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IT’s Sustainability Role and Where to Begin

January 9, 2024

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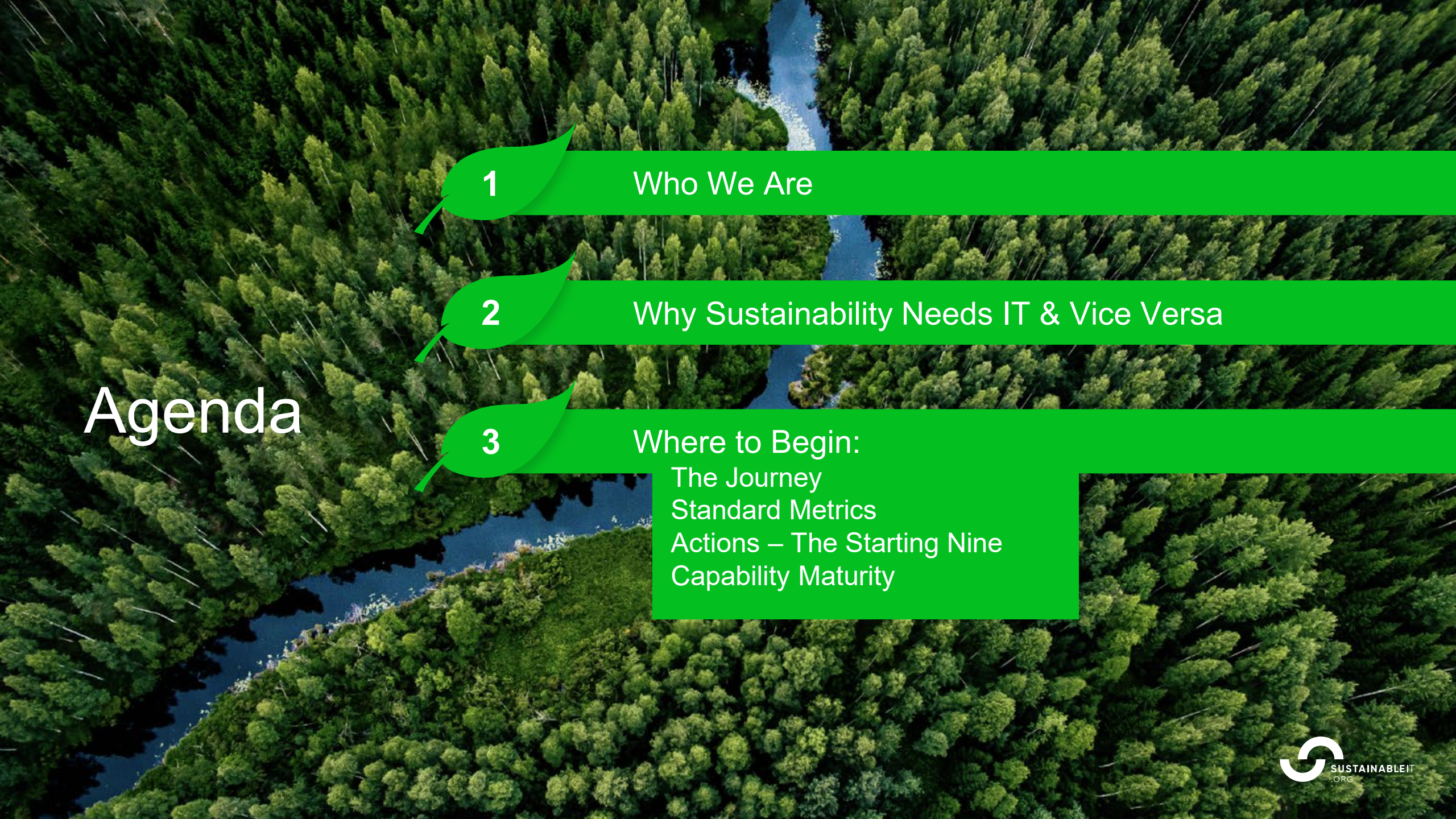

Agenda

1. Who We Are
2. Why Sustainability Needs IT & Vice Versa
3. Where to Begin:
   - The Journey
   - Standard Metrics
   - Actions – The Starting Nine
   - Capability Maturity

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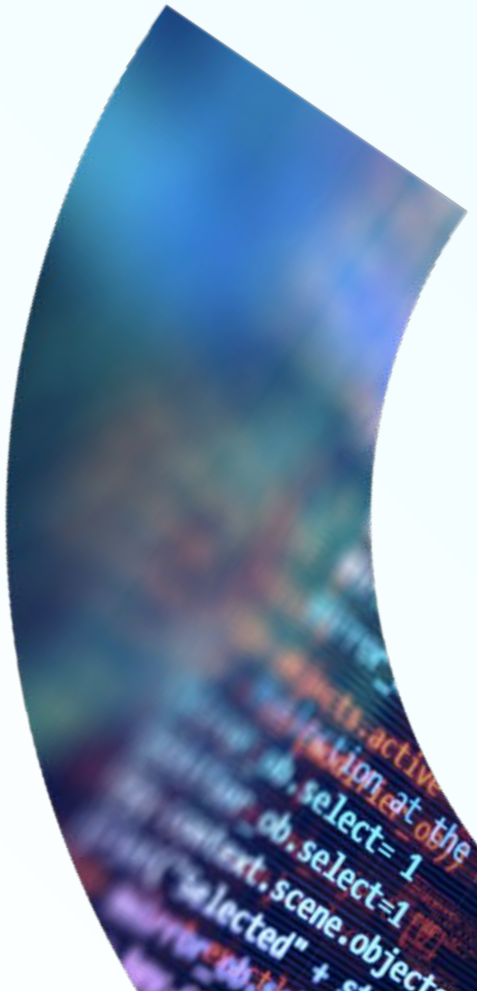
Who We Are



For too long, sustainability has been someone else's problem to solve.

IT leaders have the vision, technology and data expertise, change leadership skills, and influence to **transform the business for sustainability** . But they need the support of their teams, peers, vendors and industry partners.

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Who We Are

SustainableIT.org is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization (NPO) led by technology executives focused on advancing global sustainability through technology leadership.

Advancing Global Sustainability through Technology Leadership

Our mission is to unite the world's largest community of technology and sustainability leaders to define sustainability transformation programs, author best practices and frameworks, set standards and certifications for governance, provide education and training, and raise awareness for IT-centric ESG programs that make their organizations and the world sustainable for generations to come.

Our ESG Mandates

Community & Education

Build local, regional and global technology-oriented ESG communities. Develop ESG education and training programs.

Advocacy & Awareness

Promote tech-led ESG transformation in IT functions, enterprise and industries. Raise awareness and interest through awards, media, and publications.

Research & Standards

Research and define best practices, frameworks, and standards for adoption by IT, companies, and industries.

Transparency & Accountability

Set standards for metrics and reporting to enable transparency and accountability. Promote certification for individuals and organizations.

2023 Highlights

Membership Companies

70+	8	10	1000s
COMPANIES	COUNTRIES	INDUSTRIES	ENGAGED

Events

12	14	30	MIAMI LONDON LOS ANGELES
WEBINARS	IMPACT AWARDS	FEATURED SPEAKERS	MAJOR EVENTS

Resources

30+	240	15+
PLATFORM RESOURCES	IT ESG STANDARDS	EXTERNAL INSIGHTS

Why Sustainability Needs IT & Vice Versa

Sustainability Benefits Span Financial to Reputational

From 2013 to 2020, companies with consistently high ESG performance achieved **2.6x higher total shareholder return** than mid-level ESG performers. And companies with high sustainability maturity were more likely to see brand image, CSAT and tax savings improvements.

IT financial value

- Cost optimization (efficiency and productivity from structural transformation)
- Cost savings from lower IT energy use
- Cost sayings from longer hardware/device lifecycles

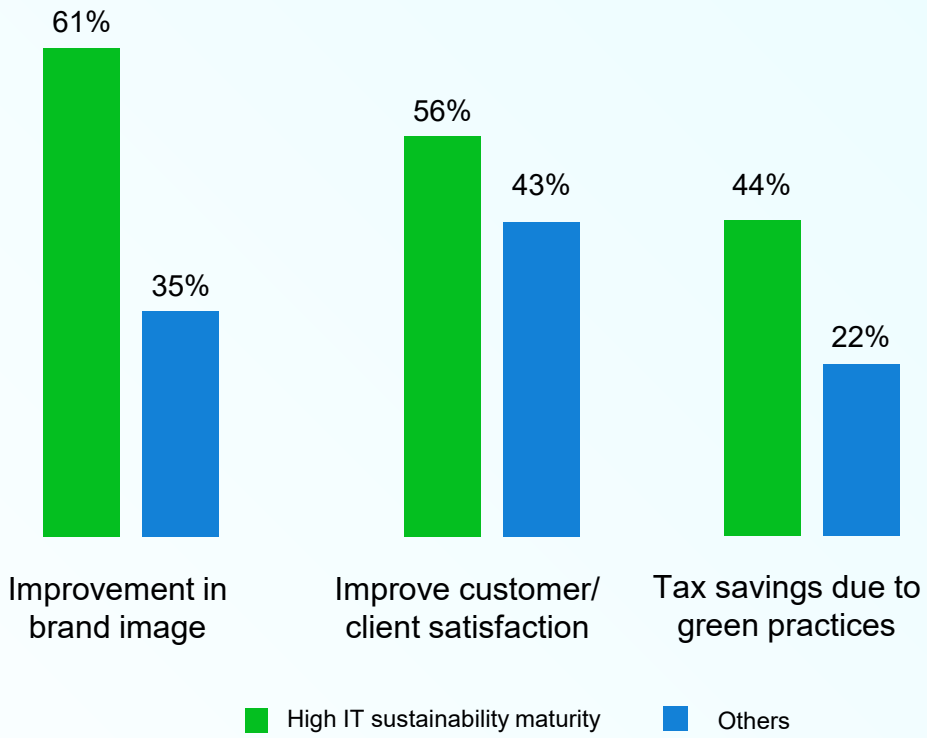
Business financial value

- Cost savings from lower business energy use (green buildings, active energy management, transportation efficiencies, etc.)
- Appeal to “ESG investors”
- Readiness for regulatory mandates for disclosure and business partner requirements

Non-financial value

- Brand perception
- Appeal to younger demographic (employees and customers)
- Greater workforce loyalty

Sustainable IT benefits



Sources: Accenture analysis, Capgemini Research Institute

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Sustainability Reporting Regulations are Expanding

Reporting requirements begin as early as 2024; IT should align goals and actions with pending compliance requirements.

