



The Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility

From “Nice-to-Have” towards a Strategic Tool for Business and Society

The environment in which corporate social responsibility (CSR) operates is changing in several directions at once, and the choices that companies and governments make in the next few years will determine how it is judged.

Two facts frame that moment. The first is that CSR has become a management discipline with substantial resources attached to it. Sustainability reporting among the 250 largest companies in the world rose from 35% in 1999 to 96% in 2024; 69% of those companies now have their reports independently assured; and 56% have a designated sustainability leader, up from 45% in 2022.¹ The sums involved are large: corporate giving in the United States alone reached USD43.67 billion in 2025.²

The second is that the policy settings around CSR are in motion, and not in one direction. In 2026 the European Union narrowed the scope of its sustainability reporting directive, while Singapore extended its enhanced tax deductions for corporate donations and volunteering to 2029.³ Both directions raise the same question. Where governments relax reporting requirements, companies can no longer point to compliance to justify their CSR programmes and must point to results instead. Where governments design new incentives, they must decide what those incentives will reward: activity or results. The reporting infrastructure is in place, the resources are significant, and the policy choices are being made. That is

why the question of whether CSR has become a strategic tool, and what companies and governments should do to make it one, is being raised now.

1. Defining corporate social responsibility

CSR refers broadly to the responsibility that a company assumes for its impacts on society. Compliance with the law forms the baseline of that responsibility; CSR has historically also encompassed voluntary action beyond that baseline, and some jurisdictions have since codified elements of it in law. One of the foundational formal definitions was given by Howard Bowen in 1953, who described social responsibility as the obligation of businessmen to pursue the policies, make the decisions and follow the courses of action that are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society.⁴ Almost sixty years later, the European Commission defined CSR as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society”, noting that respect for applicable legislation is a prerequisite for meeting that responsibility.⁵ The difference between these two definitions illustrates how the concept has evolved from an appeal to the conscience

of the individual businessman (Bowen) to the modern focus on the enterprise itself and the impacts it has on society, which can be identified, managed and measured.

CSR and sustainability are related but distinct concepts. Sustainability derives from the idea of sustainable development, defined by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.⁶ Applied to a company, it has been defined as meeting the needs of the company's direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders.⁷ CSR, by contrast, comes from the ethics and business-and-society literature and concerns the responsibilities a company has toward society and its stakeholders. The two overlap in practice. ISO 26000, the international guidance standard on social responsibility, defines it as an organisation's responsibility for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, and states that its objective is to contribute to sustainable development.⁸ In other words, when a company manages its impacts on society and the environment, it is practising CSR and contributing to sustainability at the same time. While this paper focuses on CSR, it cannot be discussed in isolation from sustainability and where the two overlap the paper draws on sustainability data as evidence.

While historically CSR has been associated primarily with traditional forms of philanthropy, meaning voluntary contributions to the community, mostly through charitable giving, in present practice there are at least five ways in which a company can contribute to society, of which only the first involves the donation of money. Working from the B4SI community-investment framework and the wider CSR literature reveals five components:⁹

- **Cash:** donations, grants, sponsorship and matched giving, made directly or through a corporate foundation.
- **Time:** employee volunteering, skills-based and pro bono work, secondments to non-profit or public organisations and employee participation in initiatives such as greening and clean-up campaigns.
- **Assets:** products, equipment, facilities and data provided in kind.
- **Business practice:** changes to the way the company itself operates, such as responsible sourcing, the development of suppliers and small businesses, local content, inclusive hiring and fair treatment of employees and products or services designed for underserved customers.

- **Voice:** advocacy, participation in coalitions and contributions to industry standards and public policy.

Many of the longest-running cross-company datasets on corporate giving and community investment focus primarily on financial contributions, the first of these five. This one-dimensional focus is one of the reasons why the amount of money that companies donate has become an inadequate measure of the scale and nature of CSR today.

1.1 How this paper assesses CSR

To assess whether CSR has evolved into a strategic tool, we look at four specific dimensions drawn from the academic literature on corporate social performance along which the evolution should be measured. The dimensions called out below include the key questions highlighting the principles that motivate CSR, the processes through which it is managed and the outcomes it produces:¹⁰

- **Purpose and focus:** why does the company engage in CSR, and how does it decide which issues to address?
- **Governance and ownership:** who is accountable for CSR within the company, and does the board oversee it?
- **Funding, delivery and engagement:** where does the money for CSR come from, through which channels is the activity delivered, and how are employees engaged in it?
- **Measurement and disclosure:** what does the company measure, how does it assure and report the results, and does it link executive incentives to these results?



