MAY 2024 EDITION



ANALYSIS REPORT ESG IN INDIA

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- Insights on India's ESG Mechanism
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Overview

Organizations are preparing themselves to answer the climate change scenario that is one of the biggest crises of the 21st century. In the last few years, its significant impact on the global economy and financial growth has been evident across the sectors. This has attracted major attention towards environmental, social, and governance (ESG) rating and evaluation globally.

The ESG stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance where these three entities in short refer to a set of factors that are widely used by venture capitalists and corporate organizations to assess a company's viability and moral practices. India over the years has launched various ESG funds to drive investment decisions based on the ESG parameters.



Source: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/about-deloitte/in-Deloitte-India-ESG-Preparedness-Survey-Report_noexp.pdf

ESG FACTORS



- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Energy Efficiency
- Raw Material Sourcing
- Waste Management
- Innovation



- Human Rights & Fair Wages
- Animal Welfare Policies
- Community (eg giving back)
- Product Responsibility
- Employee Training & Qualification



- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Stakeholders
- Inclusion & Diversity
- Management Incentive Structure
- Financial Accounting & Transparency

Source: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/stocks/news/esg-investing-why-investors-need-to-add-a-flavour-of-sustainability-in-their-portfolios/articleshow/94578208.cms?from=mdr

To increase the competitiveness of Indian businesses, the Security Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has updated the established ESG framework with new metrics in 2023. It has replaced SEBI's May 2021 Business Responsibility Report (BRR) framework with the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) format, also termed as 'BRSR Core'. The top 1000 companies listed under SEBI need to file mandatory disclosure under this new reporting framework.



Source: https://www.outlookbusiness.com/strategy-4/feature-17/sebis-got-indian-thoughts-on-esg-push-6841

As sustainability is taking center stage in global development, the updating of the ESG framework by SEBI is a welcome step. It will incentive the companies to innovate sustainable processes and solutions. It will attract new investors for market capitalization in sustainable projects to promise favourable results in the long run. It will also motivate businesses to develop responsible processes and structures that can bring favourable results while countering climate change scenarios.

Highlights from ESG 2023 Trends



Indian organizations nowadays are greatly inclined towards non-monetary performance supported by generic reporting systems like yearly viability reports, etc. Through this, the business leadership and reporting framework syncs with the global shift and helps them prepare to meet global ESG requirements.



Geopolitics and COVID-19 have upended the status quo for supply chains and spurred a shift to sovereign manufacturing.



Supply chains can be a source of operational and reputational risk, but can also offer new opportunities for efficiencies, innovation and ESG improvements.



Scrutiny on supply chains will continue to grow in 2023 as the public seeks more understating of the full product journey.



Expectations are growing for reporting and reducing scope 3 emissions - so it's time to get started.

Source: https://www.pwc.com/kz/en/publications/new_publication_assets/esg-trends-in-2023-eng.pdf

27%

of businesses from India are well-prepared to meet ESG requirements, while suppliers of only 15% of respondents are ready

49%

of the businesses surveyed are aware of ESG reporting mechanisms and regulations in India

68%

of the respondents have been able to formally integrate ESG strategies and mechanisms into their organisations

80%

of the respondents report their ESG efforts via methods like **sustainability reports (81 per cent), ESG reports** (50 per cent) and BRSR & integrated reports (44 per cent)

75%

of the companies surveyed communicate their ESG efforts; **the most-used method is awareness programmes** (85%), followed by annual meetings (76%) and investor decks (50%)

Source: https://www.businesstoday.in/interactive/longread/the-esg-imperative-indian-businesses-future-ready-265-20-06-2023

The ESG framework in India now talks about corporate aspirations and performance in terms of sustainability. It has also become an important aspect of various incentive plans and performance evaluation criteria for businesses. However, the latest BRSR framework has enhanced India's ESG reporting framework to serve the growing needs of businesses, it has a long mile to go.

Insights on India's ESG Mechanism

At the Conference of the Parties (COP26), India made commitments to develop viable solutions to counter climate change and address environmental challenges on priority. One of them was the introduction and successful implementation of ESG into India's corporate ecosystem.



