



# 4th Annual CSR Insights Survey

SUMMER 2023

# 149

companies  
represented

ACCP and YourCause from Blackbaud surveyed the corporate social impact<sup>1</sup> field to better understand the trends impacting corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) professionals. The survey was conducted in April of 2023 and garnered responses from 149 companies representing more than \$1B in community investment.

# \$1B+

in community  
investment

The survey results show a profession experiencing continued instability and change, which may hinder its ability to successfully maintain momentum toward the goals of positively impacting society and meeting key stakeholder expectations.

*1 - For the purposes of this survey, we are using the terms "corporate social impact," "corporate social responsibility (CSR)," and "corporate citizenship" interchangeably. Corporate social impact encompasses the full spectrum of responsibilities that typically fall under CSR and/or ESG.*

# 2023 Key Findings

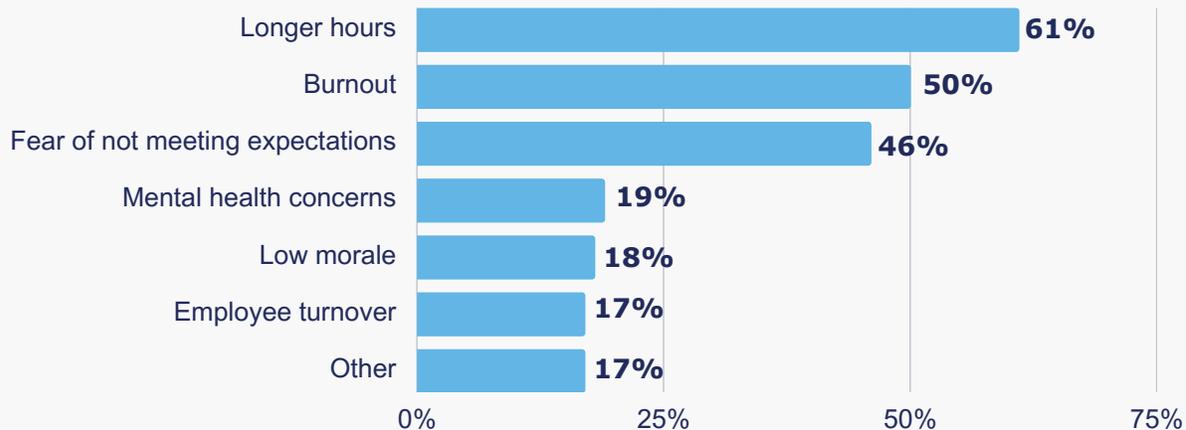
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## The ever-increasing demands on and responsibilities of corporate social impact teams are creating adverse consequences.

Most survey respondents (86%) indicated their team had more responsibilities in the past year, a 6% increase from one year ago when an already high 80% said that demands on their team had increased. Further, 58% indicated they need more resources to meet these expectations.

This ongoing trend comes with real consequences. Impacts cited included longer hours (61%), burnout (50%), fear of not meeting expectations (46%), and mental health concerns (19%). Company executives, sometimes not as well-versed in the specifics of CSR and ESG work, must understand these consequences, particularly in a tight labor market.

### How has your team been impacted by increased demands and responsibilities?

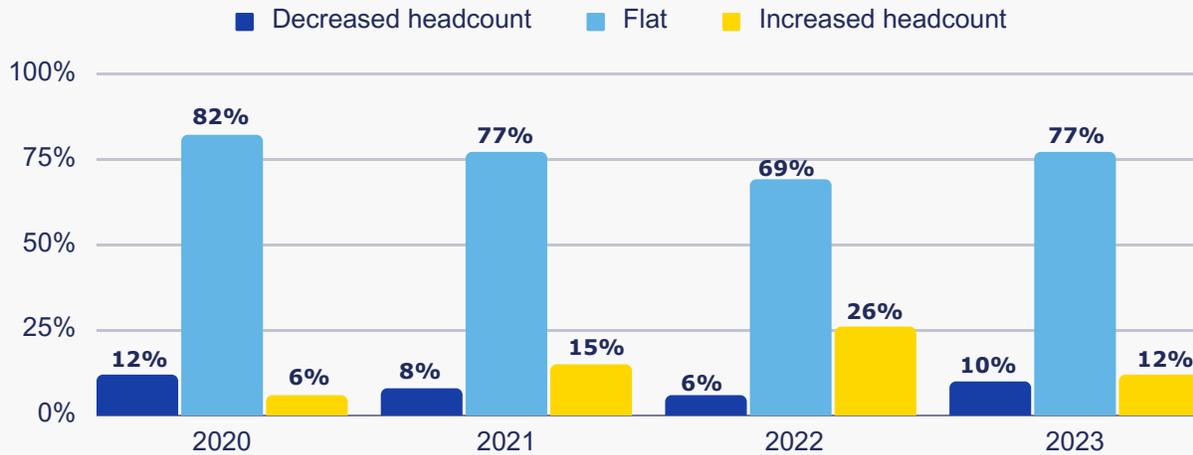


### Corporate social impact professionals do not have the resources to meet their companies' expectations.

Most respondents (60%) work on a team of five or fewer people. Not surprisingly, the resources cited as most needed are more headcount (67%), more financial resources to invest in community and priority issues (54%), and more focus or buy-in from executive leadership (46%).

Insufficient headcount has been a consistent theme for the last several years. CSR teams have yet to see meaningful growth in size despite the increased relevance of the function to corporations and the significant percentages of companies that have increased their investment in communities since the recent pandemic.

## Headcount Changes 2020-2023



46% of survey participants desired more focus or buy-in from leadership, even though roughly half perceived their C-suite’s commitment to CSR as high. Perceptions of C-suite commitment to both CSR and ESG grew from 2022 to 2023, as 22% of respondents indicated that C-suite commitment to CSR increased and 26% noted that C-suite commitment to ESG increased.

Interestingly, survey respondents perceived C-suite **commitment** to CSR as higher than its commitment to ESG. In contrast, they perceived the C-suite’s **understanding** of the ESG strategy to be slightly higher than its understanding of the CSR strategy. The ongoing political backlash against ESG may have influenced these results.

## Perception of C-Suite Commitment

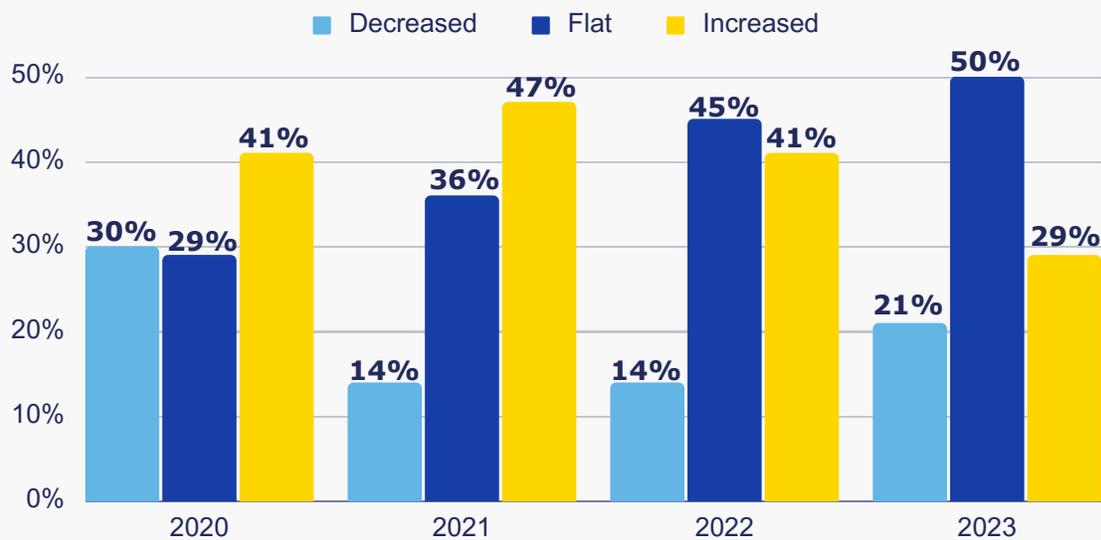
	ESG	CSR
Commitment (high)	44%	51%
Understanding (high)	39%	33%

## 2

## Increases in grantmaking budgets slowed for the first time since before the pandemic, and cuts inched higher.

In 2023, the lowest percentage of companies increased their grantmaking budget since this study began in 2020, declining from a high of 47% in 2021 to a low of 29% this year. This trend is likely a reflection of the uncertain economy.

### How did your grantmaking budget change this year compared to last year?



*Note: 2021 data does not equal 100% because 3% of respondents chose none of the above.*

Corporate foundations were less likely to experience decreases in their grantmaking budget, aligning with the belief that foundations can provide the benefit of stability in turbulent times.

The Technology and Manufacturing industries' grantmaking budgets were more deeply impacted than some other industries, reflecting the more fragile state of those industry segments. 31% of Manufacturing companies and 27% of Technology companies indicated their grantmaking budgets experienced a decrease this year compared to 21% of all respondents.

CSR teams in the Technology and MedTech & Pharma sectors also experienced the most significant headcount decreases. 27% of respondents in the MedTech & Pharma sector and 21% in the Technology sector reported a decrease in headcount, compared to 10% of all respondents.

The economy impacted employee engagement budgets less than grantmaking budgets. In fact, 25% of survey respondents experienced increased employee engagement budgets. This may reflect the heightened focus on employee engagement within corporations due to the tight labor market and the priority of recruiting and retaining top talent.

### 3

## Corporate structures and terminology are changing as the relevance of corporate social impact grows and the work evolves.

As the work of CSR and ESG evolves, there is a shift in what companies call this work internally and how they get the work done.

When asked what name companies use for this work, no one term received a majority of responses. The most frequently used title for the work was corporate social responsibility (21%) or names leading with the word “community,” e.g., community impact, community relations, community affairs, or community engagement, which collectively comprised 23%.

Some sectors were more likely to use a particular name or phrase than others. For instance, social impact is a term gaining in popularity, particularly in the Technology sector. Of survey respondents who identified as working for a Technology company, 42% indicated their department was named either social impact or corporate social impact.

The survey results also revealed that the structure and functions of departments are varied. The most frequently cited combination of functions housed in the same department included employee volunteerism, community relations, and corporate grantmaking.