Two analytical tests are applied within these dimensions. The first, a strategy test, applies to the first three dimensions: following Burke and Logsdon, CSR can be described as strategic when it is central to the company's mission, produces benefits specific to the company, is proactive rather than reactive, goes beyond legal requirements and is visible to stakeholders.¹¹ The aggregate indicators available, such as materiality assessment and formal ownership, are partial proxies for these characteristics rather than direct observations of them, and the conclusions are drawn accordingly. The

second, an impact chain, applies to the fourth dimension: following Ebrahim and Rangan, a programme can be measured as inputs (resources committed), activities (programmes delivered), outputs (people reached), outcomes (changes in their circumstances) or impact (lasting change in people's lives), with attribution of that change to the intervention a further step that not every organisation should attempt.¹² The level is determined by what a metric measures, not by its subject: workers trained is an output; the share in employment a year later is an outcome. Figure 1 sets out what each dimension covers.

Figure 1 – The four dimensions used to assess CSR in a company

Dimension	What it covers	The question it answers	Basis in the literature
Purpose and focus	The reasons for which the company engages in CSR, and the method by which it selects the issues it addresses, ranging from the preferences of leadership to a formal assessment of the issues that matter most to society and to the business.	Are issues chosen by preference and tradition, or because they matter both to society and to the business?	Wood (1991), principles; Carroll (1979); Porter and Kramer (2006)
Governance and ownership	The individual or function accountable for CSR and the level at which it reports, the extent of board oversight, and whether decisions on CSR are taken within the company's strategy and risk processes or separately from them.	Is there an executive owner and a board mandate?	Wood (1991), processes; Mirvis and Googins (2006)
Funding, delivery and engagement	The source of funds for CSR (a discretionary giving budget, or the operating, capital and procurement budgets of the business); the channels through which it is delivered (grants to third parties, or the company's own operations, suppliers and products); the types of resource used (cash alone, or also time, assets, business practice and voice); and the extent to which employees take part.	Is CSR paid for and delivered through the business, or alongside it?	Aguinis and Glavas (2013); Halme and Laurila (2009); Porter and Kramer (2011); Mirvis and Googins (2006)
Measurement and disclosure	The level of the impact chain at which the company measures its CSR, from inputs to outcomes and impact; whether it sets targets; the standard against which it reports and whether the report is independently assured; and whether executive incentives are linked to the results.	Does measurement reach outcomes, and are the results disclosed and rewarded?	Wood (1991), outcomes; Ebrahim and Rangan (2014)

Source: synthesis of the literature cited; full references are given in the notes.



2. The nice-to-have model: how CSR used to operate

For most of the twentieth century, CSR was generally treated as an activity that took place outside the core business. In 1970 Milton Friedman criticised the use of corporate resources for social purposes beyond the pursuit of profit within the rules of the market, arguing that the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.¹³ Two decades later, Archie Carroll's widely used pyramid of corporate social responsibility still placed philanthropy at its apex, as the one category of responsibility that society welcomed from business but did not expect of it.¹⁴ Seen through the four dimensions, the traditional philanthropic model can be described in stylised form as follows.

- **Purpose and focus.** In the traditional model, CSR was undertaken for reasons of goodwill and reputation, and the causes supported reflected the preferences of the company's leadership and its local relationships rather than an assessment of where the business affected society. Carroll's model captures the discretionary character of that philanthropy: it was the tier of responsibility that a company could add or remove at will.
- **Governance and ownership.** Responsibility for CSR commonly sat in the corporate affairs or community relations department, or in the chairman's office, and was far less likely than today to have a dedicated executive owner or a formal board mandate.
- **Funding, delivery and engagement.** CSR was typically funded from a discretionary giving budget and delivered through grants, sponsorship and one-off donations to third parties. The longest-running series on charitable giving in the United States attributes year-to-year movements in corporate giving primarily to corporate pre-tax profits and economic growth.¹⁵ A budget that moves with earnings rather than with the needs of the programmes it funds behaves as a discretionary allocation rather than as an investment.
- **Measurement and disclosure.** Companies commonly measured the amount they had spent and the number of beneficiaries they had reached, and reported these figures without a common standard or independent assurance. The first Global Reporting Initiative guidelines, issued in 2000, marked an important step toward a broadly applicable sustainability reporting framework; in 1999, only 35% of the world's 250 largest companies published any sustainability report.¹⁶

The academic literature describes CSR of this kind as an activity that runs alongside the business rather than through it.¹⁷ Much of it did genuine good, but because it was optional it was rarely managed with the rigour that companies applied to their core operations.