A robust ESG mechanism was needed to meet all the required parameters to strike a balance between growth and responsibility in Indian businesses. Government support under authorities like MCA, SEBI, regulatory etc is paramount for the success of ESG and meets its objectives to ensure the sustainability of businesses.

ESG: Environmental Component

Climate Change: A company is assessed on the grounds of impact it makes on the surroundings. Other evaluating factors are like adoption of reenergy, energy efficiency and GHG emissions.

Ecosystem Conservation: To retain the remaining natural assets companies policies related to protection of native habitats, deforestation and viable use of land are analyzed.

Management of resources: Ability of a company is assessed how smartly it uses natural resources and manages waste in the premises.

ESG: Social Component

Human Rights: Companies are assessed on the grounds how well they treat their employees to retain human rights, how well they are treated and deals equality issues on the social front.

Labor Practices: It analyses how well the companies implement the labor laws among their employees including fair wages, safety at workplace, 50/50 workforce including males and females and benefits of employees.

Community Engagement: How well a company engages with the locals, involved in the noble causes through donations and efforts made to uplift social development are assessed.

ESG: Governance Component

Business Ethics: In business arena to run the operation seamlessly transparency, integrity and accountability are the fundamental pillars. Companies engagement towards anti-corruption guidelines, moral conduct and regulatory compliance are assessed.

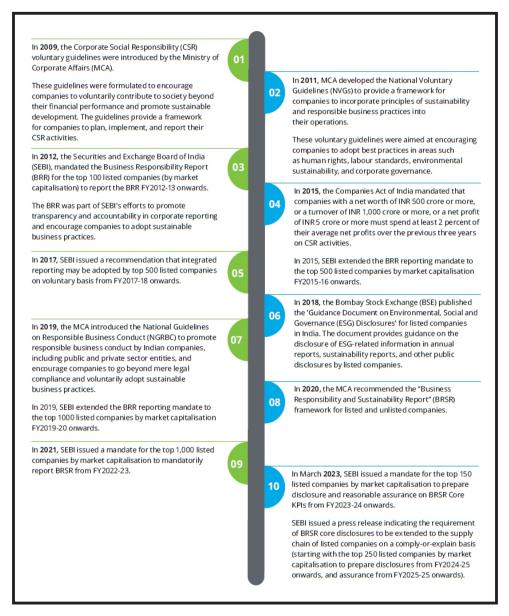
Board framework and Diversity: Here factors including decision-making at par, members of the board and leadership framework, diversity, organization practices are assessed.

Executive Compensation: Companies compensation in terms of fairness, clarity and accountability and pay structures are assessed.

The introduction of ESG standards into the Indian corporate arena came in early 2000 when Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) started focused planning related to the same. The introduction of the Companies Act, 2013 mandated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) undertakings for eligible organizations. This has proved to be a landmark decision as it welcomed various administrative frameworks and initiatives that shaped the progression of our country's ESG framework mechanism.

Furthermore, India's updated BRSR framework is developed to prioritize syncing of ESG metrics with

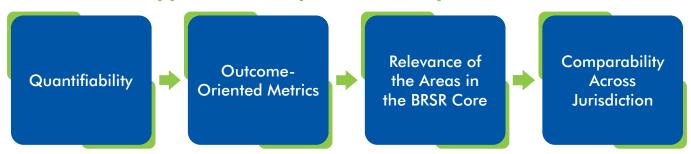
Timeline of ESG Evolution in India



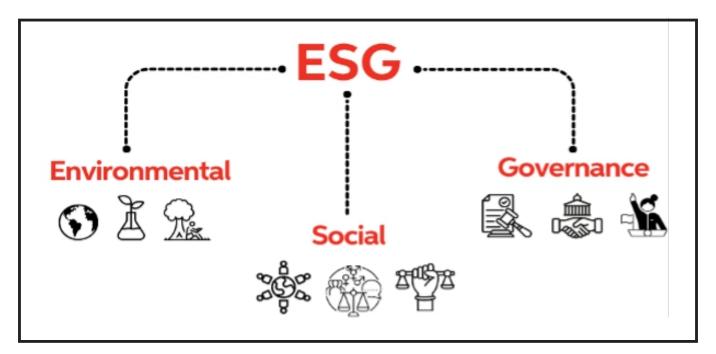
 $Source: \ https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/about-deloitte/in-Deloitte-India-ESG-Preparedness-Survey-Report_noexp.pdf$

international reporting standards such as the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). It will help Indian companies listed under SEBI to achieve greater transparency and accountability.

