Questionnaire Standard

Overview 2025

Research – Financial and Extra-Financial Analysis

January 2026

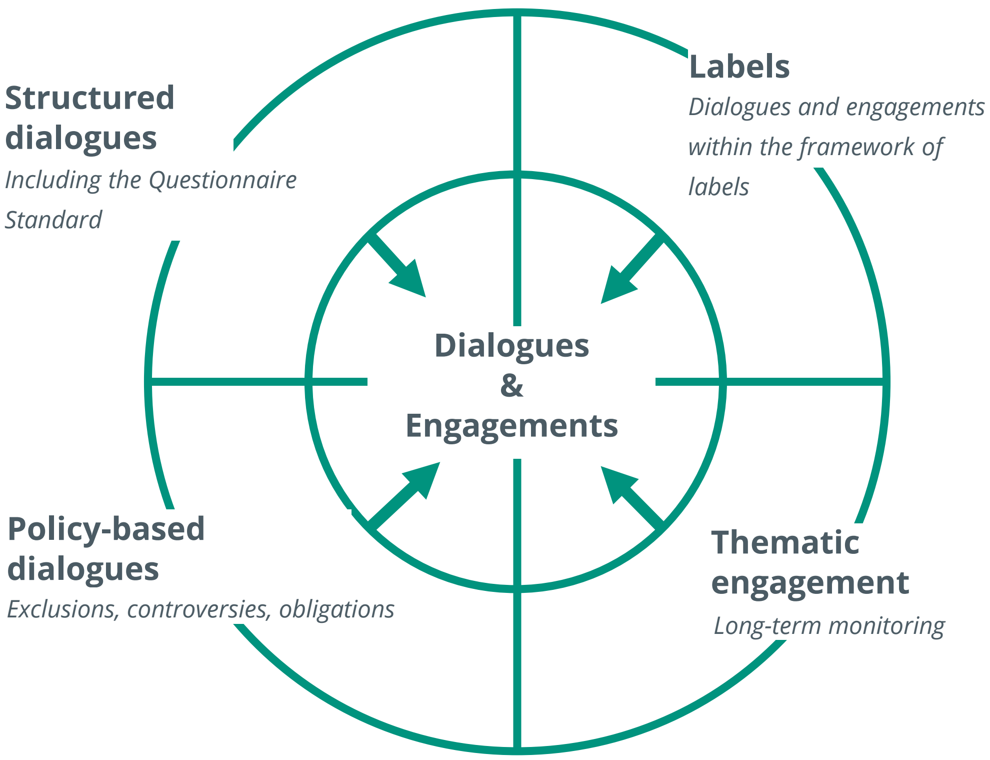
Our vision

Covéa Finance considers direct dialogue with companies as a primary axis for promoting better governance, more responsible social and environmental practices, and increased transparency. In line with this vision and using a proactive approach, Covéa Finance launched the Questionnaire Standard in 2022.

This voluntary initiative serves multiple objectives:

- Strengthen constructive exchanges with the companies in which we invest.
- Share the material themes identified in our economic, financial, and extra-financial analysis.
- Inform and deepen our internal research, both financial and extra-financial.

The four key pillars of Shareholder engagement



Questionnaire standard

At Covéa Finance, we engage in direct dialogue with companies to promote the adoption of robust environmental, social, and governance practices. This initiative is structured around an annual questionnaire comprising approximately thirty questions. It serves as a key tool to support our analysis and to structure exchanges with companies.

Recurring questions

To measure the evolution of practices and ensure data comparability.

New questions

To capture and monitor emerging issues.

Our analytical toolbox

TYPES OF DATA COLLECTION MODELS

01

Quantitative data collection

- Multiple-choice questions.
- Yes/No questions.

02

Evaluation and measurement

- Rating scales
- Likert scales
- ranking-type questions

03

Qualitative analysis

- Open-ended questions

Automation of data collection

- Migration to a dedicated online platform
- Ensuring more efficient and rapid data collection and analysis (compared to Excel spreadsheets)

Transparency and feedback

- Enhancing transparency and respondent engagement.

