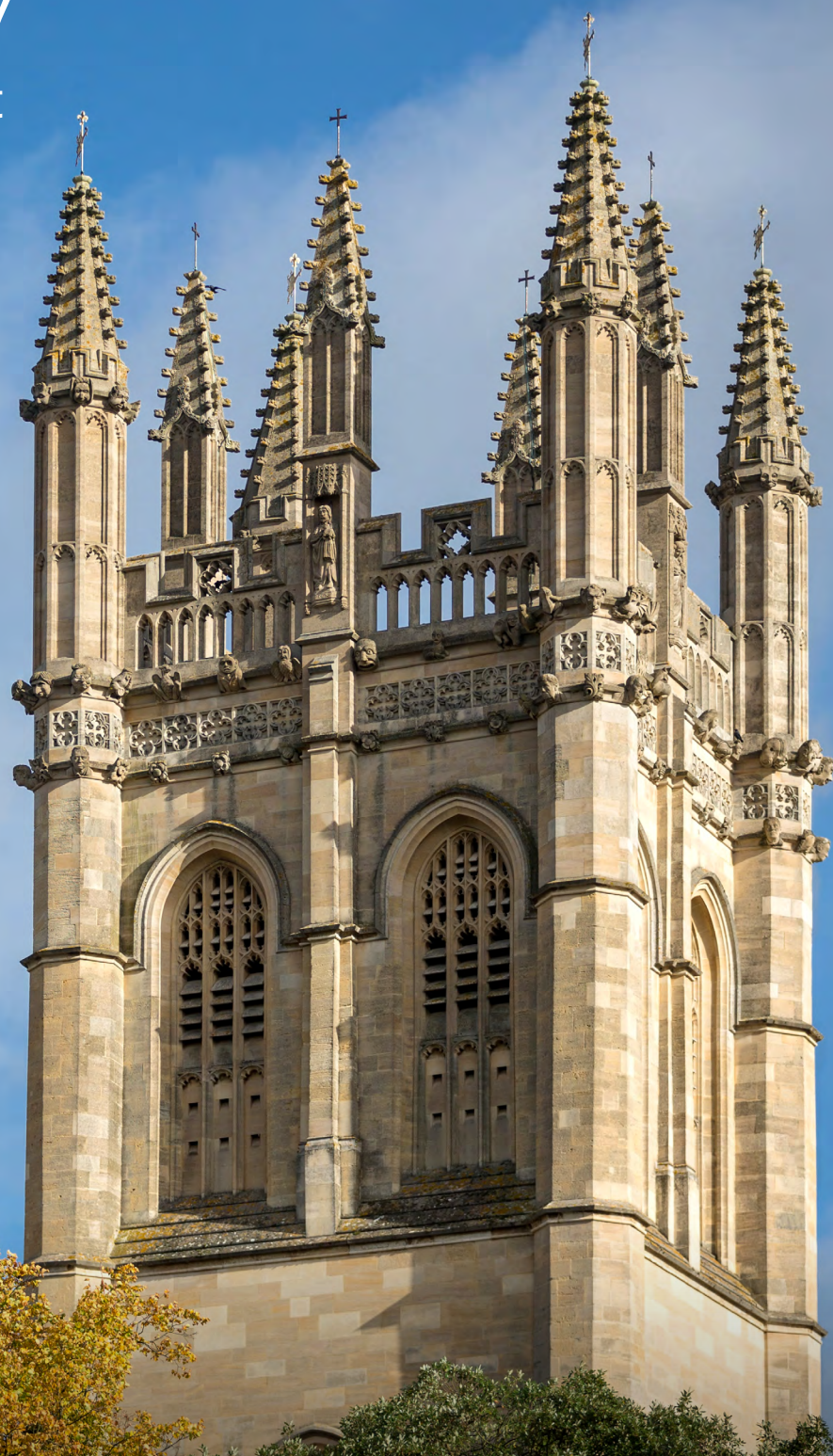


Oxford-GlobeScan

Global Corporate Affairs Survey

2025 Survey Report



Contents

1. About the Oxford-Globescan Corporate Affairs Initiative

This is the sixth annual Oxford-GlobeScan Global Corporate Affairs Survey Report which provides the latest overview of opinions, trends, and challenges through the lens of Corporate Affairs practitioners. This report captures the views and insights of 245 senior professionals who were surveyed between February and March 2025 on issues and themes of relevance to the function.

The University of Oxford and GlobeScan formalised a partnership in 2019 to deliver enhanced insight into the roles, responsibilities, challenges, opportunities, and themes facing leading global Corporate Affairs professionals around the world. The primary purpose of the partnership is to generate valuable research findings for organisations, senior executives, and Corporate Affairs leaders through a regular 'pulse' of novel, timely, and data-driven insights about the evolution of the Corporate Affairs agenda.

Oxford University's Saïd Business School is home to the Corporate Affairs Academy ('the Academy'). Each year, the Academy invites leaders from the Corporate Affairs, Corporate Responsibility, Corporate Communications, Community Engagement, and Investor Relations functions of major corporations around the world to discuss critical trends, themes, and insights of relevance to organisational stakeholder engagement. By way of example, over the last five years, discussion threads have emerged around organisational purpose, stakeholder engagement, corporate activism, and advocacy. In the first 12 years since its founding in 2011, the Academy has hosted over 250 leading professionals from Asia-Pacific, China, Russia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Scandinavia, and the Americas. Each year the Academy publishes a summary of its discussions in a white paper which is available through the Corporate Affairs Academy website.

GlobeScan, a global insights and advisory consultancy, was established in 1987 and has offices in Cape Town, Hong Kong, Hyderabad, London, Paris, San Francisco, São Paulo, Singapore, and Toronto. GlobeScan works at the intersection of trust, sustainability, and engagement.

GlobeScan partners with leading businesses, NGOs, and governmental organisations to deliver insights that guide decision-making and build strategies that contribute to a sustainable and equitable world. In 2016, GlobeScan launched a platform of research and engagement amongst leading Corporate Affairs directors that provides deep insight and expertise on the issues and trends affecting the Corporate Affairs and Corporate Communications functions globally.

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July 2025



2. Executive summary

These are the key findings of the 2025 Oxford-GlobeScan Global Corporate Affairs Survey:

Geopolitical risk remains the dominant concern for Corporate Affairs professionals.

Since 2020, geopolitical instability has consistently topped the risk agenda. In 2025, 76 percent of Corporate Affairs practitioners ranked it as their top concern, up from 47 percent five years ago. Drivers include ongoing conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, rising East–West tensions, and renewed populism, including Donald Trump’s return to the presidency and new tariffs. This anxiety is especially acute in regions and sectors heavily impacted by global trade and regulation.

Macroeconomic instability and regulatory uncertainty are rising in importance.

Political divisions over the role of business and the increased use of tariffs have contributed to macroeconomic volatility becoming the second most-cited risk. Regulatory pressures have also surged, especially in Europe, where standardisation and compliance expectations are tightening. These changes are reshaping the risk landscape across industries and geographies.

AI and innovation remains the strongest short-term opportunity.

Corporate Affairs practitioners view emerging technologies, particularly AI, as essential for maintaining competitiveness, improving efficiency, and future-proofing operations, although functional usage is still basic and tactical. Sustainable growth strategies have also gained traction, rising in priority across all regions. Meanwhile, economic growth and upliftment has climbed significantly, showing that businesses still aim to drive impact despite global turbulence.

ESG priorities are shifting under political pressure, especially in Western markets.

Climate change, diversity and inclusion, and governance still top the ESG agenda, but a split is emerging. Some companies are stepping back from public DEI commitments due to populist backlash, while others are doubling down. Political and regulatory shifts have elevated governance as a reputational risk, especially in Asia-Pacific and Latin America. Meanwhile, corporate advocacy on societal issues is in decline, particularly in North America.

Corporate Affairs is refocusing on trust, stakeholder engagement, and reputation strategies.

In response to growing uncertainty and political polarisation, the function is returning to human-centred fundamentals like direct stakeholder engagement and proactive communication. Stakeholder mapping, prioritising, and building relationships are becoming central responsibilities. Corporate Affairs teams are increasingly collaborating with senior leaders, especially the CEO and Board, but continue to face challenges in clearly articulating their value to the broader business.

3. Political and economic disruptions abound

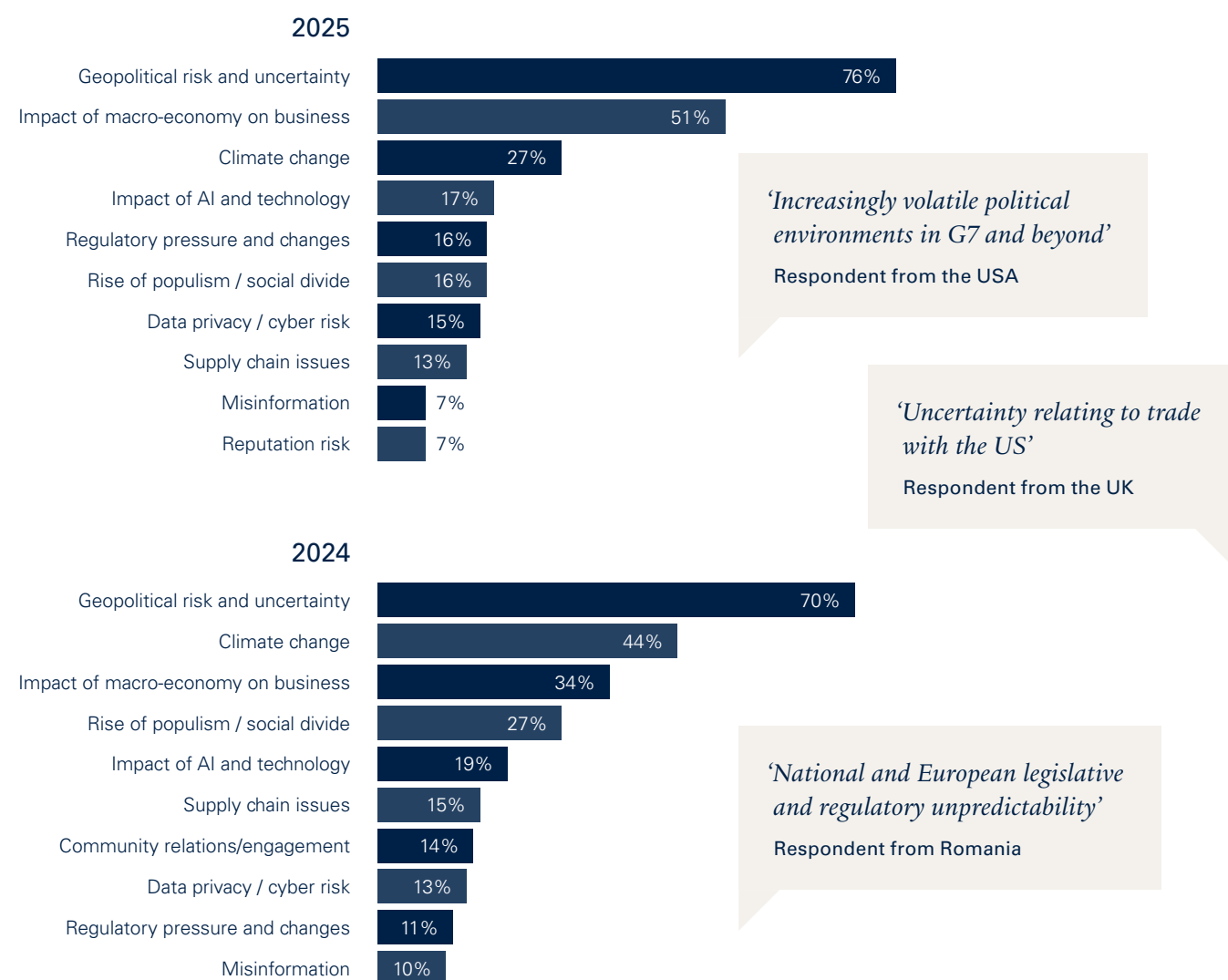
3.1 The risks

Since the first survey in 2020, geopolitical risk and uncertainty has consistently ranked as the top concern for Corporate Affairs professionals, except in 2021 when ESG performance took precedence. An evolving landscape marked by conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, intensifying East–West tensions, shifting global alliances, rising social inequality, and the growth of populist movements has fostered a climate of deep unease. As the Corporate Affairs function becomes ever more central in capturing both global and local sentiment, geopolitical risk continues to dominate. The return of President Donald Trump to the White House – alongside a surge of unprecedented tariffs prior to this year’s survey – has further amplified these concerns. The proportion of respondents identifying geopolitical risk as the top issue has surged from 47 percent in 2020 to 76 percent in 2025, making it the clear frontrunner for the most significant risk over the next two years.