3. The evolution of CSR: from nice-to-have towards a strategic tool

Each of the four dimensions has changed under the influence of external forces, and in each case governments have played a part, whether through legislation, financial incentives or the setting of national priorities. For each dimension, the shift and the role of government are described below, and Figure 2 summarises the results. The evidence in this section draws on data on sustainability reporting and community investment, which serve as proxy measures of CSR practice.

3.1 Purpose and focus: from preference to materiality

The shift. Many large companies now identify systematically which sustainability impacts, risks and opportunities matter to them, an approach for which Porter and Kramer supplied the rationale in 2006: concentrate on the few social issues that intersect with the company's competitive context.¹⁸ In 2024, 78% of the G250 and 79% of the N100 conducted a materiality assessment, and 50% and 42% respectively used double materiality, which weighs both the company's impacts on people and the environment and the financial effects of sustainability matters on the company.¹⁹ This approach shows more systematic identification of impacts, not where CSR resources go.

The role of government. Governments have driven this shift directly and indirectly. Directly, the European Union's reporting standards require a double-materiality assessment, and the growth in its use is closely associated with preparation for them.²⁰ Indirectly, a national statement of the social priorities on which a government wants business to act gives companies an external reference point for the impact side of the assessment without replacing their own analysis; the most explicit form is a statutory list such as Schedule VII of India's Companies Act, which names the areas eligible for mandated CSR expenditure.²¹

3.2 Governance and ownership: from dispersed to formal ownership

The shift. Formal sustainability ownership has become substantially more common: in 2024, 56% of the G250 had a designated sustainability leader (45% in 2022) and 46% of the N100 (34%).²² Ownership is now common among the largest companies but not universal, and rarer outside the G250.

The role of government. Some governments have made ownership a formal requirement. India obliges companies above its thresholds, and subject to statutory exceptions, to constitute a board-level CSR committee and adopt a board-approved CSR policy;²³ the European Union's reporting standards require disclosure of the role of governing bodies in sustainability matters, which is not a governance mandate but gives boards a reason to define that role.²⁴

3.3 Funding, delivery and engagement: from cash giving to broader contribution mechanisms

The shift. Corporate giving has grown in absolute terms but not relative to profit: US corporate giving reached USD43.67 billion in 2025, flat after inflation,²⁵ and among large multinationals median community investment was 0.92% of pre-tax profit in 2023, up only 2% since 2021. The mix has changed more than the amount. Direct cash accounts for 45% of community investment on average; the remainder comprises foundation cash and non-cash contributions; between 2019 and 2023 non-cash contributions rose 24% in median value against 4% for direct cash, and employee volunteering rose in participation and hours.²⁶ Comparable data on funding through operating, capital and procurement budgets remain limited; the literature still distinguishes philanthropy from responsibility integrated into the core business.²⁷

The role of government. Governments shape the volume and form of contributions through mandates and incentives. India's Companies Act 2013 obliges companies above its thresholds to spend at least 2% of average net profit on CSR, a statutory obligation linked to profits.²⁸ Incentives lower the cost of contributing and take three common forms: tax deductions for donations (granted in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and India within national limits; in India, separately from the tax treatment of statutory CSR expenditure);²⁹ relief for in-kind contributions (donated property, stock and equipment in the United States and the United Kingdom);³⁰ and enhanced incentives that steer behaviour (Singapore's 250% deduction for qualifying donations, extended to 2029, and for employee volunteering under its Corporate Volunteer Scheme).³¹ Incentive frameworks, therefore, already accommodate non-cash contributions.

3.4 Measurement and disclosure: from the annual booklet to assured reporting

The shift. Sustainability reporting is almost universal among the G250 (96% in 2024, against 35% in 1999) and widespread across the N100 (79%); 69% of the G250 obtain independent assurance.³² Saudi Arabia recorded one of the largest increases in the N100 sample, from 31% in 2022 to 53% in 2024.³³ These figures show how widely companies report and are assured; they do not show that companies measure the outcomes their programmes produce.