- **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) - EU**
- **Corporate Supply Chain Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) – EU**
- **EU Digital Green Certificate – EU**
- **Supply Chain Due Diligence Act – Germany**
- **Modern Slavery Act – UK**
- **OSFI's guidelines for management of climate-related risks – Canada**
- **UNESCO Ethics of Artificial Intelligence – UNESCO**
- **California SB 253 and 261 - US**
- **SEC Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) – US**

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Why Your Companies Need You at the Table

Organizations will rely on IT for **execution**, and IT leaders will need to be ready. Better yet, IT should be helping plan **strategy**!

Top impacts on IT departments

1. Many ESG areas are new and will require new processes and tools.
2. Regulations will require auditable ESG metrics data.
3. Corporations must track of ESG-related risks of third parties. This will mean more robust assessments and monitoring.
4. The SEC is requiring more rigorous accountability and reporting on cyber incidents.
5. Current reporting frameworks may need updating as regulators move to digital.
6. Architecture updates must incorporate sustainability principles.
7. Ethical design and accessibility must be considered when AI is as part of product solutions.

Source: Info-Tech Research Group

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Why CIOs Are Ready Now to Lead Enterprise Sustainability

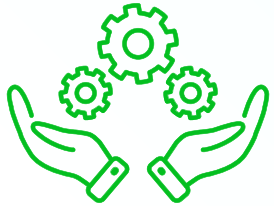
As Leaders of Digital Transformation, CIOs/CTOs Have the Strategies, Tools and Relationships

Sustainability strategies already among IT's responsibilities

- Automation of labor-intensive processes
- Migration to cloud
- Consolidation, simplification, deactivation
- Hybrid/remote worker enablement
- Technology innovation process, facilities (e.g., lab) & partner connections

Data stewardship has traditionally been an IT role

- System usage and performance metrics
- Data sourcing, smart capture, integration and virtualization
- AI for smart data capture, decision support, anomaly detection



IT has the relevant relationships

- Digital business transformation – guiding enterprisewide infrastructure and process modernization and the attendant change leadership
- Monitoring, measuring, and compliance reporting
- Vendor performance assessment and certification (outsourcers, hyperscalers)
- Strategic relationships with every business unit/function (BRMs & Business Partners)

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Poll Question #1 of 4

1. Does your company have a formal ESG sustainability program or initiative? Choose one.
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No
   - ❑ Don’t know

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Poll Question #2 of 4

2. What is IT’s current involvement in ESG sustainability? Choose one.
   - ❑ Fully engaged as partner
   - ❑ Ad hoc engagement as needed
   - ❑ No engagement

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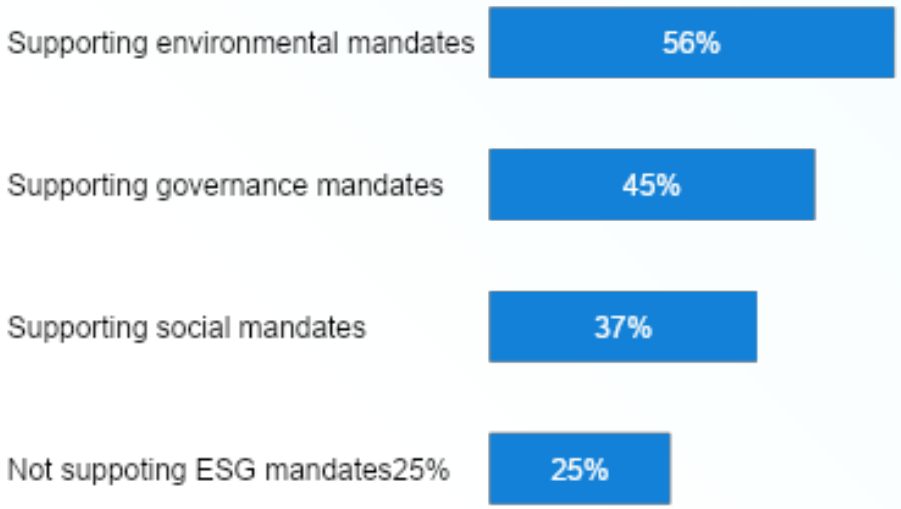
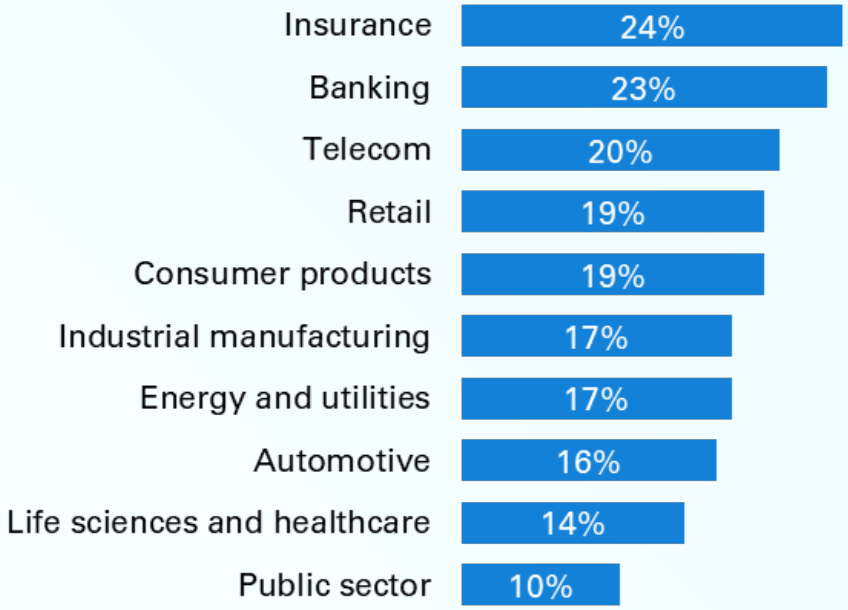
IT is Not Engaged

One in four IT organizations are not supporting any ESG mandates; Across 11 industries, only 18% have sustainable IT strategies

IT's anticipated involvement in ESG initiatives in 2023



Companies with sustainable IT strategies (with well-defined goals and target timelines) by industry



Source: Info-Tech "Tech Trends 2023;" Capgemini Research Institute

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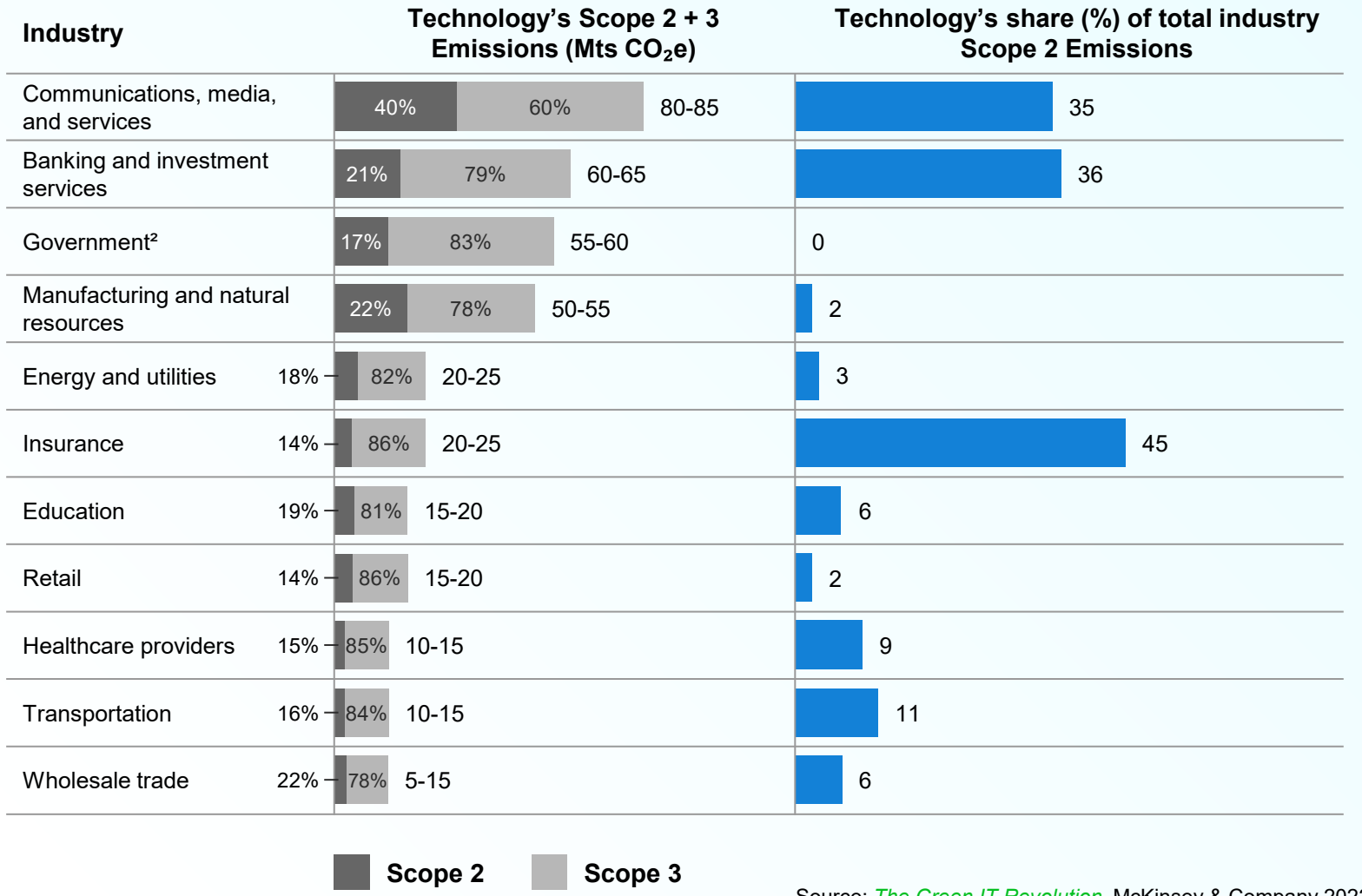
Why IT Needs Sustainability