With geopolitical risk and uncertainty standing out as the dominant issue, respondents also report a sharp rise in related concerns. Macroeconomic instability is now the second most-cited risk, reflecting growing political divisions over the role of business and the expanded use of tariffs as a policy tool. Regulatory pressures and changes have also increased in prominence, rising from ninth place last year to fifth place among the most anticipated risks over the next two years.

Concerns about environmental degradation and its influence on business sentiment remain closely connected. Meanwhile, the sharp decline in mentions of populism and social division suggests these forces are no longer viewed as emerging trends but rather as established realities that are now reflected in the dominant risks shaping the agenda. (See Figure 1.)



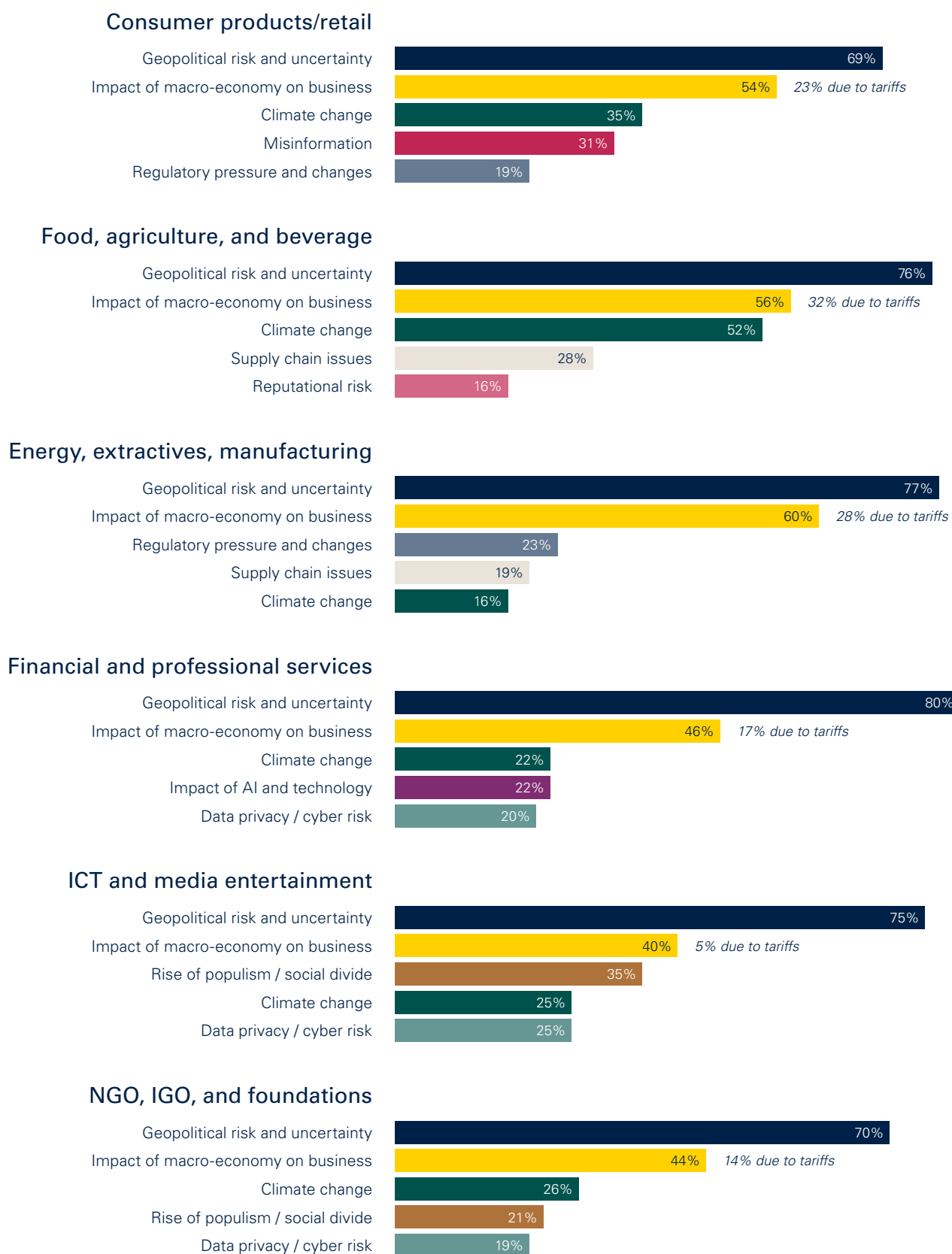
Figure 1**Short-term risks to global business as identified by Corporate Affairs professionals***Open-ended, re-coded, total mentions, 2024–2025*Q40. What are the biggest risks for global businesses over the next two years? (2024 $n=227$; 2025 $n=245$)

Notably, geopolitical risk ranks as the top short-term threat to global business in every region except North America, where macroeconomic conditions are viewed as the most pressing risk. This divergence suggests that North American companies have come to accept domestic volatility as a given and are already focused on managing its impacts.

Across all sectors, geopolitical risk and macroeconomic disruption emerge as the leading concerns. Industries such as energy, extractives, manufacturing, and food, agriculture, and beverage are particularly exposed, primarily due to tariffs on agricultural products and critical raw materials like steel. (See Figure 2.)

Climate change ranks as the third most-pressing concern in every region except Asia-Pacific, where respondents express comparatively higher concern about the impact of AI and emerging technologies. Regulatory pressures are also rising, most notably in Europe, and are likely driven by increasing EU standardisation and oversight. A similar pattern is seen in the energy, extractives, and manufacturing sector. While supply chain disruptions that dominated in previous years now seem distant, this may resurface in the coming year as the effects of new US tariffs begin to take hold.

Figure 2
Short-term risks for Corporate Affairs vary across sectors
Open-ended, total mentions, by sector, 2025



3.2 The opportunities

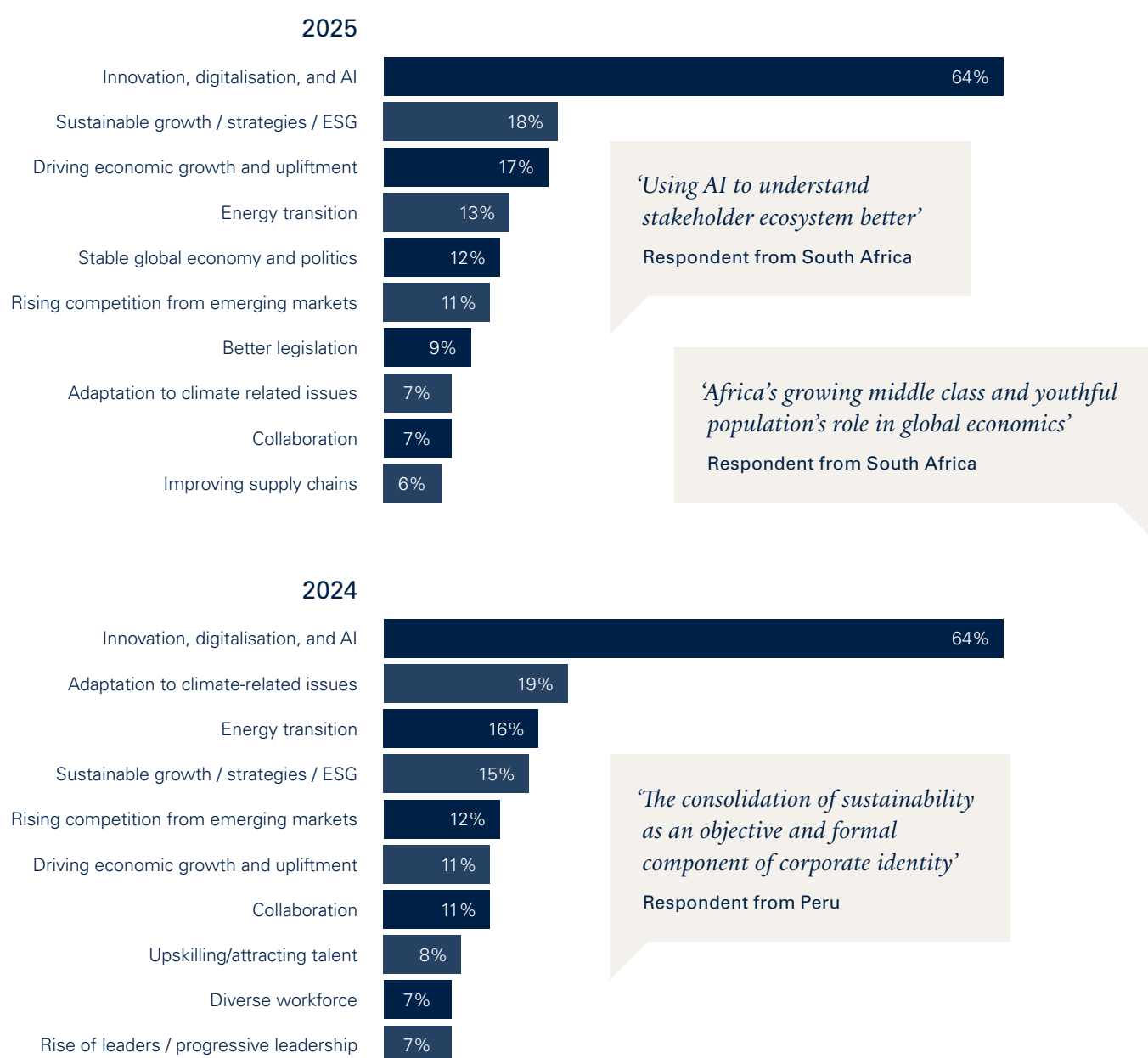
Corporate Affairs respondents see the greatest opportunities for business over the next two years in three key areas: leveraging innovation and AI, advancing sustainable growth strategies, and contributing to economic growth and upliftment

(defined here as creating inclusive growth and improving livelihoods). Innovation and AI has been firmly established as the most prominent opportunity, and is viewed as an essential tool for competitiveness, efficiency, and future readiness. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3

Short-term opportunities for global business as identified by Corporate Affairs professionals