A stable response rate despite a selective environment

This stability illustrates the strength and continuity of the relationships with companies in our portfolio. The sustained level of engagement also reflects the relevance of our dialogue framework and the credibility of our analytical approach, which combines financial and extra-financial perspectives to support constructive and ongoing exchanges with companies.

Key Figures – 2025 Questionnaire

30 questions

In total

60% recurring

To monitor trends and track the evolution of corporate strategies.

40% new

To capture emerging issues.

31% participation rate

Stable since 2023.

Participation

Companies are facing an increasing volume of questionnaires, leading to competition for attention and the adoption of more selective communication policies.

Conclusion

Despite this more adverse context, the participation rate reached 31%, in line with the level observed in 2023. This stability demonstrates the continued relevance, and resilience of our questionnaire, as well as the quality of the dialogue established with investee companies.

The questionnaire at a glance

4

Campaigns

Conducted since its launch in 2022

250

Companies

Surveyed as part of our panel

21

Countries

Represented

30

Sectors

Included in the survey

An overview across 5 key themes

KEY THEMES IN A WORLD IN TRANSITION

Artificial Intelligence: Corporate perception

Geopolitical balances and supply chains: Strategic responses

Tariffs and the value chain – Key insights

The Decarbonization challenge

ESG as a performance Driver?

AI: Human capital as a lever for return on investment

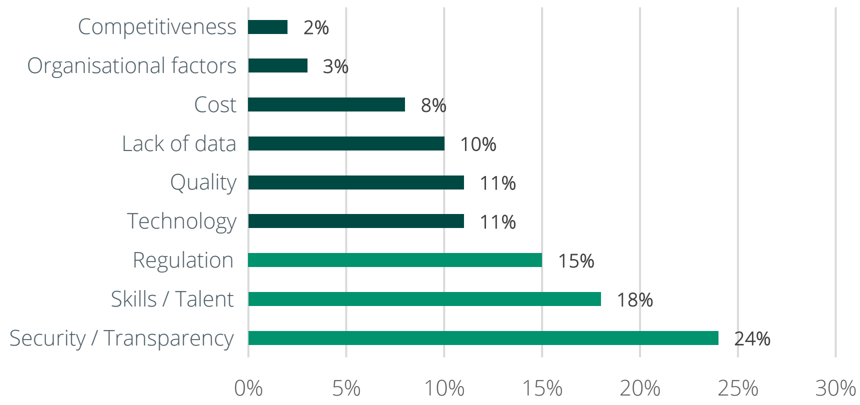
THE IMPACT OF AI IS NOW WIDELY INTEGRATED AMONG RESPONDENTS

92%

AI integration

Organisations now integrate AI into their operations.

Your assessment of the impact of artificial intelligence



> **AI is no longer viewed as a future prospect but as an established performance driver, reflecting a shift from experimentation to deployment.**

Our analysis: beyond the technical dimension

The success of transformation no longer depends on the tool, but on the human element. Mature companies have identified the two critical pillars of tomorrow:

Human capital

The ability to recruit, upskill, and reskill hybrid profiles that combine technical expertise with a deep understanding of business challenges.

Governance

Strengthening governance and security: implementing robust frameworks based on ethics, risk management, and data protection.

Risk of Disruption: A minority of companies (6%) currently report no perceived impact of AI on their operations. From an investment perspective, we view this as a significant strategic disruption indicator. As AI becomes a critical performance driver, recognizing its transformative potential is essential to maintaining long-term competitiveness and will be a key point of focus in our risk assessment framework.

AI : the ROI timelines as a key factor of differentiation between early adopters and followers

AI : A TWO-STAGE TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

How do you assess the impact of artificial intelligence, and within what timeframe do you expect a return on investment?

Less than 1 year | *Between 1 and 2 years* | *More than 2 years* | *Other*

Early adopters (38%)

These companies have moved beyond the testing phase and are entered execution mode. They anticipate a ROI within less than one year, reflecting advanced technological deployment and organizsational maturity.