The role of government. Governments have shaped this dimension in three ways: by mandating disclosure (the European Union requires in-scope companies to report against common standards with independent assurance);³⁴ by mandating evaluation (India requires its largest CSR spenders to commission independent impact assessments of projects of INR1 crore or more a year after completion);³⁵ and by recognising results (India's National CSR Awards).³⁶ Of the jurisdictions reviewed, only India mandates evaluation, whereas disclosure is mandated widely.

Figure 2 – From nice-to-have towards a strategic tool: what changed on each dimension

Dimension	The nice-to-have model (stylised)	The strategic model	Where large companies stand: the evidence
Purpose and focus	Causes follow the preferences of leadership and tradition. CSR is undertaken for goodwill, reputation and the avoidance of reputational risk.	A short list of issues selected because they matter both to society and to the business and display the characteristics associated with strategic CSR: central to the mission, benefits specific to the company, proactive, beyond compliance and visible.	Substantial but uneven progress. In 2024, 50% of the G250 and 42% of the N100 used a double-materiality assessment; nearly four-fifths of both groups conducted a materiality assessment of some form.
Governance and ownership	CSR sits in corporate affairs or the chairman's office, with a dedicated executive owner and formal board mandate the exception rather than the rule.	An executive owner who sits on or reports to the executive committee, a board committee with a written mandate and CSR decisions taken within the company's strategy and risk processes.	Increasingly institutionalised, but not universal. 56% of the G250 and 46% of the N100 had a designated sustainability leader in 2024, up from 45% and 34% in 2022.
Funding, delivery and engagement	A discretionary giving budget, spent on grants and sponsorship and moving with earnings.	CSR funded from the operating, capital and procurement budgets of the business units that own the issues, delivered through the company's own operations, suppliers and products and drawing on all five ways of contributing.	Evidence shows diversification beyond direct cash (non-cash contributions and volunteering rising faster than cash giving), but comparable global evidence on integration into core operating, capital and procurement budgets remains limited.
Measurement and disclosure	Spend and beneficiary counts, reported without a common standard or assurance.	Targets set on outcomes for the material issues, independently assured disclosure of progress against them and executive incentives linked to those outcomes.	Reporting and assurance are widespread (96% of the G250 report and 69% obtain assurance; 79% of the N100 report), but available aggregate data provide limited evidence on the prevalence of outcome- and impact-level measurement. A sizeable and growing share of the N100 links executive incentives to sustainability performance: 30% in 2024, up from 24% in 2022.

Sources: KPMG International (2024); CECP (2024); Giving USA (2026). G250 = the world's 250 largest companies by revenue; N100 = the 100 largest companies in each of 58 countries and jurisdictions. The middle two columns describe the two models; the right-hand column reports the available evidence.

4. The way forward

The evidence suggests substantial progress in issue selection, governance and disclosure, alongside growing examples of CSR being integrated into core business activity. Progress is nevertheless uneven, and comparable evidence is weakest on how CSR is funded and on the social outcomes it produces. The recommendations below set out what follows from that evidence for companies and for governments.

4.1 For companies

1. **Concentrate on a small number of issues in which both the business and society have a stake.**

Every issue on the company's CSR agenda should be assessed against the characteristics of strategic CSR. Examples may include the issues on which the company's licence to operate, its supply of talent or its supply chain depend, such as skills and employment, the development of suppliers and small businesses, health and the environment. A highly fragmented portfolio of unrelated causes is less likely to meet those conditions, however well the individual initiatives are managed.

2. **Fund strategic CSR through the business.** Where an issue is materially linked to the business, responsibility and funding should sit with the business unit able to influence it, in its operating, capital or procurement budget, rather than in a central giving budget.

Philanthropy can remain appropriate for objectives that are not linked to the business in this way. What the business pays for, the business manages.

3. **Contribute through the business, not only through donations.** For many companies, some of their most consequential social impacts arise through how they operate: whom they employ and train, which suppliers they develop and whom their products serve. Time, assets, business practice and voice should be treated as instruments of CSR in their own right rather than as adjuncts to a donations programme.

4. **Measure outcomes for the largest programmes.** Certain economic outcomes, such as employment, qualifications obtained or supplier revenue, can often be measured using existing administrative or company data and are a practical place to start; outcomes in health and other fields can be measured with equal rigour where data and methods exist. For every programme above a defined size, the company should establish a baseline, conduct a follow-up assessment, report outcomes alongside expenditure and state how far along the impact chain its measurement reaches. Demonstrated results strengthen the case for continued investment when budgets tighten or a reporting requirement is withdrawn.