Approaches Adopted to Develop BRSR Core



The ESG framework promises to analyze, the environmental impacts based on the company's operations including resource conservation, carbon footprints, etc. Alongside this, the 'Social' factor evaluates the impact of these companies on society at large. The factors primarily assessed here are the inclusion of diversity in the company's workforce to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The 'Governance' factor is greatly responsible for evaluating how well a company is structured on the grounds of processes, hierarchy, transparency, accountability, and decision-making.

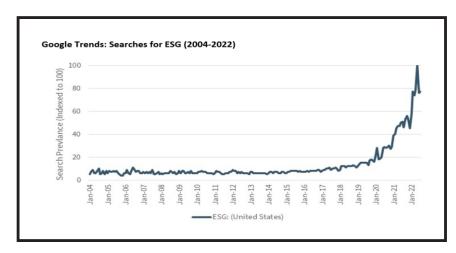


Source: https://slconvergence.org/updates/policy-brief

This cumulatively develops an inclusive framework for ESG reporting with a keen focus on key practices followed by Indian companies in each category. The developing ESG codes such as the BRSR introduced in 2022-23 govern the company's business, and governance policies at large to show their corporate responsibility and sustainable practices.

Key Components and Scoring Models

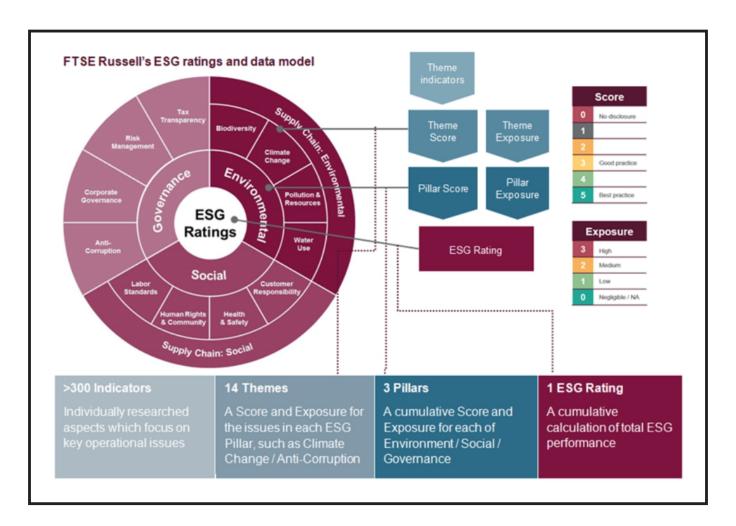
The ESG framework nowadays is becoming an inseparable part of the company's performance metrics. These factors influence the capitalists to invest wisely and achieve desired viable goals while reducing possible risks. As they can evaluate the overall performance of companies beyond financial accomplishment through ESG metrics.

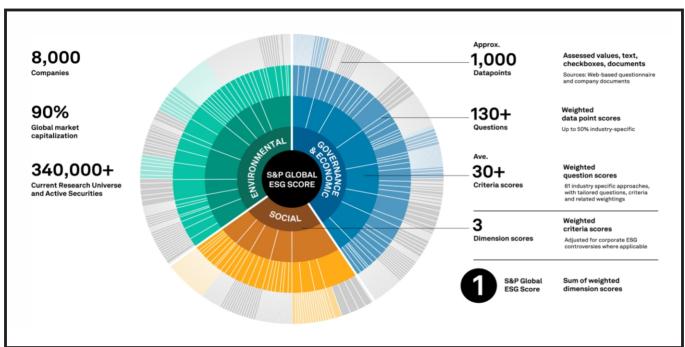


Source: https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2022/08/24/esg-ratings-a-compass-without-direction/