Followers (48%)

Two-thirds of respondents (1–2 years and >2 years) fall within a medium- to long-term horizon. They recognize the potential of AI but continue to face challenges related to integration, skills, or organizational readiness.

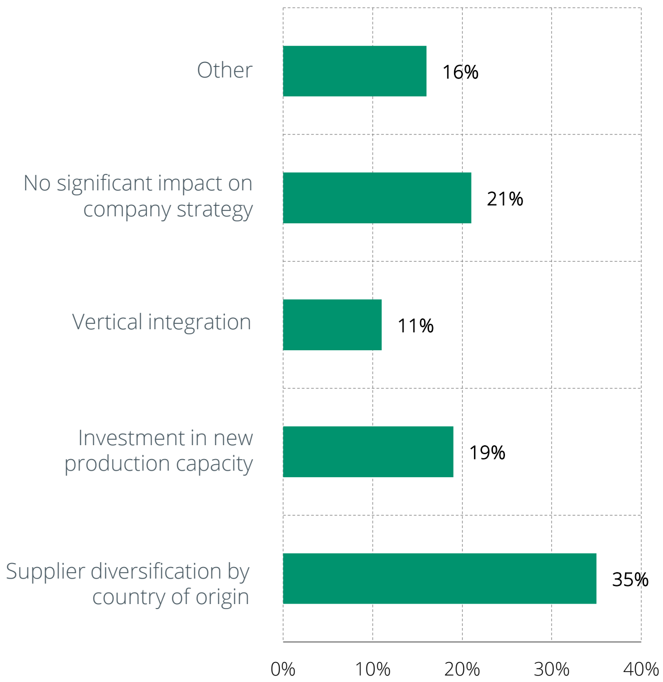
Incremental adoption

The pace of transformation varies significantly across sectors and companies. Adoption is perceived as an incremental process, driven by specific projects and use cases rather than a comprehensive, organization-wide approach. There is no shared vision regarding the ROI timeline, highlighting a lack of consensus on implementation pathways.

Resilience through diversification

GEOPOLITICAL BALANCES AND SUPPLY CHAINS: CORPORATE STRATEGIES

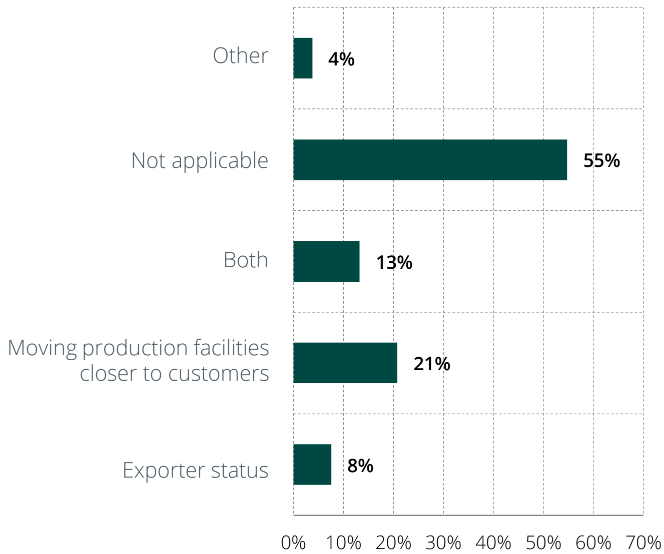
The new balance of power between customers and suppliers, their concentration and location, the problem of securing the supply chain... How are you responding to these challenges?



Preferred strategies in response to supply chain challenges

- **Dominant strategy:** Supplier diversification by country of origin accounts for 35%.
- "Investment in new production capacities" and "No significant impact on strategy" represent **19%** and **21%**, respectively.
- Vertical integration remains a minority option (11%), as companies continue to favour lighter and more agile operating models over capital-intensive solutions.

