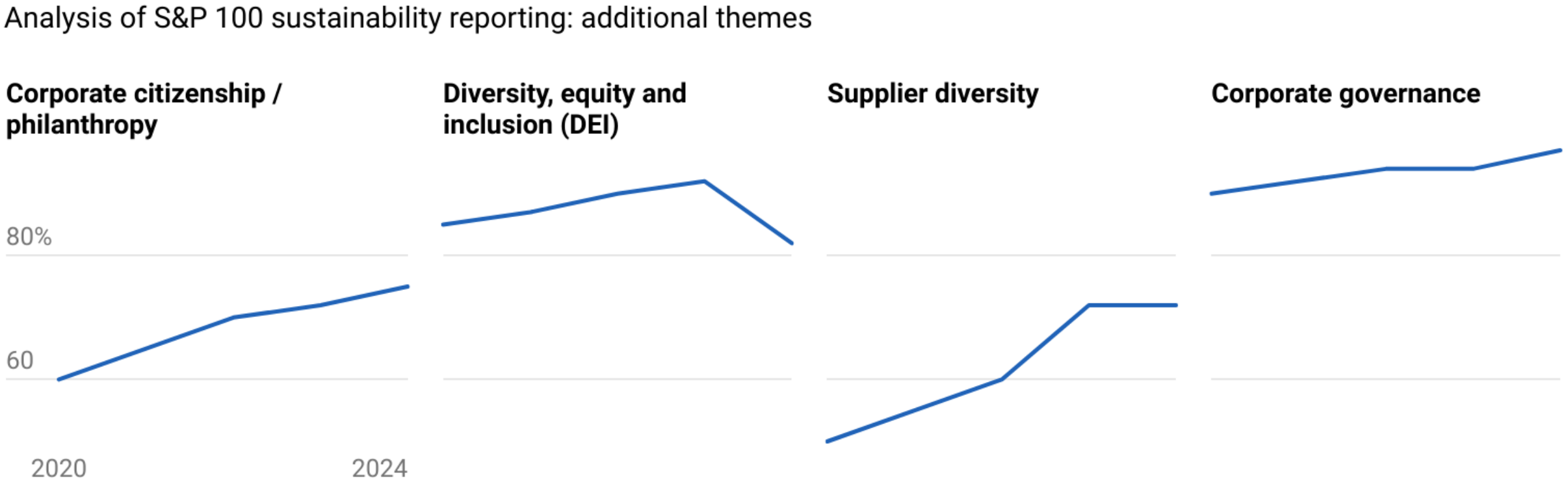


Disclosure of assurance for GHG emissions data, S&P 500, 2021-2024



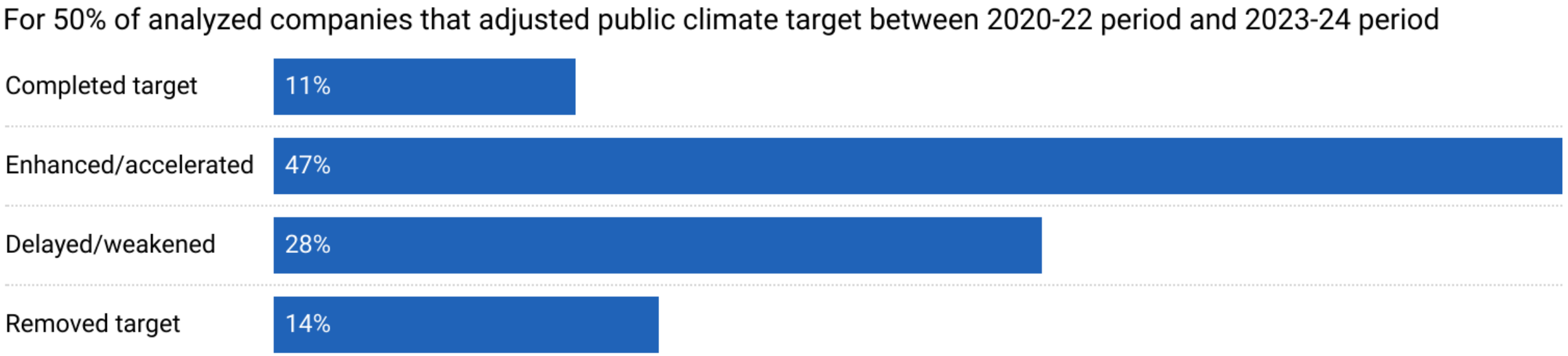
Source: ESGAUGE/The Conference Board, 2025