Environment Pillar			Social Pillar			Governance Pillar			
Climate Change	Natural Capital	Pollution & Waste	Env. Opportunities	Human Capital	Product Liability	Stakeholder Opposition	Social Opportunities	Corporate Governance	Corporate Behavior
Carbon Emissions	Water Stress	Toxic Emissions & Waste	Clean Tech	Labor Management	Product Safety & Quality	Controversial Sourcing	Access to Communication	Board	Business Ethics
Product Carbon Footprint	Biodiversity & Land Use	Packaging Material & Waste	Green Building	Health & Safety	Chemical Safety	Community Relations	Access to Finance	Pay	Tax Transparence
Financing Environmental Impact	Raw Material Sourcing	Electronic Waste	Renewable Energy	Human Capital Development	Consumer Financial Protection		Access to Health Care	Ownership	
Climate Change Vulnerability				Supply Chain Labor Standards	Privacy & Data Security		Opportunities in Nutrition & Health	Accounting	
					Responsible Investment				
	selected for the				Insuring Health & Demographic		Universal Key I		

ESG ratings provide a quantifiable measure to global companies for their 'ESG quality' performance. The key components of ESG and its scoring methodologies in an integrated approach develop an inclusive system that seamlessly works with investors' investment plans.



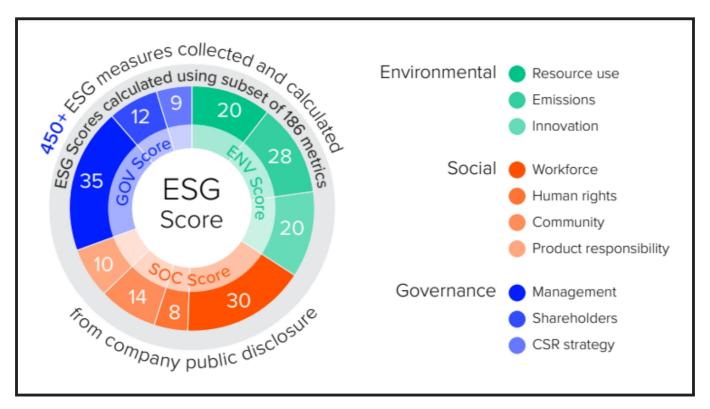


Source: https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2022/08/24/esg-ratings-a-compass-without-direction/

The companies were awarded ESG scores based on their performance in each metric used by different ESG rating companies. Undoubtedly, India lags behind their global peers in terms of ESG practice disclosure. But, currently BRSR Core is trying its best to fill that gap with new mandatory disclosures for new metrics.



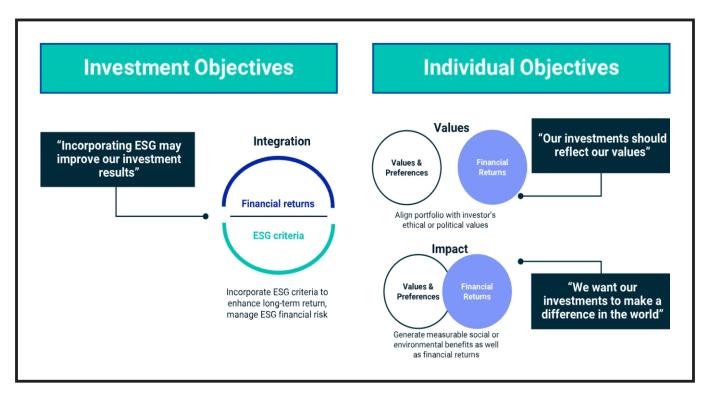
Globally, there are several scoring methodologies available for evaluating ESG scores and ratings. Thus, India is also ready to foster robust regulatory and investment-friendly frameworks that can help corporate giants pitch their best bet before international investors.



Source: https://www.knowesg.com/investors/refinitiv-esg-rating-methodology-your-guide-to-sustainable-investing

The various ESG scoring methodology prioritizes the evaluation and monitoring of intrinsic ESG risks on and beyond the monetary side. MSCI ESG Ratings Methodology reveals ESG ratings for the government and corporate organizations. **Moody's Analytics ESG Score Predictor Methodology evaluates and discloses climate risk statistics related to ESG.**

Representation of Common ESG Objective



Source: https://www.msci.com/our-solutions/esg-investing/esg-ratings/what-esg-ratings-are-and-are-not

The various factors used by rating agencies for analysis are governance scores, carbon emissions, viability factors, and diversity ratio among many others. Smart investors of this digital world, integrate the ESG scores and ratings with their investment process. The overall ESG scores assist capitalists in understanding a company's overall performance. With higher ESG scores, the companies promise a sustainable future with reliable financial results.

