

The
Research
Toolkit

EQUAL*Reach*

Research and Insights Report



What is EqualReach?

EqualReach is an impact-driven, B2B freelancing marketplace connecting organizations to vetted, highly-skilled teams from refugee communities around the world.

Together, we create dignified work while achieving your business goals.

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Introduction: Building the Foundation for Blended Impact

This report serves as the foundation for the EqualReach Toolkit Series on Blended Impact, which explores how organizations can measure, operationalize, and scale the intersection of business performance and social inclusion.

Across industries, the definition of value creation is changing. Companies are expected to deliver not only financial performance but also tangible contributions to people and the planet. Investors, employees, and consumers alike are calling for greater accountability, and metrics once confined to profit and productivity are now being expanded to include diversity, inclusion, environmental sustainability, and community engagement (Edelman, 2024; OECD, 2023).

This shift has created a new frontier for organizations seeking to align their operations with purpose — one where social impact and business performance are deeply interconnected. EqualReach's 2025 research initiative set out to understand how practitioners across sectors define, measure, and operationalize "blended impact": the overlap between commercial and social value.

The research underscored a clear opportunity for platforms like EqualReach to bridge these gaps by offering compliant, transparent, and outcome-driven partnerships that **deliver both business efficiency and measurable social value.**

Research Overview

EqualReach conducted a mixed-methods study combining surveys and interviews with more than 50 global practitioners in corporate sustainability, procurement, and social impact roles. Respondents represented organizations across technology, retail, finance, and nonprofit sectors.

The research aimed to explore:

- What business and social metrics organizations currently track
- How they define and measure success
- What barriers and opportunities exist for blended measurement and ethical sourcing

Respondent Countries

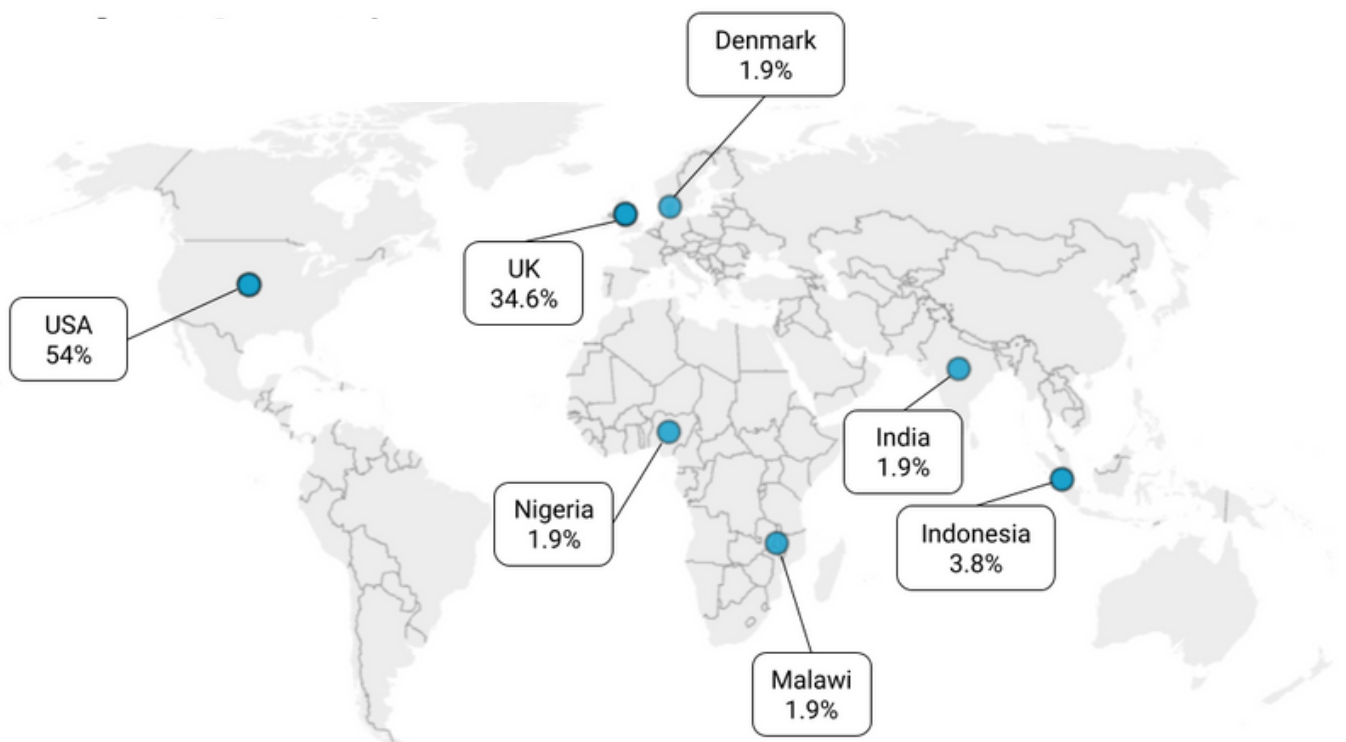


Figure 1. Regional distribution of survey participants (EqualReach, 2025).