4.2 For governments

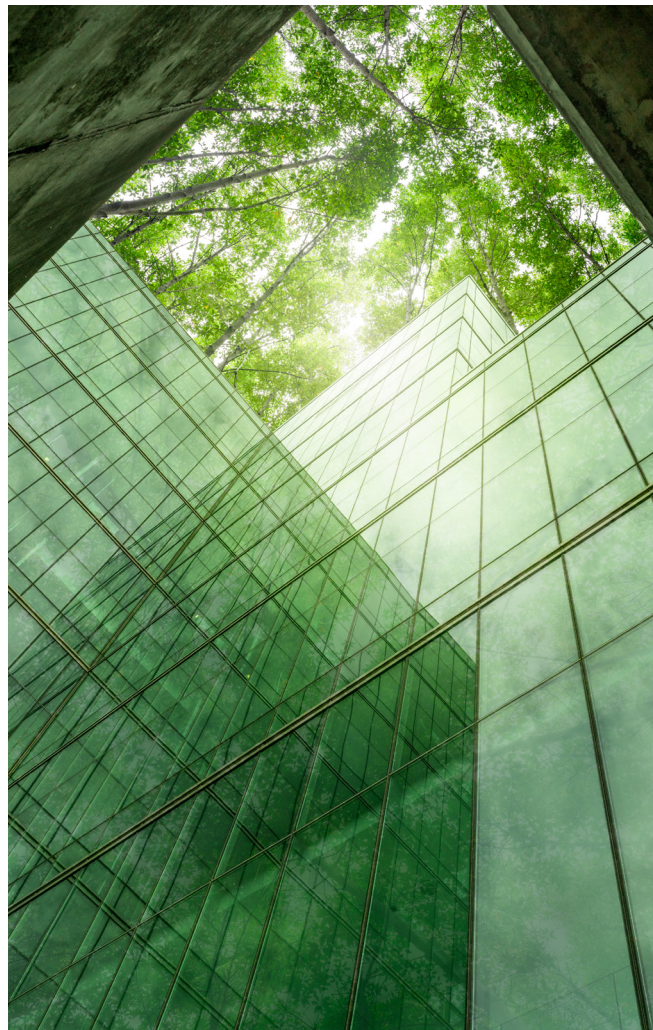
The examples in Section 3 illustrate different trade-offs between mandates and incentives. Mandates can generate high compliance with clearly specified requirements, as India's spending regime demonstrates, but compliance does not by itself establish social impact, and recent experience shows that reporting mandates can be narrowed, delayed or reconsidered. Incentives preserve greater corporate discretion and can be targeted toward national priorities, but they involve fiscal costs and depend on company take-up. Four recommendations follow.

1. **Assess carefully what to mandate and what to incentivise.** Governments are choosing between the two instruments, and in different directions: the European Union has narrowed its mandatory reporting, India has retained its spending mandate and added mandatory impact assessment for large projects, and Singapore has extended its tax incentives to 2029.³⁷ Before mandating anything, a government should study the likely effect on the behaviour it wants to change, the cost of compliance and the experience of other jurisdictions, including recent reversals. Requirements that establish basic accountability, such as proportionate governance and disclosure for the largest companies, are the strongest candidates for mandating; activity beyond that baseline is better encouraged than compelled, through tax relief, grants, recognition and preferential treatment in public procurement.
2. **Give the national CSR agenda a clear institutional owner.** Governments are increasingly assigning responsibility for the national CSR agenda to an identified body at national level, in different institutional forms. In India, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs administers the CSR provisions of the Companies Act and the national CSR portal,³⁸ and in Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development acts as steward of the agenda.³⁹ The common feature is a single, identifiable body that owns the agenda. Every government should have one, because an identified owner allows national priorities to be communicated consistently to companies and the various instruments, from incentives to platforms and awards, to be coordinated rather than run in parallel.
3. **Act as the facilitator between companies and causes.** A government is well placed to know where social need is greatest, which non-profit organisations (NPOs) are capable of meeting it and where public programmes already reach. Governments that use that knowledge can direct companies toward the beneficiaries and the implementing organisations where a contribution will count, and can vet the NPOs that receive corporate funds. Saudi Arabia's National Platform for Social Responsibility, launched in 2023, does this: it provides companies with a map of development opportunities in the environmental, economic and social fields, so that a business can identify where its resources are relevant, and registers the initiatives that result. Its reach shows the effect: more than 2,145 companies are registered on it, and the initiatives recorded on it exceed SAR5 billion in value.⁴⁰ A mechanism of this kind relieves companies of the burden of identifying needs and finding credible NPOs, and it increases the likelihood that contributions reach the people who need them.
4. **Support companies in how to report.** Governments and market regulators that ask companies to report are increasingly telling them how. The European Union has issued detailed reporting standards to accompany its directive;⁴¹ the Saudi Exchange issued voluntary ESG disclosure guidelines in 2021, and all of the Saudi companies in the 2024 survey of the hundred largest reported using them.⁴² A government that asks companies to report should make the task as clear and as light as possible: publish guidance on what to report and in what format, provide standard templates so that smaller companies are not left to design their own, and offer support to companies that lack the internal capacity to report unaided. Requirements should be proportionate to the size of the company, and once set they should be left unchanged for long enough that companies can invest in the systems needed to meet them.