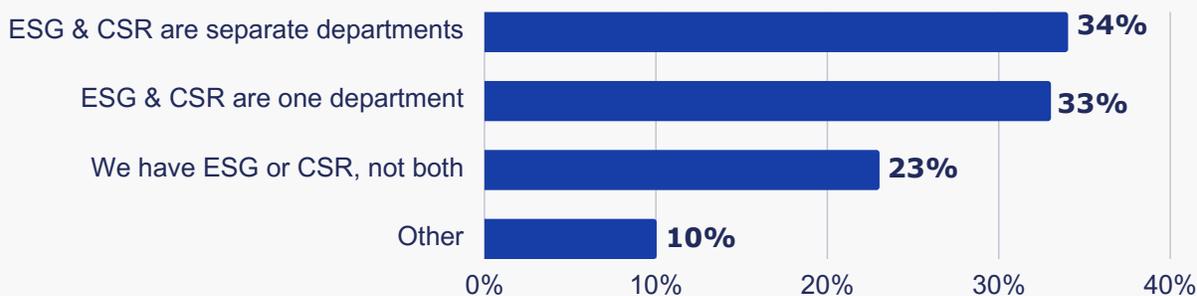
### Which of the following functions are housed in the same department as yours?



The structural relationship between CSR and ESG is also varied. One-third (33%) of respondents indicated that the CSR and ESG functions reside within one department, and one-third (34%) indicated that their companies' ESG and CSR functions are housed in separate departments. This variety in structure across companies makes benchmarking and measurement challenging.

Notably, almost 20% of respondents work in companies that do not have an ESG function, even though they have a CSR function. Only 4% of respondents reported they have an ESG function but no CSR function.

### How are ESG and CSR set up at your company?



*Note: In order to clearly illustrate the differences in structures, survey response categories were combined into the four categories shown above. Responses to all categories can be found in the full survey findings section.*

The larger the company's size by number of employees, the more likely it was that CSR and ESG were separate functions reporting to different departments. 55% of companies with more than 50,000 employees had separate CSR and ESG functions, as did 44% of companies with 10,000-25,000 employees. Manufacturing was also more likely to have separate CSR & ESG departments (54%) than other industries.

## 4

### The top three issue areas companies are prioritizing are environmental sustainability, education, and food insecurity.

This year, the top three priority social issues are environmental sustainability (56%), K-12 education (53%), and food insecurity (49%).

The focus on environmental sustainability is a natural progression as CSR & ESG functions continue to cooperate and integrate to respond to the material issues of companies. In addition, 66% of survey respondents from global companies indicated environmental sustainability as a priority area, potentially influenced by new EU regulations around ESG.

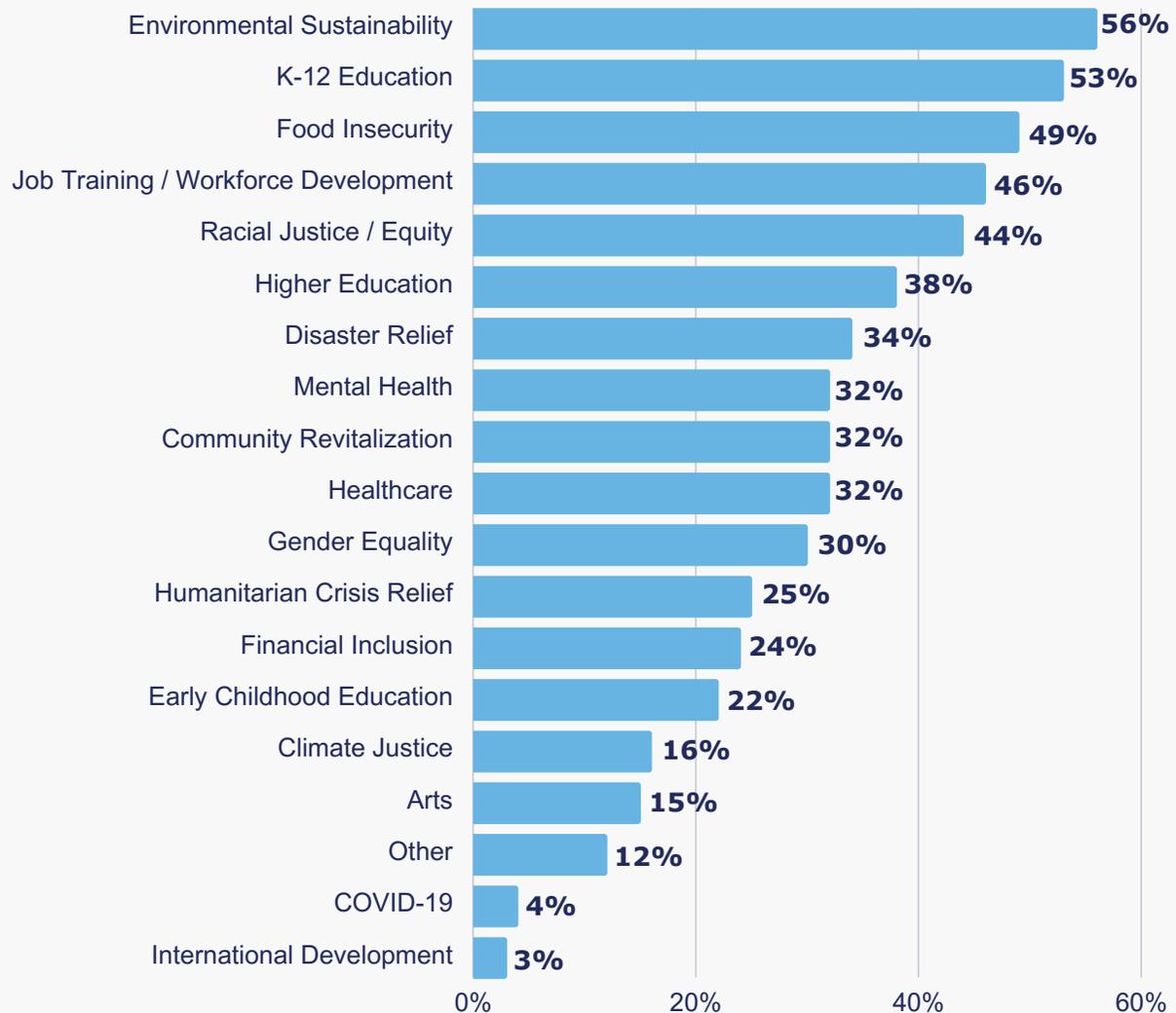
Education has long been a top priority for companies. However, in 2023 this survey disaggregated education issues by educational stages, e.g., early childhood, K-12, and higher education, to understand priorities more clearly. In 2022, 62% of companies identified education, broadly defined, as a top priority. In 2023, 53% cited K-12, 39% higher education, and 21% early childhood education as priorities.

Food insecurity has steadily increased as a priority issue for companies for the past three years, to a high of 49% in 2023. While many companies have long supported food insecurity as one of many issue areas, it quickly rose to a top-three focus area during the pandemic, when 20% of respondents indicated it was a new priority area (as reflected in the [2021 CSR Insights Survey](#)), and continued to increase in 2022.

This trend has two likely explanations. First, there is increasing recognition that reversing food insecurity is foundational to addressing many other social issues, such as academic success. Second, economic hardship and workforce layoffs further weakened the resiliency of families living on the edge of financial security.

Racial justice/Equity was indicated as a priority issue by 44% of respondents as compared to 50% last year. (Note: in 2021, racial equity was identified as a “new priority” for 64% of respondents).

### Which of the following social issues are priority areas for your company in 2023?



5

## Participation in employee volunteerism is increasing and continues to adapt to the changing workplace.

Most (61%) survey respondents reported that participation in employee volunteer activities has increased, a welcome sign compared to the decline in recent years. The focused effort to increase participation in volunteer activities supports the belief that employee volunteerism is an effective strategy for increasing engagement and tangibly aligning corporate values with those of employees. This is consistent with data cited in YourCause from Blackbaud’s recent [11th Annual Report on Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Engagement Trends](#) report.

To increase participation rates, CSR professionals are offering a greater variety of volunteer options. Survey respondents cited increased opportunities for group volunteering (59%) and more focus on in-person volunteering opportunities (48%) while also adding more options for individual volunteering (35%).

Although companies are seeing an increase in employee volunteerism compared to last year, CSR professionals continue to struggle to get participation levels back to pre-pandemic levels of 33-34%, per the [Giving in Numbers 2020](#) report.

### In what ways has volunteerism changed in your company?



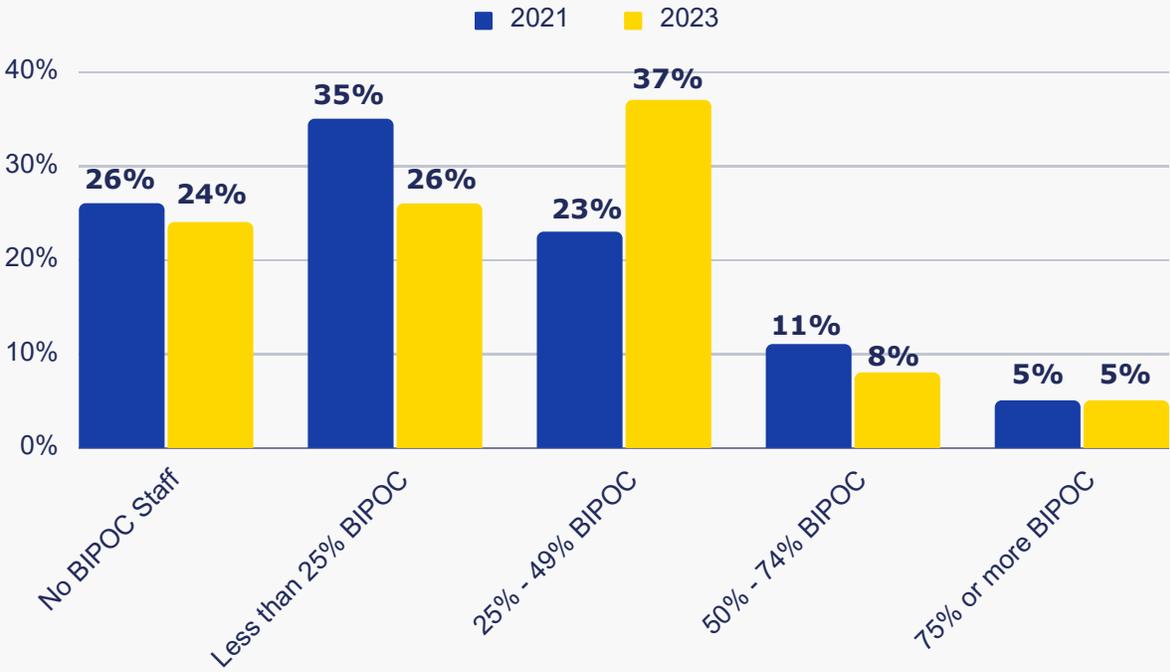
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## White women continue to dominate the corporate social impact profession. However, teams are significantly more diverse if the team leader is a person of color.