Key Insights

1

The Definition of Performance Is Expanding

Organizations recognize that performance now extends beyond financial outcomes. As one participant noted, “Revenue and margin matter, but so does who benefits and how.” Over 70 percent of respondents said their companies track standard business KPIs such as revenue growth, customer satisfaction, and cost efficiency. However, fewer than 30 percent currently measure social indicators such as workforce diversity, inclusive procurement, or community impact (EqualReach, 2025). These findings reveal a widening gap between financial and social measurement—one that blended impact aims to close.”

What business and social impact metrics does your organization currently track, and or want to track?

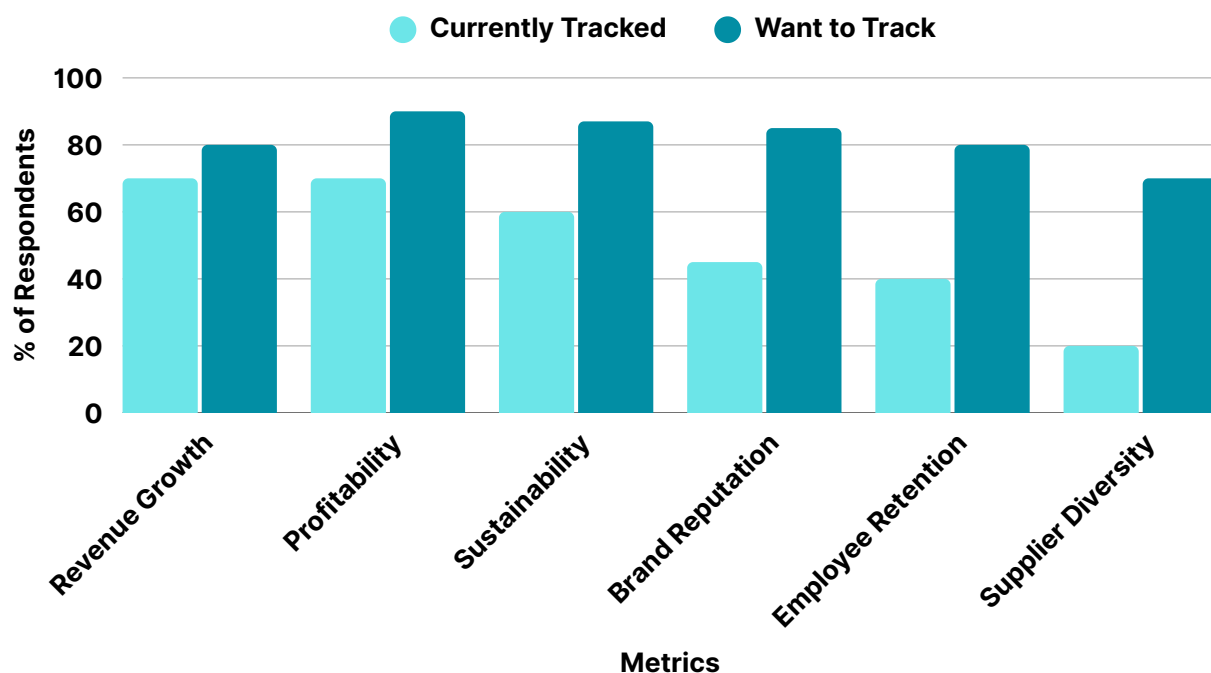


Figure 2. % of organizations tracking business vs. social metrics (EqualReach, 2025).

2

Regulation Is Driving Measurement

New global frameworks such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) are accelerating the need for consistent ESG and social-impact disclosure (European Union, 2024). Similarly, the UK Procurement Act (2023) mandates the inclusion of social-value considerations in public contracting decisions. This regulatory momentum is pushing companies to move from voluntary CSR commitments to measurable, reportable social value.

3 Reporting and Transparency Remain Limited

Even among organizations collecting social-impact data, most do not yet publish those results externally. Public reporting remains focused on financial or environmental metrics rather than human-centric or inclusion-based outcomes.