Technology Contributes as Much as 45% of Scope 2 Emissions



Source: *The Green IT Revolution*, McKinsey & Company 2022

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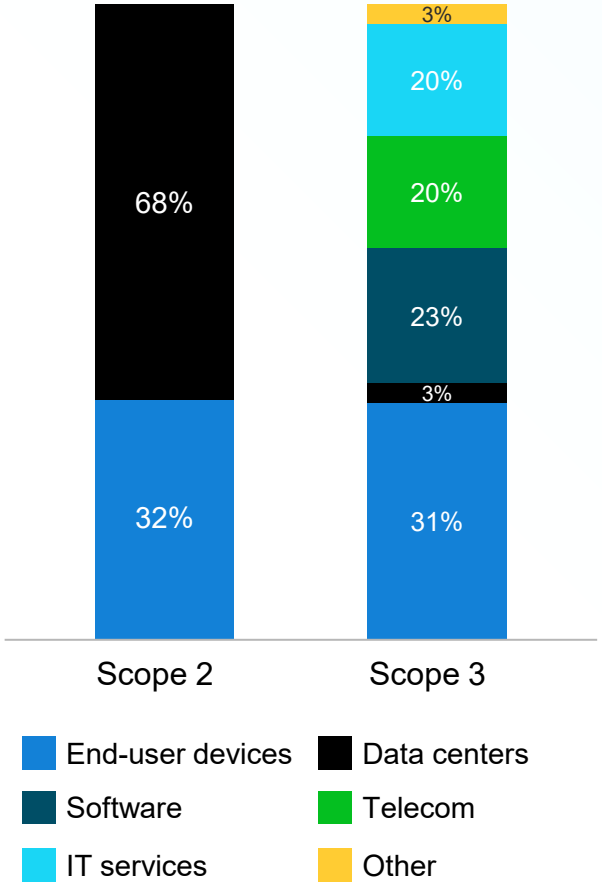
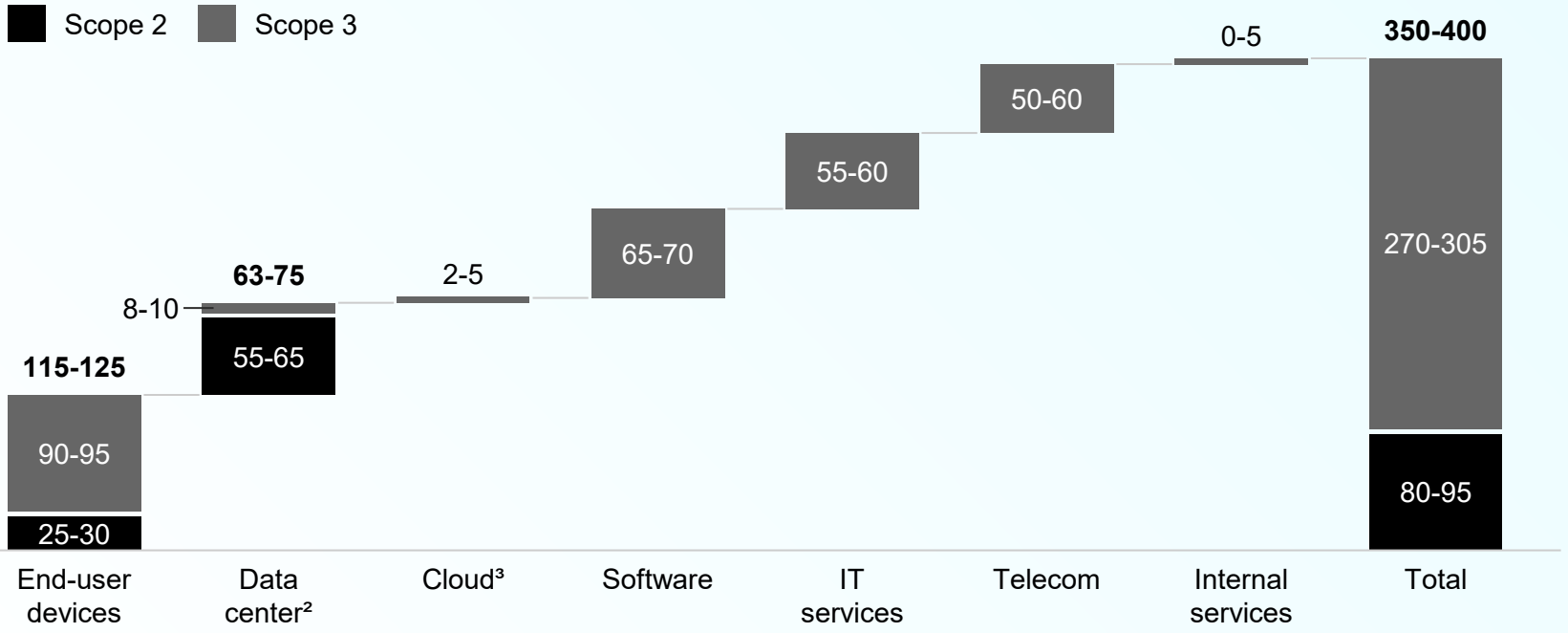
End-user Devices, Data Centers Account for 50% of IT's Scope 2, 3 Emissions

Emission contributions by technology type





¹Megatons of carbon dioxide equivalent gases.
²Includes emissions from on-premises data center and co-location.
³Infrastructure as a service (IaaS) only, Software as a service (SaaS) and Platform as a service (PaaS) spending accounted for in software category

Source: *The Green IT Revolution*, McKinsey & Company 2022

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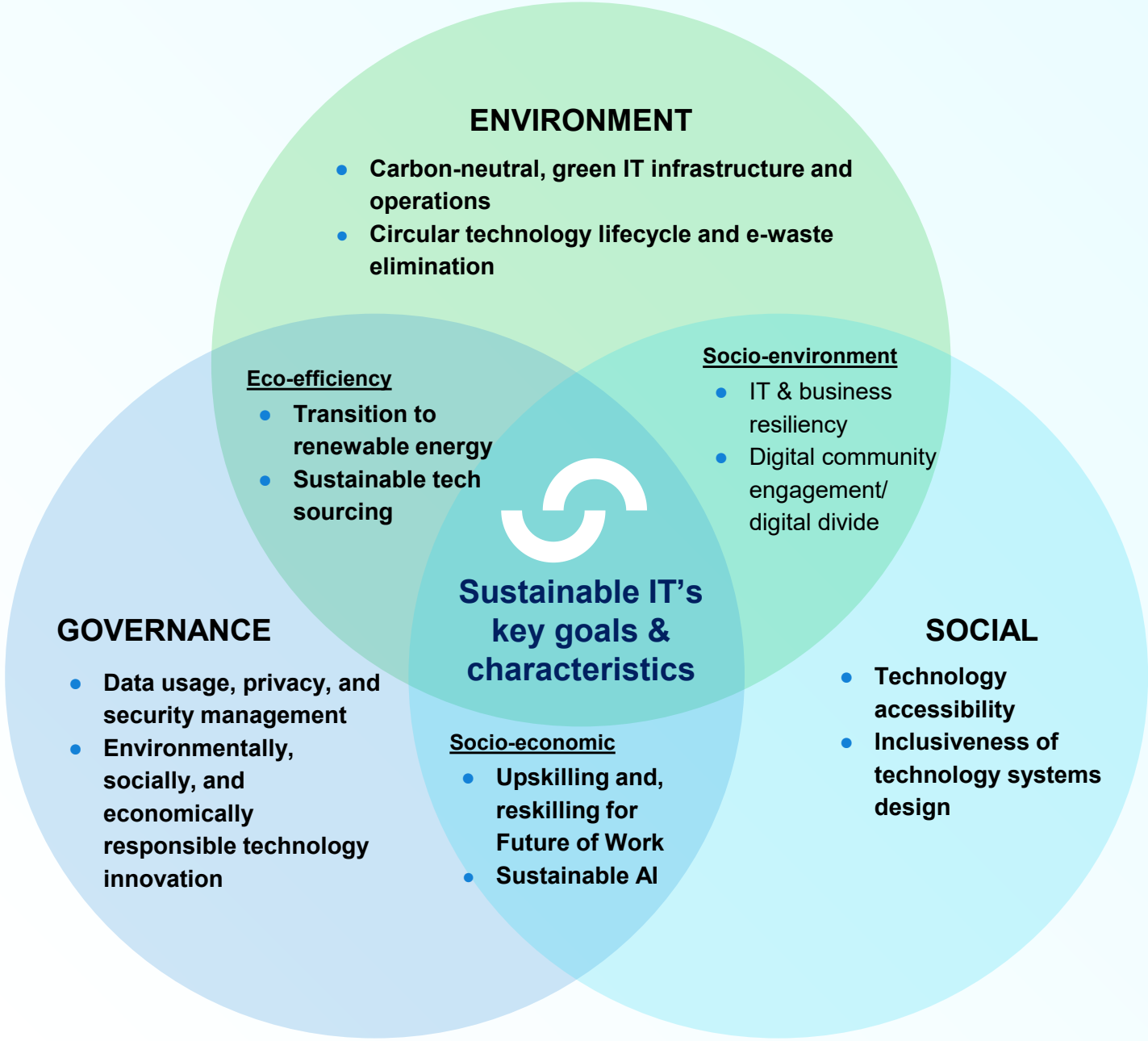
What Does IT Sustainability Look Like?