5. Conclusion

CSR has evolved substantially from discretionary philanthropy toward a more institutionalised form of corporate responsibility. Large companies increasingly use structured approaches to identify their social and sustainability priorities, formal ownership has expanded, reporting and assurance have become widespread and important examples show responsibility being embedded in operations and value chains. The transition is nevertheless incomplete and uneven, and comparable evidence remains weakest on two points: how extensively CSR is funded through core business budgets, and whether programmes produce measurable social outcomes.

CSR began as generosity, and generosity remains at its heart. What has changed is the expectation that comes with it, and meeting that expectation is a shared task in which the roles are now clear. Companies choose the issues where they can make a difference, fund the work through the business and measure what it changes; governments set national priorities, own the agenda, connect companies with credible NPOs and design instruments that reward results; non-profit organisations deliver programmes on the ground and provide the evidence of what changed; and the beneficiaries, the people whose circumstances CSR exists to improve, are the measure by which all of it is judged.



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Endnotes

- ¹ KPMG International (2024). The Move to Mandatory Reporting: KPMG Survey of Sustainability Reporting 2024, executive summary and global findings. G250 = the 250 largest companies in the world by revenue (Fortune 500, 2023); N100 = the 100 largest companies in each of 58 countries, territories and jurisdictions (5,800 companies). Methodological note. The KPMG and CECP datasets measure sustainability and ESG reporting and governance, and community investment, respectively; neither is labelled “CSR”. They are used here as indicators of the institutionalisation of corporate responsibility where the concepts materially overlap.
- ² Giving USA Foundation (2026). Giving USA 2026: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2025, researched and written by the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy; press release, June 2026 (givingusa.org): giving by corporations USD43.67 billion in 2025, up 3.1% in current dollars and +0.5% adjusted for inflation (treated as flat); corporate giving grew 60% over the last five years against 29% for total giving; corporations about 7% of total giving. All Giving USA figures in this paper are taken from this edition.
- ³ Directive (EU) 2026/470 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 February 2026 amending Directives 2013/34/EU, (EU) 2022/2464 and (EU) 2024/1760 (“Omnibus I”), Official Journal of the European Union, L series, 26 February 2026 (EUR-Lex OJ:L_202600470): sustainability reporting limited to undertakings with more than 1,000 employees and net turnover above EUR450 million. Ministry of Finance, Singapore (2026). Budget 2026 and public consultation on the Finance (Income Taxes) Bill 2026: the 250% tax deduction for qualifying donations to Institutions of a Public Character and eligible institutions, previously due to lapse after 31 December 2026, extended to donations made up to 31 December 2029; Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, Donations and Tax Deductions (the deduction applies to qualifying donations to approved recipients and is subject to the conditions of the scheme).
- ⁴ Bowen, H. R. (1953). *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*. New York: Harper & Row, p. 6.
- ⁵ European Commission (2011). A Renewed EU Strategy 2011–14 for Corporate Social Responsibility, COM(2011) 681 final, section 3.1 (definition) and section 4.8.1 (invitation to Member States to develop national CSR plans). EUR-Lex, CELEX 52011DC0681.
- ⁶ World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our Common Future* (the Brundtland Report). Oxford University Press, chapter 2, paragraph 1.
- ⁷ Dyllick, T. and Hockerts, K. (2002). “Beyond the Business Case for Corporate Sustainability.” *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 11(2), 130–141.
- ⁸ International Organization for Standardization (2010). ISO 26000:2010, Guidance on Social Responsibility, clause 2.18 (definition of social responsibility) and clause 3.3.5 (the objective of social responsibility is to contribute to sustainable development).
- ⁹ The categories draw on Kotler, P. and Lee, N. (2005), *Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the Most Good for Your Company and Your Cause* (Wiley), whose six initiative types include community volunteering, socially responsible business practices and cause promotion; on the Business for Societal Impact (B4SI) Framework, which classifies community-investment inputs as cash, time, in-kind and management costs; and on Halme, M. and Laurila, J. (2009), “Philanthropy, Integration or Innovation?”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84(3), 325–339, which distinguishes philanthropy from responsibility integrated into core business. The five-part grouping is the authors’ own.