Inclusion of DEI in sustainability reporting has dropped marginally in 2024



Note: Analysis of 96 S&P 100 companies, that issue an annual ESG/sustainability report in PDF format.
Source: The Conference Board, 2025

50% of S&P 100 companies adjusted public climate targets in 2023 or 2024—although most did so to accelerate or enhance goals



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Source: The Conference Board, 2025

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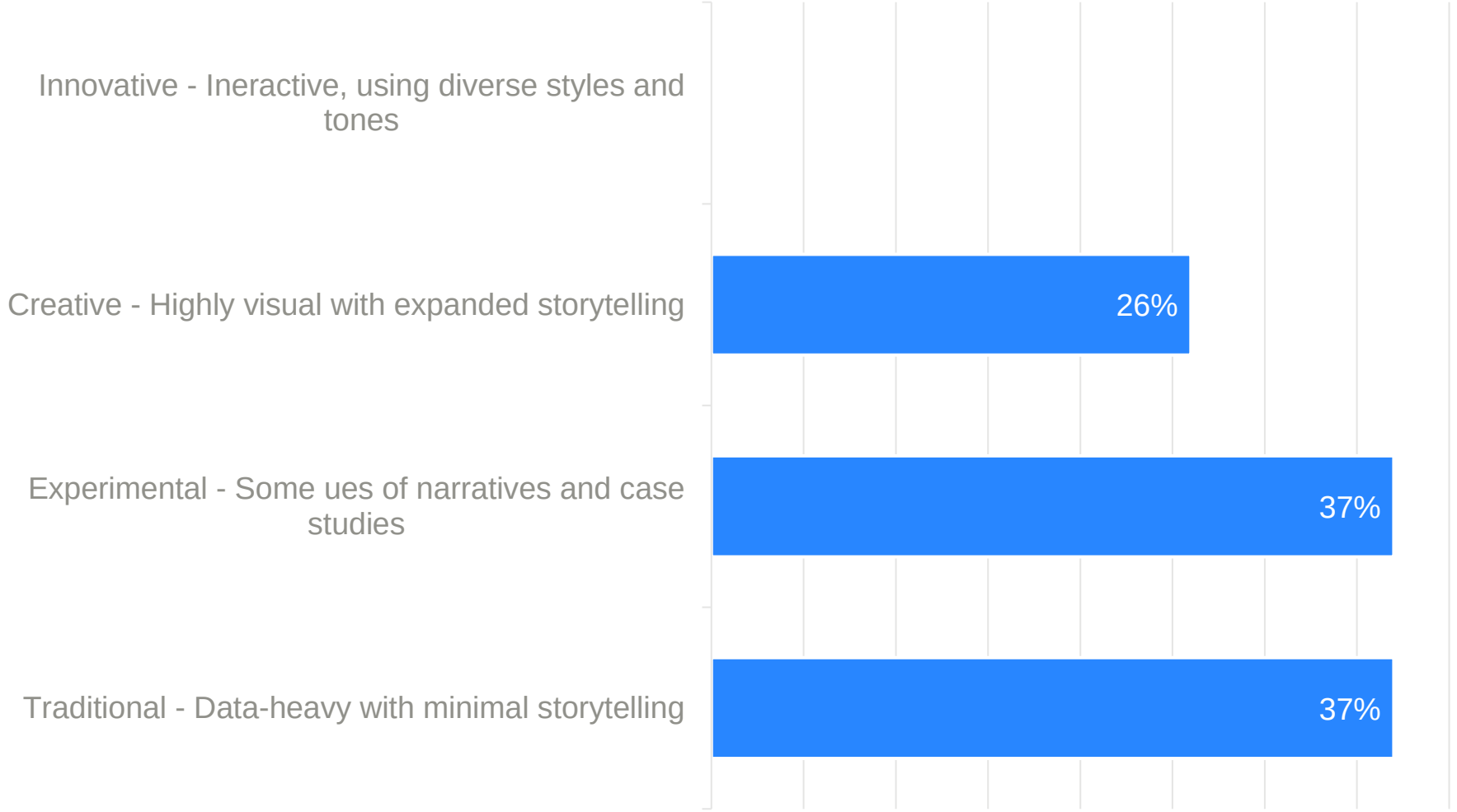
Style and Approaches to Storytelling