Open-ended, re-coded, total mentions, 2024–2025



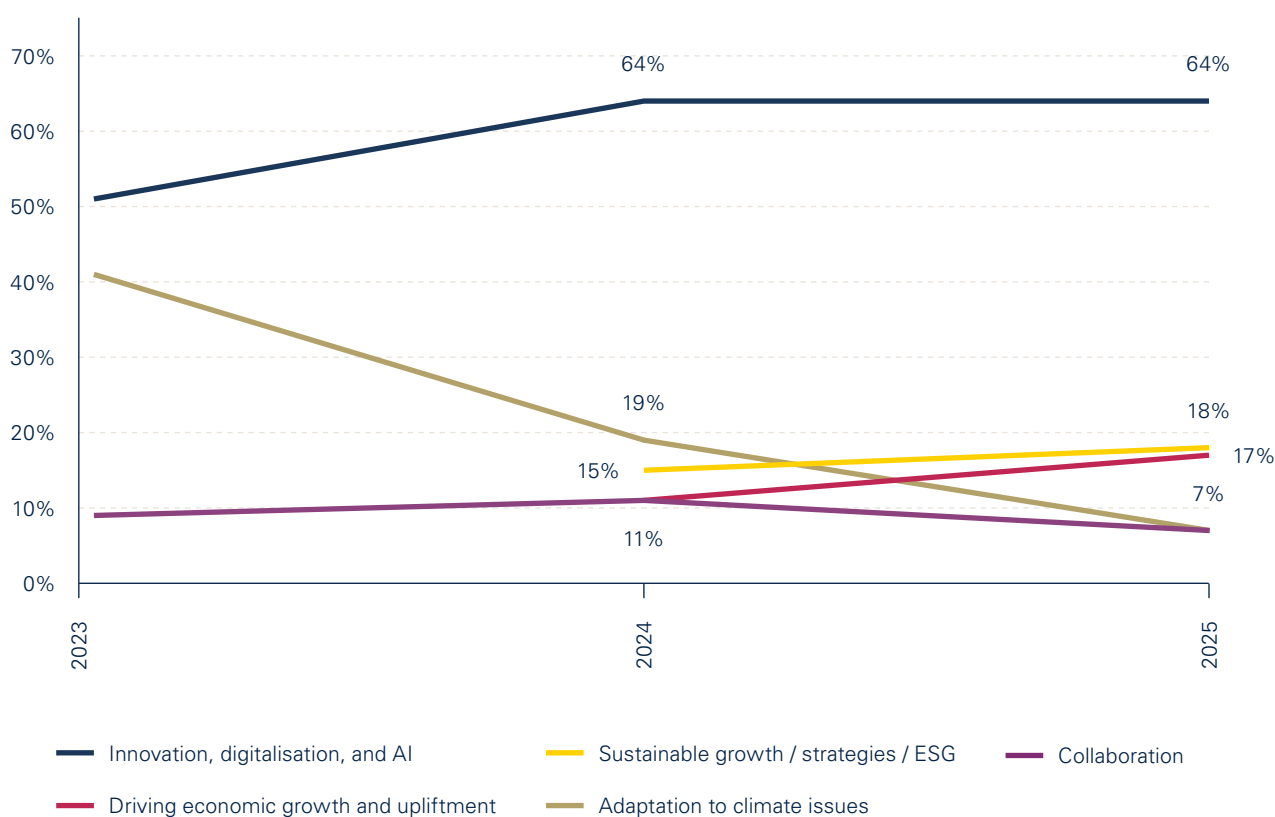
Sustainable growth strategies have risen to become the second most-significant short-term opportunity for global business, up from fourth place last year. Meanwhile, the focus on driving economic growth and upliftment has grown substantially, increasing from 11 percent in 2024 to 17 percent in 2025. Despite ongoing global turbulence due to the isolationist policy approach enacted by the

Trump administration, growth and societal upliftment remains firmly on the business agenda.

In contrast, adaptation to climate change – previously a top priority – has seen a sharp decline in prominence, falling to eighth place this year after ranking second in both 2023 and 2024. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4
Short-term opportunities for global business

Open-ended, total mentions, 2023–2025



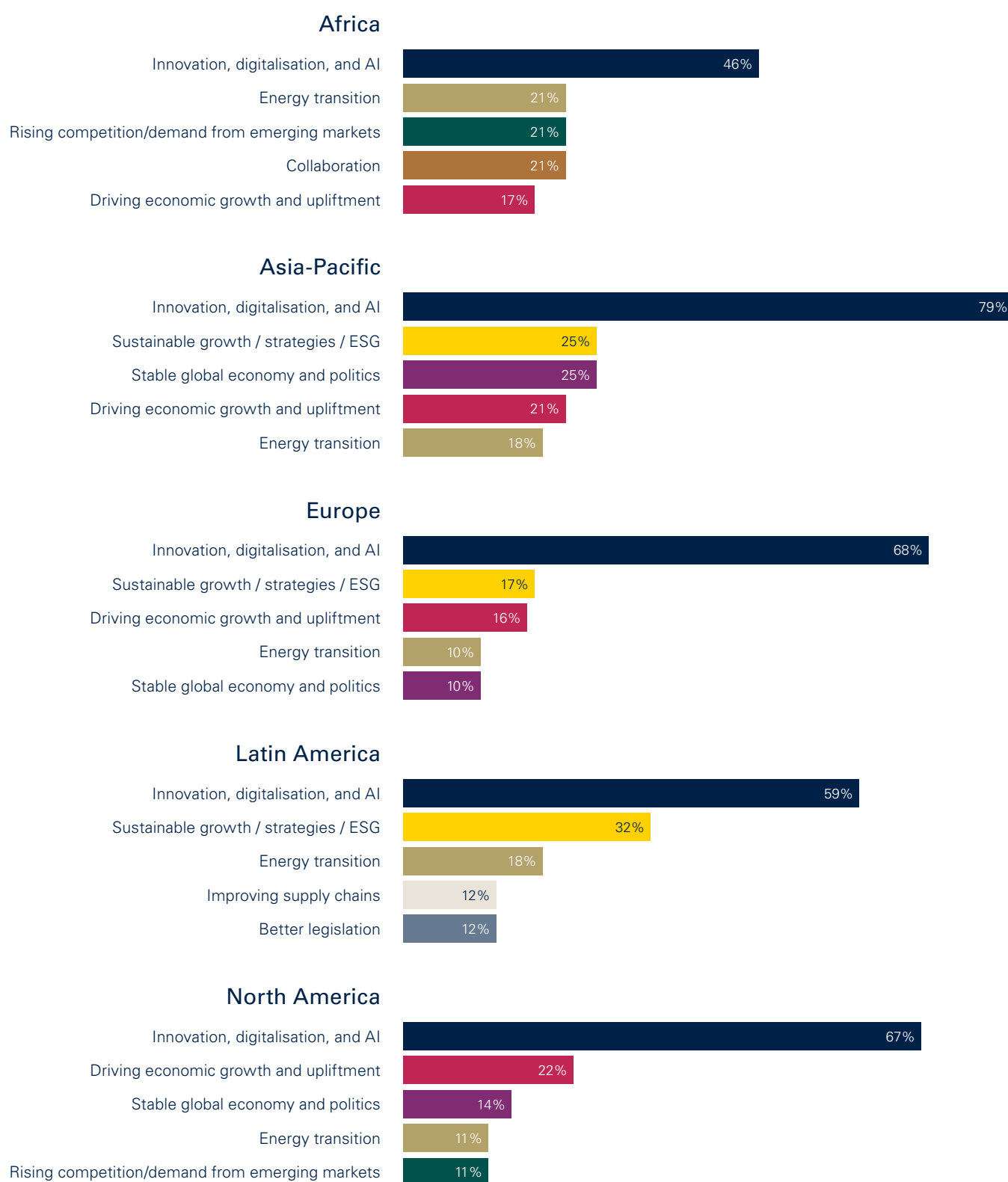
Q41. What are the biggest opportunities for global businesses over the next two years? (2023 n=109; 2024 n=227; 2025 n=245)

Adaptation to climate change, however, remains a key opportunity in the food, agriculture, and beverage sector, as well as in energy, extractives, manufacturing, and in ICT and media entertainment.

Across all regions, innovation, digitalisation, and AI stands out as the top opportunity, as well as among all sectors. Sustainable growth strategies and ESG ranks second in Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Latin America.

In Africa, energy transition is viewed as the second most-important opportunity, while collaboration, at 21 percent, is viewed significantly more positively on the continent. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5
Short-term opportunities for global business vary across sectors
Open-ended, total mentions, by sector, 2025



Q41. What are the biggest opportunities for global businesses over the next two years? (n=245)

4. ESG, changing political winds, and reputation risk

Nowhere are the effects of the heightened political and economic pressures more strongly felt than in the broad area captured under Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG). Often mischaracterised as a catch-all for ideological agendas, ESG remains an important proxy for understanding the broader context in which businesses operate and how they develop strategies and behaviours. As in previous years, we invited Corporate Affairs practitioners to assess these issues and their own activities.

4.1 DEI as rising ESG concern

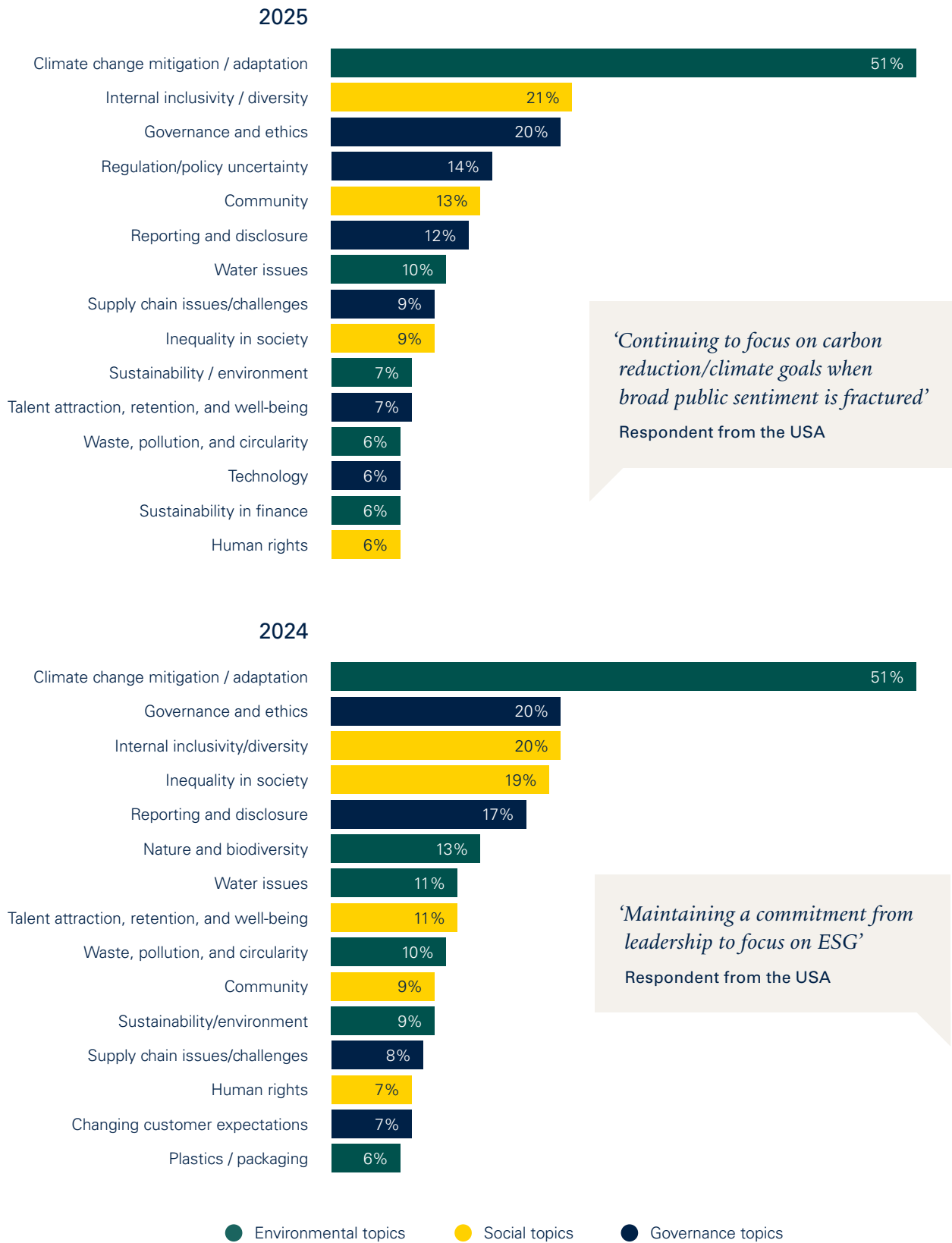
In this year's survey, climate change remains the leading ESG concern, followed closely by inclusivity and diversity within organisations, and governance and ethics. While these top three issues are consistent with last year's findings, their order has shifted, with inclusivity and diversity rising from third place to second place.

