

What Defines a Company as Prosocial: An Examination of Oil and Gas Sustainability Reports

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Abstract:

This study analyses how oil and gas companies present prosocial behaviour in their sustainability reports. Through several different frameworks, including the IPIECA reporting guideline, four companies were examined to recognise patterns of effective channels of reporting that provided tangible evidence of prosocial impact. Findings reveal common themes of stakeholder engagement, social contributions, and governance. All companies address these, but the extent of reporting, such as statistics, case studies, and strategic planning, all impact the authenticity of their actions and whether they are all for social reputation rather than a goal-based purpose. Overall, the analysis provides insight into how the oil and gas sector portrays prosocial values to maintain its reputation and align with global sustainability expectations.

Aim of the report:

Oil and gas companies are among the largest corporations globally, having built their wealth by harnessing the earth's resources for profit. Historically, they have been shareholder-oriented, but as the world shifts towards a net-zero, low-carbon future, these companies must adapt or suffer both profit and credibility loss. The qualitative analysis examines the most recent sustainability reports available to the public from four companies: BP, ExxonMobil, Saudi Aramco, and Shell. This ensures that the most accurate representation of their sustainability efforts is considered. The report aims to explore how these companies frame their contributions to communities, economic development, corporate governance, and more, exploring whether companies are transitioning to a stakeholder-centred approach. These activities will be assessed to determine which efforts genuinely create social impact and aim to influence stakeholder perceptions.

Introduction

What does prosociality mean in a corporate setting?

Prosociality is a social behaviour that benefits a large range of constituents and normally involves 'cooperation, kindness, altruism, positive reciprocation, trustworthiness, and other benevolent behaviour directed towards furthering the public interest' (Salop, 2024). In the interest of advancing their social standing, companies may sacrifice short-term profits to contribute towards a greater cause, producing long-term benefits for the corporation. The concept of pro-social behaviour ties well with what a company's stated purpose is. For a company to truly convey itself to have a duty-based purpose (actions driven by a company's recognition of broader societal values and expectations, reflecting a higher-order purpose linked to moral and ethical obligations), it must aim to encourage and cultivate prosocial behaviour in all aspects of its work.

Prosocial frameworks:

Several different frameworks are well-known and are followed and adhered to by companies aiming to improve their social license to operate. These frameworks are listed and explained below:

Stakeholder theory: This concept is not new and dates back to the 1960s. Researched by Stanford Research Institute, it theorises that organisations need the support of their stakeholders as well as shareholders to succeed (Mahajan et al., 2023). The definition from the research of stakeholder theory in the Journal of Business Research (Mahajan et al., 2023) is *“a theory that (i) encourages organizations to acknowledge and consider their stakeholders, which exist internally or externally to the organization, (ii) promotes understanding and managing stakeholder needs, wants, and demands, and thus (iii) represents a holistic and responsible framework that goes beyond the focus of shareholders in decision-making processes, which, in turn, (iv) enables organizations to be strategic, maximize their value creation, and safeguard their long-term success and sustainability.”* This definition can be applied in the context of this research, as acknowledging, and valuing the needs and views of stakeholders improves a company’s legitimacy as a prosocial firm. By creating platforms for engagement, companies create long-term value by signalling that they are responsible and responsive to the needs of stakeholders. Stakeholder theory establishes prosociality as both a moral obligation and a strategic necessity.