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Latest Compliance in ESG Reporting in India

Globally, organizations have acknowledged the significance of incorporating ESG components into their business practices. To achieve ESG compliance in India several regulatory entities and investors are religiously involved in shaping ESG reporting ecosystem. However, **India lacks a single legislation to regulate ESG compliance.**

Key Legislation Governing ESG egulation in Indic Factories Act, 1946

Environment Protection Act, 1986

Companies Act, 2013

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulation, 2015

The capital market regulator, SEBI in this regard has come up with the latest disclosure requirements for its specific listed companies under BRSR core. Thus post 2021, the top 1000 listed companies under SEBI are mandated to declare ESG performance in a phased manner.



BRSR Core Compliance Timeline for ESG Reporting in India				
Financial year	Applicability of BRSR Core to top listed entities (by market capitalization)			
2023-24	Top 150 listed entities			
2024-25	Top 250 listed entities			
2025-26	Top 500 listed entities			
2026-27	Top 1000 listed entities			

Source:https://www.india-briefing.com/news/environmental-compliance-for-companies-in-india-key-legislation-and-esg-guidelines-32012. html/

The regulatory framework mandates them to reveal their ESG information including matrices such as social responsibility, ecosystem performance, and governance execution. Annually, these organizations have to share a Business Responsibility Report (BRR) as a subset of their principal annual report. Additionally, SEBI focuses on Materiality Assessment as it compliments organizations to classify ESG entities important for their investors and trading.

Evolution of BRSR regulations in India



SEBI circular dated 10 May 2021

Since FY 2022-23, the BRSR format has been a mandatory disclosure requirement for the top 1,000 listed entities by market capitalisation.



SEBI board meeting dated 29 March 2023

- Starting FY 2024-25, preparing disclosures and undertaking reasonable assurance on BRSR Core KPIs have been mandated for the top 150 listed entities by market capitalisation.
- Since FY2024-25, BRSR Core KPIs have been extended to include the value chain of the top 250 listed entities.

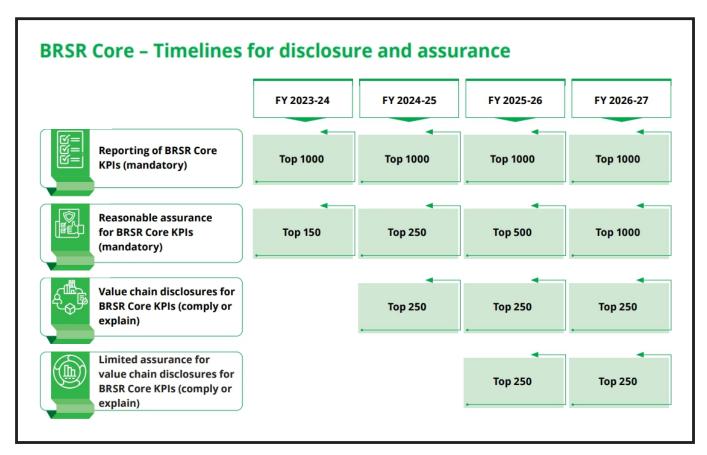


SEBI circular dated 12 July 2023

- The BRSR framework has been revised with Core KPIs and glide path for BRSR Core reasonable assurance.
- The scope of value chain for which BRSR Core disclosures and assurance are applicable, has been clarified.

Source: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/audit/in-audit-Business-Responsibility-and-Sustainability-Report-Core_10-11-2023.pdf

SEBI's BRSR framework keeps a check on the top listed company's financial statement and environmental conservation practices simultaneously.



 $Source: \ \underline{https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/audit/in-audit-Business-Responsibility-and-Sustainability-Report-Core_10-11-2023.pdf$

The BRSR is following basic principles of responsible business in its ESG reporting mechanism.