This shift is particularly striking given the recent deprioritisation of DEI programmes by some companies in response to growing populist and political pressures and highlights an emerging divergence: some organisations are retreating from public DEI commitments while others are actively reaffirming their stance, signalling a split in how companies navigate values-led expectations in an increasingly polarised environment. (See Figure 6.)

4.2 Uncertainty defines reputation risk landscape

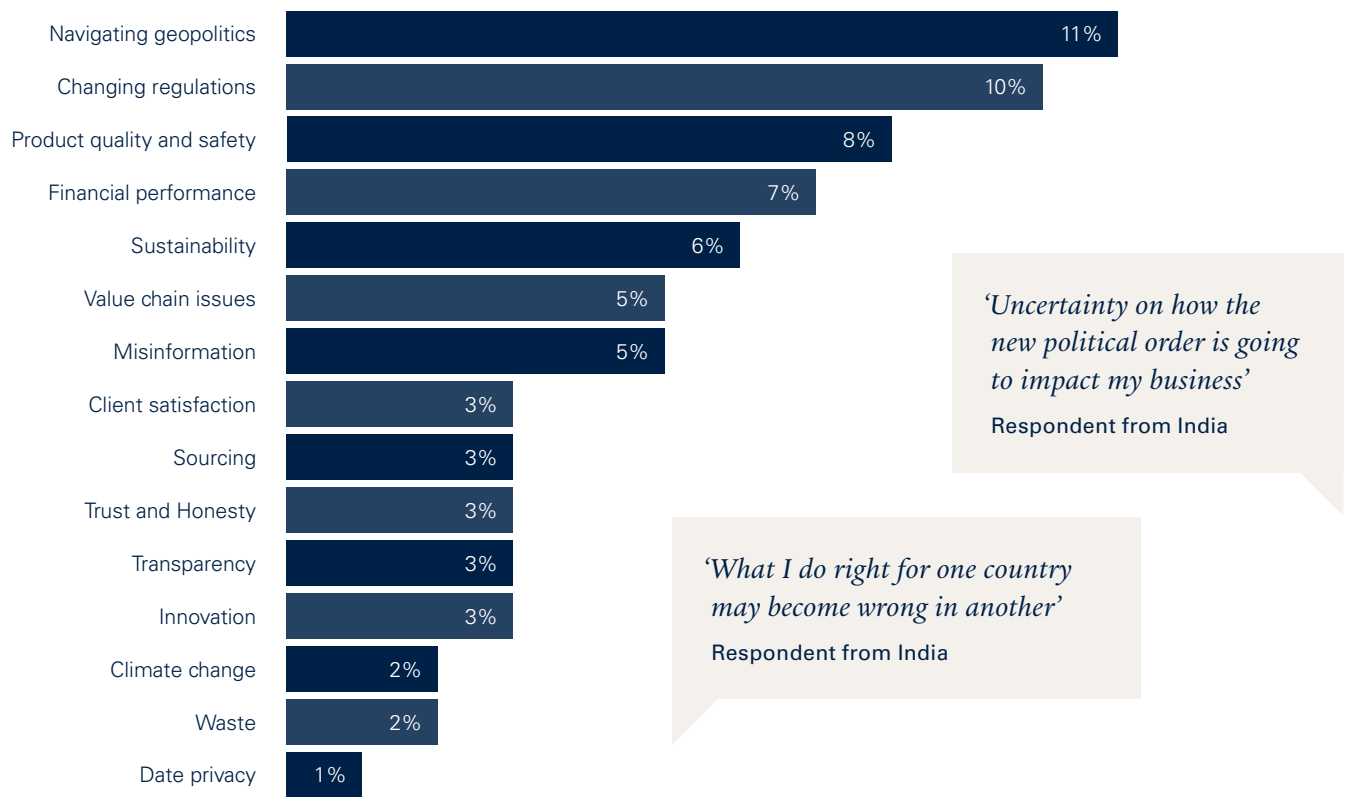
In the 2025 survey we introduced a new question aimed at understanding what is seen as key reputational risks. Regulation and policy uncertainty, alongside navigating geopolitics, are seen as growing sources of reputational risk, underscoring how shifting policy landscapes are adding to the complexity that Corporate Affairs leaders must manage. (See Figure 6.1.)



Figure 6**Top ESG issues for your organisation***Open-ended, total mentions, top 15, 2024–2025*

Q1.3. There is ongoing discussion on ESG (environment, social, and governance) issues for business. What are the top ESG issues for your organisation? Please list up to three ESG issues. (2024 $n=227$; 2025 $n=245$)

Figure 6.1
Top issues affecting your company's reputation
Open-ended, total mentions, 2025



Q53. What are the top issues affecting your company's reputation? (2025 n=245)

In fact, governance now ranks as the greatest reputational risk to business overall in the ESG agenda, rising from last place in 2024. This increase has been most pronounced in Asia-Pacific and Latin America, where regional shifts are sharpening the focus on ethics, accountability, and board oversight. (See Figure 7.)

4.3 Rise of populism impacts corporate advocacy

To better understand these shifting priorities, it is important to look at the broader context. Since 2020, the perception that political populism poses a risk to business had been steadily rising. Interestingly, this concern has grown for business in general but fewer respondents this year view it as a high-level threat to their own organisations. This could indicate that more and more, business is building up their own resilience. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 7

Perceptions of environmental, social, and governance in terms of reputational risks

Highest reputational risk, given top ranking, by region, 2024–2025

Global ranking ESG for reputational risk

2024		2025	
1. Environment	(39%)	1. Governance	(35%)
2. Social	(31%)	2. Environment	(34%)
3. Governance	(29%)	3. Social	(27%)

Africa

2024		2025	
1. Social	(44%)	1. Social	(38%)
2. Governance	(31%)	2. Governance	(33%)
3. Environment	(25%)	3. Environment	(29%)

Asia-Pacific

2024		2025	
1. Environment	(39%)	1. Governance	(46%)
2. Social	(32%)	2. Environment	(32%)
3. Governance	(29%)	3. Social	(14%)

Europe

2024		2025	
1. Environment	(47%)	1. Environment	(36%)
2. Governance	(28%)	2. Governance	(32%)
3. Social	(24%)	3. Social	(27%)

Latin America

2024		2025	
1. Environment	(38%)	1. Governance	(38%)
2. Social	(34%)	2. Environment	(29%)
3. Governance	(28%)	3. Social	(29%)

North America

2024		2025	
1. Governance	(34%)	1. Governance	(36%)
2. Environment	(32%)	2. Environment	(33%)
3. Social	(29%)	3. Social	(22%)

Q1.4. Please rank Environment, Social, and Governance from highest to lowest in terms of reputational risk to your business. (2024 *n*=227; 2025 *n*=233)

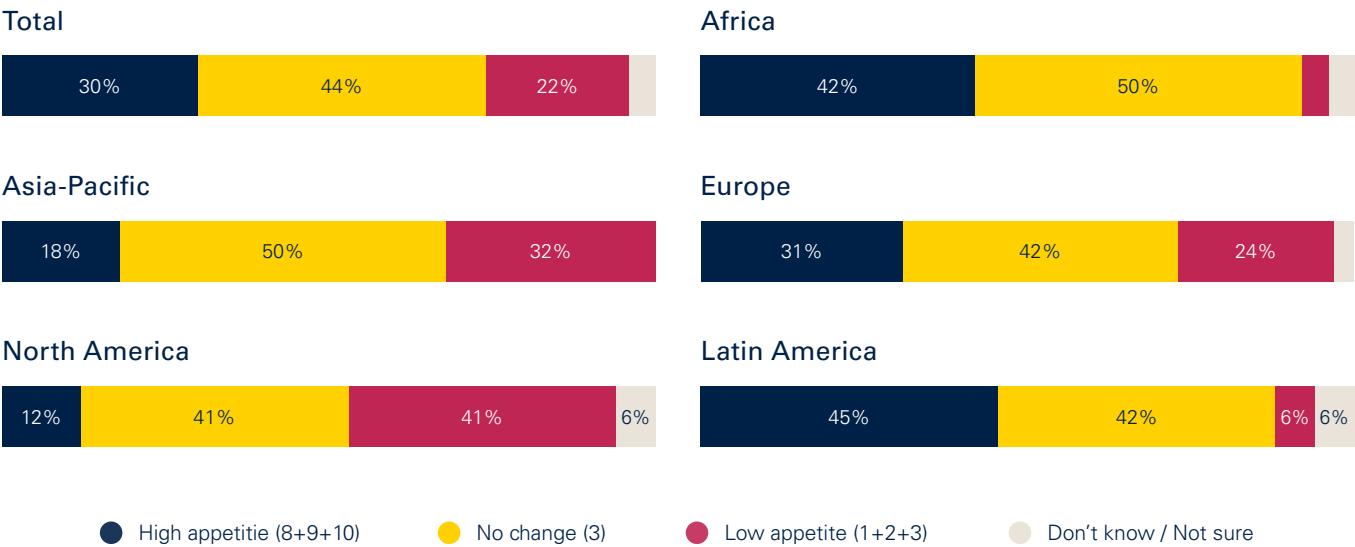
Figure 8**Business risk of political populism***'Highest risk' (6+7 on a 7-point scale), 2020–2025*

Q2.1. There has been increasing attention paid to political populism across the world, and to a growing trend toward polarisation within society. To what extent do you consider this evolution to be a risk for: a) business in general, b) your company specifically? (2020: $n=195$; 2021: $n=228$; 2022: $n=221$; 2023: $n=109$; 2024: $n=227$; 2025: $n=244$)

At the same time, there has been a notable decline in the appetite for corporate advocacy. Since 2022, enthusiasm for businesses taking public positions on societal issues has waned, with only three in ten companies now reporting a strong appetite to engage. This hesitancy is most pronounced in North America, where only 12 percent of respondents support strong corporate advocacy, a sharp contrast with Latin America at 45 percent. (See Figure 9.)

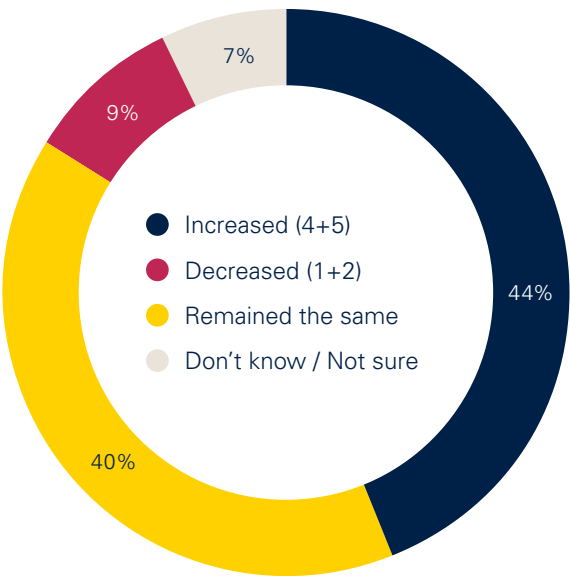
Within this, some interesting sub-themes emerge. Corporate involvement in advocacy is becoming more polarised. Since 2023, there has been a simultaneous increase in both high and low levels of activity, indicating a growing divide in corporate strategies. Among those actively engaging, the most commonly planned advocacy efforts are centred on social issues, particularly health, wellbeing, and inequality. While environmental themes continue to be important, there is now a more even distribution across ESG priorities, with governance themes – especially around regulation – receiving increased attention.

Figure 9
Appetite for corporate advocacy
10-point scale, by region, 2025



Q2.3_1. How would you describe your organisation's appetite for corporate advocacy (sometimes referred to as corporate activism) and their level of active involvement? – Appetite for corporate advocacy (2025 n=242)

Figure 10.
Change in level of engagement in political advocacy
5-point scale, 2025



Q2.10. Has your organisation's level of engagement in political advocacy changed in the last 12 months? (2025 n=243)

A new question in this year's survey further confirms this shift: nearly half of respondents report that their organisations have increased political advocacy efforts over the last year. However, regional differences remain stark. North America stands out with 20 percent of respondents noting a drop in such engagement, a significantly larger reduction than seen in any other region. (See Figure 10.)