Environmental, Social and Governance: “ESG reporting frameworks are used by companies for the disclosure of data covering business operations and opportunities and risks that are related to the environmental, social and governance (ESG) aspects of the business.” (IBM, 2023) ESG performance has entered mainstream reporting and can even have negative implications if companies only remain profit focused. Companies that ignore ESG issues risk their social reputation as well as a possible decrease in investments. A Study from the Journal of Environmental Management found that ESG performance is positively interrelated with corporate performance ($p < 0.01$). (Chen, Yu, and Gao, 2023) The positive impact of ESG rating on corporate financial performance is more pronounced with large-scale companies. Within the sustainability reports of the oil and gas companies, many cite the same organisations that have set guidelines for what should be included in their reports. Ipieca is “the global oil and gas association for advancing environmental and social performance across the energy transition.” (Ipieca, 2023) It was founded in 1974 at the request of the United Nations Environment Programme; it is the principal channel of communication between the UN and the industry. They have provided a framework for oil and gas companies to use, in collaboration with the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers and the American Petroleum Institute, as a tool to structure sustainability reports. The latest framework includes a new section on ‘just transition’, indicating that this topic will now start to appear in more reports from the sector. The framework covers 21 sustainability issues and 43 indicator categories. “These issues and indicators have been selected based on industry consensus, together with significant insights and suggestions from an independent panel of stakeholders with expertise in the sector and sustainability reporting (Ipieca, 2025). Frameworks such as these are the leading guides in how companies present their data and decide what metrics they use in measuring their progress. They provide the ‘lens’ through which the report is written, which aims to highlight success strategically.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: In 2015, all UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. “Which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.” (United Nations, 2015) As the UN currently has 193 member states, the SDGs are a prominent topic and mentioning them in sustainability reports shows compliance with global organisations and contributes to their social reputation. The Global Reporting Initiative provides a guide for integrating the SDGs into corporate reporting. On their website, they state, “Transparency is fast becoming the new paradigm for conducting business. Transparency underlies Target 12.6 of the SDGs, to encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and integrate sustainability information into their reporting. Through better reporting, organisations can understand, communicate, and better manage their contributions to the SDGs.” (GRI, 2024) This shows the strategic approach to how companies should present themselves as pro-social.

Methodology:

List of companies in the report and the year of the sustainability report chosen:

- Bp – Sustainability Report 2024
- ExxonMobil – Sustainability Report 2025
- Saudi Aramco - Sustainability Report 2024
- Shell – Sustainability Report 2023

Each of these reports is the most recently published on each of the respective companies' websites. These were chosen as they are the most reflective of each of the companies' latest advances in their sustainability practices.

Analysis Approach:

The analysis in this report is mainly thematic (qualitative) and involves identifying recurrent themes within the reports, such as economic development, social investment, climate and global agreements and governance. Comparisons will be made to recognise similarities and differences to see what approaches are invariably prosocial and what companies are doing to distinguish themselves.

Other ways the reports will be analysed will be through looking at tone and the lens through which the company frame their actions. Such as, through a duty-based purpose lens, or more through safeguarding for the future and risk mitigation.

Ipieca, a not-for-profit oil and gas industry association for environmental and social issues, has published five sustainability report guides, advising oil and gas companies on how to shape the structure and content of their sustainability reporting. This guide will be compared against each of the sustainability reports, and it will be checked to see how closely each of the companies follows the framing of the guide.

Limitations of the research:

Size of the research: As this research is at a small scale, it is hard to use this analysis to generalise what the whole sector of oil and gas is doing to become more prosocial, if any attempts at all. To fully research this area a large set of companies would need to be used, analysing over a set number of years.

Self-reported data: All the data, whether recorded or measured, is produced by the companies themselves. They may choose to emphasise certain elements and mention negative issues in smaller quantities. Since this is not an investigative report in that context, the data provided will be accepted at face value and used to assess the level of prosocial behaviour.

Thematic bias: With qualitative analysis, the data, to some extent, is up to personal interpretation. To minimise personal critique, the data must be viewed objectively.

Findings

Social investment:

Social investment is a clear theme in all four of the reports, with a large emphasis on the non-profit sector of the area. Social investment goes beyond a company's duty to maximise shareholder returns and shows an overarching moral purpose to invest in communities and give back to people. Shell projects prosocial behaviour as they stated how much investment was voluntary, showing true interest in developing and reskilling people and improving people's quality of living.