Zoom Poll Question #4

How would you describe your firm's current approach to storytelling in reporting, ranging from traditional to more innovative styles?



Approaches to sustainability reporting and storytelling have evolved over time

Year	Overall Trend	Tone & Style	Visuals & Design	Use of Case Studies	Interactivity & Data Presentation
2020	**Traditional**, data-heavy reports with minimal storytelling.	Formal, compliance-driven, investor-focused.	Basic visuals and charts.	Limited.	Static reports, conventional tables.
2021	**Experimental**, some narratives and case studies.	Formal, but more narratives and case studies.	More infographics and images.	Emerging, but often brief.	More readable summaries.
2022	**Creative** reporting, expanded storytelling	More engaging; some rebranding from “ESG”	Highly visual, more engaging layouts.	More frequently used to highlight impact.	Emerging tendency for dynamic dashboards.
2023/2024	**Innovative**, interactive, some recalibration	Diversity of styles and tones.	Emerging interactive reports.	Widely used, often tied to corporate strategy.	Emerging online reports.

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Source: The Conference Board, 2025

Approaches to sustainability reporting and storytelling can vary by industry

Industry	Case Studies & Stories	Visuals & Infographics	Tone & Style	Interactivity
Technology	**High:** Frequent impact stories (e.g., how tech solves sustainability issues).	**High:** Design-heavy reports with charts, icons, illustrations.	**Inspiring, future-oriented:** Narrative, innovative, public-friendly.	**Medium-High:** Many have web-based interactive reports or dashboards.
Consumer Goods/Retail	**High:** Community and consumer-focused case studies (sustainable products, community programs).	**High:** Colorful visuals, campaign-style imagery.	**Engaging and optimistic;** frames sustainability as core to brand values.	**Medium:** Some interactive elements like online portals or story maps.
Healthcare/Pharma	**High:** Patient and community health stories, humanitarian impact.	**Moderate:** Use of photos (patients, scientists), clear charts.	**Empathetic and responsibility-focused tone** – mix of formal reporting and humanizing stories.	**Low-Medium:** Predominantly static reports with data appendices.
Financial Services	**Low-Moderate:** Few case studies; focus on finance metrics and risk.	**Moderate:** Conservative use of visuals (graphs, tables).	**Formal, investor-focused** tone emphasizing risk and returns.	**Low:** Little to no interactive reporting; PDF reports dominate.
Industrial/Manufacturing	**Moderate:** Project case studies (factory emissions cuts, safety initiatives).	**Moderate:** Infographics to explain processes, images of facilities.	**Balanced tone** – informative and pragmatic, less flowery.	**Low-Medium:** Mostly traditional format; a few online highlights.
Energy (Oil & Gas, Utilities)	**Moderate:** Some case studies, often about technology pilots (carbon capture, community investment).	**Moderate:** Visuals of infrastructure, operations, data-heavy charts.	**Formal and technical**, emphasizing engineering and safety.	**Low:** Traditional reporting format (PDF with data); minimal interactivity.

Note: Analysis of 96 S&P 100 companies, that issue an annual ESG/sustainability report in PDF format..
Source: The Conference Board, 2025

2025

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