The survey found that the corporate social impact profession is predominantly comprised of white women, reinforcing data collected in ACCP’s 2021 Advancing Equity in the Corporate Social Impact Profession study. 87% of survey respondents indicated they worked on a team where fewer than 50% of teammates were people of color.

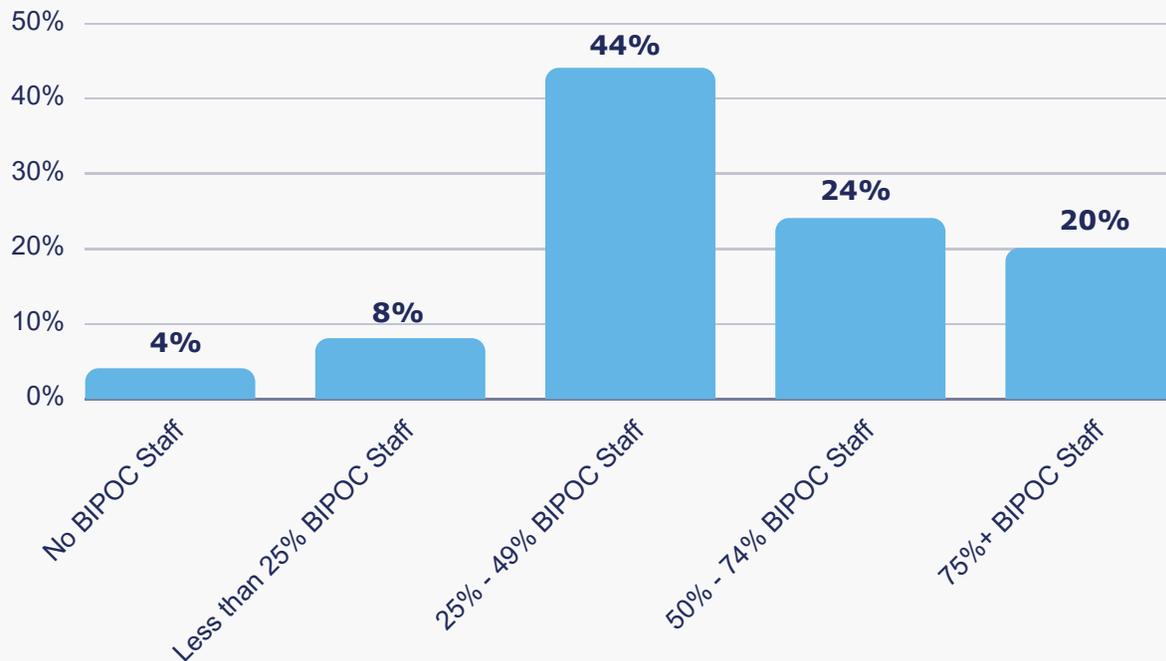
However, the data suggests that there may be some progress in the overall diversity of CSR teams over the past two years, as the percentage of companies that reported less than 25% of their teammates were people of color declined by 9% from 2021 (35%) to 2023 (26%). The percentage that reported 25-49% of their teammates were BIPOC increased by 14% from 2021 (23%) to 2023 (37%). However, the prevalence of teams with no BIPOC staff stubbornly remains, as 24% of survey respondents cited they work on all-white teams – a slight decrease over the 26% of all-white teams reported in 2021.

### CSR Staff Demographics



An important finding of this year's survey is that corporate social impact teams are significantly more diverse when the team leader is a person of color. 88% of survey respondents who indicated their team lead was a person of color worked on a team with more than 25% diversity.

### CSR Staff Demographics - BIPOC Leader



While we know anecdotally that diverse leaders attract more diverse teams, this data confirms that a diverse leader of CSR or ESG begets a more diverse team of professionals. However, despite this insight, the 2023 survey indicated a significant and concerning 17% decline in the percentage of CSR and ESG department leaders of color. 19% of respondents indicated their department leader was a person of color, compared to 36% in the 2021 study. This survey does not provide insight into why this decline occurred. However, it aligns with widely reported HR data suggesting corporate layoffs have disproportionately impacted people of color.

# Full Survey Findings

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

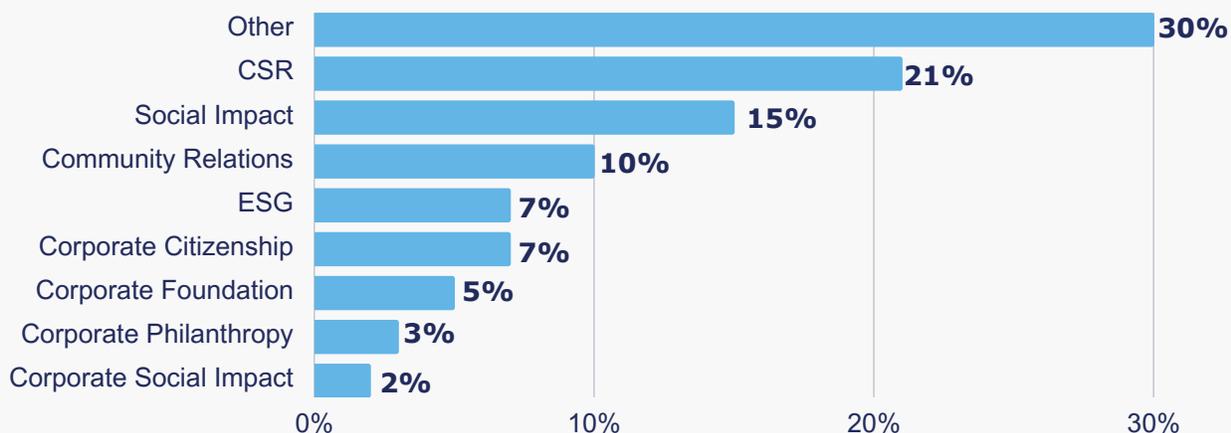
## Terminology & Scope of Responsibility

*The language used to describe this work continues to evolve.*

When asked what name companies use for this work, no one term received a majority of responses. The most frequently used title for the work was social responsibility (21%) or names leading with the word “community,” e.g., community impact, community relations, community affairs, or community engagement, collectively comprising 23%.

Some sectors were more likely to use a particular name or phrase than others. For instance, social impact is a term gaining in popularity, particularly in the Technology sector. Of survey respondents who identified as working for a Technology company, 42% indicated their department was named either social impact or corporate social impact.

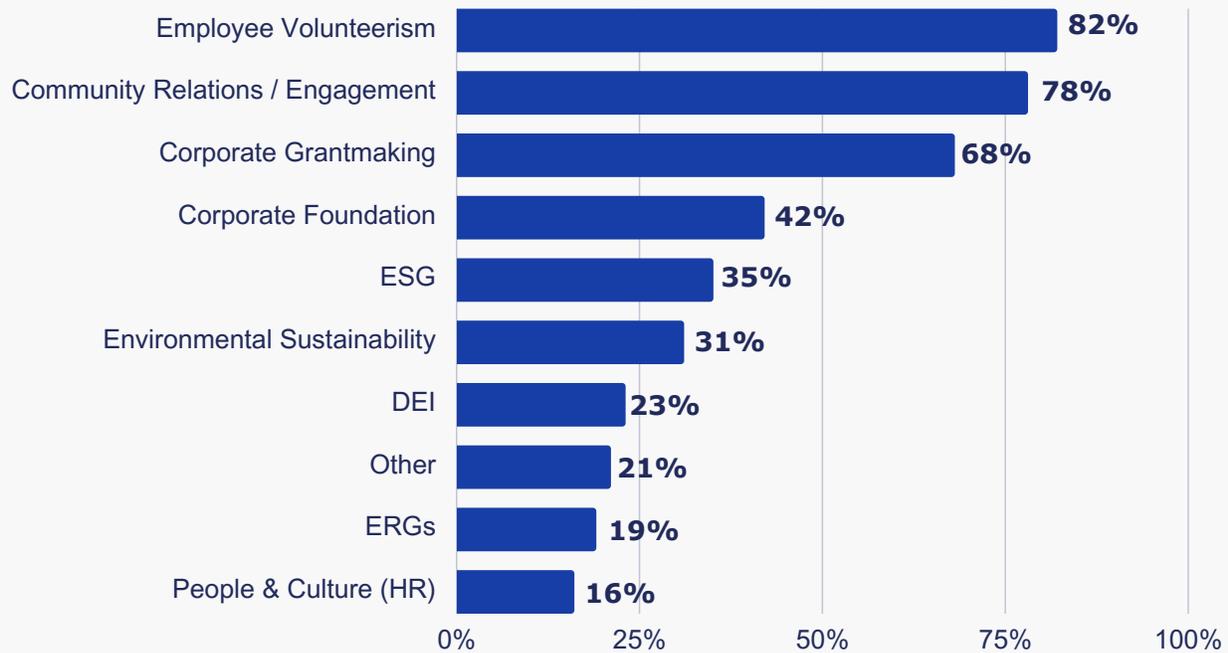
### What title does your company use to describe your team's work?



*The work of CSR is multi-dimensional with an external and internal focus.*

The survey results also revealed that the structure and functions of departments are varied. The most frequently cited combination of functions housed in the same department included employee volunteerism, community relations, and corporate grantmaking. This illustrates that corporate social impact plays an increasingly critical internal role in engaging a company’s employees, in addition to its traditional external influence.

## Which of the following functions are housed in the same department as yours?



## Corporate Structures

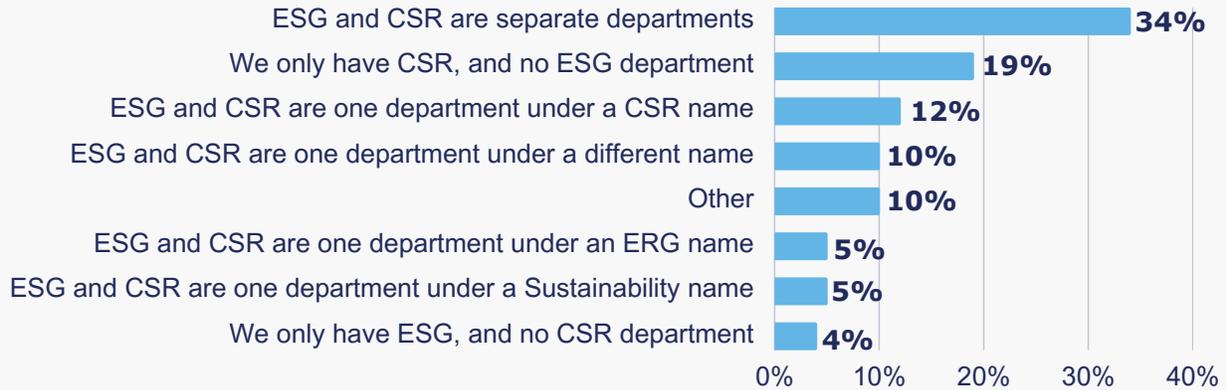
***How CSR and ESG are incorporated into the corporate structure continues to evolve, and no “one size fits all” approach has been established.***

The structural relationship between CSR and ESG is also varied. One-third (33%) of respondents indicated that the CSR and ESG functions reside within one department, and one-third (34%) indicated that their companies’ ESG and CSR functions are housed in separate departments. This variety in structure across companies makes benchmarking and measurement challenging.

