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IBM Study: Sustainability Ranks Among Highest Priorities on CEO Agendas, Yet Lack of Data Insights Hinders Progress

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- **44% of UK respondents in this year's CEO study cite sustainability as among their greatest challenges in the next two to three years, a 25% increase from 2021**
- **Respondents face the greatest pressure to be transparent around sustainability from boards (83%) and investors (62%)**

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LONDON, May 10, 2022 – A new IBM (NYSE: IBM) Institute for Business Value (IBV) study* revealed that sustainability is rising higher on corporate agendas, and CEOs recognize sustainability as a business imperative and growth driver. Yet as CEOs face growing pressures from boards and investors, a lack of reliable data insights is hindering their ability to take action.

IBM's annual CEO study, [Own your impact: Practical pathways to transformational sustainability](#), which surveyed more 90 CEOs in the United Kingdom, found that nearly half of respondents rank sustainability as a top priority for their organizations — an increase of 37% from [2021](#). However, more than half (51%) also cite sustainability as among their greatest challenges in the next two to three years, with unclear ROI and economic benefits, along with lack of data insights, as leading barriers to execution.

“CEOs are leading during one of the most complex environments ever, including war, inflation, talent shortages, and a COVID-19 pandemic health crisis. Yet now is not the time to take their foot off the pedal on sustainability,” said John Granger, Senior Vice President, IBM Consulting. “CEOs must lead with purpose to convert their ambitions to action, embed sustainability across their entire enterprise to ensure shared accountability, and leverage data and technology to accelerate impact.”

Key study findings include:

CEOs believe sustainability can help drive business performance, and sustainability is climbing

higher on their agendas

- Just under half (44%) of UK CEOs cite sustainability as among their greatest challenges in the next 2-3 years, a 25% increase from 2021.
- Over 80% of CEOs believe that their company's sustainability investments will produce improved business results in the next five years and nearly half of CEOs (45%) think that sustainability will accelerate business growth.

Pressure is mounting from stakeholders, but lack of data insights stands in the way

- CEOs reported receiving the greatest pressure from board members (83%), followed by investors (62%), regulators (61%), ecosystem partners (58%) and government (44%)
- 67% of CEOs list unclear ROI and economic benefits as a leading challenge to achieving sustainability objectives, followed by lack of insights from data (50%), regulatory barriers (49%) and technological barriers (32%).

CEOs are starting to put words into action and, while progress is slow, they remain optimistic

- 95% of CEOs report being at least in the piloting stage of implementing their sustainability strategy and over two-thirds (68%) are confident they'll achieve their sustainability goals.
- Only 17% of CEOs surveyed believe sustainability targets announced by government for their industry were not achievable.

To view the full study, visit <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/c-suite-study/ceo>

***Methodology**

The IBM Institute for Business Value interviewed 3,000 CEOs from 43 locations and 28 industries as part of the 25th edition of the IBM C-suite Study series. These conversations focused on participants' perspectives on leadership; the responsibilities and expectations of business; and sustainability, including trends, challenges, actions taken, opportunities, and their visions for the future. The study was conducted in cooperation with Oxford Economics in 2021 and benchmarked against more than 20 years of IBM's annual CEO surveys.

About the IBM Institute for Business Value

For two decades, the IBM Institute for Business Value has served as the thought leadership think tank for IBM. What inspires us is producing research-backed, technology-informed strategic insights that help leaders make

smarter business decisions. From our unique position at the intersection of business, technology, and society, we survey, interview, and engage with thousands of executives, consumers, and experts each year, synthesizing their perspectives into credible, inspiring, and actionable insights. To stay connected and informed, sign up to receive IBV's email newsletter at ibm.com/ibv. You can also follow @IBMIBV on Twitter or find us on LinkedIn at <https://ibm.co/ibv-linkedin>

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