SEBI also issued detailed eligibility criteria for the ESG Rating Providers (ERPs). The ESG ratings like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) adopted by Indian organizations have advanced their accountability and transparency to impress global investors in the market.

01

Nine Principles of BRSR

- Businesses should conduct and govern themselves with integrity and in a manner that is ethical, transparent and accountable.
- Businesses should provide goods and services in a manner that is sustainable and safe.
- Businesses should respect and promote the well-being of all employees, including those in their value chains.
- Businesses should respect the interests of and be responsive to all their stakeholders.
- Businesses should respect and promote human rights.
- Businesses should respect and make efforts to protect and restore the environment.
- Businesses, when engaging in influencing public and regulatory policy, should do so in a manner that is responsible and transparent.
- Businesses should promote inclusive growth and equitable development.
- Businesses should engage with and provide value to their consumers in a responsible manner.

Risks Involved and Opportunities in the Domain

ESG evaluation and consideration are way different in developing/emerging economies in comparison to developed ones. Every market has its own set of challenges and opportunities and thus needs to be evaluated on its specific set of metrics. The same is true for Indian companies, here inclusive development, and gender parity in jobs, are much relevant metrics in assessing ESG scores in comparison to the developed markets.



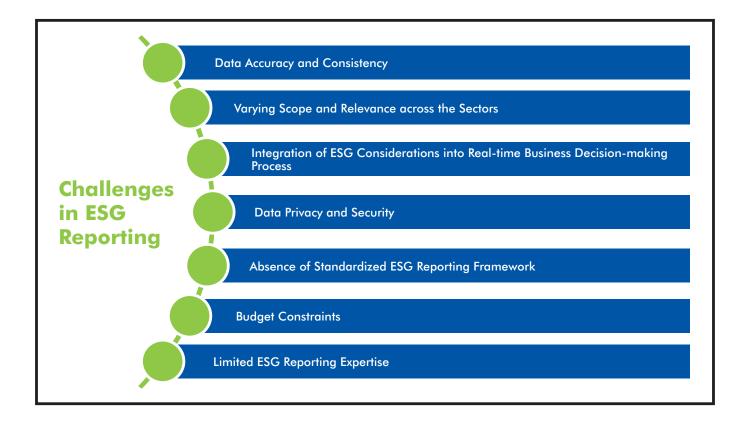
 $Source: \ \underline{https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/audit/in-audit-Business-Responsibility-and-Sustainability-Report-Core_10-11-2023.pdf$

With a large youth population, the world's fastest growing economy India is leveraging its demographic dividend. The implementation of the BRSR frame work reflects its policy priority to implement a comprehensive strategy for climate change with the help of corporate and industry giants.

Opportunities Developed through BRSR Framework in India



Many Indian companies benefit from keeping a strong focus on Sustainability. This brings costeffectiveness to their business operation which in turn enhances profitability and net revenue. But **across** the sectors challenges are diverse and thus India's ESG framework falls short of developing a one-size-fits-all standard.



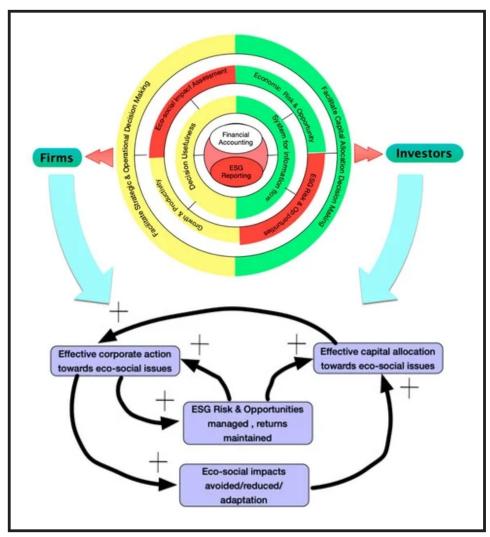
Thus, India is on the way to utilizing the power of its responsible businesses to create long-term value. It will improve global market perception for Indian companies in the long term and allow investors to make informed decisions. By addressing these challenges at the core of ESG reporting, India is continuously focusing on sustainable and transparent disclosure mechanisms under the BRSR that will align them with the global agenda related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Government Outlook and Industry Preparedness

As organizations are synching their business practices with the fundamentals of the ESG framework, governments are also working to frame supportive policy frameworks across the globe. This alliance accounts for a transformation that reveals how financial growth is approached nowadays prioritizing long-term viability and welfare of society viza-viz monetary welfare.