- ¹⁰ Wood, D. J. (1991). “Corporate Social Performance Revisited.” *Academy of Management Review*, 16(4), 691–718; Mirvis, P. and Googins, B. (2006). “Stages of Corporate Citizenship.” *California Management Review*, 48(2), 104–126. The four-dimension structure is a synthesis of these sources.
- ¹¹ Burke, L. and Logsdon, J. M. (1996). “How Corporate Social Responsibility Pays Off.” *Long Range Planning*, 29(4), 495–502.
- ¹² Ebrahim, A. and Rangan, V. K. (2014). “What Impact? A Framework for Measuring the Scale and Scope of Social Performance.” *California Management Review*, 56(3), 118–141. The paper provides a conceptual framework and argues that the appropriate level of measurement depends on an organisation’s theory of change and scale; it does not measure the prevalence of each level among companies.
- ¹³ Friedman, M. (1970). “The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits.” *The New York Times Magazine*, 13 September 1970.
- ¹⁴ Carroll, A. B. (1991). “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility.” *Business Horizons*, 34(4), 39–48.
- ¹⁵ Giving USA Foundation (2025). Giving USA 2025: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2024, press release, June 2025 (givingusa.org), cited here only for its attribution of movements in corporate giving to corporate pre-tax profits and GDP growth; its estimates for 2024 have since been revised in the 2026 edition and are not used in this paper.
- ¹⁶ Global Reporting Initiative (2000). *Sustainability Reporting Guidelines on Economic, Environmental and Social Performance*, June 2000 (first edition); KPMG International (2024), op. cit., which records that 35% of the G250 reported on sustainability when KPMG first measured the G250 in 1999.
- ¹⁷ Aguinis, H. and Glavas, A. (2013). “Embedded Versus Peripheral Corporate Social Responsibility.” *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 6(4), 314–332.
- ¹⁸ Porter, M. E. and Kramer, M. R. (2006). “Strategy and Society.” *Harvard Business Review*, 84(12), 78–92; and (2011). “Creating Shared Value.” *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1/2), 62–77.
- ¹⁹ KPMG International (2024), op. cit.
- ²⁰ For the EU see Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/2772 supplementing Directive 2013/34/EU as regards sustainability reporting standards (ESRS), consolidated text of 1 January 2025, EUR-Lex 02023R2772-20250101: ESRS 1, section 3 (double materiality as the basis for sustainability reporting); ESRS 2, Disclosure Requirement GOV-1 (the role of the administrative, management and supervisory bodies); on growth in its use, see KPMG International (2024), op. cit.
- ²¹ Companies Act 2013 (India), section 135, in force since 1 April 2014 and in force at the time of writing: companies meeting the net-worth, turnover or net-profit thresholds must spend at least 2% of average net profit of the preceding three financial years on activities within the areas specified in Schedule VII, constitute a CSR committee of the board (with a statutory exception where the CSR obligation does not exceed INR50 lakh) and adopt a board-approved CSR policy. Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules 2021 (Ministry of Corporate Affairs notification of 22 January 2021), rule 8(3): impact assessment by an independent agency of projects with outlays of INR1 crore or more that have been completed not less than one year before the study, for companies with an average CSR obligation of INR10 crore or more in the three preceding financial years; rule 4: implementing agencies must be registered with the Central Government (Form CSR-1).
- ²² KPMG International (2024), op. cit.
- ²³ Companies Act 2013 (India), s. 135, and CSR Rules, op. cit.
- ²⁴ ESRS, op. cit.
- ²⁵ Giving USA Foundation (2026), op. cit.
- ²⁶ Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose (2024). *Giving in Numbers: 2024 Edition* (survey of companies with revenue above USD2 billion; 2023 data). Median total community investment (direct cash, foundation cash and non-cash) 0.92% of pre-tax profit (n = 179) and 0.12% of revenue (n = 200); median total community investment rose 2% between 2021 and 2023, and 53% of companies decreased it over that period; direct cash 45% of total community investment on average; between 2019 and 2023 the median dollar value of direct cash rose 4%, foundation cash fell 2% and non-cash contributions rose 24%; employee volunteering increased in average participation rate and median hours since 2021.