Notably, almost 20% of respondents worked in companies that do not have an ESG function, even though they have a CSR function. Only 4% of respondents reported they have an ESG function but are without a CSR function.

The larger the company’s size by number of employees, the more likely it was that CSR and ESG are separate functions reporting to different departments. 55% of companies with more than 50,000 employees had separate CSR and ESG functions, as did 44% of companies with 10,000-25,000 employees. Manufacturing was also more likely to have separate CSR & ESG departments (54%) than other industries.

## How are ESG and CSR set up at your company?



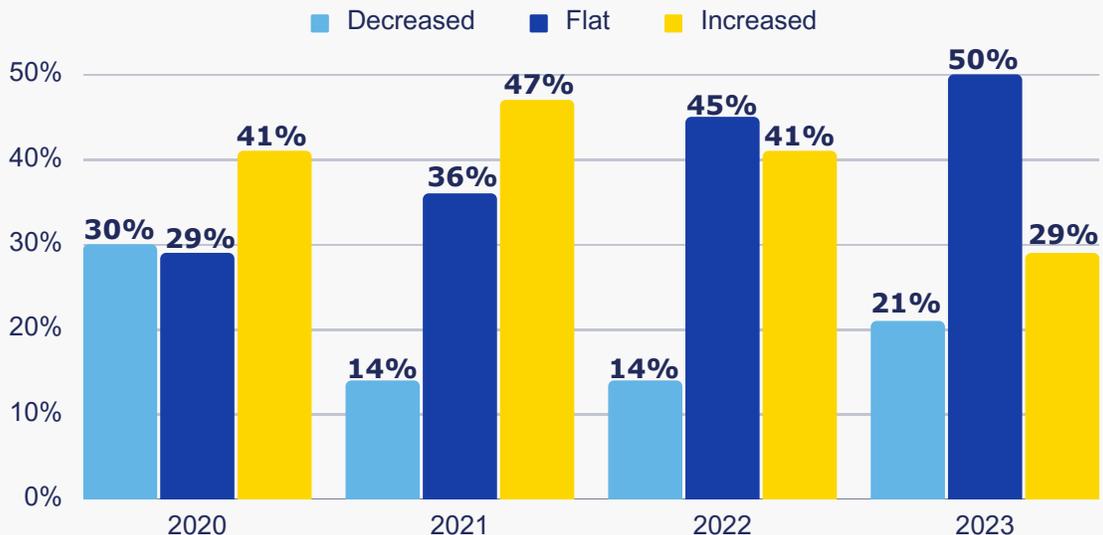
## Budgets

**Corporate grantmaking budgets are primarily flat in 2023, with some industries more negatively impacted by the economy.**

Half of those surveyed responded that their grantmaking budgets remained the same as last year. This remained true regardless of the size of their CSR staff. However, some industries experienced more significant decreases including Manufacturing (31% experienced a decrease) and Technology (27% experienced a decrease).

Year over year, respondents are indicating more decreases in their grantmaking budgets and fewer increases.

## How did your grantmaking budget change this year compared to last year?

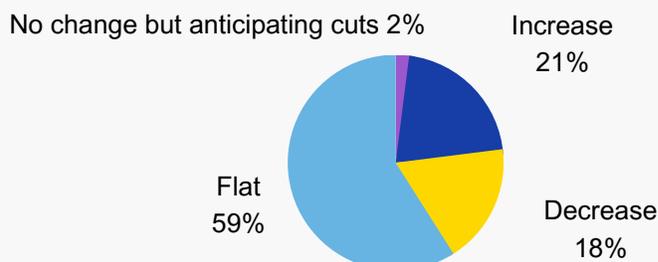


Note: 2021 data does not equal 100% because 3% of respondents chose none of the above.

## Changes in other CSR-related budgets.

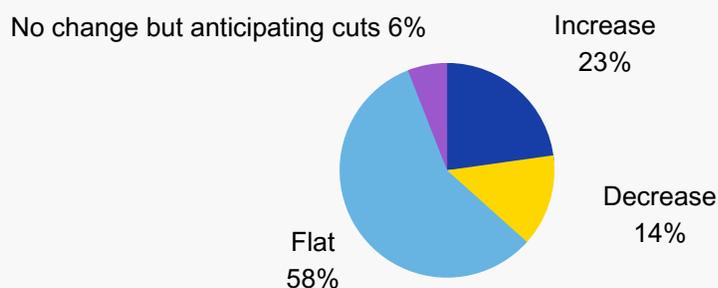
Operations budget: CSR operations budgets largely stayed the same (59%), while 21% increased and 18% decreased.

### How did your operations budget change in 2023?



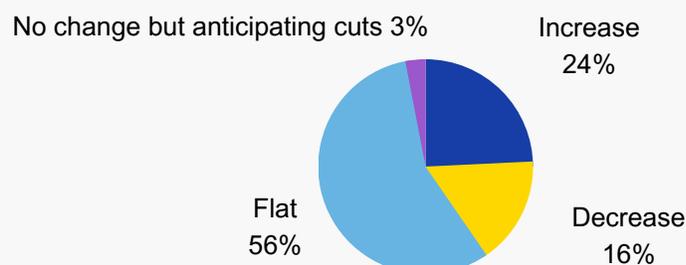
Foundations: Corporate foundation budgets were less likely to decrease than corporate grantmaking budgets. This gives further credence to the perception that corporate foundation budgets offer more stability in turbulent times.

### How did your foundation budget change in 2023?



Employee engagement: Budgets for employee engagement were most likely to stay the same (56%), but almost a quarter (24%) saw a budget increase, while only 16% experienced a decrease. This trend may reflect the increased importance of engaging employees in corporate social responsibility activities.

### How did your employee engagement budget change in 2023?



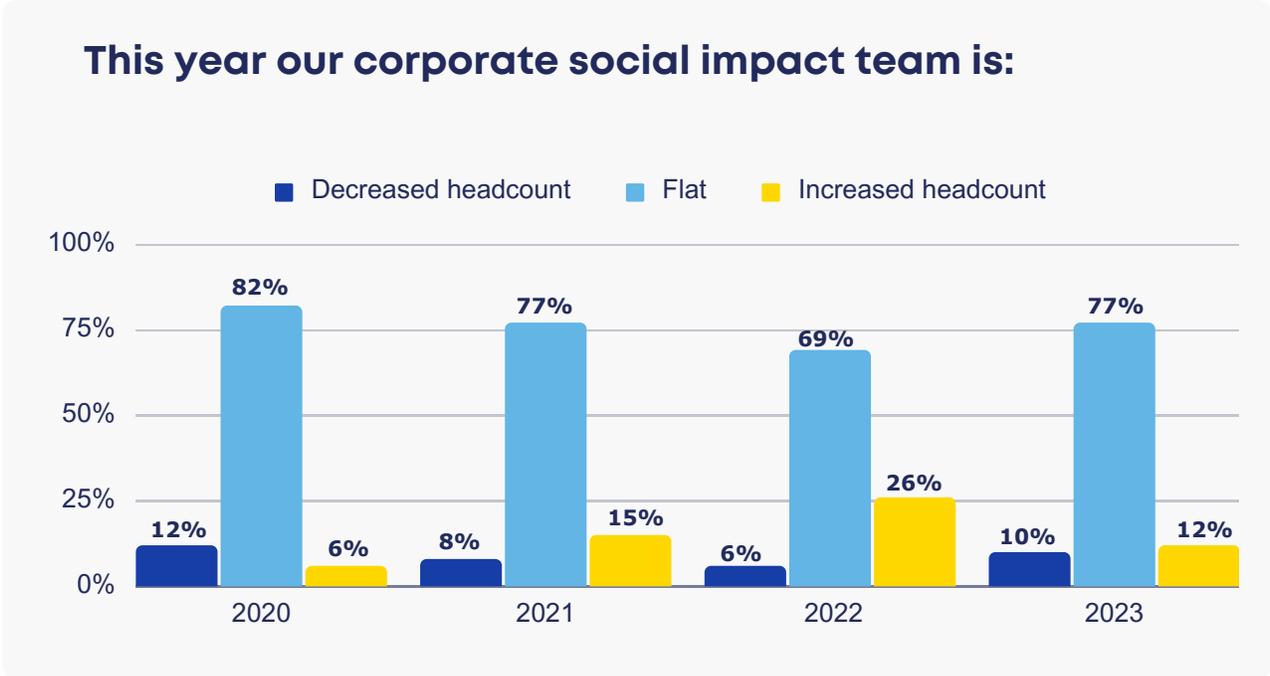
# Corporate Social Impact Staffing

***Despite the increased importance of the work, corporate social impact staffing largely stayed flat in 2023, continuing a multi-year trend.***

Consistent with the last three years, corporate social impact team headcount most often stayed the same (77%). However, there was a rise in the percentage of decrease in headcount (10% this year compared to 6% last year) and a decrease in team growth (12% this year compared to 26% in 2022). The percentage of CSR teams experiencing a reduction in staff this year is comparable to the trend seen during the height of the pandemic.

The industries most impacted by decreased headcount were Technology (21%), MedTech & Pharma (21%), Insurance (14%), and Energy (14%). The companies experiencing a decrease in headcount were also most often global companies (85%).

Finally, it's interesting to note of those that added headcount, more than 90% also experienced increased integration with DEI departments and saw a higher percentage of increased volunteer participation.