India is prioritizing the positive policy support for ESG regulation in the country beyond attracting investors. These ESG regulations are helping Indian companies operate seamlessly, and responsibly while diminishing the bad

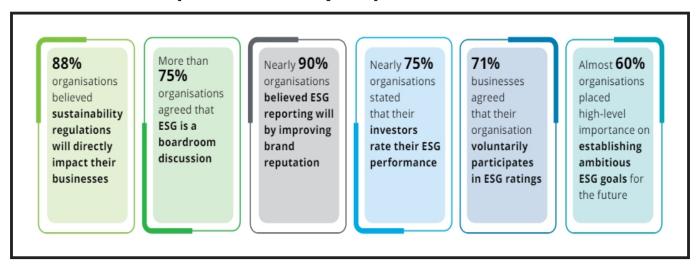
Business Investor Outlook in ESG Reporting



 $Source: https://www.mdpi.com/sustainability/sustainability-16-00606/article_deploy/html/images/sustainability-16-00606-g001-550.jpg$

impacts on the surrounding ecosystem to conserve themselves and society.

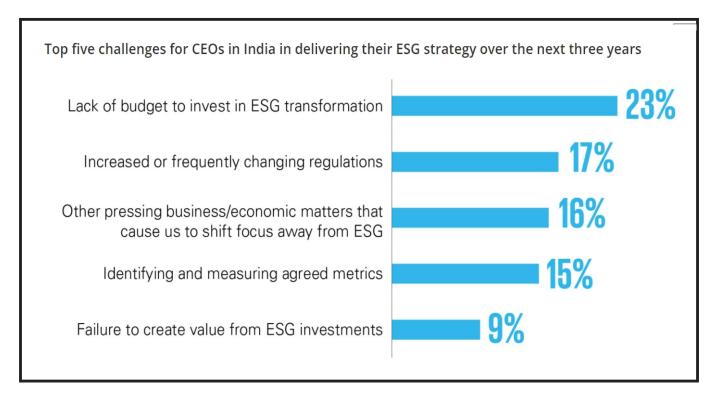
Snapshot to Industry Preparedness Statistics



Source: https://www2.deloitte.com/in/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/ESG-preparedness-survey-report.html

The regulatory norms are devised to make sure that the companies can be well prepared to drive sustainable future growth. Data from the World Bank discloses that the growing implementation of the ESG ecosystem by several countries witness edits vital importance. Government policies including Social Welfare, Environmental Protection, and Governance are encouraging unprepared organisations to adopt the ESG framework in their practices. Mainly they may include subsidies, tax rebates, contributions, and procurement policies favoring the ESG adoption





Source:https://kpmg.com/in/en/home/insights/2022/10/kpmg-2022-india-ceo-outlook/esg-nuanced-approach.html

Industry preparedness is crucial for attaining robust advancement toward Sustainability goals. It gets a push through government initiatives in the advanced areas including Risk Management, Investor involvement, Innovation & Technology, and Capacity Development. The joint efforts showcase a conducive environment toward achieving a more comprehensive future of ESG reporting in India.



How AG Group Can Be a Help

To create community resilience beyond profit making by embracing our ESG solutions Click Here

Indian Companies with TOP ESG Scores

Indian companies are coming forward and integrating themselves with the fundamentals of ESG to promote responsible financing. It will help them to counter the lack of transparency and reliability issues in ESG scoring in their core business operations.

The SEBI under 'BRSR Core' has mandated the ERPs to be empanelled with AMFIs. As per the study conducted by Stakeholders Empowerment Services (SES) on the top 100 Indian companies (excluding PSUs/Government Banks) basis their 2019-20 disclosures, the top



Source: https://urbanfootprint.com/blog/in-the-news/esg-scores-meaning/

scorers are Infosys, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Tech Mahindra in overall ESG scores.