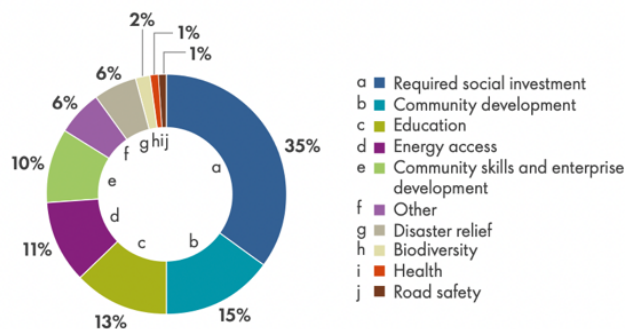
All companies have a dedicated social investment section, except ExxonMobil, which has a local economic development section in its report that mentions their collaboration with NGOs in developing countries.

Shell and BP both list their three priority areas/social investment themes.

Shell: access to energy, skills and enterprise development, and science, technology, engineering, and maths education.

BP: building capability for the future, supporting resilient communities, and partnering for environmental sustainability.

Saudi Aramco has two investment pillars: People and Planet.



Around \$84.8 million of our total social investment spend in 2023 was in countries that, according to the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index 2021, have a gross national income of less than \$15,000 a year per person.

Figure 1: Shell's social investment spending by theme (Shell PLC, 2023)

Of the three companies that have a specified social investment area, all of them state how much in that year they spent on social investment. Shell is the only company that states how much of this social investment was government-required or due to contractual agreements (35%) and how much was voluntary (65%). Shell also provides quantitative data on how their social investment spending was distributed. Social investment creates value through accountability and actions with a goal-based purpose. Social investment is a way to promote pro-social behaviour and build social reputation. Investment in society can have reciprocal value for the company, due to investment in STEM programmes and funding the skill development of workers. This approach illustrates how social investment generates prosocial value without compromising profitability. Shared value is created for society and business by supporting talent and creating opportunities for career development.

Comparison against the IPIECA reporting guideline:

CORE

C1 Describe your social investment strategies, programmes and procedures.

C2 Report your company's total social investment expenditure.

ADDITIONAL

A1 Provide an assessment of the quality and effectiveness of your social investment strategy, including results and impacts.

A2 Set out social investment expenditure broken down by region or country.

A3 Provide social investment expenditure broken down by voluntary and contractually obligated spend.

A4 Report the percentage of annual pre-tax profits towards contributions to host communities.

A5 Provide case studies to illustrate how you have implemented your social investment strategy and any lessons learned. For example:

- how significant parts of the local community perceive they are benefiting from your investment, including the extent to which livelihoods and economic opportunities are developing;
- whether your social investments are fostering improved community relations or creating tensions; and
- how your contributions are creating shared value and community development through the provision of expertise, access to facilities, training or other non-financial resources;
- how your social investment supports a just transition by helping communities benefit from the presence of less carbon-intensive and renewable energy businesses, and by supporting communities affected by the downsizing, conversion to other uses, closure or sale of more carbon-intensive facilities as part of your carbon reduction plans.

All companies reported on the core C1 and C2 elements. Additional elements are followed through by BP (A1, A2, A5), Saudi Aramco (A1, A2, A5) and Shell (A1, A2, A3 and A5)

Figure 2: Social Investment Guidelines 1 (Ipieca, 2025)

Prosocial behaviour: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential in business to build a diverse and fair workforce that leverages the knowledge and skills of different people. Freedom from exclusion is a right that all workers should have to work safely and comfortably. DEI is something every company should adopt to maximise innovation, employee engagement, and social reputation. All companies except ExxonMobil have a diversity, equity, and inclusion section for their employees. ExxonMobil mentions diversity in the supply chain but provides no details about it within their workforce. BP, Shell, and Saudi Aramco all share statistics on the percentage of women employed at each company and the percentage of women in senior leadership roles, often comparing data from previous years. This transparency adds value and fosters a prosocial impact by allowing stakeholders to see their progress. Race and ethnicity are discussed by both BP and Shell, with Shell providing statistics and information about adherence to the Parker Review—a framework on how UK boards can better improve ethnic and cultural diversity. BP also includes case studies on workforce diversification at specific operations and supported organisations. For example, “In India, where our business is growing, we launched ‘bp works for women’ – a campaign aimed at women who want to build a successful career. As part of this, we shared stories to highlight what working life at BP is like for women and installed art displays in Pune, giving access to information about BP’s flexible working policies” (BP, 2024).