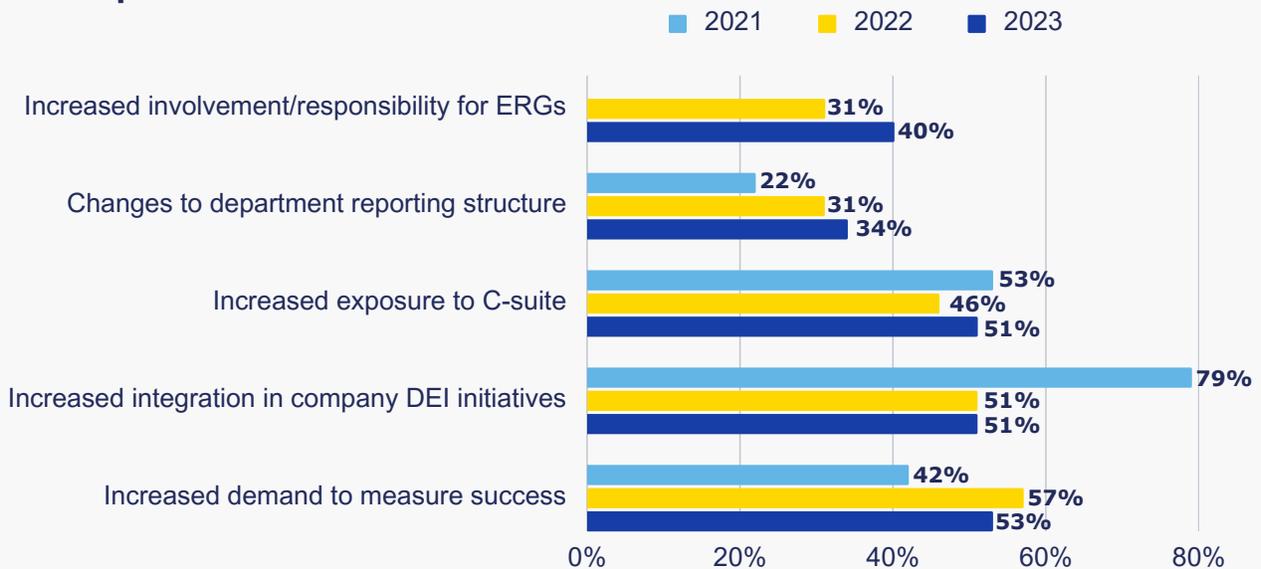


## Changes Experienced in the Past 12 Months

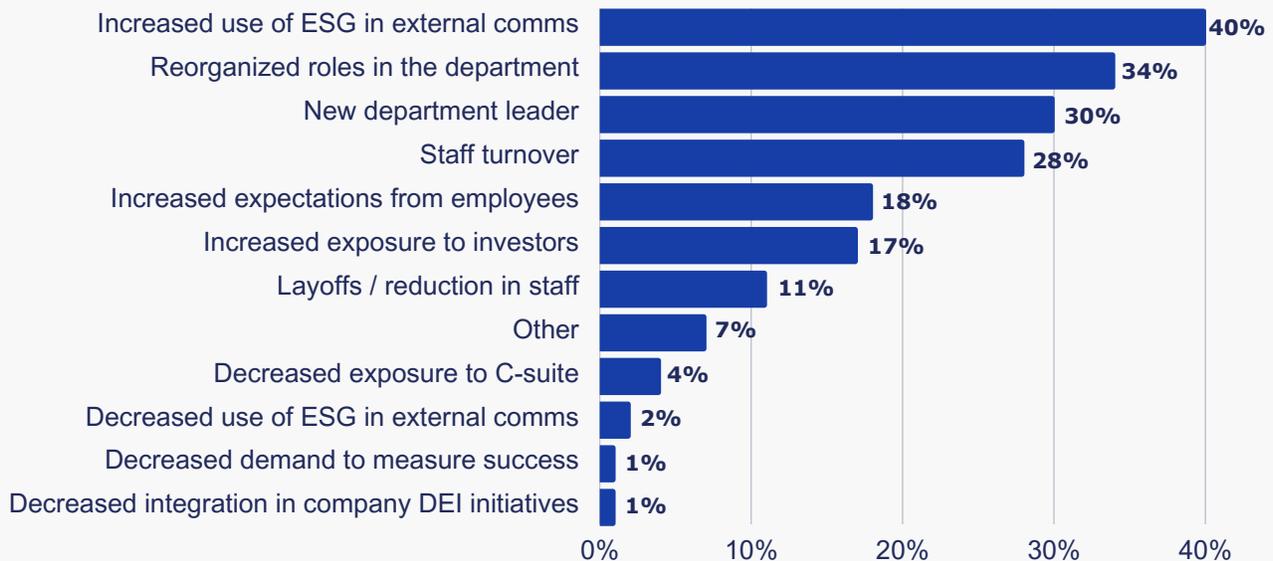
*Increased demand to measure success continues, as does exposure to C-suite.*

Survey results show a profession experiencing continued instability and change. In addition to sustained increased demand to measure impact (53%) and exposure to the C-Suite (51%), responses also showed a startling amount of change, including reorganized roles (38%), changes to department reporting structure (34%), new department head (30%), turnover (28%), and layoffs (11%).

### How would you describe the changes your department experienced in the past 12 months?

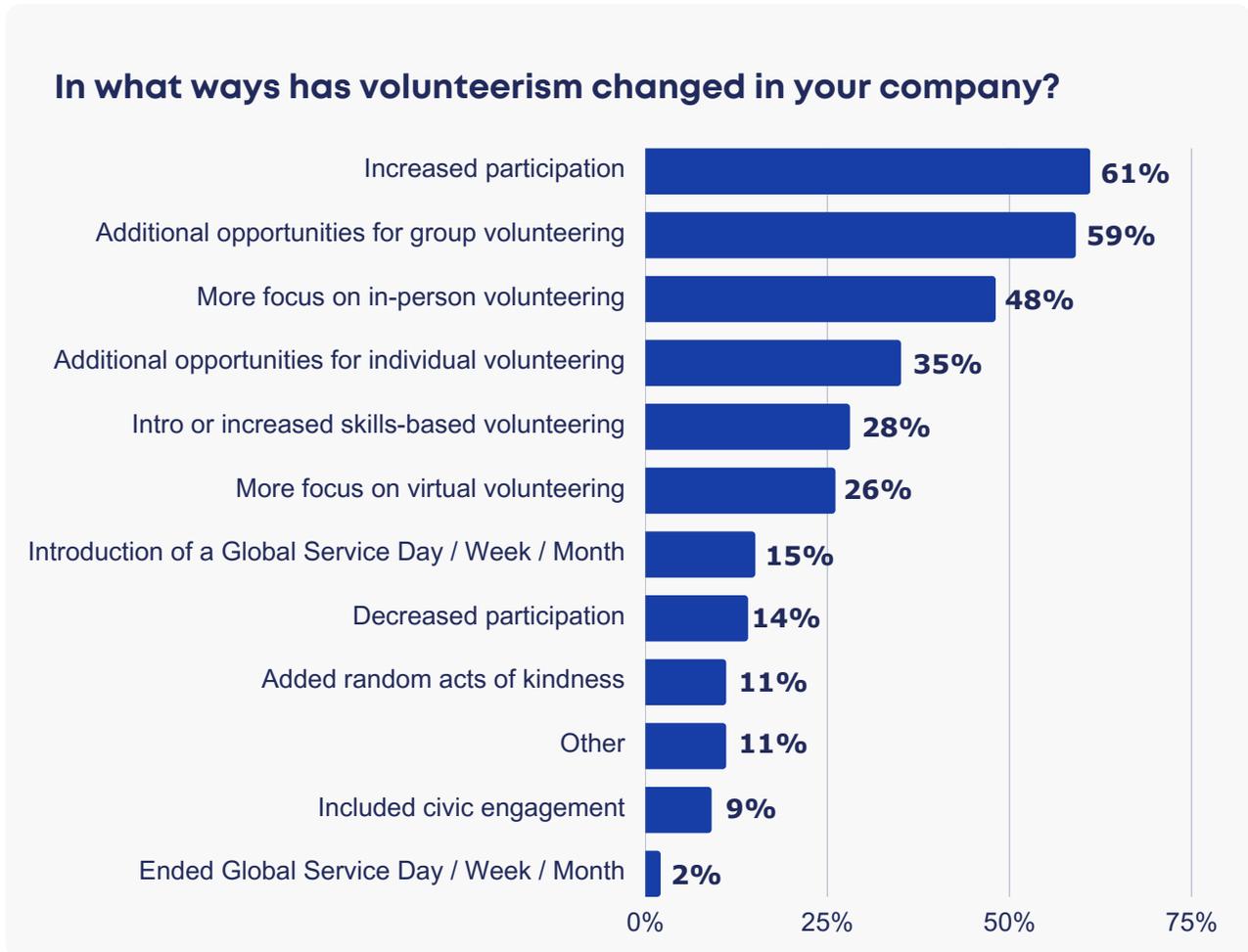


### How would you describe the changes your department experienced in the past 12 months? (Only 2023 Data)



## Employee Volunteerism

*Employee volunteerism continues to evolve in the changing post-COVID workplace, with more options and increased employee participation.*



Most (61%) survey respondents reported that participation in employee volunteer activities increased, a welcome sign compared to the decline in recent years. The focused effort to increase volunteerism supports the belief that employee volunteerism is an effective strategy for increasing engagement and tangibly aligning corporate values with those of employees. This is consistent with data cited in YourCause from Blackbaud's most recent [11th Annual Report on Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Engagement Trends report](#).

To increase participation rates, CSR professionals are offering a greater variety of volunteerism options. Survey respondents cited increased opportunities for group volunteering (59%) and more focus on in-person volunteering opportunities (48%) while also adding more options for individual volunteering (35%).