Sustainable IT is the strategic leadership of enterprise technology to minimize its negative and maximize its positive impacts on the environment and society.

Key IT sustainability goals and characteristics across the ESG pillars are shown at right.



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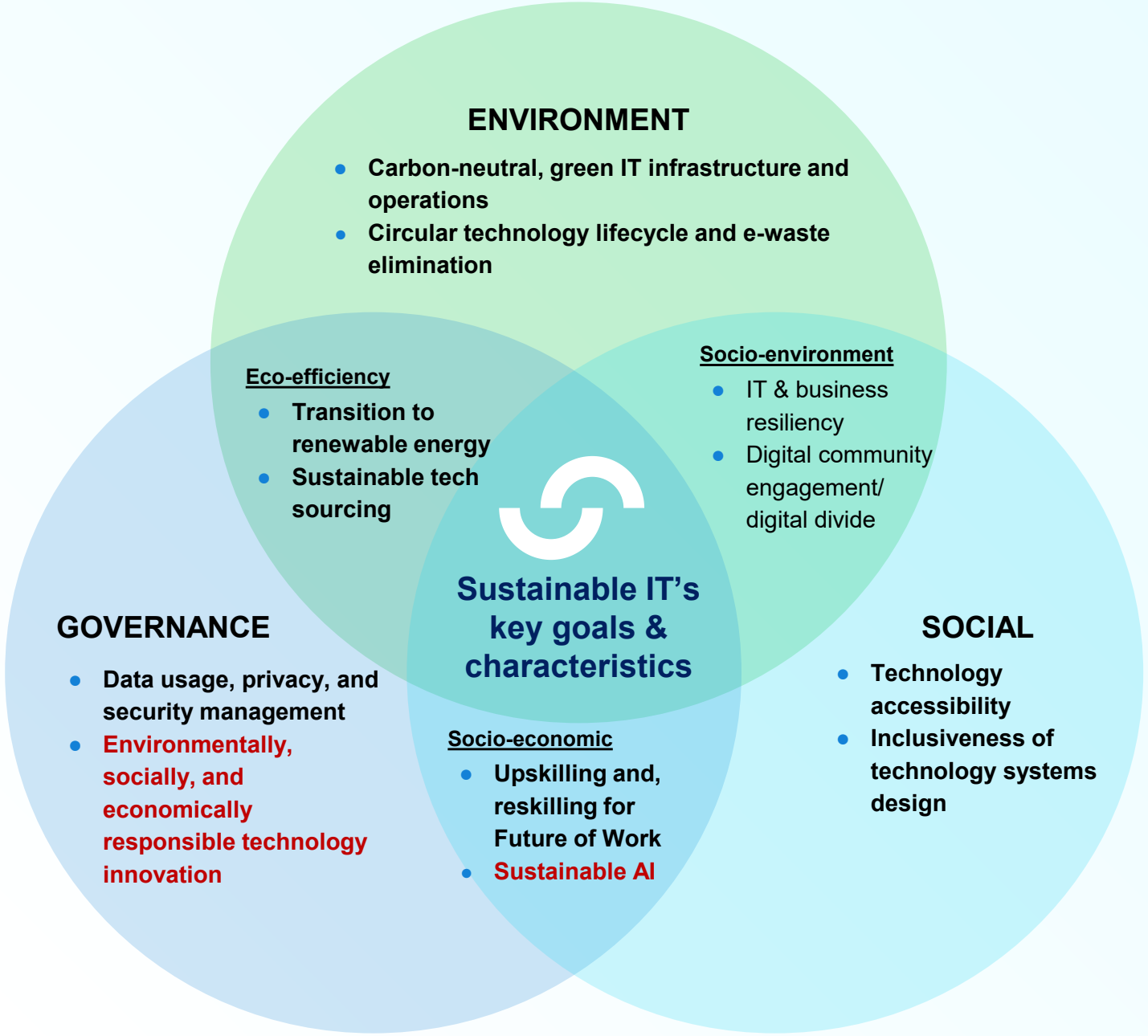
What Does IT Sustainability Look Like?



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Two Sides to AI

Positive Impacts - ESG

Future of work (social)

- AI-fueled RPA and intelligent agents improve productivity, reduces manual tasks and associated waste and emissions.

Education (social)

- VR, AI and learning sciences enable immersive, holistic experience.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Use of AI to screen data can ID and remove bias in recruitment and pay systems, and reveal equity gaps.

Environmental

- Sensing devices optimize smart building energy usage; detect wildfires earlier.
- AI uses IOT data to optimizes waste management process and city traffic patterns.

Corporate governance

- Pattern recognition detects potential fraud and non-compliant activities.
- AI monitors detect cybersecurity and privacy vulnerabilities.

Negative Impacts - ESG

Future of work (social)

- Displaces workers and devalues skills, reducing individuals' employment and earning potential.

Education (social)

- AI can be used to write dissertations and college applications, plagiarize material, and facilitate academic cheating.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (social)

- Can perpetuate bias embedded in data sets used in training.
- May not be accessible to disadvantaged populations, widening the digital divide.

Environmental

- Training algorithms consumes energy and water resources and generate significant emissions, as does the operation of LLMs
- Data proliferation exponentially increases storage & network requirements, impacting energy and emissions.

Corporate governance

- AI unprotected use of personal data can violate privacy laws.
- AI errors lead to false positives & accusations.

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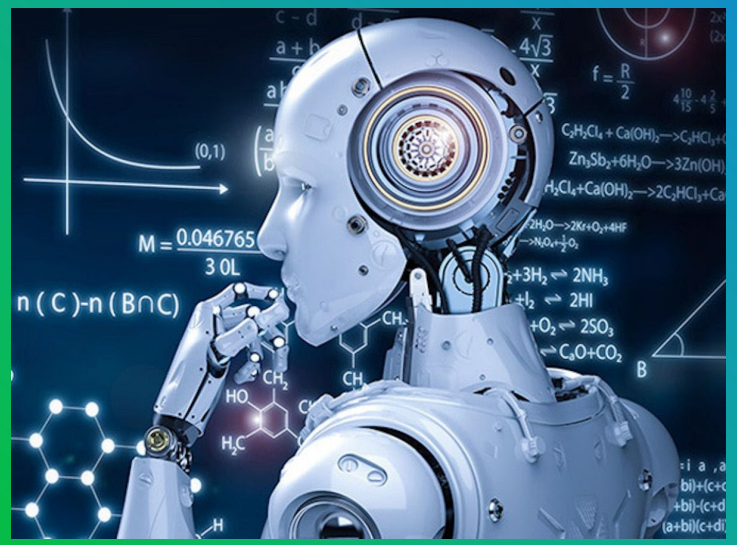
Ethical Dilemmas



AI ethics challenges

- **Lack of transparency** – AI decisions are not always understandable or explainable even by their programmers.
- **Questionable neutrality** – AI decisions are susceptible to inaccuracies and discriminatory outcomes due to biases.
- **Environmental harm** – AI's energy consumption and emissions intensity are greater than other forms of computing. Lack of AI development transparency frustrates ability to make ethical environmental choices.
- **Degraded creativity value-chain** – Creator integrity and copyrights are being challenged as AI grows capable of producing "art."
- **Negative externalities** – AI-enabled platforms' unregulated use of personal data could accelerate loss of citizen privacy to corporations and governments, damage competition, propagate false information in social media "echo chambers," degrade the value of workers, and create a net loss of jobs.
- **Weaponization** – AI superintelligence could destabilize balance of power and enable systems to make decisions that cause harm not intended by their creators or commanders.