Transparency improves stakeholder trust and legitimacy as the company shows that it values a diverse workforce. A varied workforce also creates a large range of perspectives that can generate innovation and a flow of ideas that may approach challenges differently from a

homogenous workforce. DEI reporting reduces possible legal implications or operational risks that may be associated with discrimination, and it creates value for the company as well as increasing shareholder interest and social reputation, making them more attractive for investment.

CORE

- C1** Describe your policies, programmes and procedures to promote workforce diversity and inclusion, and non-discrimination.
- C2** Provide workforce composition data for gender and / or other diversity categories.
- C3** Discuss workforce composition, particularly with reference to your management positions.

ADDITIONAL

- A1** Provide case studies to illustrate how you implement policies, procedures and programmes at a corporate and local level. Where relevant to your company, include case studies that illustrate how you are supporting a just transition by promoting workforce diversity and inclusion, for example with regard to gender and ethnicity, in your less carbon-intensive and renewables businesses.
- A2** Provide information on other inclusive practices, such as equal pay for equal work.
- A3** Provide data on the diversity and inclusion issues that are raised through your grievance mechanisms or engagement surveys.
- A4** Describe how career management reflects the diversity of your workforce, for example promotion rates for different groups, or the progression of national employees versus expatriates.

Figure 3: DEI guidelines (Ipieca, 2025)

Comparison against the IPIECA reporting guideline:

BP, Shell, and Saudi Aramco all adhere to the three reporting elements (reference figure in the Ipieca 2025 reporting guideline. Additional elements are followed through by BP (A1, A2, A3) and Saudi Aramco (A1, A2).

A Just transition:

BP, Shell, and ExxonMobil all feature a section labelled a ‘Just Transition’. A just transition is explained in the latest Ipieca reporting guideline as, “The concept to provide access to affordable energy, and that an energy transition should be executed in a fair and just manner for those impacted, including communities, workforces, and consumers.” (Ipieca, 2025) This section of the reporting guideline was added in the latest edition, published in 2025. Of the three that mention a just transition, only the ExxonMobil report was published in 2025. Saudi Aramco does not explicitly mention a just transition but states its low-carbon technology investments and its journey to net zero.

The just transition section describes how the development of renewable energies benefits workers by building skills to operate low-carbon technology. It also discusses how this will affect communities. BP provides case studies from around the world showing how its operations support local economies and how they engage with stakeholders to manage potential risks of new projects. BP, ExxonMobil, and Shell state their collaborations with universities and laboratories and are part of the just transition task force, formed by IPIECA. BP and Shell are both working with Business for Social Responsibility and The B Team. A just transition section demonstrates prosocial behaviour by recognising the impacts on communities, workforces, and industries due to the development of low-carbon technology. Providing opportunities for retraining and reskilling, as well as minimising negative impacts such as resettlement, builds stakeholder trust and results in long-term benefits for companies and stakeholders. Value is created through long-term investment in developing skills for the future, fostering a workforce with shared morale and motivation, and improving company productivity. Investment in local economies has generated shared value as funding for healthcare, education, and infrastructure enhances quality of living and boosts the economy. Collaborations strengthen a company's legitimacy and social licence to operate by reflecting their participation in global agreements, signalling goal-driven purpose and aligned perspectives.

*This section could not be compared against the IPIECA guidelines as the ‘just transition’ section of the guide was only published in 2025, so companies that reported on their own just transition would not have been following IPIECA’s principles.