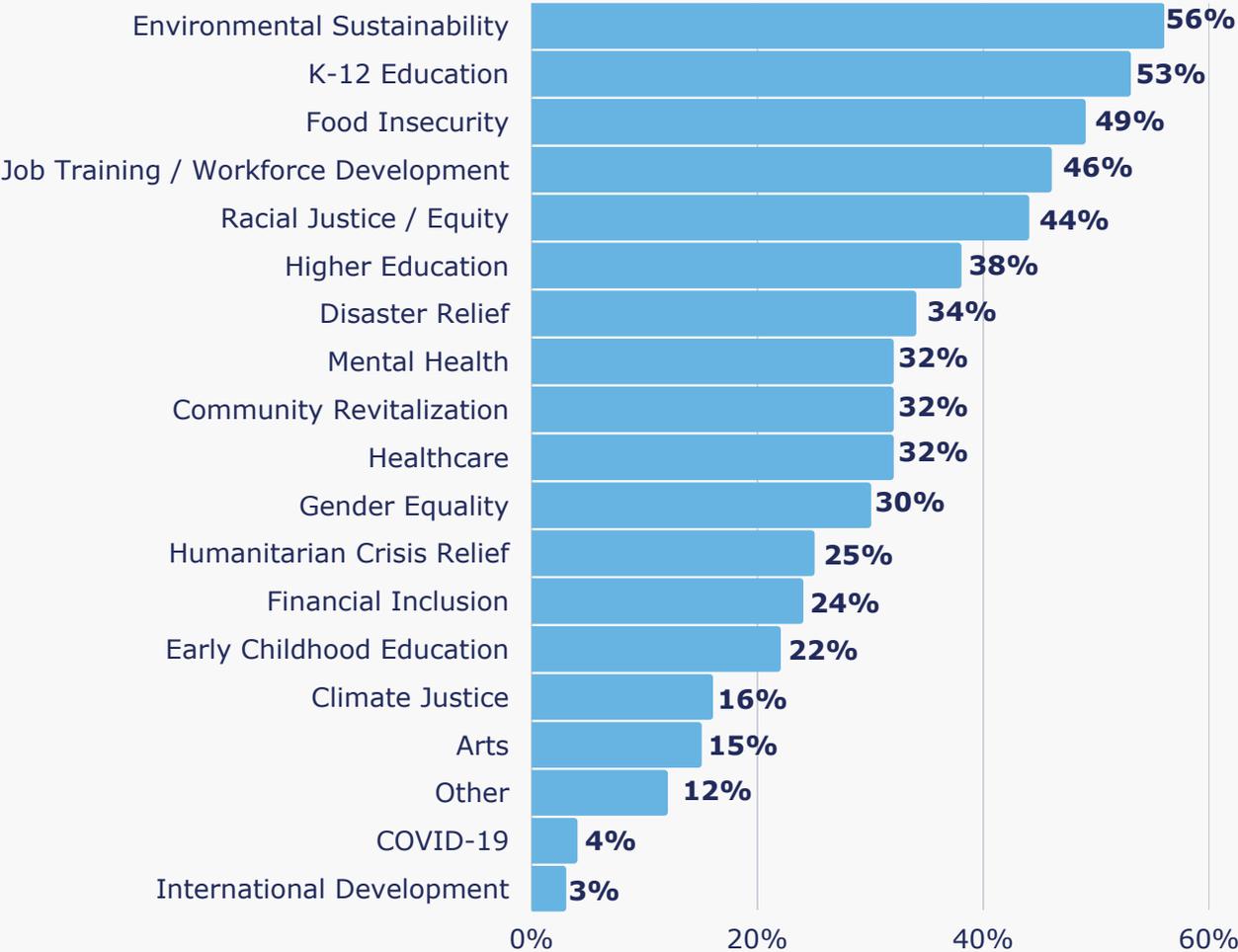
# Priority Social Issues

*The top three issue areas companies are prioritizing are environmental sustainability, education, and food insecurity.*

This year, the top three priority issue areas were environmental sustainability (56%), K-12 education (53%), and food insecurity (49%).

The focus on environmental sustainability is a natural progression as CSR & ESG functions continue to cooperate and integrate to respond to the material issues of companies. In addition, 66% of survey respondents from global companies indicated environmental sustainability as a priority issue area, potentially influenced by new EU regulations around ESG.

## Which of the following social issues are priority areas for your company in 2023?



Education has long been a top priority for companies. However, in 2023 this survey disaggregated education issues by educational stages, e.g., early childhood, K-12, and higher education, to define priorities more clearly. In 2022, 62% of companies identified education, broadly defined, as a top priority. In 2023, 53% cited K-12, 39% higher education, and 21% early childhood education as priorities.

Food insecurity has steadily increased as a priority issue area for companies for the past three years, to a high in 2023 of 49%. While many companies have long supported food insecurity as one of many issue areas, it quickly rose to a top-three focus during the pandemic, when 20% of respondents indicated it was a new priority area (as reflected in the [2021 CSR Insights Survey](#)), and continued to increase in 2022.

The trend has two likely explanations. First, there is increasing recognition that reversing food insecurity is foundational to addressing most other social issues, such as academic success. Second, economic hardship and workforce layoffs have further weakened the resiliency of families living on the margins of financial security.

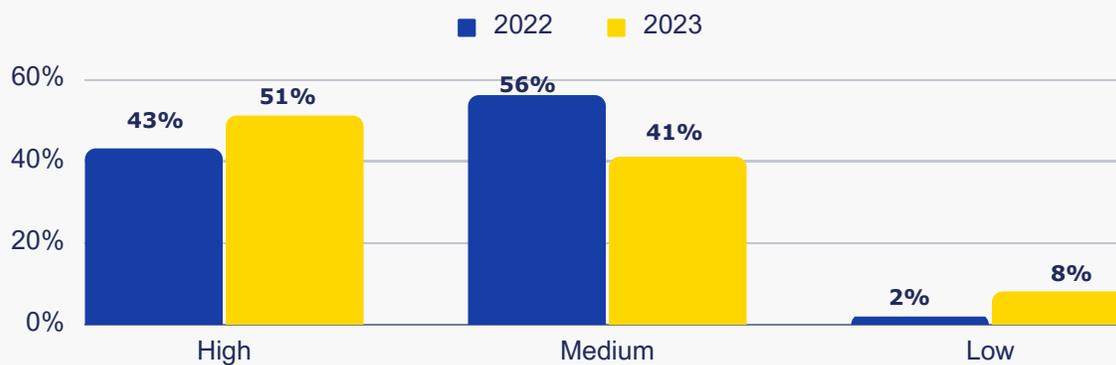
Racial justice/equity was indicated as a priority issue area by 44% of respondents as compared to 50% last year. (Note: in 2021, racial equity was identified as a “new priority” for 64% of respondents).

## C-Suite Commitment to CSR & ESG

**More than 50% of respondents perceive their C-suite to have a high commitment to CSR, while 22% perceive a stronger commitment than the previous year.**

C-suite’s commitment to CSR appears to be growing based on this year’s survey results, as more than 50% of respondents said they perceive their C-suite’s commitment to CSR as high. However, it is interesting to note that this perceived high commitment is not translating into more resources for the function, as mentioned earlier in this report.

### How would you describe your leadership's commitment to CSR?\*

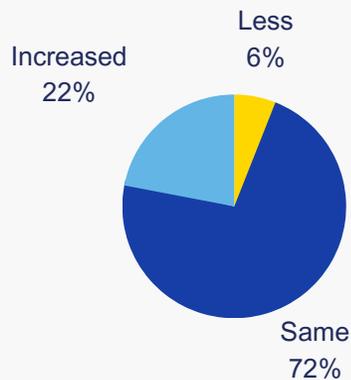


*\*Note that the question was asked differently in 2022, and the 2022 data for “Medium” includes “committed but not leading” and “some commitment.”*

## ***C-suite's commitment to CSR remains primarily flat compared to 2022.***

While the C-suite commitment to CSR remained mostly steady, 22% of respondents indicated an increase in commitment compared to last year. This is not surprising considering the growing importance of the work and the interest from employees, consumers, and investors (as noted in ACCP's [Making the Case for Corporate Social Impact Toolkit](#)) that a corporation operates in a way that positively impacts society.

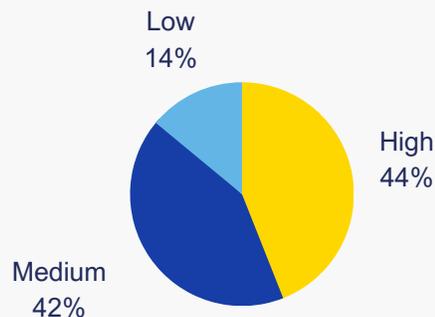
### **How does the C-suite level of CSR commitment compare to the previous year?**



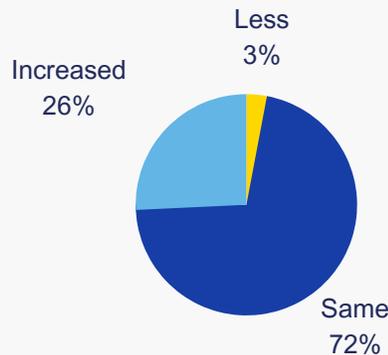
## ***C-suite executives are slightly less committed to ESG compared to their commitment to CSR.***

The C-suite commitment to CSR was slightly higher (51%) than to ESG (44%). However, the ongoing “ESG backlash” could have influenced this perception difference. 43% of those who indicated a high commitment were from companies of 1,000-10,000 employees, and 58% were global corporations. This suggests that ESG has higher prominence in those companies affected by the ESG reporting requirements for global companies.

### **How would you describe your C-suite's commitment to ESG?**



## How does this level of commitment to ESG compare to the previous year?



Similar to how respondents answered the CSR commitment question, C-suite commitment to ESG essentially (72%) remained the same from 2022, but 26% perceived an increase in commitment.

***C-suites' understanding of their ESG strategy is higher than their understanding of CSR strategy.***

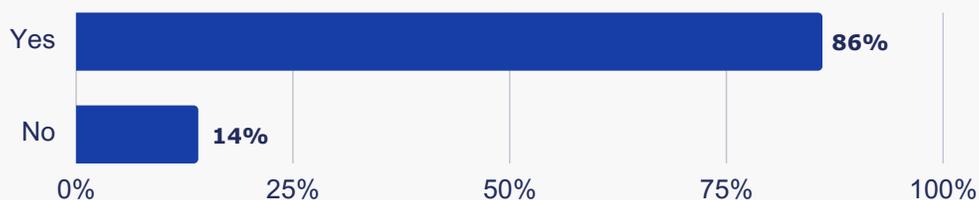
Perception of C-Suite Commitment	ESG	CSR
Commitment (high)	44%	51%
Understanding (high)	39%	33%

## Increased Responsibility & Impact

***An overwhelming majority (86%) of respondents have taken on more responsibility during the past year without additional resources.***

This year's survey shows corporate social impact professionals continued taking on more responsibility without additional resources.

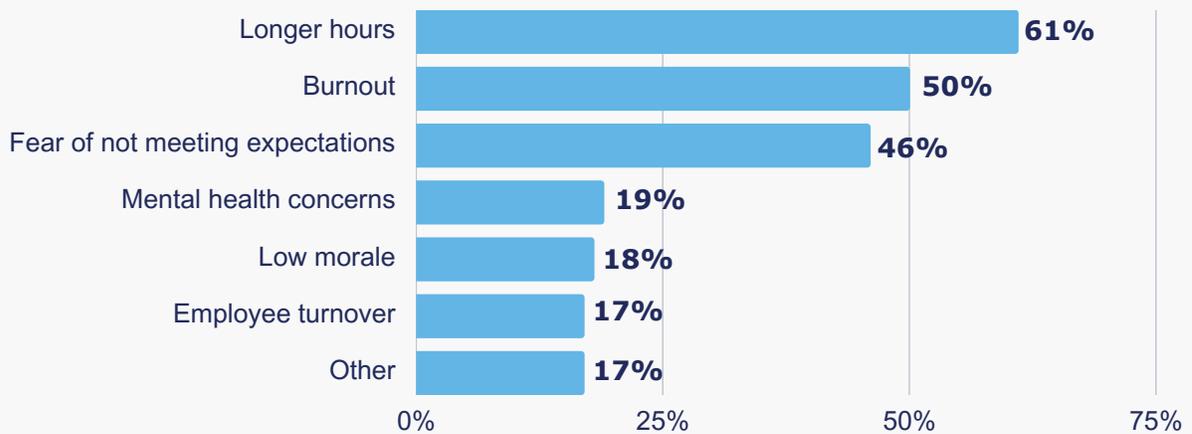
### Has your team taken on more responsibility in the past year?