At a time when the geopolitical balance is shifting, are you more inclined to become an exporter, or do you prefer to locate your manufacturing units closer to your customers?



The emergence of a hybrid and agile model

As global power dynamics evolve, companies are moving beyond the binary choice between exporting and reshoring. Hybrid models more flexible and diversified are adopted.

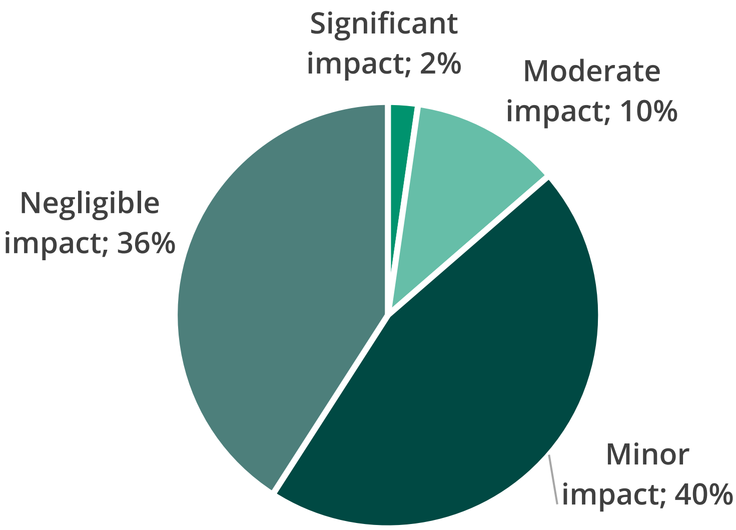
The "Other" category (4%) reveals structural transformation in operating models, such as :

- Artificial Intelligence
- Consolidation of client relationships
- Strengthening of local supply chains

Resilience to tariffs

FOCUS ON CUSTOMS DUTIES – HIGHLIGHTING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VALUE CHAIN

What is the overall impact of tariffs on your investment decisions? (excluding "Other")



76% of companies perceive a minor or negligible impact of tariffs on their current investment decisions. At this stage, tariffs appear to be largely absorbed within existing operating and sourcing models.

Incremental adjustments

Beyond, responses classified under the "Other" category (12%) reveal that tariffs are no longer perceived merely as a cost item, but rather as a **complex strategic variable** requiring ongoing management. Most companies indicate that the impact of tariffs has been addressed through **incremental adjustments**, such as

- seeking alternative suppliers or
- increasing prices.

The findings suggest that Companies appear to prioritize flexibility and short-term responsiveness over structural reconfiguration an adaptation of existing models rather than a radical transformation.

The automotive sector case study

Logistical complexity

In the automotive industry, tariffs rarely apply to a finished product but affect thousands of components crossing national borders multiple times throughout the process.

Model reassessment

Tariff barriers require international companies to undertake a comprehensive reassessment of their global distribution and production models.

Systemic vulnerability

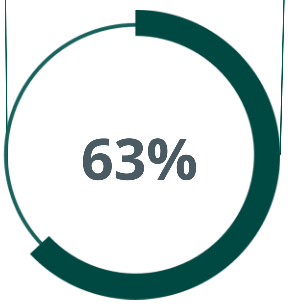
The more fragmented and geographically dispersed the value chain, the greater the cumulative impact of tariffs, challenging investment profitability.

Decarbonization is steadily establishing itself as a prevailing theme

...BUT SCALING REMAINS CONSTRAINED BY THE COMPLEXITY OF STANDARDS

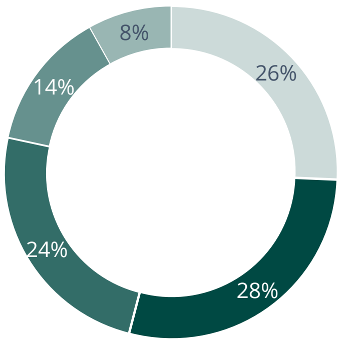
What decarbonization levers have you implemented or do you plan to implement?