Governance:

Corporate governance is fundamental to being prosocial as it forms part of the ESG investing principle that assesses a company’s environmental and social impacts, along with its transparency and accountability. In sustainability reports, governance includes codes of conduct covering various human rights. BP features a section on its code of conduct, which includes speaking up (reports and issues raised through channels connected to BP), anti-bribery measures, tax transparency, and political donations. Shell reports on all these areas as well, alongside cybersecurity, noting that all employees and staff undergo mandatory training courses aimed at raising awareness of cybersecurity threats. Notably, the ethics and compliance section highlights the guidelines and frameworks guiding the company’s practices. ExxonMobil refers to international human rights and labour standards, such as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and ILO Convention 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. This reflects prosociality by demonstrating adherence to and respect for universal rights. These agreements focus on protecting vulnerable groups and upholding ethical principles, indicating that the company recognises and values a diverse range of people, both within and outside its workforce.

By adhering to specific guidelines, the company mitigates potential issues in high-risk areas. Alignment with global agreements bolsters the company’s credibility, enhances investment prospects, stakeholder respect, and positive engagement, and fosters long-term relationships with various stakeholders (e.g., indigenous communities). These relationships support operational continuity and help minimise conflicts. Shell, BP, and Saudi Aramco also provide statistics related to governance. They all report the number of concerns and enquiries submitted through their respective hotlines; BP and Shell additionally report the number of dismissals linked to these concerns. Saudi Aramco reports hours spent on anti-bribery and anti-corruption training. These statistics serve as concrete evidence of the companies’ commitment to complying with their own codes of conduct and international standards. This approach boosts stakeholder trust, including employees, which can lead to increased motivation and productivity.

Governance is required in sustainability reporting to maintain corporate legitimacy; however, this doesn’t minimise the importance of transparent and accurate reporting, as stakeholders’

In 2023 there were:

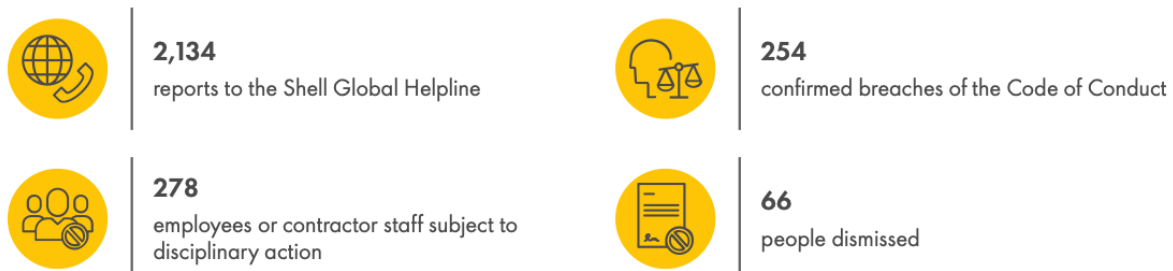


Figure 4: Shell's ethics and compliance statistics

access to codes of conduct and how actions are taken in relation to these is what creates a reputable business.

Comparison against the IPIECA reporting guideline:

CORE

C1	Describe your governance architecture, including the role of the board, board committees, board diversity, executives, managers, the workforce and stakeholders.
C2	Describe your code of conduct, values and principles and how they relate to sustainability.
C3	Describe the way in which your board reviews sustainability issues, including risks and opportunities, supported by examples of their work in action.
C4	Provide an overview of, or list, your corporate policies that address sustainability issues.
C5	Set out how your board and executives monitor strategic performance and goals.

BP (C2, C3, C4, C5), ExxonMobil (C2, C3, C4, C5), Saudi Aramco (C2, C3, C4, C5) and Shell (C2, C3, C4, C5). All the companies describe their governance structure, just not in their sustainability reporting.

ADDITIONAL

A1	Describe the composition of your board and executive team, including selection processes, areas of expertise, diversity and length of terms.
A2	Set out how you manage relationships with partners, including operated and non-operated joint ventures, contractors and suppliers.
A3	Describe how you utilise internal audits and self-assessment processes that are designed to assure the implementation of systems of internal control.
A4	Outline your assurance processes, including by third parties, and subsequent review by your management and board as they relate to sustainability reporting and other disclosures that cover sustainability issues.
A5	Provide details of how you take non-financial performance and targets into account within executive and / or employee remuneration.
A6	Outline your training and cultural awareness programmes for board and executive management related to sustainability issues.
A7	Describe training and other processes that inform your workforce about your code of conduct requirements or equivalent rules related to business ethics and behaviour.