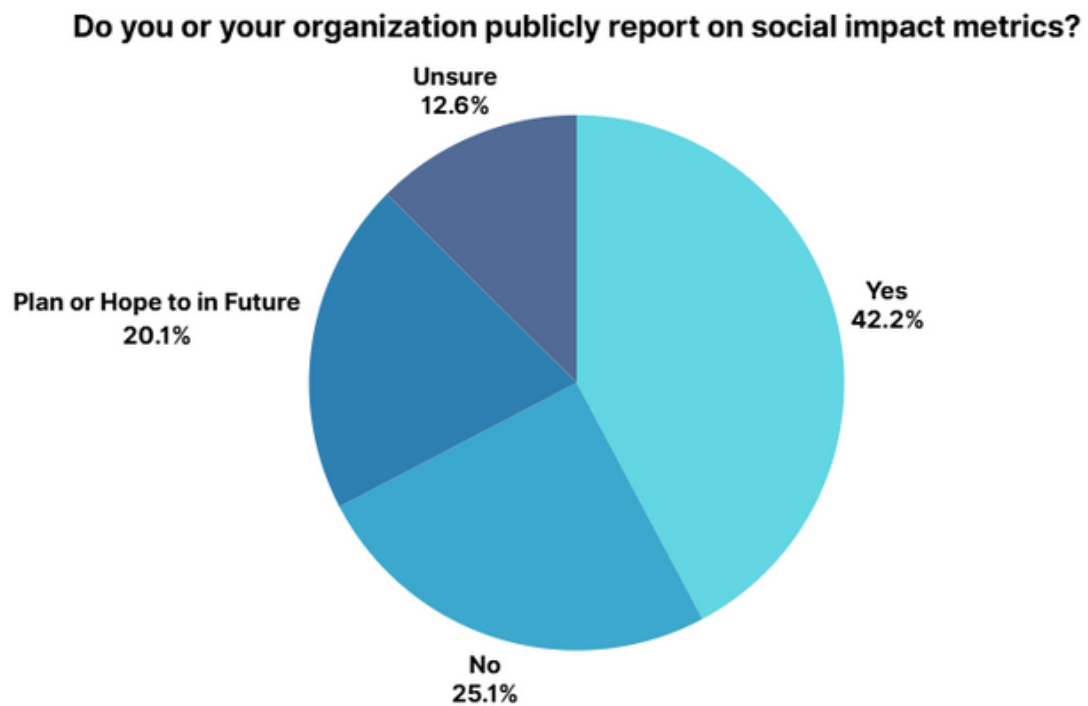


Figure 3. Share of organizations publicly reporting on social impact metrics (EqualReach, 2025).

If yes, respondents shared the social impact reporting frameworks they follow/align with as:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [8]
- B Corp Certification [9]
- Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) [10]
- Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) [11]
- 1% for the Planet [12]
- Ecovadis [13]
- Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTI) [14]
- Social Value TOMs (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) Framework [15]

As shown in Figure 3, fewer than one-third of surveyed companies publicly report their social or blended metrics. Leaders cited concerns about data reliability, comparability, and reputational risk. However, transparency is critical for building trust and enabling cross-sector learning. The move toward standardized frameworks such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) (European Union, 2024) will make disclosure expectations increasingly mandatory.

4 How Organizations Resource Impact Measurement

As measurement expectations rise, many companies are turning to external expertise. Nearly half of respondents said their organization brings in outside consultants or partners to design methodologies, collect data, or validate impact results. The most valued qualities when selecting outside talent were reliability, proven quality, and cost-effectiveness.

Does your organization ever bring in outside talent (freelancers, contractors, agencies)?

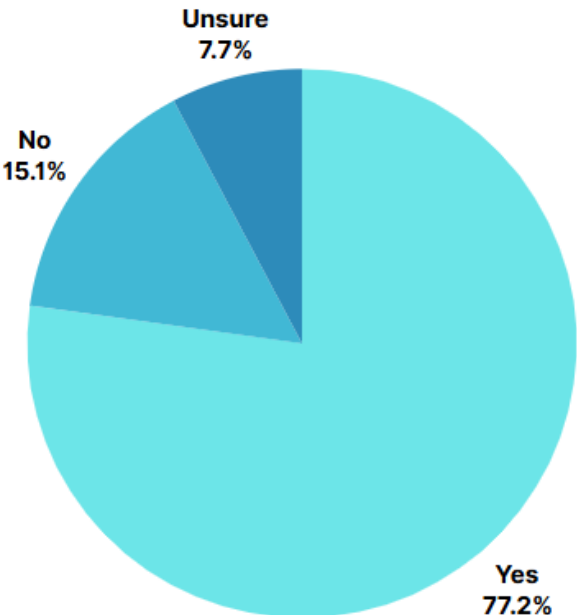


Figure 4. How organizations hire externally and what factors they prioritize (EqualReach, 2025).