Have a decarbonization Project already underway



Of which validated by the SBTi

Global framework to align carbon transition targets



Strong commitment

- **93%** of surveyed companies **have already initiated a decarbonization project.**
- **2030 as a key milestone**
- **The most frequent target is a >70% emissions reduction (40% of respondents),** reflecting a willingness to pursue deep, structural transformation rather than marginal adjustments.

Credibility challenges and barriers

- **The SBTi framework is establishing itself as the benchmark for 73% of companies, serving as a guarantee of trust for third parties.**
- **Lack of sector-specific standards, representing obstacles to deployment.**
- **Methodological complexity, especially** when defining transition pathways (scopes 1, 2, 3 emissions)
- **Significant time and resources** required to meet increasingly stringent criteria.

Prioritisation of traditional operational levers

The strategy is built on a balanced mix of direct levers:

- **Energy transition: 28%** *(renewable energies)*
- **Industrial efficiency: 26%** *(process improvement)*
- **Sobriety: 24%** *(overall consumption reduction)*

Note: Carbon offsetting (14%) remains used as a secondary lever, confirming the priority given to real emission reductions over compensatory mechanism.

ESG as a performance driver?

FROM REGULATORY COMPLIANCE TO VALUE CREATION

What are your priorities regarding your ESG strategy? Among European respondents, we observe a significant shift toward a performance-driven and value-creation-oriented approach.

ESG **Sustainability** **Strategy**

Emissions **Decarbonization** **Climate**

Economy Diversity Rights Human

Objectives, Circular, Safety, Staff, Clients, Plan, Transition, Data, Biodiversity

Priorities and actions by pillar

Environment

The most frequently addressed theme. Decarbonization is the dominant topic. The analysis also highlights strong interest in the circular economy (eco-design, circularity) and broader natural-resource management (water, biodiversity).

Social

Perceived through several lenses. Human capital management is a priority, encompassing expertise management, employee well-being, and workplace safety.

Governance

Although less visible in terms of keywords frequency, it is nonetheless expressed through fundamental underlying concepts. It is cited as an area requiring reinforcement and is reflected in concerns related to business ethics and compliance.

Measurement as a key enabler

We have moved beyond the era of intentions and entered to an era where measurement has become central to ESG strategy and execution

1

Data mastery

Integration of Scopes 1, 2 and 3 to enable granular and comprehensive carbon management.

2

Methodological robustness

Adoption of CSRD standards and double materiality as the structuring framework.

3

Alignment to international standards

Ensuring that all actions are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Key trends

1 Positive momentum

- Response rates show continued growth on financial topics and remain stable across extra-financial themes.
- Notwithstanding the cooling of interest in ESG noted this year, extra-financial challenges continue to be a priority, especially decarbonization, which was added as a new theme in 2025.

2 Drivers of interest: The impact of new themes

- Artificial Intelligence (introduced in 2024) has merged as the main catalyst for engagement on the financial dimension, reflecting its growing role as a driver of performance, productivity, and strategic differentiation.
- Decarbonization (introduced in 2025): continues to sustain strong interest in the extra-financial dimension and offsets the relative decline in more traditional ESG indicators,

3 Value potential: Insights from the “Other” category

(15% responses)

This segment should no longer be considered as residual, but rather as a strategic weak signal.

- Its growing significance highlights a misalignment between the predefined categories and the operational realities faced companies.
- It reflects a need for greater granularity and nuance. An evolution of the framework toward more flexible and open-ended modes of expression could be better suited to capture emerging practices, hybrid strategies, and context-specificities.

4 Recommendations for the next campaign

Methodological evolution: Introduce open-ended questions to capture the richness of company-specific situations.

Calendar alignment: Optimise outreach periods to ensure maximum availability of decision-makers.

User-centered design: Clarify and adapt themes to reduce the proportion of the “Other” category of answer.

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PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT COMPANY OF THE COVÉA GROUP
8-12, rue Boissy d'Anglas 75008 Paris

www.covea-finance.fr | www.covea-finance.com