Sources: *Harms of AI,* Daron Acemoglu, MIT

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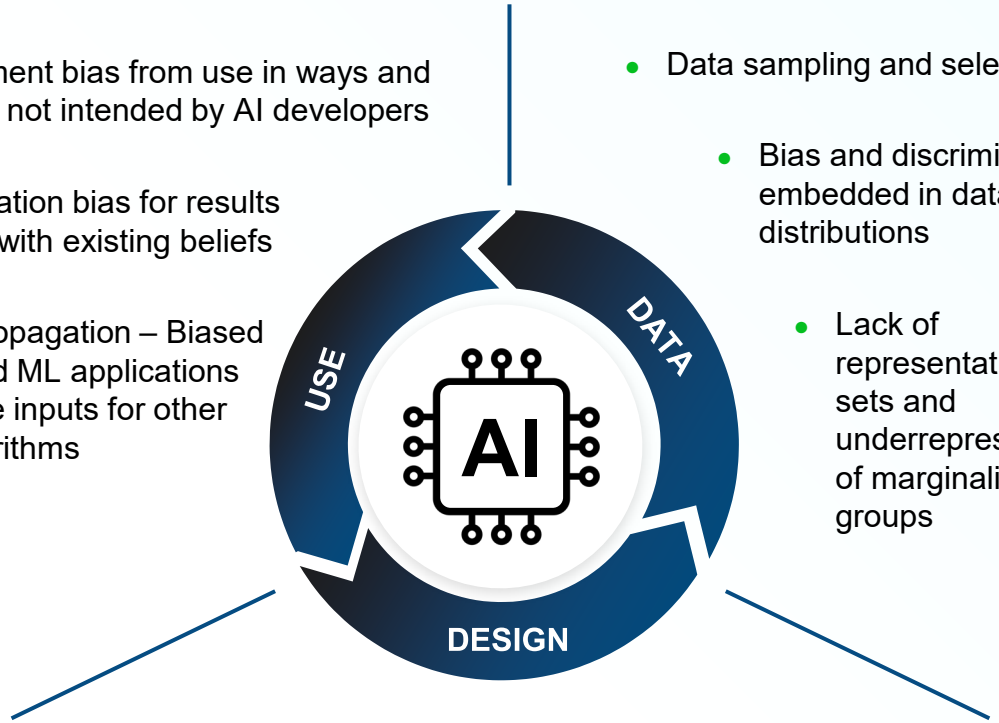
AI Bias

Documented AI pattern biases have ranged from facial recognition systems to credit-limit setting to racial bias in healthcare risk analysis to job candidate screening – all based on erroneous interpretations of data

How bias enters AI cycle

- Deployment bias from use in ways and contexts not intended by AI developers
- Confirmation bias for results aligning with existing beliefs
- Error propagation – Biased or flawed ML applications generate inputs for other ML algorithms



- Data sampling and selection bias
- Bias and discrimination embedded in data distributions
- Lack of representative data sets and underrepresentation of marginalized groups
- Exclusionary design, model building and testing
- Lack of diversity in AI design teams

Ways to minimize AI bias

- Test algorithms in real-life situations
- Establish processes and practices for bias monitoring, detection and correction
- Increase transparency on how the algorithms are being trained and which are being used
- Include a “human-in-the-loop” that creates a continuous feedback loop leading to greater accuracy
- Integrate fairness definitions into the training process.
- Consider rounding out problematic data sets with synthetic data
- Deploy tools created to reduce bias (e.g., IBM’s AI Fairness 360)

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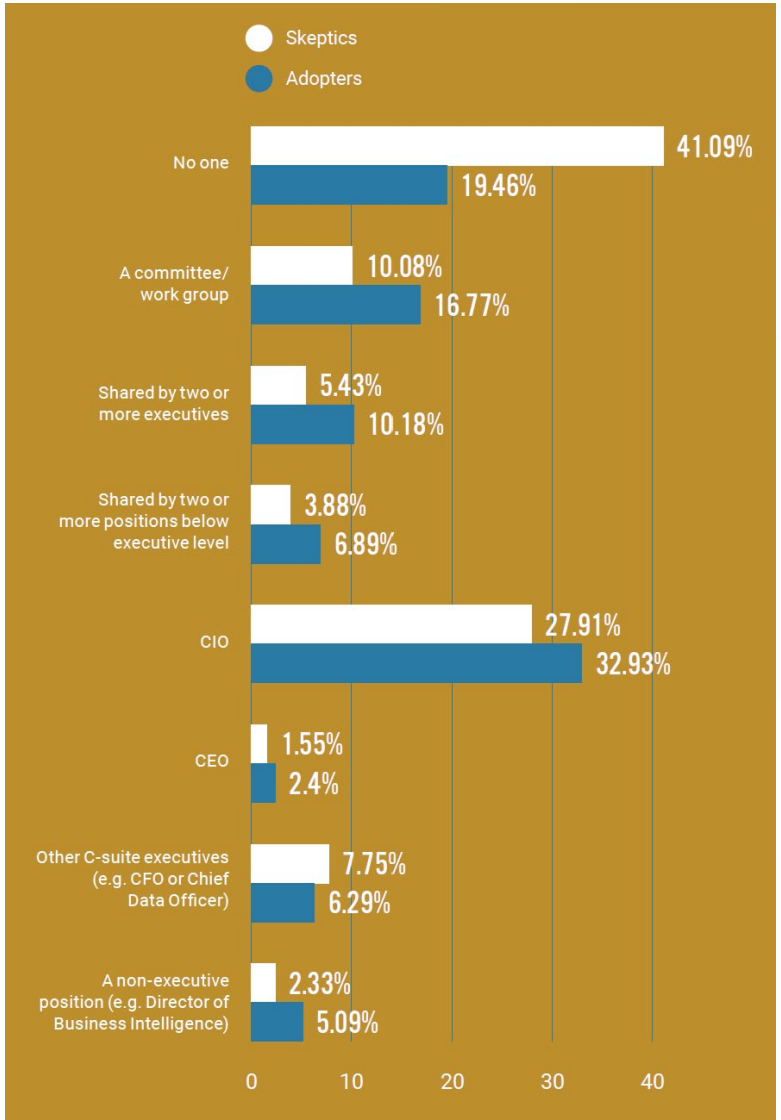
AI governance is primarily an IT responsibility, but there are many doing nothing

Who is accountable for AI governance?



Source: Info-Tech Research

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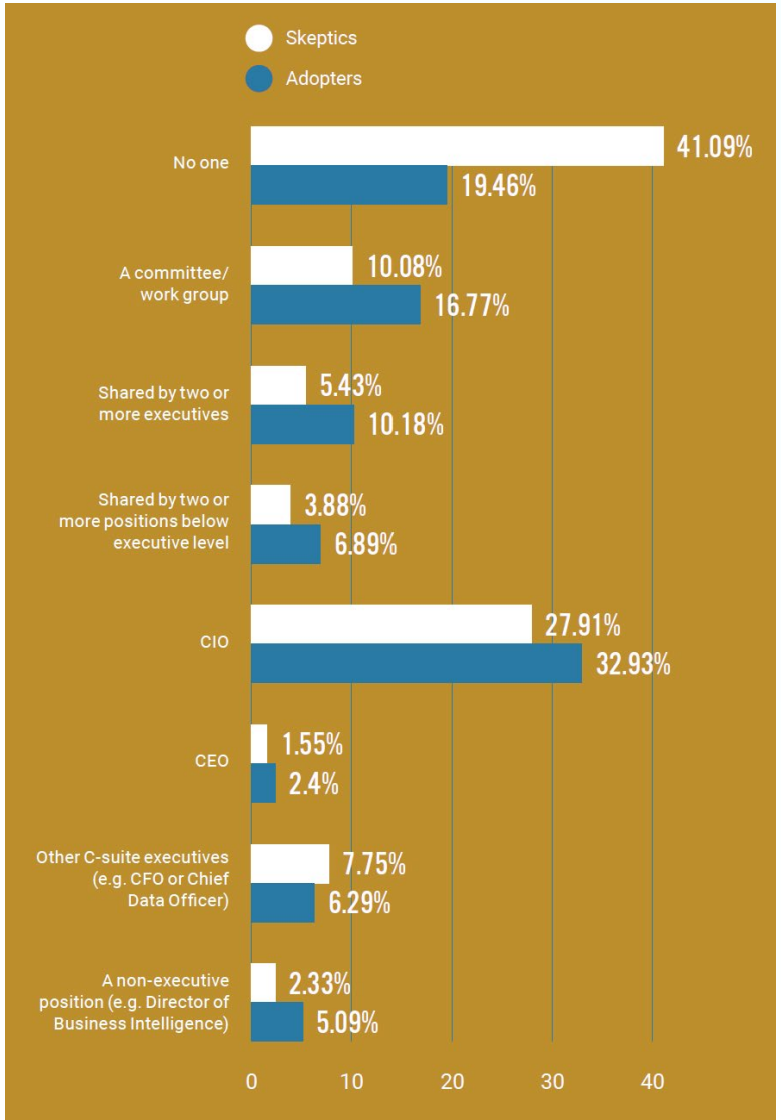
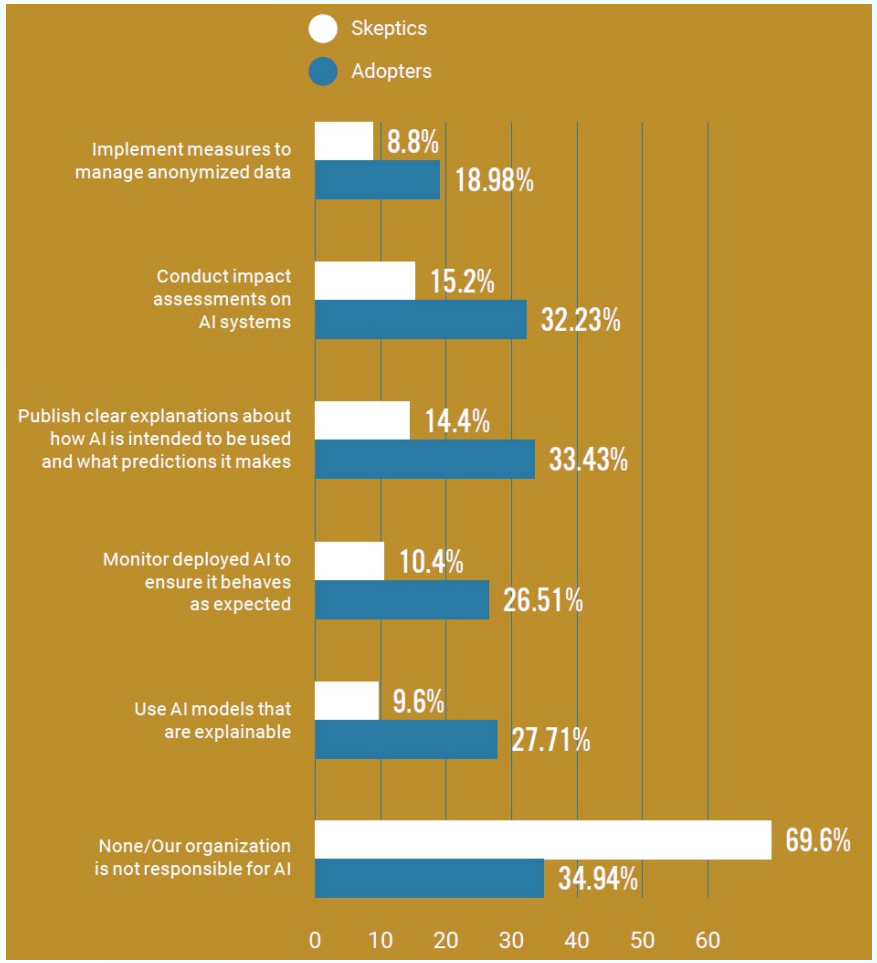


What governance steps are in place today?