With corporate activism declining compared to previous years, a key question arises: how is this shift playing out across the companies' approach to sustainability and ESG?

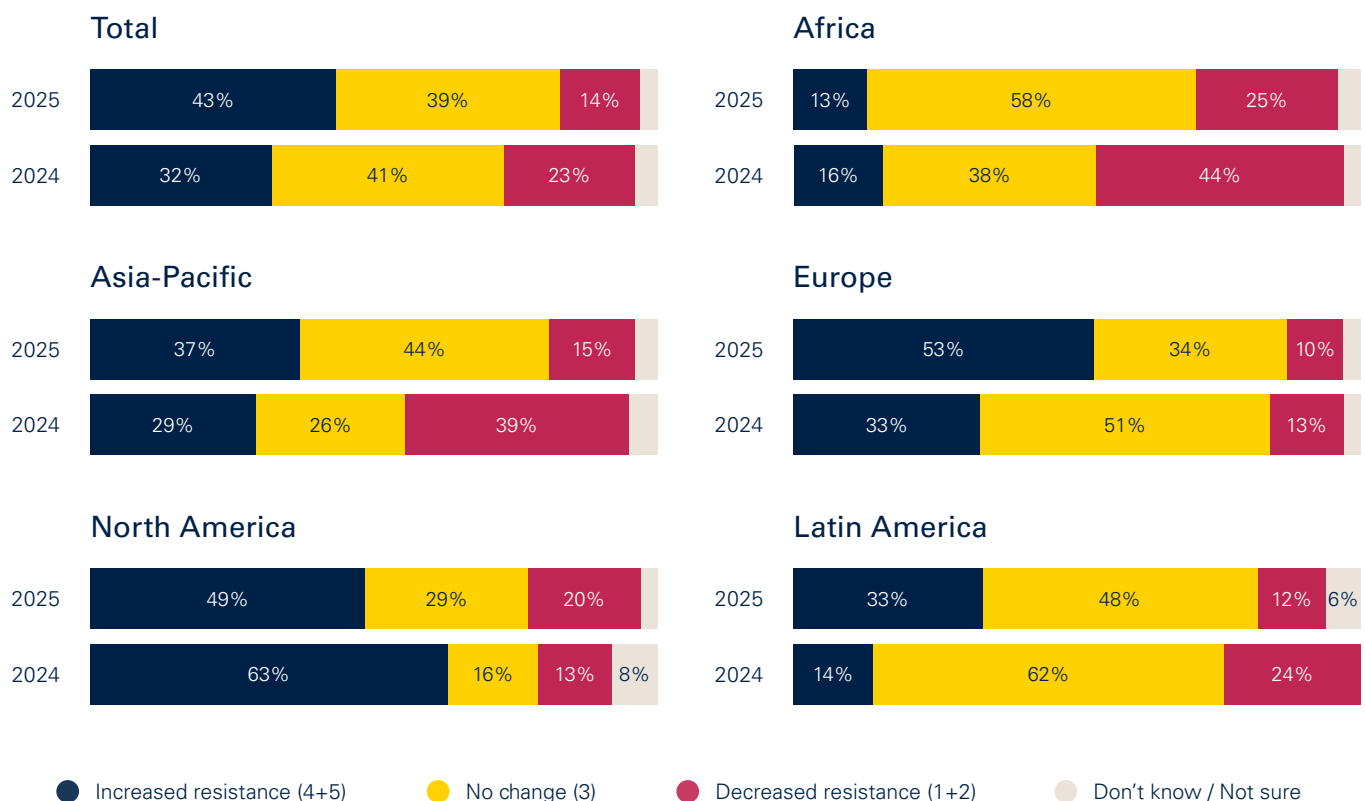
Between 2024 and 2025, corporate attitudes toward ESG have become more polarised, reflecting a growing

influence of political dynamics. While backlash against ESG has intensified in some regions, particularly in Europe and North America, other regions have experienced little to no change. This divergence signals that while ESG is increasingly contested, the backlash is far from universal. (See Figure 11.)

Figure 11

Degree to which Corporate Affairs professionals experience resistance against ESG in their region

5-point scale, by region, 2024–2025



Q23.5. Looking again at the last 12 months, are you seeing more resistance against ESG in your region? (2024 *n*=227; 2025 *n*=238)

4.4 Shifts in ESG commitments and communications

Political pressure appears to be a significant driver behind these shifts. In North America, for instance, half of the companies surveyed report a scaling back of their ESG commitments. In contrast, companies in Africa and Asia-Pacific have largely held firm, and in some cases, have strengthened their commitments, showing resilience in the face of political headwinds.

This politicisation has also reshaped the way companies communicate about ESG. Although ESG-related messaging has not disappeared, the pace has slowed, especially in Europe and

North America where increased scrutiny and heightened political sensitivities have led to a notable decline in external communications.

Perhaps the most revealing shift lies in how companies now perceive the value of ESG. While optimism remains strong in Africa, where nine in ten companies still view ESG as a strategic opportunity, sentiment in Europe and North America has cooled. In both regions, fewer companies now see ESG as a business opportunity, with an increasing proportion viewing it either as a risk or a neutral consideration. (See Figure 12.)

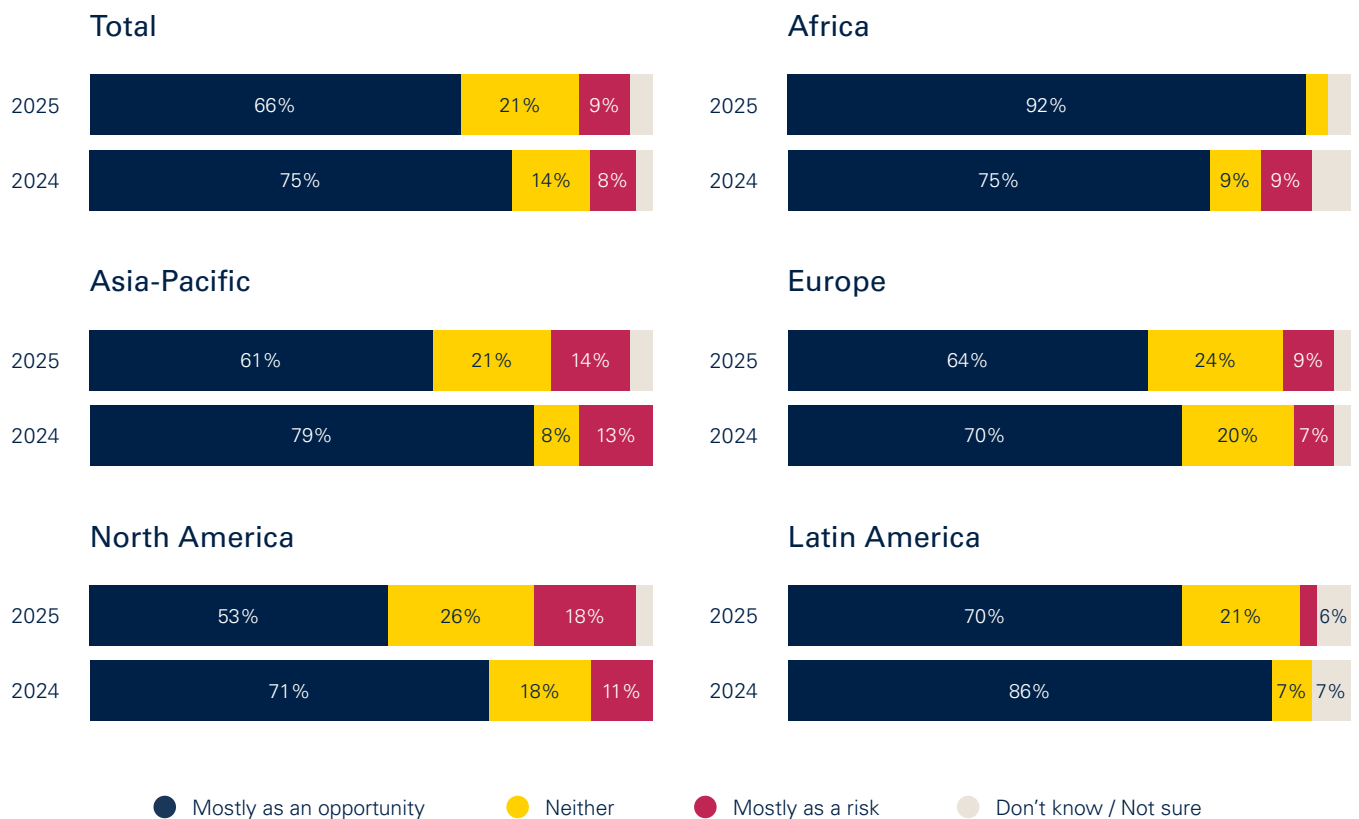
In summary, ESG continues to be a central yet increasingly complex domain for Corporate Affairs. Regional disparities are deepening, and political pressures are reshaping both strategy and storytelling.

In this evolving context, companies may need to adopt more tailored and region-sensitive approaches to ESG in the years ahead.

Figure 12

Organisations viewing ESG commitments as a risk or an opportunity

3-point scale, by region, 2024–2025



Q23.6. Does your organisation view ESG commitments as a risk or an opportunity? (2024 $n=227$; 2025 $n=241$)

5. Corporate purpose remains a North Star

In recent years, a clearly defined corporate purpose has become a critical unifying force across strategy, culture, operations, and societal engagement. However, even before the disruptive return of Donald Trump and his so-called ‘Liberation Day,’ rising populist pressure was already beginning to test companies’ confidence in purpose-led positioning. For some, this has meant quietly pulling back from DEI commitments and societal advocacy, while for others, it has prompted a renewed commitment. But is this the case in reality?

5.1 Corporate purpose continues to be a Top Table agenda point

The evidence from this year’s survey, however, shows that notwithstanding political pressures and changing landscapes, corporate purpose remains a topic of discussion at the executive level. Nearly half of Corporate Affairs practitioners (45 percent) indicate that they are having increased discussion around corporate purpose at the top table of their organisations. A further nearly 40 percent state that the level of discussion is the same now as it was a year ago – confirming that eight in ten organisations continue to have purpose as an agenda item. (See Figure 13.)

Of the 10 percent who mention that corporate purpose is less of an agenda point today compared to a year ago, the main explanation is that the changing political

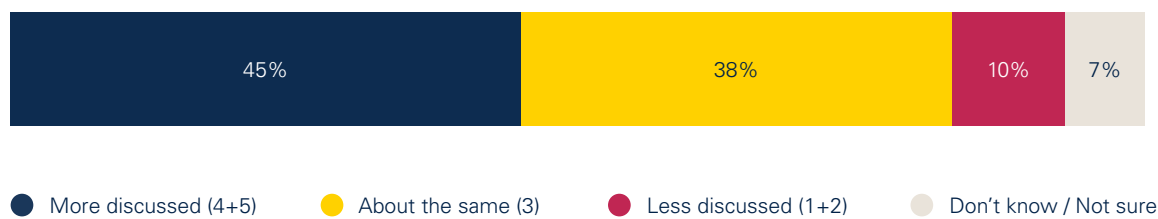
and economic environment has led them to reconsider the importance of purpose and that they would rather focus on day-to-day operational issues. The percentage of companies that are questioning the value of being a purpose-led business is small.

When one analyses the reason behind the nearly 80 percent who say that corporate purpose is very much an on-going agenda item in their businesses, a few themes arise. Corporate purpose is seen to play an essential role in ensuring strategic alignment with business strategy and as such is seen as the guiding principle or North Star for the business especially in times of political uncertainty. In a world of changing ESG priorities and the impact of market forces, being a purpose-driven organisation can be a differentiator in response to shifting consumer and investor expectations. It is also seen as a long-term differentiator that can be leveraged as a tool for resilience and innovation. Delivering on corporate purpose is also seen as a key component of trust-building strategies and is therefore seen as a driver of building trust with stakeholders.