Figure 5: Governance Guidelines (Ipieca, 2025)

Stakeholder Engagement:

Stakeholder engagement and integration are key to a company’s purpose and transition to a prosocial reputation. Incorporating and valuing stakeholders’ needs into a company's principles increases the social value of a company, as they build trust and long-term value creation. Engagement ensures issues and conflicts are minimised as feedback is received and acted upon. This creates mutual benefits for all parties as investments in society increase the quality of living and productivity.

In each report, stakeholder engagement is addressed both directly and indirectly with a list of employees, governments, communities, suppliers, and indigenous groups. In BP, Shell and Saudi Aramco all have their version of an employee feedback survey where engagement statistics are provided, e.g. “In the 2024 Pulse annual survey, our overall engagement score decreased by three points to 70%, in line with 2022 levels, with a completion rate of 82%... Based on our overall Pulse survey results for 2024, we set three focus areas for improvement in 2025 – psychological safety, competitiveness, and understanding of our strategy and performance.” (BP, 2024). BP provides evidence of how its engagement with employees differs year to year and remains transparent even when numbers are down. Additionally, BP shows active reception to the feedback received and has formed focus areas for improvement.

This builds stakeholder trust and shows that the opinions and well-being of its employees are valued, leading to employee pride. Saudi Aramco operates similarly with a feedback and response system, developing focus areas based on the results of its 2022 survey. In its 2024 report, it provides data to show improvements in employee experience. “Notably, there was a 7% increase in response rate from 2022. The improvements in both the rating and response rate are attributed to the actions taken by organisations across the Company in response to the 2022 survey results.” (ARAMCO, 2023). They show clear and effective evidence of how engagement leads to positive outputs, emphasising the importance of integrating the opinions of stakeholders and employees in this context. Shell does not state how they respond to the feedback surveys, but provides statistics.

All of the companies stress the importance of engaging with the communities where their operations take place. BP and ExxonMobil provide case studies of how they interact with local communities. Shell uses an online feedback tool to assess the implications of their operations on communities.



Figure 6: Shell Community Feedback 2023

ExxonMobil, BP, and Shell all state what global frameworks and the partnerships with NGOs they use to aid in relationships and minimise impacts to communities.

Showing collaborations and evidence of how and when feedback is resolved shows that stakeholder engagement is important to these companies, making them more prosocial as they emphasise minimising impacts on stakeholders and integrating their needs into the core purpose of their company. Value is created through legitimising these companies as businesses that go beyond profit and focus on the well-being and impacts on all associated. Engagement can act as risk mitigation, leading to fewer legal implications, and responsible leadership is important to investors in the company.

Net zero:

A common theme within sustainability reports in all business sectors is the transition to ‘net zero’. Net zero, from the UN, means, “Put simply, net zero means cutting carbon emissions to a small number of residual emissions that can be absorbed and durably stored by nature and other carbon dioxide removal measures, leaving zero in the atmosphere”. (United Nations, 2025)

Companies are focusing on investing in low-carbon emissions technology, and all four of the companies mention scope 1 and 2 emissions. They also have interim targets set and progress updated. Scope 3 emissions are voluntary to report on, but scope 1 and 2 emissions are mandatory. (UK Government, 2023) Shell is the only one to report on their scope 3 emissions and outright state, “Scope 3 emissions from the energy products we sell account for most of the total emissions we report”. (Shell PLC, 2023) Shell has an ambition to reduce scope 3 emissions by 15–20% by 2030. (Shell PLC, 2023). This shows acknowledgement for improving emissions in the interest of the environment rather than adhering to mandatory guidelines. Areas that stand out in the net-zero section of each report are how progress is approached and reported on. Saudi Aramco, BP, and Shell all mention a ‘roadmap’ or similar approach that details how each company plans to reach net zero and minimise emissions. These show stakeholders that the company can predict when aims will be met. Planning shows consideration for environmental stewardship and the ability for peer assessment, creating competitive advancements. ExxonMobil reports on its progress but does not mention interim targets or how progress compares against the. BP shows statistics of year-by-year progress against its original targets.