²⁷ Aguinis, H. and Glavas, A. (2013), op. cit.

²⁸ Companies Act 2013 (India), s. 135, and CSR Rules, op. cit.

²⁹ United Kingdom: HM Revenue & Customs, Corporation Tax relief for qualifying charitable donations; United States: Internal Revenue Code §170(b)(2) and IRS Instructions for Form 1120, corporate charitable deduction limited to 10% of taxable income with a five-year carry-forward; Canada: Income Tax Act, s. 110.1, corporate donations deductible up to 75% of net income; India: Income-tax Act 1961, s. 80G (deduction of 50% or 100% of qualifying donations from gross total income, subject to conditions and limits), and Explanation 2 to s. 37(1) (expenditure incurred on CSR activities referred to in section 135 of the Companies Act is not treated as expenditure incurred for the purposes of business).

³⁰ United States: Internal Revenue Code §170(e)(3) and IRS Instructions for Form 1120 (contributions of property; enhanced deduction for qualifying contributions of inventory to charitable organisations); United Kingdom: HM Revenue & Customs, Corporation Tax relief for gifts of trading stock and equipment to charities.

³¹ Ministry of Finance, Singapore (2026), op. cit.; Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, Corporate Volunteer Scheme: 250% tax deduction on qualifying expenditure incurred when employees volunteer or are seconded to Institutions of a Public Character, subject to an annual cap; extended in Budget 2026 to 31 December 2029.

³² KPMG International (2024), op. cit.

³³ KPMG International (2024), op. cit.

³⁴ Directive 2014/95/EU (Non-Financial Reporting Directive), Article 1, inserting Article 19a into Directive 2013/34/EU (mandatory non-financial statement for large public-interest entities with more than 500 employees; where an undertaking does not pursue a policy on a listed matter, it must provide a clear and reasoned explanation); Directive (EU) 2022/2464 (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive), introducing reporting against the ESRS with limited assurance; The Companies (Strategic Report) (Climate-related Financial Disclosure) Regulations 2022 (UK).

³⁵ Companies Act 2013 (India), s. 135, and CSR Rules, op. cit.

³⁶ Ministry of Corporate Affairs (India), National Corporate Social Responsibility Awards, instituted 2017.

³⁷ Omnibus I directive (2026), op. cit.; Companies Act 2013 (India), s. 135, and CSR Rules, op. cit.; Ministry of Finance, Singapore (2026), op. cit.

³⁸ Companies Act 2013 (India), s. 135, and CSR Rules, op. cit.

³⁹ Saudi Press Agency (28 October 2024). "Global CSR Forum Starts Under the Patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques": the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development described the establishment of a Social Responsibility Committee by Cabinet decision, a social responsibility strategy, the national platform and a national CSR guide and index; KPMG in Saudi Arabia (2025), New Horizons, op. cit., describing the Ministry as steward of the Kingdom's CSR agenda.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (Saudi Arabia), news release of 23 March 2023 on the launch of the National Platform for Social Responsibility (csr.gov.sa): the platform provides private-sector establishments with development opportunities in the environmental, economic and social fields, a development map of available opportunities, a knowledge centre, an idea bank, a company classification programme and an index of private-sector practices; Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (2026), "Social Responsibility in the Kingdom: Initiatives Exceeding 5 Billion Riyals": more than 2,145 companies registered; registered initiatives exceed SAR5 billion in value.

⁴¹ ESRS, op. cit.

⁴² Saudi Exchange (2021). ESG Disclosure Guidelines (voluntary); KPMG International (2024), op. cit., reporting that all surveyed Saudi N100 companies use the stock exchange guidelines.