If yes, respondents shared top factors considered in order of importance:

- 1. Ease of onboarding talent
- 2. Quality of project delivery
- 3. Reliability of talent
- 4. Cost of talent/project delivery
- 5. Speed/time of project delivery

Interviews indicated that cross-functional collaboration—between sustainability teams, procurement leads, and third-party partners—drives stronger reporting systems and builds internal capacity over time. Organizations that treat external collaboration as co-learning, rather than outsourcing, show faster progress in embedding impact measurement enterprise-wide.

Interest in Inclusive Sourcing Is Growing—but Barriers Persist

Momentum for hiring or contracting refugee and displaced talent is rising across industries. Roughly two-thirds of respondents said their organization is open or very open to exploring inclusive sourcing. Yet only a small fraction have implemented such partnerships to date.

How likely are you or your organization to hire refugees or displaced talent for project support?

Moderate: 2.5/5 Average

Likelihood ranked from 1 (the least) to 5 (the most)

The key blockers, in addition to the key enablers, are listed in order of reported importance below:

Key Blockers

- Lack of awareness of available, vetted talent
- Lack of funding for additional talent
- Legal or compliance concerns
- Uncertainty about skills/qualifications
- Language barriers
- Concerns about quality of work
- Lack of internal buy-in from stakeholders or leadership
- Ability to travel, connect with clients

Key Enablers

- Compliance/legal guidance
- Reports, testimonies, or success stories from other organizations
- Portfolios of work from talent
- An official certification for ethical sourcing or community impact
- Post-project report on business metrics performance (i.e., project on-time delivery)
- Post-project report on social metrics performance (i.e., diversity of team)

Common barriers include limited awareness of vetted talent networks, uncertainty regarding legal frameworks, and lack of internal champions. Conversely, organizations already engaging refugee or displaced talent cited access to pre-vetted partners, success stories from peers, and measurable impact reporting as key enablers. This highlights a significant opportunity: when the path to engagement is clear, organizations recognize both social and business advantages—from diversified skill sets to reputational differentiation and stronger community relations.

Emerging Themes from Interviews

Qualitative interviews with corporate and nonprofit leaders deepened the survey findings and identified three recurring themes that define the future of blended impact measurement:

Integration, Not Addition

Companies are moving away from treating social impact as a separate reporting stream. The goal is to integrate social metrics into the same dashboards and KPIs that govern financial and operational performance.

Accountability Through Partnerships

Executives increasingly view collaboration with social enterprises and refugee-led organizations as an effective route to deliver measurable impact. Partnerships offer credibility, agility, and on-the-ground insight that internal teams often lack.

The ROI of Inclusion

Inclusion is evolving from a moral commitment to a driver of business value—enhancing innovation, adaptability, and long-term resilience (World Economic Forum, 2024). Organizations that prioritize inclusive supply chains and talent models often see measurable gains in productivity, engagement, and brand trust.

Awareness Gap

“One of the hardest things is even knowing where to find vetted refugee talent.”
– U.K. Consultant

Internal Buy-In:

“Leadership needs testimonies from other companies who’ve done it successfully.”
– U.S. Nonprofit Leader

Compliance & Risk Concerns:

“Legal and visa restrictions make us cautious—we need guidance.”
– E.U. Energy Firm Leader

Proof of Quality:

“We’d want a post-project report to know: was it on time, was quality high?”
– Global Consultancy Executive

Certifications:

“You should provide badges or assets for companies to showcase the impact on their social media or other channels.”
– U.S. Social Impact Consultant

Collectively, these findings show a growing recognition that social responsibility and business performance reinforce one another. Organizations capable of measuring both simultaneously will be better equipped to navigate regulatory shifts and stakeholder expectations while achieving sustainable growth.”



Implications for Organizations

Blended measurement represents a strategic evolution of ESG and CSR—not an addition to them. It enables organizations to understand how operational decisions directly influence social outcomes and vice versa.

Firms adopting blended frameworks can:

- Demonstrate accountability to regulators, investors, and communities through transparent, comparable data.
- Strengthen market differentiation by embedding social value into core value propositions and procurement practices.
- Enhance talent attraction and retention by aligning employee purpose with measurable company impact.
- Unlock innovation through diverse perspectives and equitable partnerships.

In short, aligning profit with purpose is not only an ethical choice but a strategic imperative for long-term competitiveness.



Conclusion and Next Steps

This research establishes the empirical foundation for understanding how organizations define and measure blended impact. It confirms that while awareness of social value is high, practical measurement integration remains limited.

The next step is action. Toolkit 2 – Metrics That Matter translates these insights into a practical framework for selecting, aligning, and reporting both business and social metrics through a unified approach.

Together, the EqualReach Toolkit Series provides organizations with the evidence, tools, and case examples needed to embed blended impact into everyday operations—turning commitment into measurable performance.

References

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What We Do

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