Source: Info-Tech Research

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Where to Begin

Like Any Transformation, It is a Journey

ESG Program Journey

Using a R A C I format, we have mapped the CIO's program role.

1 Understand the ESG drivers

I CIO – INFORMED

"ESG assets are expected to surpass $50 trillion by 2025, globally."
– **Bloomberg Intelligence** (2022)

- Visibility of climate change
- Regulatory requirements
- Rise in ESG investing
- Younger generation with strong convictions & financial influence

"91% of companies take sustainability into account when making purchasing decisions, and 85% of consumers are more likely to purchase from a company with a reputation of sustainability or diversity."
– **Study by EcoVadis** (2021)

2 Set the program purpose

I CIO – INFORMED

Clarify ESG goals and intentions with respect to the organization.

3 Assess the material impact of ESG factors on your business

I CIO – INFORMED

"The ability to anticipate stakeholder reactions to emerging sustainability issues and how they could affect a business and its performance is critical." – **World Economic Forum** (2020)

4 Weigh risks, opportunities, and financial impact

C CIO – CONSULTED

Weigh ESG options and adjust your business operating model to align with your purpose.

5 Define approach and governance

C R CIO – CONSULTED/RESPONSIBLE

"47% of companies reported that the full board most commonly oversees climate-related risks and opportunities while 20% delegate to an existing board governance committee." – **EY** (2021)

Foundational elements of a successful ESG program are constant, but organizational approaches vary based on industry and size.

6 Identify gaps against desired outcomes

C R CIO – CONSULTED/RESPONSIBLE

IT impacts of an ESG program extend beyond the data challenge.

7 Deliver on goals and disclosure

R CIO – RESPONSIBLE

8 Continually report and measure

R CIO – RESPONSIBLE

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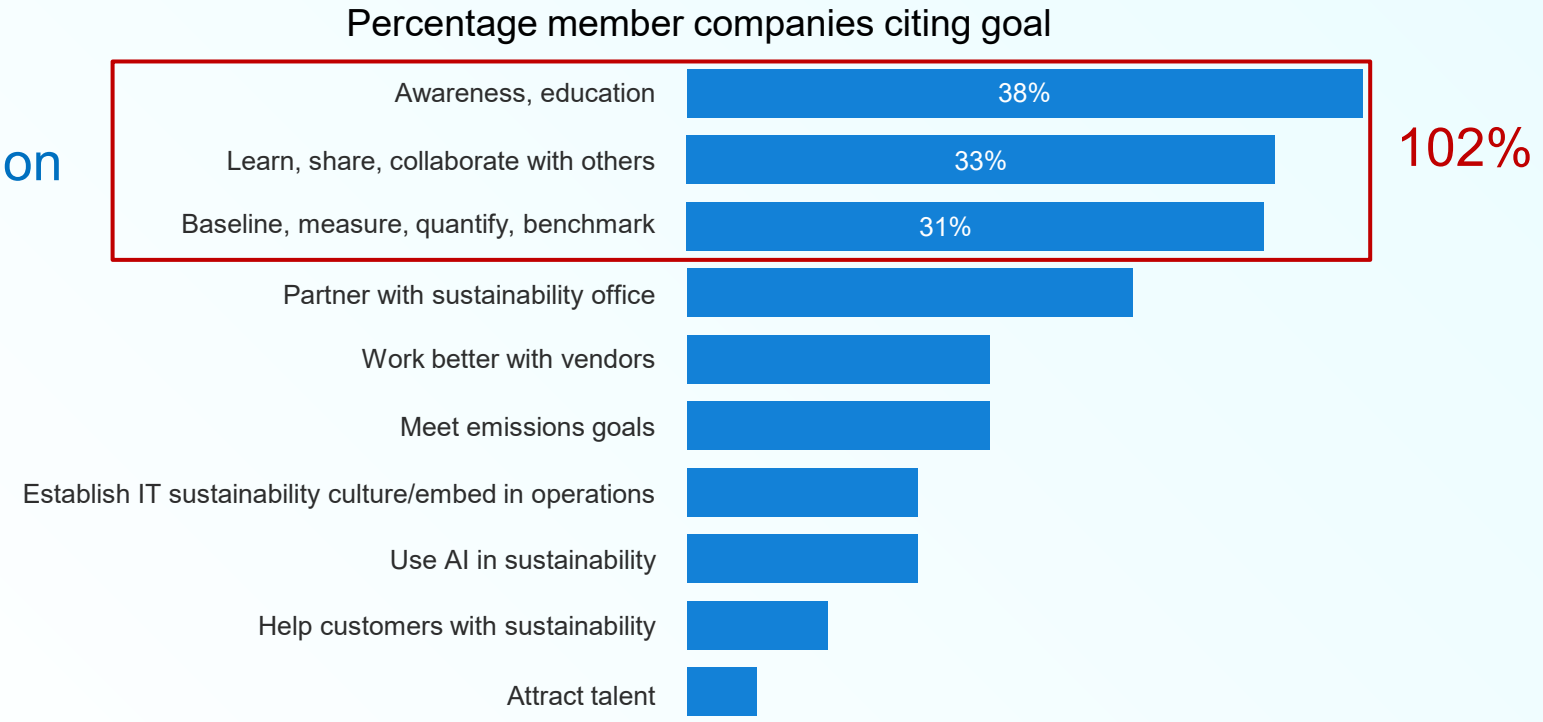
Source: Info-Tech Research Group

Our Member Research Shows Top Goals

TOP GOALS

- Spread awareness & education
- Learn from others
- Obtain metrics



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Start with Standards: Sustainability Standards are Topics Against Which Improvement is Targeted, Measured, and Reported

- Created and vetted by IT leaders
- A uniform foundation on which to build strategies
- Industry, region and company-size agnostic
- To be mapped to the UN SDG Ambition goals

Sampling of SustainableIT's ESG standards for IT

Environment

- Technology infrastructure energy consumption (kWh, % renewable)
- Lifecycle energy consumption of IT products and services
- Technology infrastructure emissions
- Lifecycle emissions of IT products and services
- Device and hardware lifecycle circularity
- Percentage IT devices reused/refurbished or repurposed
- Refresh cycle of IT devices
- Virtual meeting enablement
- Eco-friendly business travel
- Paperless enterprise enablement
- Water consumption and discharge
- Sourcing environmental sustainability impact assessment
- Eligible tech meeting certification criteria
- IT procurement process environmental impact assessment

Social

- Health and safety impacts of IT products and services
- Technology systems user-accessibility
- Technology design inclusiveness
- IT workforce diversity, equity and inclusion
- Vendor ecosystem diversity
- Digital community engagement/digital divide reduction
- Technology vendor human-rights requirements, assessment and accountability
- Supply-chain human rights requirements, assessment and accountability

Governance

- Sustainability governance and accountability
- Sustainability funding and incentives
- Sustainability training, coaching and talent pipeline
- Environmentally, socially and economically -responsible technology innovation
- Future-of work-strategy sustainability enablement
- Reskilling automation-displaced workers
- Governance of data usage, security, and privacy
- Business continuity/resilience strategy and planning for enterprise and value-chain partners
- Enterprise risk management incorporating ESG risks
- Financial fraud and corruption safeguards
- AI governance (transparency, privacy, security, ethics, environmental impact)