Set against this trend, this year’s survey points to the perception by Corporate Affairs practitioners that stakeholder trust in their company is steadily rising, with the proportion holding this view having more than doubled since 2016. (See Figure 14.)

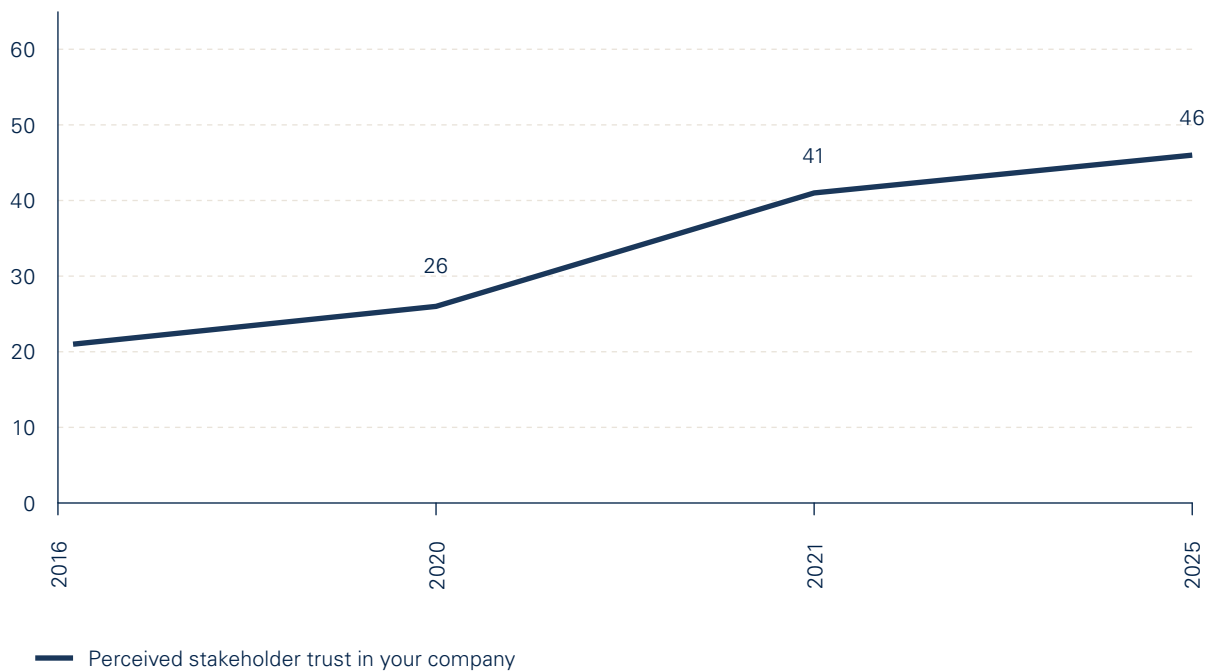
Figure 13
Corporate purpose remains a discussion at top table
5-point scale, 2025

Change in discussion about corporate purpose



Q48. Has corporate purpose become more or less discussed with your executive committee in the last 12 months or has it remained the same? (n=242)

Figure 14
Perceived stakeholder trust in your company
6+7 on a 7-point scale, 2016–2025

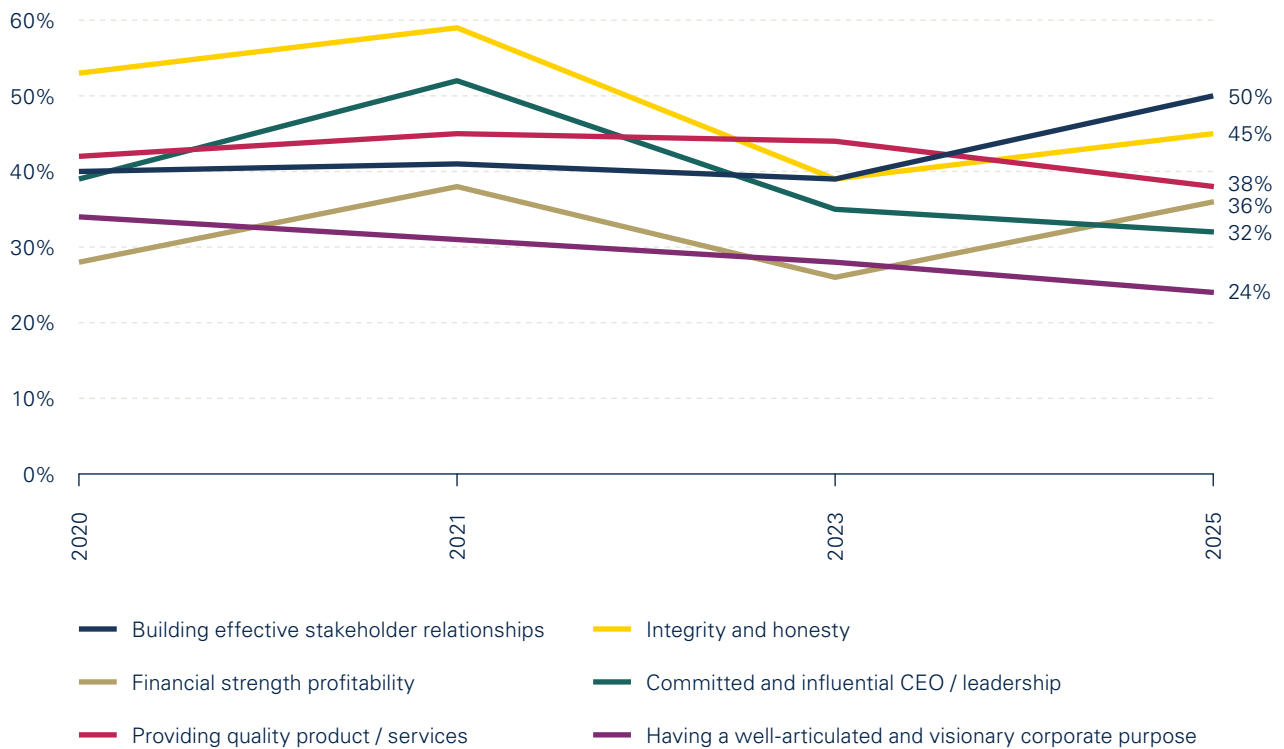


Q5. Public opinion research shows that multinational companies face a lack of trust. Overall, how much do you think your stakeholders trust your company to operate in the best interests of society today? (2020 *n*=201; 2021 *n*=228; 2025 *n*=245)

5.2 Stakeholder engagement is pivotal to trust-building

Trust is the most important currency of long-term corporate success. When asked what drives stakeholder trust, Corporate Affairs professionals point first to building effective stakeholder relationships, followed by integrity and honesty. After slipping in 2023, culture, values, and relationships have re-emerged as key contributors to trust. At the same time, respondents have reaffirmed that the most effective methods for building trust remain rooted in human interaction through open, in-person engagement and clear, consistent communication. (See Figure 15.)

These factors are at the heart of the Corporate Affairs function, which has grown in visibility and influence precisely because it understands that corporate reputation rests not only on what a company achieves, but how it achieves it. In a more polarised and scrutinised world, the authenticity of character, along with successful outcomes, is foundational to achieving and maintaining stakeholder trust over the long term. (See Figure 16.)

Figure 15**Drivers of trust in business***Drivers of trust in company, top five total mentions, 2020–2025*

Q6. What do you think drives trust in your company today? Please select up to five. (2020 n=202; 2021 n=228; 2023 n=109; 2025 n=244)

‘Going back to the basics, no matter what tools, apps or tech is in place, it will never beat a face-to-face engagement for building trust’

Respondent from Kenya

‘Instead of dialogue, focusing on listening and welcoming different groups’ voices’

Respondent from Brazil

‘Face-to-face meetings, consistency in approach and methodology, being truthful, direct, and honest about what can be done’

Respondent from Canada

Figure 16**Drivers of trust in business***Drivers of trust in company, top five, total mentions, 2020–2025*

Q6. What do you think drives trust in your company today? Please select up to five. (2020 $n=202$; 2021 $n=228$; 2023 $n=109$; 2025 $n=244$)

6. Building capacity: Evolution of the Corporate Affairs function

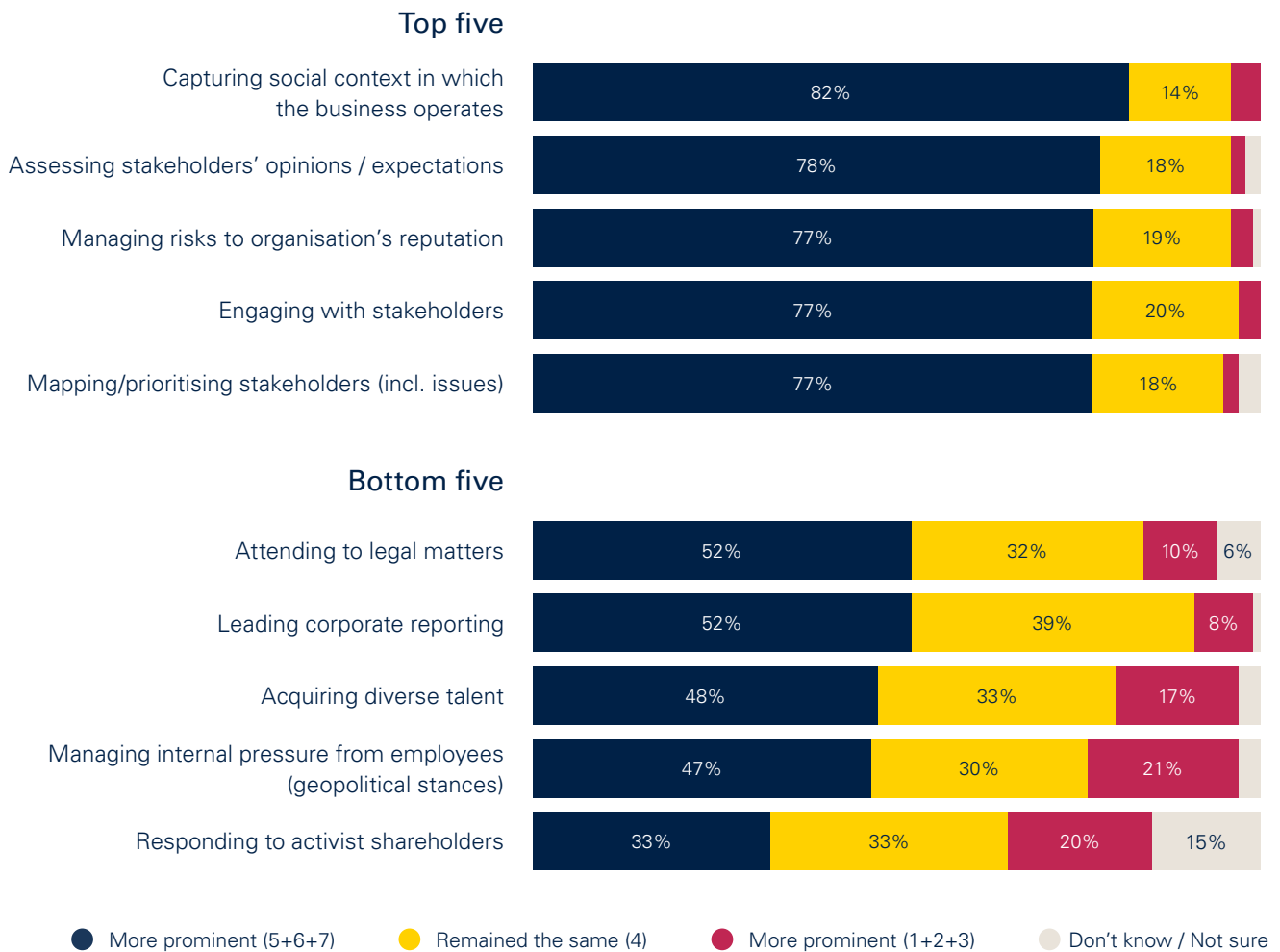
In a climate marked by uncertainty, rapid change, and increasing polarisation, Corporate Affairs professionals are increasingly being called upon to serve as the organisation's antennae, tuning into the external environment and translating reputational signals into meaningful action. The responses to questions about responsibilities, activities, and functional relationships this year reflect a clear shift: Corporate Affairs practitioners are returning to the fundamentals of stakeholder engagement.