This “do more with less” mantra is having concerning consequences, including longer hours (61%), burnout (50%), fear of not meeting expectations (46%), mental health concerns (19%), low morale (18%), and employee turnover (17%).

Interestingly, 17% of respondents indicated “other,” and many of those responses were positive consequences, including professional growth and challenges, more influence, higher engagement, and being motivated by the increased value of CSR to the company.

### How has your team been impacted by increased demands and responsibilities?



### Additional Resources Needed

**Corporate social impact professionals feel they need more resources to meet demands.**

58% of respondents feel they don’t have the resources (including staff, budget, and expertise) to meet demand and expectations.

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



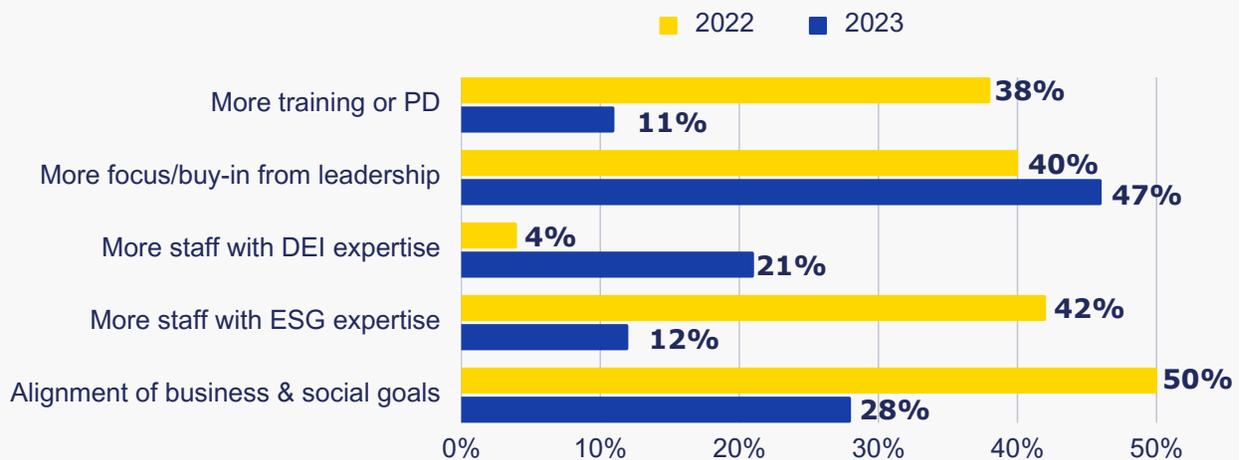
More headcount was the most significant resource needed (67%), followed by more financial resources to invest in community and priority issue areas (54%). Insufficient headcount has been a consistent theme for the last several years, as CSR teams have yet to see growth in size despite the increased relevance of the function to corporations.

Respondents also desired more focus or buy-in from executive leadership (46%). This is an increase compared to last year, when 40% desired more focus or buy-in from executive leadership.

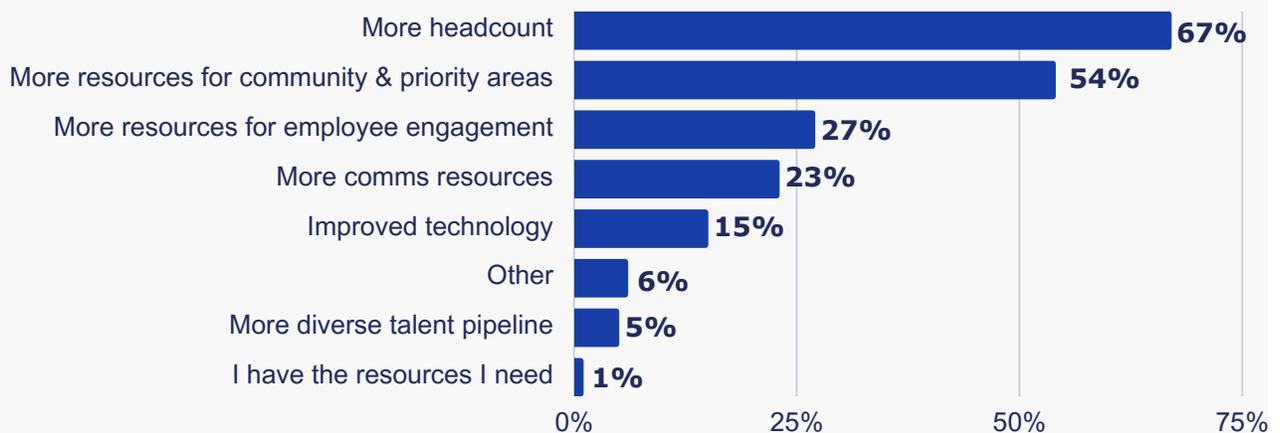
It's interesting to note that the need for staff with ESG and DEI expertise decreased significantly in 2023. The need for more training or professional development also reduced from 38% to 11%.

In addition, the need for greater alignment of business and social impact decreased from 50% to 28%, a possible indicator of the growing belief that corporate social impact is an essential strategy for overall business success.

### What resources are needed for your team to meet demands / expectations?



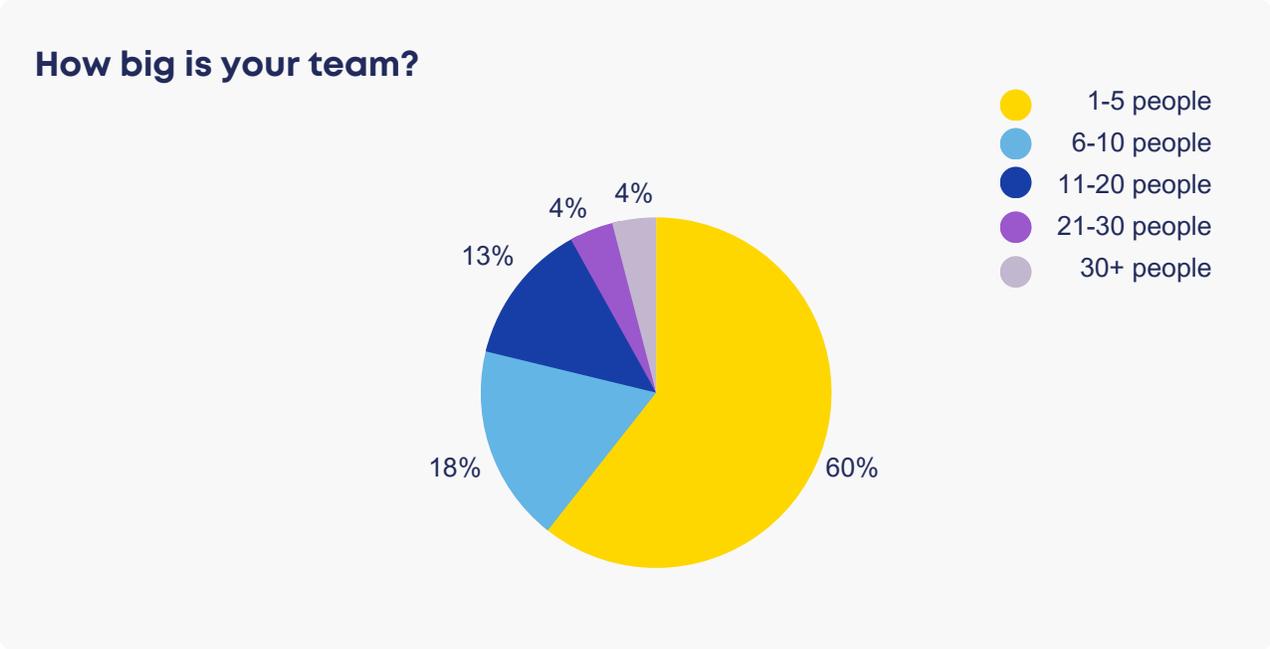
### New response options for 2023



# Survey Respondent Demographic Data

## CSR Team Size

Most respondents (60%) had a CSR team of between one and five people, with only 9% having a team larger than 20. Larger grant and community investment budgets don't correlate to larger staff. 69% of companies with grant budgets of \$3M+ had a staff between 1-5. Most respondents' grant budgets "stayed the same," regardless of their team staff size.

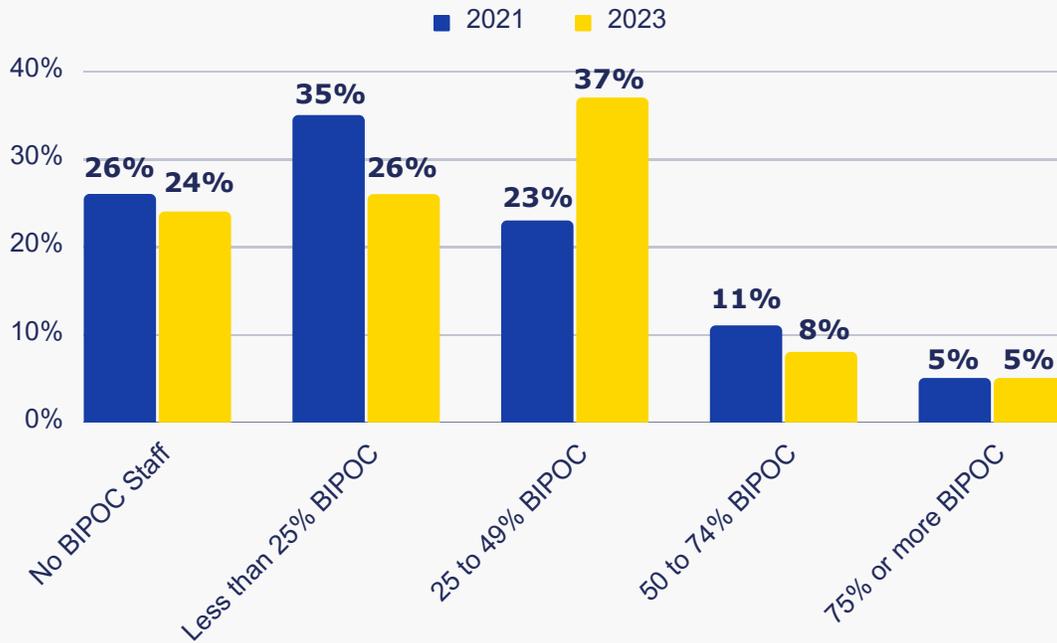


## Racial Diversity

CSR teams are still primarily white – 24% said they have no BIPOC staff (compared to 26% in 2021), and another 26% said they had less than 25% BIPOC staff (down from 35% in 2021). Only 13% of respondents had a majority BIPOC team (down from 16% in 2021).