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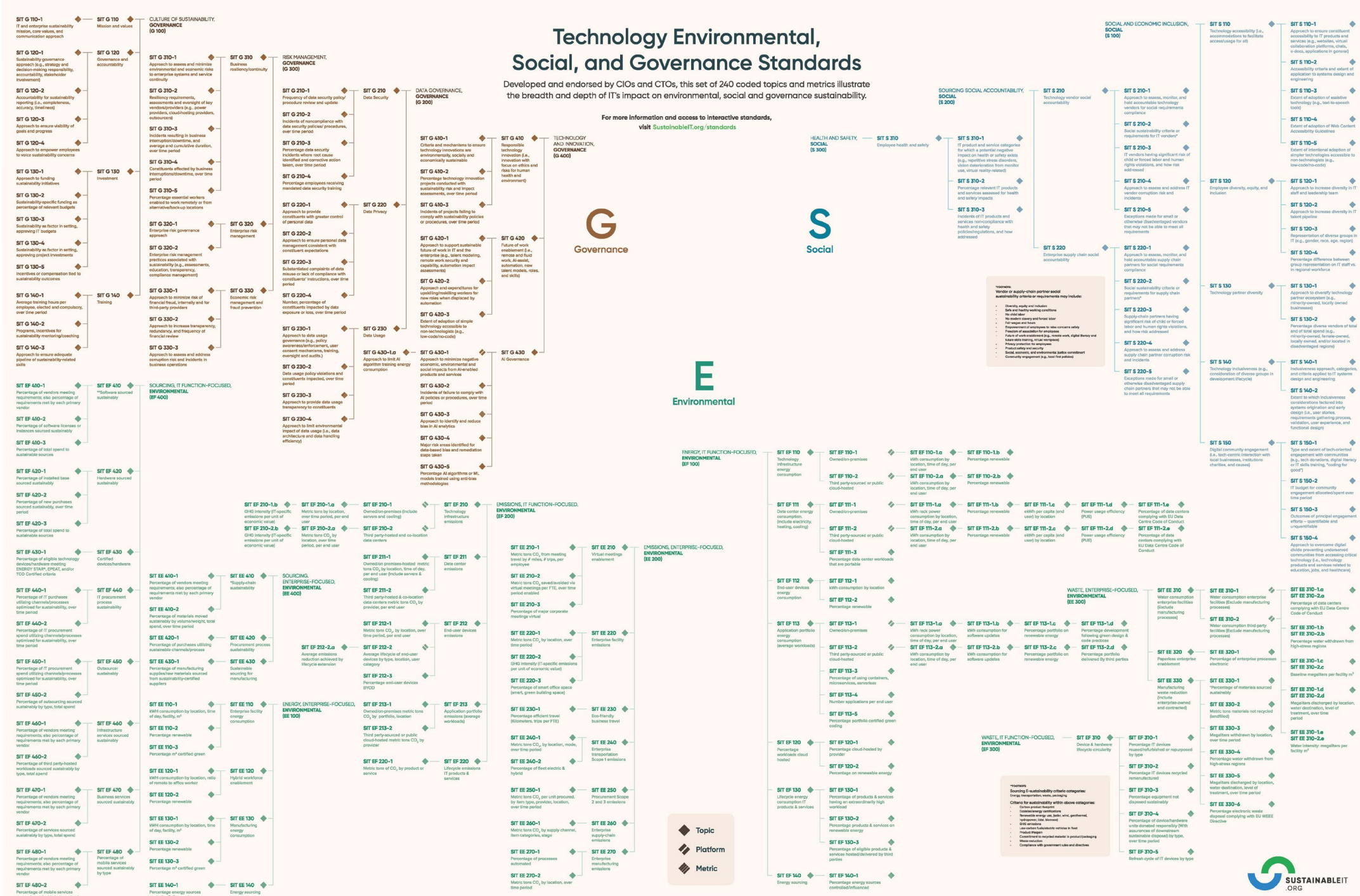
Technology Environmental, Social, and Governance Standards

Developed and endorsed by CIOs and CTOs, this set of 240 coded topics and metrics illustrate the breadth and depth of IT's impact on environmental, social and governance sustainability.

For more information and access to interactive standards, visit SustainableIT.org/standards



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Environmental

ENERGY (100) – FUNCTION-FOCUSED

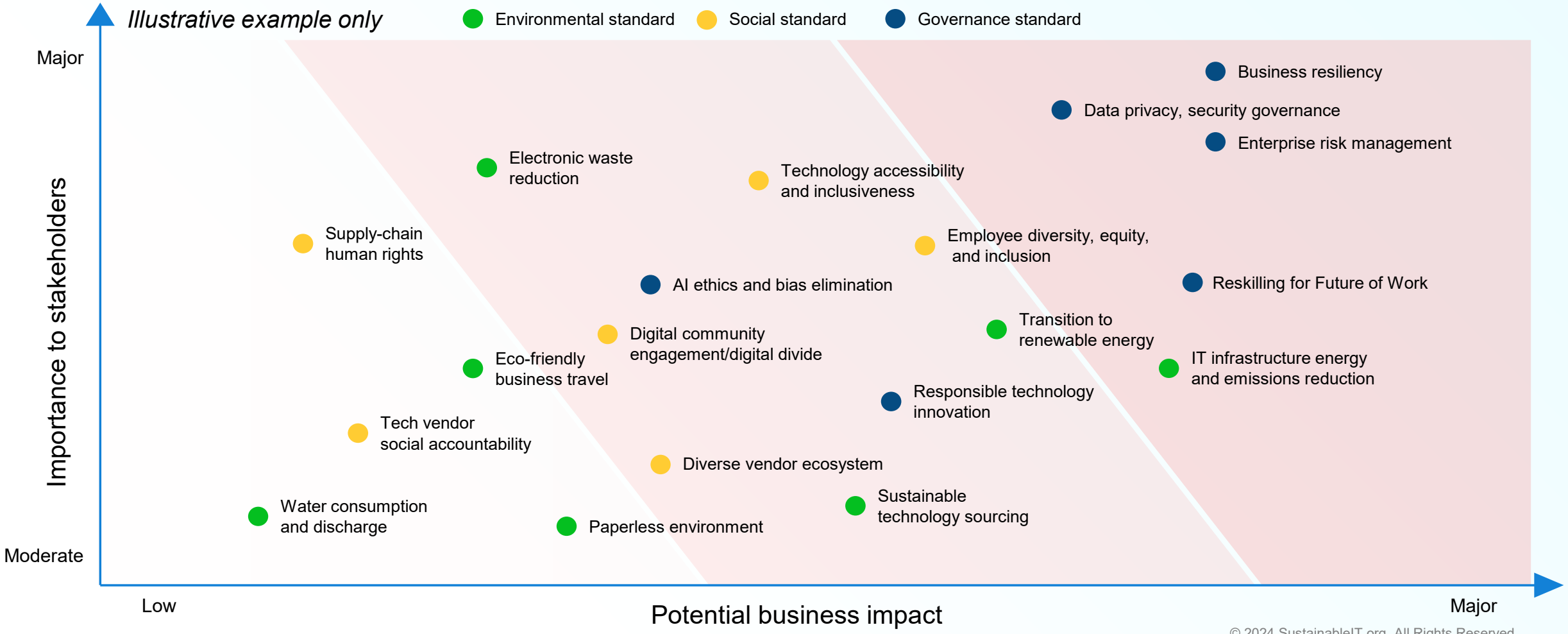
SIT Code	Type	Description	Relevant third-party codes
⊞ SIT EF 110	Topic	Technology infrastructure energy consumption (include electricity, heating, cooling) ⓘ	GRI 302-1, 3; SASB TC-IM-130a.1, TC-SI-130a.1
⊞ SIT EF 111	Topic	Data center energy consumption (include electricity, heating, cooling)	
⊞ SIT EF 112	Topic	End-user devices energy consumption (include electricity, heating, cooling) ⓘ	
⊞ SIT EF 113	Topic	Application portfolio energy consumption (average workloads)	
⊞ SIT EF 120	Metric	Percentage workloads cloud hosted ⓘ	SASB TC-SI-000.A
⊞ SIT EF 130	Metric	Lifecycle energy consumption IT products and services (include electricity, heating, cooling) ⓘ	GRI 302-1, 3
⊞ SIT EF 140	Topic	Energy sourcing	

Drill Down to Measures

SIT Code	Type	Description	Relevant third-party codes
⊞ SIT EF 110	Topic	Technology infrastructure energy consumption (include electricity, heating, cooling) ⓘ	GRI 302-1, 3; SASB TC-IM-130a.1, TC-SI-130a.1
⊟ SIT EF 111	Topic	Data center energy consumption (include electricity, heating, cooling)	
⊟ SIT EF 111-1	Platform	Owned/on-premises	
SIT EF 111-1.a	Metric	kWh rack power consumption by location, room, time of day, per end user	
SIT EF 111-1.b	Metric	Percentage renewable ⓘ	
SIT EF 111-1.c	Metric	ekWh per capita (end user) ⓘ	
SIT EF 111-1.d	Metric	Power usage efficiency (PUE) ⓘ	
SIT EF 111-1.e	Metric	Percentage data centers complying with EU Data Centre Code of Conduct	

Prioritize Standards That Have Highest "Materiality" – Importance to IT/Business Stakeholders and Potential Business Impact

Further refine priorities based on standards in which IT can have a major, visible and rapid impact



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The Sustainability Metrics Lifecycle

Project to document standards data across its sustainability lifecycle

Identification	Collection & Distribution	Disclosure & Decisions
• Regulatory requirements (if applicable) • Current relevant programs • Related targets/goals • Data needed • Current and desired locations • Reliability level & improvement process • Ownership	• Collection method & frequency • Accountable for collection • Staging/aggregation method • Distribution method • Accountable for distribution	• Used for disclosure? • Disclosure method • Accountable for disclosure • Audited? • Accountable for audit • Goals reliant on metric • Decisions supported • Outcomes realized

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The Starting Nine

Most Start the Journey with These Nine Actions

Take stock

1. Assess what you are already doing and already have in place. It will be more than you thought.

Governance

2. Develop and communicate vision for a sustainable IT operating model. Align to existing enterprise sustainability vision.
3. Define sustainability responsibility in IT -- executive sponsor, team leads, data and measurement team, and key business stakeholders.
4. Conduct a materiality assessment.

Energy and emissions

5. Begin monitoring energy consumption of major IT assets, and type of energy (renewable, coal, etc.).
6. Develop or accelerate server migration plan to low-carbon intensity cloud.

IT hardware circularity

7. Assess current hardware disposal methods; initiate or expand IT asset disposition to reduce landfill.
8. Assess impact of prolonging IT hardware lifecycle on IT asset classes (servers, laptops, etc.).