6.1 A return to fundamentals

With trust under pressure and policy landscapes in flux, many Corporate Affairs teams are leaning into face-to-face interactions to provide reassurance and build credibility. This renewed emphasis on direct engagement is not only helping stakeholders feel heard and supported but is also reinforcing trust in the function itself. As governance expectations rise and DE&I initiatives remain in focus, this back-to-basics approach is proving essential. It is a reminder that in times of complexity, the most effective strategies are often the most human. (See Figure 17.)

This strategic pivot is also visible in how responsibilities are shifting within the function. Capturing the social context of business, engaging stakeholders, and managing reputational risks have emerged as the fastest-growing responsibilities, marking a clear shift from earlier focus areas of sustainability and corporate purpose. On the contrary, activities such as responding to activist shareholders or internal pressures around geopolitical positioning have seen a decline, suggesting a renewed focus on external, apolitical stakeholders.



Figure 17**Evolution of roles in the Corporate Affairs function in last three years***7-point scale, top five and bottom five, 2025*

Q11. In thinking of each of the following activities that may be part of your professional responsibilities, would you say that they have become a more or less prominent part of your role compared with three years ago? (2025 $n=116-125$)

6.2 Stakeholders remain the central focus

Stakeholder mapping, prioritisation, and engagement are becoming central to the Corporate Affairs role globally. Regional nuances add further depth. In North America, there is greater focus on developing thought

leadership and leading on corporate reporting, while in Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America, the emphasis remains on engaging directly with stakeholder concerns. (See Figure 18.)

Figure 18

Evolution of roles in the Corporate Affairs function in last three years, by region

‘Much more prominent’ (6+7 on a 7-point scale), by region, 2025

Africa

1. Stakeholder engagement	(100%)
2. Mapping and prioritising stakeholders	(100%)
3. Managing risks to your organisation’s reputation	(83%)

Asia-Pacific

1. Assessing stakeholder opinions and expectations	(78%)
2. Stakeholder engagement	(77%)
3. Mapping and prioritising stakeholders	(62%)

Europe

1. Managing risk of an organisation	(63%)
2. Capturing and understanding social context	(59%)
3. Assessing stakeholder opinions and expectations	(55%)

Latin America

1. Mapping and prioritising stakeholders	(82%)
2. Stakeholder engagement	(78%)
3. Managing risk of an organisation	(70%)

North America

1. Capturing and understanding social context	(60%)
2. Developing thought leadership activities	(57%)
3. Leading corporate reporting activities	(47%)

‘Stakeholder mapping and have put in place a stakeholder staircase’

Respondent from Zimbabwe

‘We have different initiatives, programmes, and platforms to reach each key stakeholder group’

Respondent from the USA

‘Facilitating smaller engagements with unexpected groups of stakeholders who participate in the value chain of the issue’

Respondent from South Africa

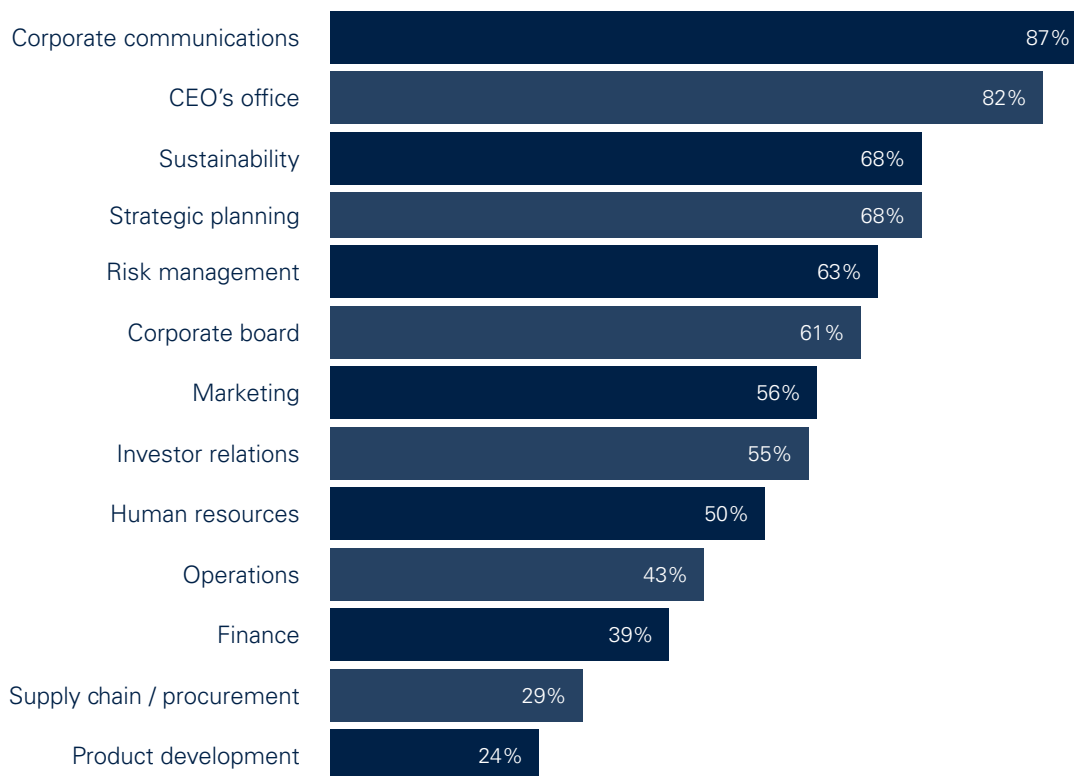
In response to a new question exploring internal functional relationships and collaboration, the two areas with the most frequent contact are corporate communications and the CEO's office. Along with the Board featuring more prominently, these are strong indicators of the function's growing prominence and its access to senior leadership.

It aligns with the broader trend of Corporate Affairs acting as a key source of context and insight, grounded in multi-stakeholder relationships. Strategic planning and sustainability also feature prominently in these internal connections. (See Figure 19.)

Figure 19

Level of engagement of Corporate Affairs with other functions

'Very/more engaged' 4+5 on a 5-point scale, 2025



Q51. Please rate the level of engagement that each of the following functions within your company has with your company's Corporate Affairs function. (2025 $n=237-240$)

6.3 Articulating business value continues to be challenging

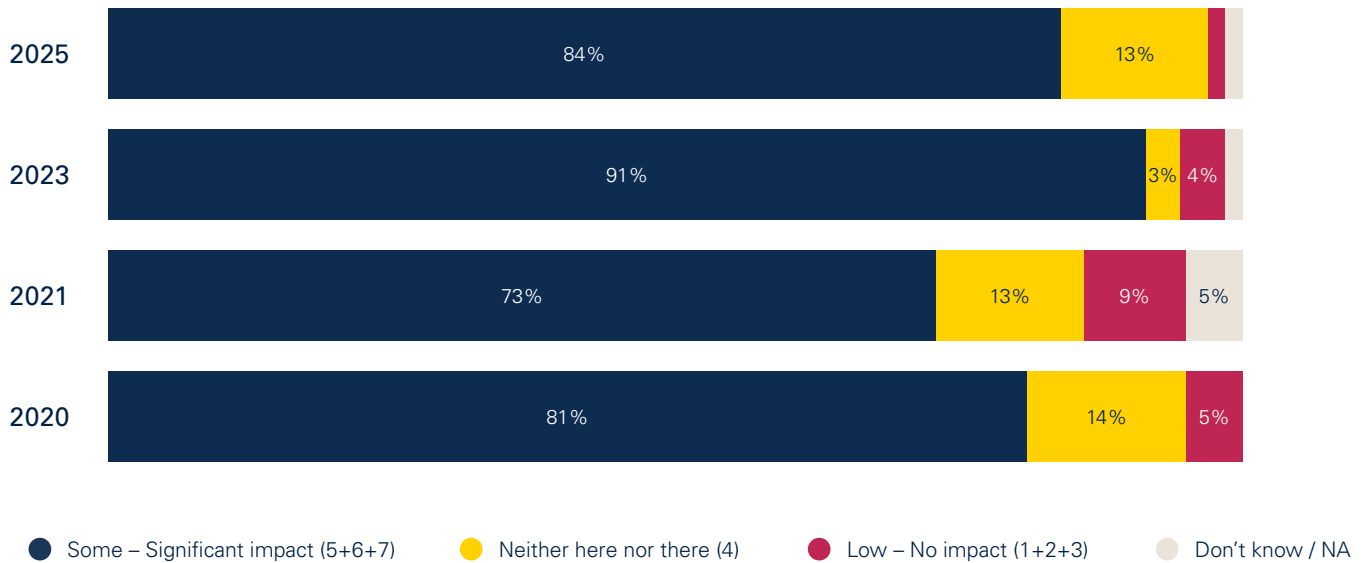
However, despite this strategic integration, the challenge of clearly articulating the value of Corporate Affairs to the broader business remains. While more than eight in ten respondents agree that the function contributes meaningfully to business value creation, this has declined from 2023. Today, the function primarily sees its value in protecting trust, influencing reputation, and enabling strategic communication – the core areas that remain critical but perhaps less visibly tied to growth in the current economic and political climate. (See Figure 20.)

6.4 Using AI more, but differently

The adoption of AI has grown significantly among Corporate Affairs professionals, with nearly two-thirds now reporting that they are integrating AI into their roles – a significant increase from just under half last year – as the need to engage with the technology becomes more urgent. Around one-third are using AI primarily for summarising and writing, followed closely by research support. As users become more discerning about the strengths and limitations of AI in their work, its role has shifted from early-stage drafting to a more embedded function focused on enhancing day-to-day tasks like content refinement and information processing. (See Figure 21.)