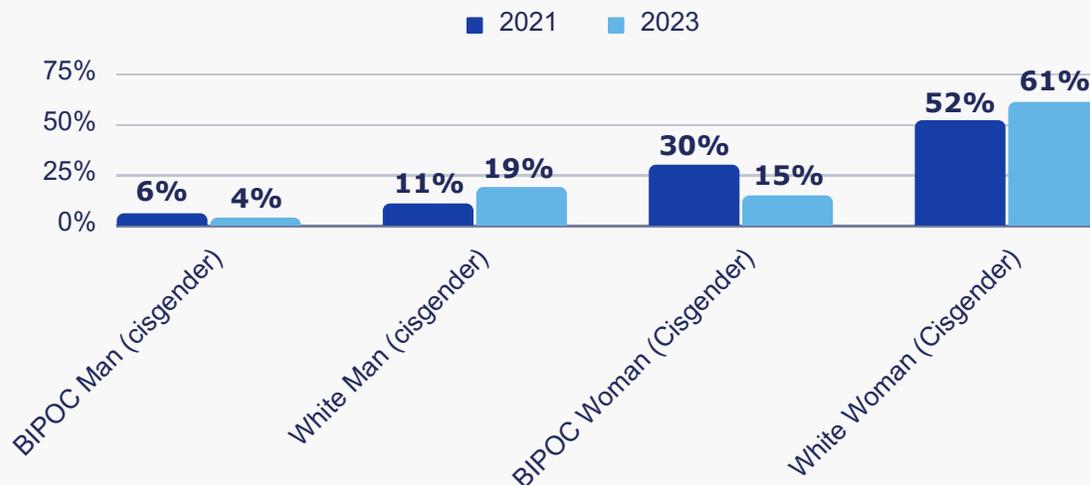
However, teams were significantly more diverse if the CSR leader was a person of color. In such cases, 88% responded that their teams were more than 25% diverse.

## To the best of your knowledge, how would you describe the racial demographics of your team?



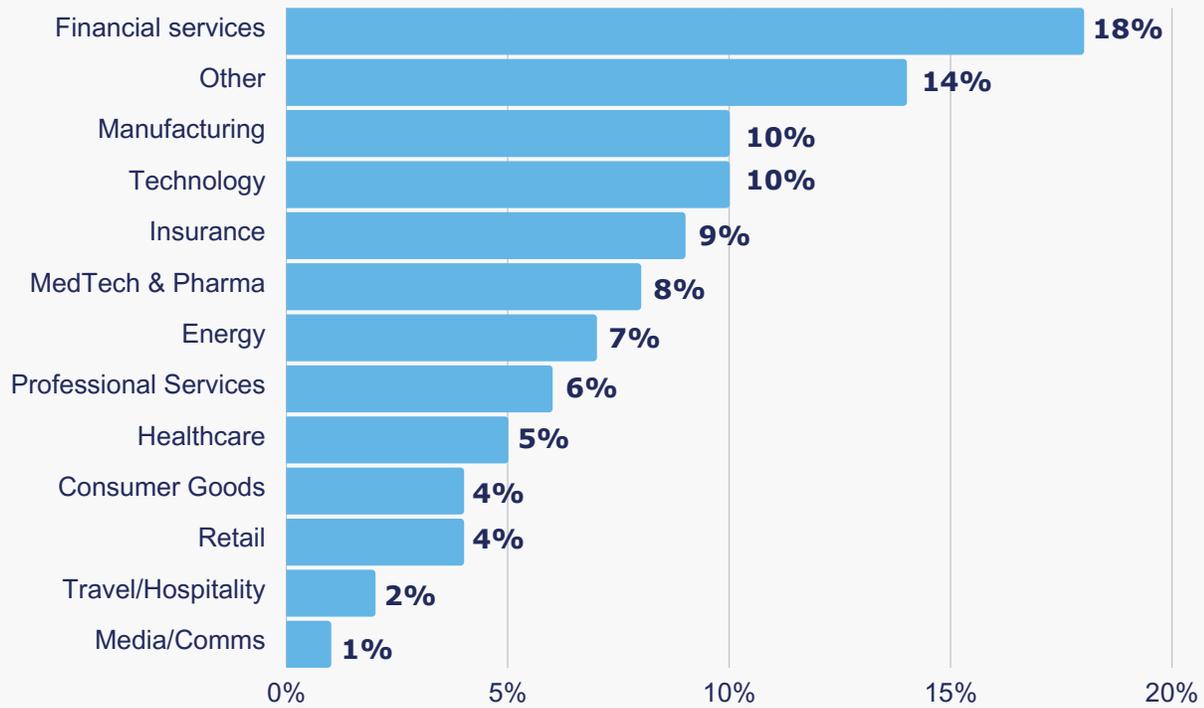
The diversity of CSR leaders is trending in the wrong direction. 61% of respondents indicated their CSR leader was a white woman, compared to 52% in 2021. Only 20% of survey respondents indicated their team was led by a BIPOC individual, compared to 36% in ACCP’s 2021 [Advancing Equity in the Corporate Social Impact Profession](#) report.

## To the best of your knowledge, how would you describe the head of your CSR team?



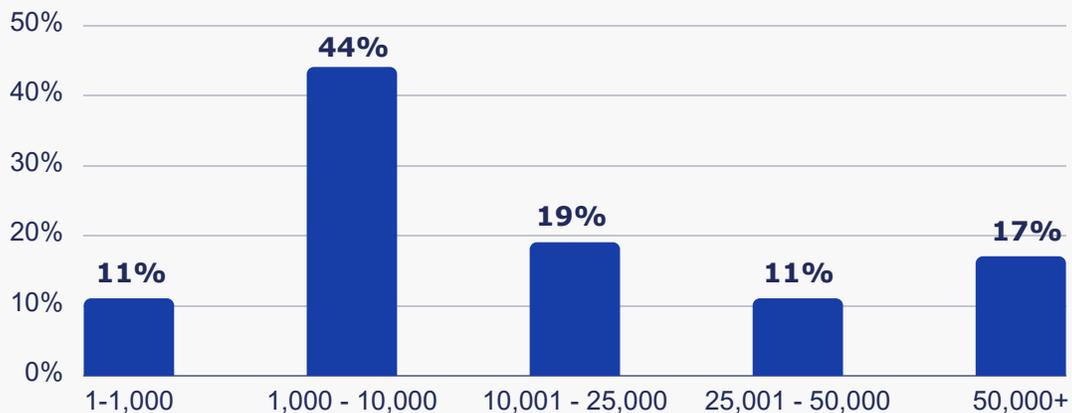
## Industries Represented

### What industry do you work in?



## Company Size

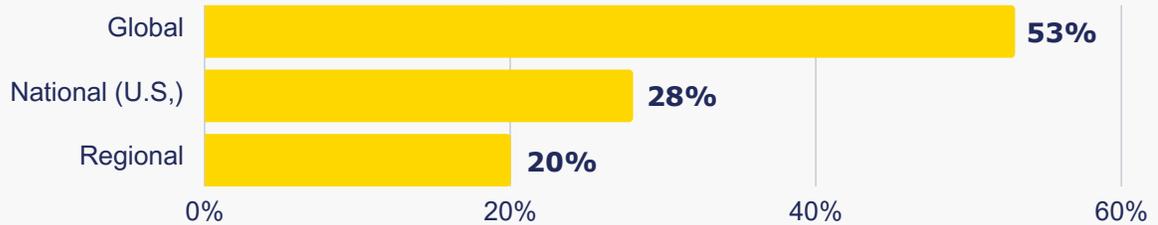
### How many employees does your company have?



## Geographic Footprint

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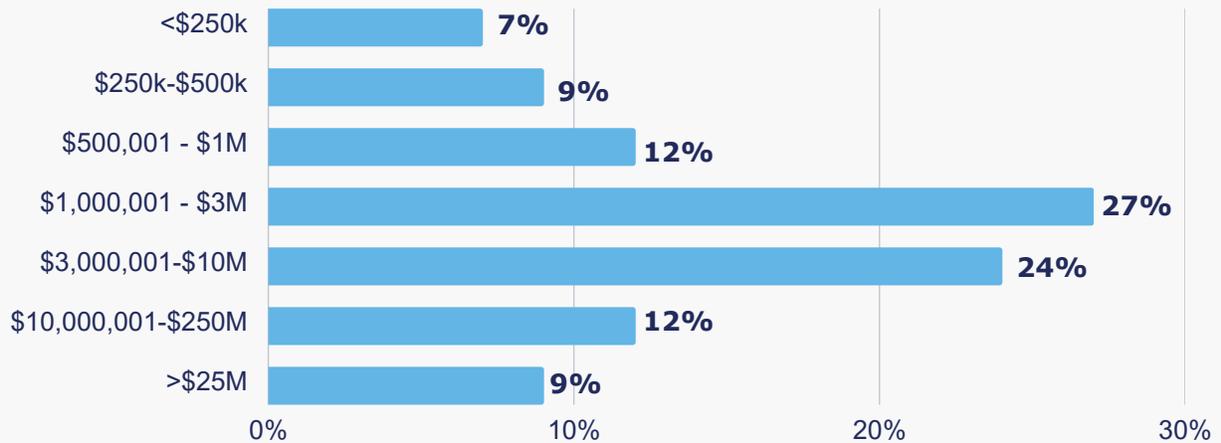
### Describe your company's footprint



## Size of Grant Budgets

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### What is your annual budget for grants and community investments?



# Appendix

## **Links to studies referenced in this report**

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[11th Annual Report on Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Engagement Trends](#), YourCause by Blackbaud

[2020 CSR Insights Survey](#), ACCP

[2021 CSR Insights Survey](#), ACCP

[2022 CSR Insights Survey](#), ACCP

[Advancing Equity in the Corporate Social Impact Profession 2021](#), ACCP

[Giving in Numbers 2020](#), CECP

[Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Engagement Report](#), YourCause from Blackbaud

[Making the Case for Corporate Social Impact toolkit](#), ACCP



### **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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