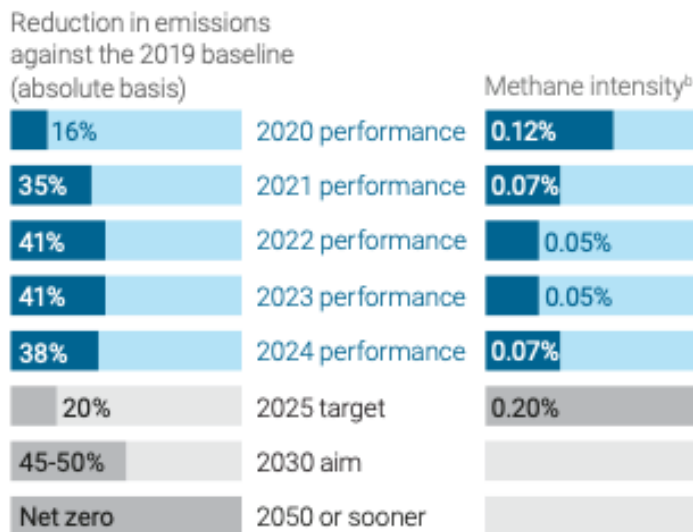


Figure 7: BP Progress Targets and Aims (BP, 2024)

*Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions are defined as:

Scope 1: direct greenhouse gas emissions from sources under Shell’s operational control;
 Scope 2: indirect greenhouse gas emissions from the generation of purchased energy consumed by Shell assets under operational control; and Scope 3: other indirect greenhouse gas emissions, including emissions associated with the use of energy products sold by Shell. (Shell PLC, 2023)

CORE	
	Describe your general approach to managing climate-related risks and opportunities, including discussion on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification and evaluation of risks and opportunities; • incorporation of risks and opportunities are into business strategies and planning for existing operations and new projects; • risks and opportunities related to energy transition; • risk mitigation opportunities through nature based solutions; and • physical climate-related risks, such as rising sea levels or flood risk.
C1	
	Outline your GHG emissions management strategy, including plans, commitments, investments and activities to mitigate GHG emissions within your operations.
C2	
	Explain how you assess, prioritize and manage methane risks and impacts as part of your overall GHG emissions management strategy.
C3	
	If you have quantitative GHG emission or energy-related targets, describe the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scope of your targets – total GHG, CO₂, methane, other GHGs, energy use, and / or flaring; • type of targets (absolute or intensity); • targets already underway or planned; • approach used to measure progress towards these targets; and • baseline period and timescale, along with progress towards meeting your targets.
C4	
ADDITIONAL	
	Outline the tools and methodologies (including explicit description of underlying assumptions, e.g. carbon pricing, global policy development and associated temperature increases estimates) you use to manage climate-related financial risks and opportunities, such as stress testing, 'shadow' cost of carbon, or scenario planning.
A1	
	Outline your approach to incentivize the management of climate-related risks and opportunities and, if relevant, describe how you incorporate climate-related performance targets within remuneration for senior management and your workforce.
A2	

Figure 8: Climate Action Guidelines (Ipieca, 2025)

Comparison against the IPIECA reporting guideline:

All companies report on the suggested core elements. Additional elements are followed through by BP (A1 and A2), ExxonMobil (A2), Saudi Aramco (A1 and A2) and Shell (A1)

Discussion:

From the reports examined and compared against the IPIECA reporting guideline, it is interesting to see how companies formulate information to appear from a green and social perspective. All the sustainability reports share clear similarities, but there are areas where only one or two companies demonstrate a truly pro-social output. Linking to stakeholder theory as a prosocial framework, sustainability reports provide information in a way that appeals to stakeholders and, therefore, signals investment potential. The topics of net zero and decarbonisation attract interest, as reporting certain elements related to emissions is required by governments, such as scope 1 and 2 emissions. All four companies report on their scope 1 and 2 emissions, including progress and interim targets. Although this is mandatory, it still promotes prosociality, as providing tangible evidence of reductions demonstrates proactive engagement and a concern for environmental stewardship. Reporting on scope 3 emissions is voluntary, and only Shell shares data in this regard. They state the company's aims to reduce all scope emissions, listing interim figures. Publicising scope 3 data voluntarily increases transparency, thereby fostering stakeholder trust and indicating true intent to work towards low-carbon emissions beyond mere regulatory compliance. Social contributions serve as a means to project a purpose-driven goal sincerely. Shell was the only company to specify how much of its social contribution was mandated by governments. This emphasised that Shell chose to invest more in communities than required, demonstrating care for skill development, supporting local economies, and individuals. Each company provides case studies illustrating how and where they have invested. Common themes in social investment include support for STEM education, reskilling workers for a low-carbon future, and collaborating with NGOs. Social contribution exemplifies mutual value creation for both parties. Many initiatives involving STEM programmes lead to long-term benefits for the company, as they offer courses for skill development, often resulting in role shifts rather than rehiring and providing faster returns on human capital. Companies engaging with

communities beyond regulatory requirements enhance their social license and legitimacy, thereby increasing shareholder potential.

The less prominent but still common pro-social themes are DEI and governance. They follow globally recognised frameworks that are regarded as socially necessary for establishing a reputable business. All companies address both sectors, sharing statistics that exemplify accountability and transparency. An area recurring in each report is gender equality, with every company reporting percentages of female employees in both the workforce and on boards. All categories representing the highest efforts of pro-sociality are aligned with the Ipieca reporting guidelines. This does not necessarily suggest that the companies' efforts are not genuine; the guideline provides the best framework for presenting the information in a way that appeals to and is understood by shareholders and stakeholders. Each aspect analysed in this report demonstrates both prosocial behaviour and value creation from economic, environmental, and social perspectives. Companies that operate with a purpose aligned to moral and duty-based principles are the leaders in transparency and voluntary disclosure of data. Shell serves as an example, as its data exceeds requirements, such as in reporting Scope 3 emissions and disclosing social investment spending. Voluntarily sharing data with stakeholders promotes inclusivity and reflects a genuine desire to be accountable for their actions.

After looking at sustainability reports from four different companies, the companies that choose to disclose as much data as possible increase in stakeholder appeal. Prosociality is shown best through case studies of how activities such as investment, volunteering and operations create social and economic value. They are effective at providing evidence of engagement, the type of action taken and the outcome. They provide examples of accountability and allow benchmarking among peers. Creating transparency and allowing future projections and improvement targets to be public knowledge opens a company up to accountability and critique.

Conclusion:

This set of four sustainability reports offers a small glimpse into how global oil and gas corporations are shifting their focus towards a more inclusive, stakeholder-oriented future. Each company provides clear evidence of how it contributes to society beyond just profit returns for shareholders. The IPIECA guideline helps companies communicate information effectively to appeal to a broad range of stakeholders, demonstrating that sustainability reports also serve as a form of marketing and represent the best way to showcase the company. Pro-social behaviour is best defined by a company's actions involving investment in communities and the workforce, where issues are acknowledged, and projects are developed solely to improve people's quality of life by raising their living standards and providing opportunities to develop skills. This also includes recognising shortfalls and devising strategies to address them. To further research into the promotion of pro-social behaviour in business, a larger data set over a specified period would need to be analysed. This would reveal the effectiveness of different strategies employed by companies to resolve issues and their prevalence across the entire oil and gas sector. It would also highlight when certain issues become more prominent and how different companies respond to them in their reports.

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