Figure 20**Impact of Corporate Affairs function on creating and protecting business value**

7-point scale, 2020–2025



Q12.2. And thinking about your organisation, how would you rate the impact that Corporate Affairs has on creating and protecting business value? (2020 $n=196$; 2021 $n=212$; 2023 $n=104$; 2025 $n=241$)

‘Protecting the reputation of the company so that we are trusted to deliver our strategy and are capable of financing it’

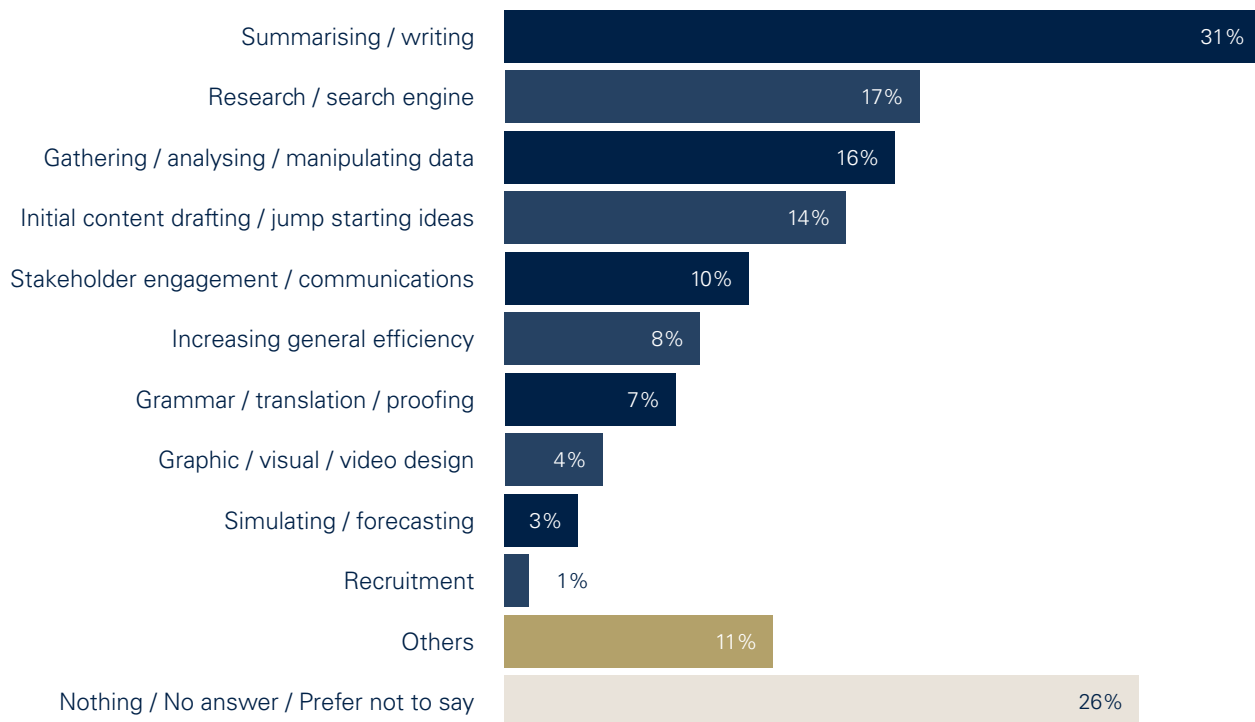
Respondent from Republic of Ireland

‘Corporate Affairs creates and sustains the company’s metanarrative, delivering the group’s core messaging to targeted audiences’

Respondent from the UK

‘Building stakeholder networks that support strategic ambitions, particularly in relation to organic and inorganic growth, but also in day-to-day stakeholder trust to support licence to operate’

Respondent from the UK

Figure 21**Application (use) of AI in Corporate Affairs***Open-ended, total mentions, 2025*Q46. In what capacity have you been using AI? (2025 $n=229$)

7. Respondents and methodology

This survey is conducted annually during the first quarter of the year. In 2025, GlobeScan fielded the online survey between 5 February and 26 March. Although data collection was completed before the so-called ‘Liberation Day’ announcement, some tariffs were already in place for Canada and Mexico, and this could have influenced feedback. Invitations to participate were emailed directly

to over 2,000 qualifying individuals. The Oxford-GlobeScan team also leverages their LinkedIn networks and industry associations to reach out to contacts in Corporate Affairs, Corporate Communications, and all related disciplines.

Below is an overview of the most salient features of the sample.

Figure 22
Voices of 245 Corporate Affairs leaders

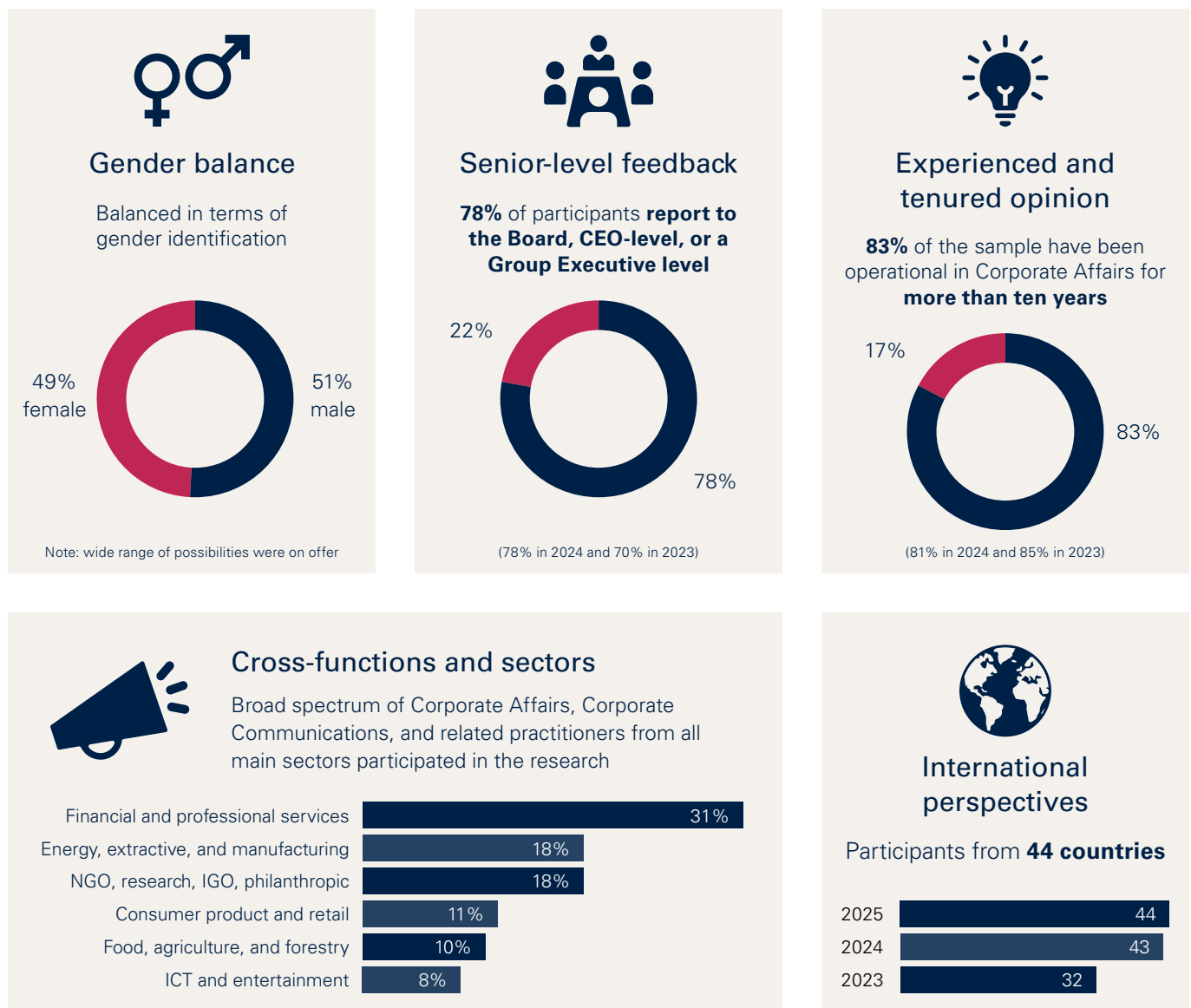
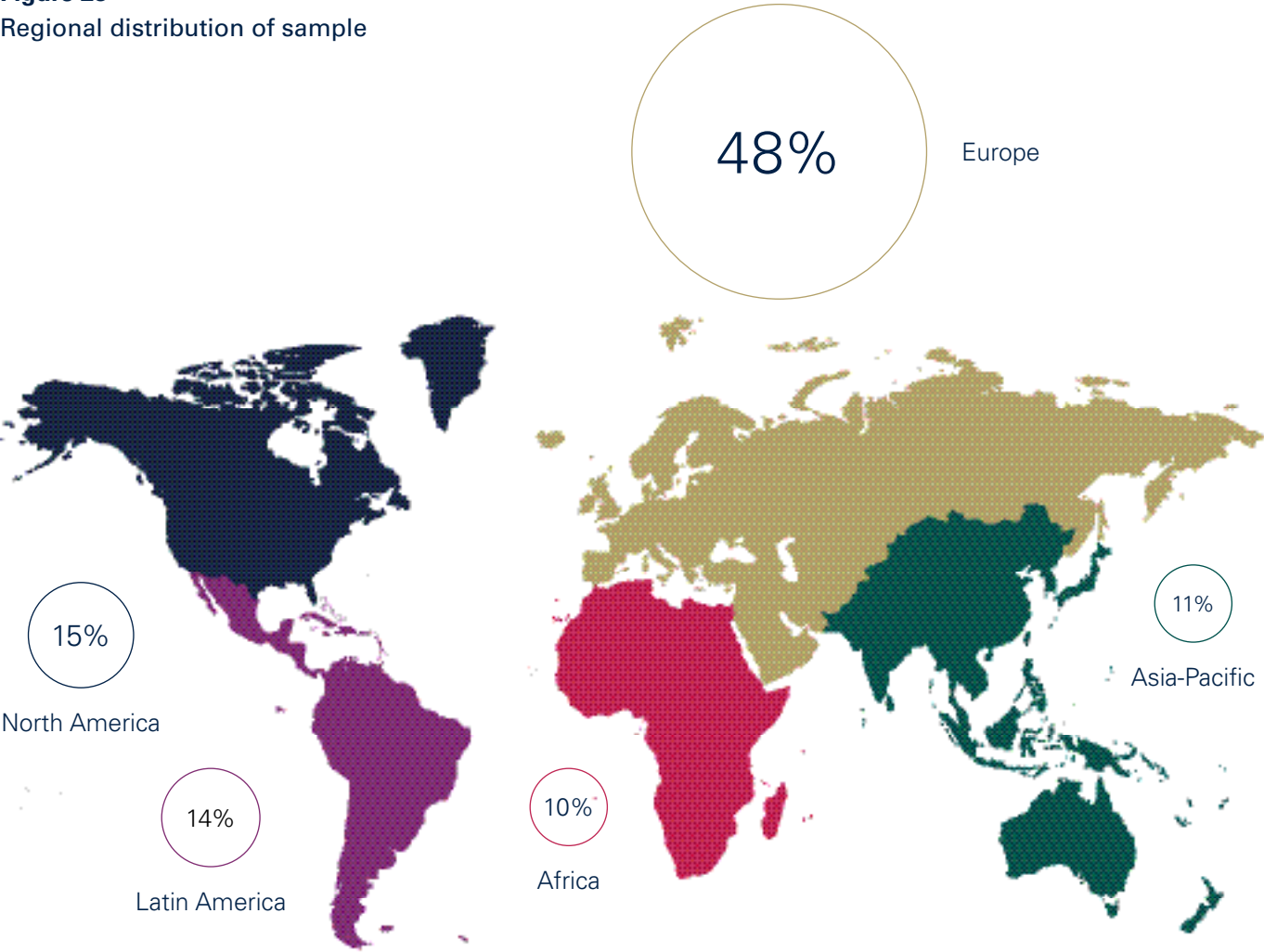


Figure 23
Regional distribution of sample



8. Research partners

The Corporate Affairs Academy, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

Connecting reputation with strategy and business performance

Informed and strategic Corporate Affairs activity helps create significant business value and prepares organisations to best recover from downside risks and crises. Organisations operating in fast-paced, information-overload environments are counting on Corporate Affairs professionals to make the judgements that are required to build long-term success. The Academy focuses on three core, interrelated themes:

- Reputation research, theory, and thinking
- Reputation engagement, trends, and practices
- Professional development as reputation experts; high-value purpose, practices, and resources

The Corporate Affairs Academy is delivered over several virtual sessions in the lead-up to a week of on-campus interactive presentations, seminars, and workshops. Each Academy features a dinner at one of Oxford's historic colleges. Attendees benefit from a balance of leading academic research and functional best practices.

www.sbs.oxford.edu/caa

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GlobeScan

GlobeScan is an insights and advisory firm specialising in trust, sustainability, and engagement. We equip clients with insights to navigate shifting societal and stakeholder expectations, crafting evidence-based strategies that reduce risks and create value for their organizations and society. Established in 1987, we have offices in Cape Town, Hong Kong, Hyderabad, London, Paris, San Francisco, São Paulo, Singapore, and Toronto. GlobeScan is a participant of the UN Global Compact and a Certified B Corporation.

In 2016, GlobeScan launched a platform of research and engagement amongst leading Corporate Affairs Directors, developing deep insight and expertise in the issues and trends affecting Corporate Affairs and Corporate Communications functions globally. GlobeScan also offers advisory services to Corporate Affairs and Corporate Communications teams.

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