OVERALL ESG SCORE: TOP 5 COMPANIES					
Grade	Rank	Company Name	Industry		
Α	1	Infosys Ltd.	IT		
B+	2	Mahindra & Mahindra	Automobile		
B+	3	Tech Mahindra Ltd.	ΙΤ		
B+	4	Housing Development Finance Corporation	Finance: Non-Banking		
B+	5	Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd.	Services		

'ENVIRONMENT' - TOP 5 COMPANIES					
Grade	Rank	Company Name	Industry		
A+	1	ITC Ltd.	Consumer Goods		
Α	2	Adani Ports and SEZ	Services		
Α	3	Infosys Ltd.	IT		
Α	4	Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.	Automobile		
Α	5	Marico Ltd.	Consumer Goods		

'SOCIAL': TOP 5 COMPANIES					
Grade	Rank	Company Name	Industry		
Α	1	Adani Transmission	Power		
Α	2	Mahindra & Mahindra	Automobile		
Α	3	Larsen & Toubro Infotech	IT		
Α	4	Infosys	IT		
Α	5	Hindalco Industries	Metals		

'GOVERNANCE': TOP 5 COMPANIES					
Grade	Rank	Company Name	Industry		
A+	1	Infosys Ltd.	IT		
A+	2	Info Edge (India) Ltd.	IT		
A+	3	Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd.	Finance - Non-Banking		
A+	4	ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Ltd.	Finance - Non-Banking		
A+	5	Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.	Automobile		

 $\textbf{Source:}\ \underline{https://www.sesgovernance.com/pdf/home-reports/1649043402}\underline{\textbf{ESG-Scores---Top-100-Listed-Companies-in-India.pdf}}$

CRISIL (Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited), India's eminent credit rating agency launched the ESG scores for India's 225 companies spanning 18 diverse sectors. These ESG scores motivate Indian companies to excel toward a more viable future. Several Indian organizations in the recent past have adopted ESG fundamentals showcasing the commitment and dedication leading towards accountable commerce practices.

08 Way Forward

ESG reporting in India is gaining momentum but still it is in its nascent stage. The 'BRSR Core' is implemented as per the timeline. Its effectiveness and utility will unfold in the future. It will enable Indian businesses to be sustainable and responsible in their actions. This will create a far-reaching impact on the Indian economy as businesses are encouraged to give due importance to ESG disclosures in their annual reports beyond financial numbers.

It will bring a fresh breeze to conventional corporate governance structure and environmental conservation efforts. The evolving ESG ecosystem will give a major push to India's fight against climate change and its commitment to fulfilling social responsibility. The digital shift in ESG reporting will add more accountability to benefit policymakers, business owners, investors as well as regulators. It will guide them to make informed decisions supporting the sustainable growth of India in the years to come.



Expert's Insight

"

ESG obligations are becoming more mature. As a result of this evolution in ESG frameworks, we see a shift from global frameworks to sector-specific frameworks, like Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures and other regionally led frameworks. We are monitoring these standards. We have noticed that these frameworks are significantly broadening the ESG data needs for customers.

"

Rinesh Patel
Global Head of Financial Services
Snowflake, USA



RESOURCES

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AG Horizon Pvt Ltd, established in the year 1998, is a multifunctional, multi-disciplinary organization offering a wide range of consultancy services to multiple sectors for the implementation of projects under one roof from "Concept to Commissioning". We have the privilege of working with Central & State govt. and with Multi-lateral funding agencies viz. World Bank, JICA, New Development Bank, Asian Development Bank etc.

With the vision of sustainable future, we have partnered with Moody's Analytics, a global integrated risk management firm established in 1909. Moody's Analytics provides financial intelligence and analytical tools to help central & state governments worldwide and business leaders to make better and faster decisions.





info@aggrp.in



www.aggrp.in



+91 9810046249



0124 4235267

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Traffic Management

Engineering

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IT & Telecom

Power & Renewable Energy

Infrastructure: Highway/Tunnels

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Irrigation

Agriculture

Animal Husbandry
Horticulture & Forestry

Social & Public Sector

Sports

Tourism Education

Healthcare

Sustainability

ESG

SDG

Carbon Credit Climate Change