Vendor management

9. Communicate sustainability vision and plans to key vendors.

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SustainableIT Journey: General Sustainability Actions – Year 1

	Year 1
	Discovery & Initiating
Education	• Discover IT's ESG impacts and potential areas of improvement. • Discover availability and accessibility of essential ESG data (including regulatory compliance needs). • Inform C-suite, sustainability office, and IT team of IT's ESG relevance (impact, drivers, data governance).
Goals & Strategy	• Develop vision for sustainable IT operating model, including architecture. Communicate to C-suite and board. • Create transformation strategy and roadmap for ESG sustainability across IT's services lifecycle.
Targets & KPIs	• Prioritize IT ESG goals by materiality assessment. Factor in regulatory requirements. • Select initial sustainability improvement goals and set realistic targets aligned with enterprise goals. Include potential quick wins and initiatives/programs already underway. • Adopt standardized IT sustainability topics and metrics for measurement and reporting (see our ESG standards). Measure and document baselines for targeted sustainability metrics/KPIs.
Leadership & Governance	• Establish IT executive sponsor, team leads, key stakeholders. • Solidify responsibility and accountability as program evolves. • Establish communication/relationship with sustainability officer. • Establish IT participation in enterprise sustainability governance
Talent & Resources	• Assemble initial team motivated by ESG goals. • Self-fund initial research and projects; tap available corporate ESG resources once plan is accepted. • Investigate and leverage third-party ESG training and support resources.

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SustainableIT Journey: Governance Sustainability Actions – Year 1

	Year 1
	Discovery & Initiating
Culture	• Be transparent within IT and with stakeholders on sustainability vision and goals. Communicate and update regularly. • Educate broader IT team in issues, impacts, metrics, and regulations.
Data Governance	• Review and assess data needed for sustainability reporting by IT and the enterprise, prioritizing regulatory compliance needs. • Review and update data security, privacy, and usage policies to align with ESG commitments and regulatory requirements. • Review and update incident tracking, root-cause analysis, and reporting to comply with regulatory requirements.
Risk Management	• Review and update enterprise business continuity plans. • Assess IT-related ESG risks for the enterprise and develop/update response and mitigation plans. • Assist enterprise stakeholders on their ESG risk reporting obligations.
Technology & Innovation	• Establish vision and criteria for responsible technology innovation (does not harm environment, society, or economy). • Assess current initiatives for potential ESG negative impacts.

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SustainableIT Journey: Environmental Sustainability Actions – Years 1

	Year 1
	Discovery & Initiating
Energy	• Update or assess IT assets (particularly data centers and end-user devices). • Measure and monitor energy consumption of owned data center assets. Determine percentage of energy from renewable sources. • Develop/accelerate plan to co-locate/cloud host all IT infrastructure possible.
Emissions	• Calculate IT data center Scope 2 emissions and GHG intensity, converting energy consumption to carbon emissions. • Request Scope 2 and Scope 3 emissions information from hyperscalers.
Waste	• Assess average lifecycle of IT asset classes and potential for extension. • Extend lifecycle on key IT asset class (laptops, smartphones, etc.) and measure/report environmental impact. • Initiate or expand use of IT asset disposition (ITAD) to reduce landfill impact.
Sourcing	• Share sustainability vision and intentions with primary IT vendors; learn their intentions and accomplishments. • Establish environmental criteria for sustainable sourcing (see our standards guidance for SIT EF 400, page 12). • Create an IT provider questionnaire to gather vendor environmental and social data for inclusion in IT reporting.

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SustainableIT Journey: Social Sustainability Actions – Year 1

	Year 1
	Discovery & Initiating
Social & Economic Inclusion	• Research and adopt accessibility measures and criteria. • Research and adopt digital inclusiveness measures and criteria.
Sourcing Social Accountability	• Assess primary technology vendors for human rights risk-potential; request policies from those at risk.
Health & Safety	• Assess potential health and safety impacts of IT product and services.

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Poll Question #3 of 4

3. What areas of impact is your IT organization targeting it its sustainability effort currently or over 2024)? Choose all that apply.

- ❑ Energy consumption/emissions of IT infrastructure
- ❑ Circularity of IT hardware (IT asset disposition)
- ❑ Improving user accessibility and inclusion for our tech services/products
- ❑ Sustainability data governance (identification, access, distribution, auditability, etc.)
- ❑ Diversity and inclusion of IT staff
- ❑ Sustainable IT architecture principles
- ❑ None of the above

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Poll Question #4

4. What is your most significant obstacles in IT-led sustainability? Choose up to 2.
   - ❑ Lack of awareness, interest, commitment
   - ❑ Resources (funding, time)
   - ❑ Don’t know where to start
   - ❑ Inadequate data
   - ❑ Inadequate skills/knowledge related to sustainability
   - ❑ Corporate sustainability office excludes or sidelines IT organization

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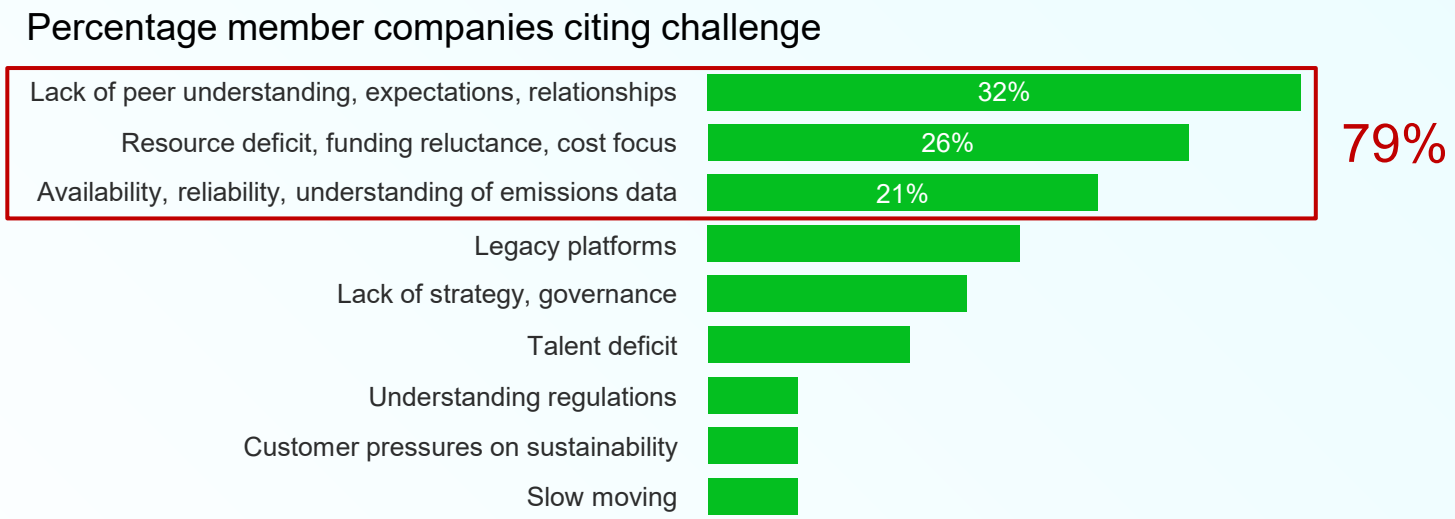
Our Member Research Shows Major Obstacles

TOP CHALLENGES

- Developing relationships
- Obtaining funding
- Finding the data



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Mature the Capabilities Fundamental to Early-stage Sustainability Journeys

Capabilities	Maturity Levels				
	Level 1 - Beginning	Level 2 - Unstructured	Level 3 - Defined	Level 4 - Managed	Level 5 - Optimized
Awareness and Commitment	- Limited awareness and understanding of IT sustainability challenge and opportunity - No formal IT executive commitment - No formal IT goals	- Growing recognition of sustainability materiality to IT - Limited executive support - Isolated IT sustainability goals	- IT seen as sustainability player - IT executive support exits - IT objectives defined and linked to ESG goals	- IT recognized broadly as sustainability enabler or driver - Strong executive support in IT and among key stakeholders - Formal ESG targets roadmapped and monitored - Up-to-date information on regulations, tools and standards regularly shared	- Technology-driven sustainability seen as fundamental and potential competitive advantage - Enterprise executive team fully engaged - Sustainability embedded in IT ecosystem and delivery lifecycle - Awareness reinforcement embedded in employee orientation, training requirements
IT Strategy and Role	- No IT sustainability strategy - IT sustainability responsibilities undefined - IT typically not involved in enterprise sustainability strategy	- Strategy exists but is not broadly known or consistently applied - IT responsible for sustainability initiatives within function - IT sporadically supports enterprise initiatives	- Technology strategy defined and applied - IT responsibility defined and operational - IT role in enterprise sustainability formalized	- Regular IT strategy reviews - Regular assessment of IT leadership performance - Formally aligned IT and enterprise strategies	- IT and enterprise strategies unified - IT enterprise leadership role - IT leader collaboration influences industry strategy
Governance	- No formal IT sustainability governance - No IT priorities, baselines or targets - No technology vendor requirements - No IT ESG standards (i.e., topics for disclosure, metrics)	- IT sustainability governance limited or ad hoc - IT priorities and targets isolated - Criteria and goals shared with some vendors - IT ESG standards introduced but not broadly applied	- Robust IT governance in place - All top priorities have baselines and targets - Sustainability criteria for all major vendors defined and applied K13 - ESG standards fully defined and adopted	- Sustainability governance embedded in business transformation governance - Baselines, targets and progress actively and consistently monitored, managed - Goal-setting, accounting and reporting collaboration among IT and vendor partners - IT ESG standards roll up to enterprise standards	- IT/enterprise sustainability governance unified - New, more ambitious targets set - Industrywide criteria and standards for technology vendors - Enterprise standards roll up to industry standards

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