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2026 LEADERBOARD REPORT: AUTOMAKER SCORECARD SHOWS AN EVEN CLEANER EV IS WITHIN REACH

Momentum is building towards an even cleaner electric vehicle (EV), which doesn't just run on electricity but is built with circular practices and decarbonized materials, while minimizing negative impacts on the environment, workers and communities, according to a scorecard of 18 global automakers.

The fourth edition of the Lead the Charge Auto Supply Chain Leaderboard, which ranks global automakers based on their efforts to build equitable, sustainable, and fossil-free supply chains for electric vehicles, shows a majority of automakers are now taking important initial steps to clean up their supply chains.

The analysis, published by a network of climate, human rights and investor groups, also shows a core group of industry leaders - Ford, Mercedes, Tesla, Volvo and Volkswagen - are pushing further ahead. These companies at the head of the pack have achieved a rate of progress that is double that of the remaining 13 companies since the first edition of the Leaderboard, and are starting to implement more effective practices for decarbonizing the materials used in their vehicles and mitigating environmental and human rights abuses in their supply chains. For example:

- Volvo and Mercedes have made significant investments in steel and aluminum decarbonization and are now disclosing specific quantities of low carbon steel and aluminum used in their new EV models, Mercedes' CLA and Volvo's ES90.

- Mercedes, Volkswagen and Tesla publish detailed raw material reports on their progress to prevent, mitigate and remedy human rights and environmental harms across a range of supply chains such as lithium, cobalt and nickel.

When leading performance across all automakers for each of the 88 indicators is taken into account, a score of 86% emerges. Automakers could attain this score simply by matching the existing best practices of their peers across different areas, showing that an even cleaner EV of the future is within reach.

Much of the most significant progress documented by the analysis is specific to electric vehicle supply chains, with automakers choosing to decarbonize steel and aluminium in their EVs, as opposed to their outdated internal combustion engine vehicles. Automakers are also often going further on transparency, recycling and responsible sourcing for their EV battery supply chains. This is a boost for the electric vehicle industry amid policy and industry pullbacks in the U.S. and Europe, demonstrating to consumers that there can be even more benefits to buying EVs, beyond just eliminating tailpipe emissions.

Other progress includes:

- Chinese companies were the biggest improvers overall this year. Geely, now the top scoring East Asian automaker, has developed some of the industry's best practices on battery decarbonization and recycling and has continued to make significant progress on human rights. BYD, the world's largest EV maker, has taken important first steps, such as putting in place a new code of conduct for suppliers and a supply chain grievance mechanism.

- A majority of automakers have now taken initial steps on respecting Indigenous Peoples' rights, representing 12 of the 18 automakers; in 2023 there were only six such automakers
- Over half of the automakers improved their scores on battery recycling and repurposing, with examples of progress ranging from investments in battery design to improve recyclability through to commercial partnerships to reuse EV batteries in stationary storage and to bring innovative new recycling technologies to market.
- While **Tesla** remains number one in the overall rankings, **Volvo** is number one on supply chain decarbonization, and **Ford** on responsible sourcing. Because of Tesla and Ford's performance, US companies were the top performers overall
- Together with Geely and BYD, **Renault** achieved the joint largest score jump due to making significant improvements across all of the human rights areas

But the leaderboard also shows there is still a long way to go, with even industry leaders showing patchy performances and no company reaching 50% of the total scores obtainable in the analysis. There has even been regressions by some carmakers:

- The world's biggest car maker, Toyota, continues to be an industry laggard when it comes to cleaning up its supply chain, and is flailing at the bottom of the rankings along with Chinese state-owned car companies such as GAC and SAIC, who have made little to no progress in areas such as steel and aluminum decarbonization or responsible mineral sourcing.

- GM significantly fell down the Leaderboard rankings this year as the only automaker that failed to publish an annual sustainability report. GM has now been overtaken in the rankings by Geely and Hyundai Motors.

Quotes by members of Lead of The Charge

- *Two-thirds of automakers now cite UNDRIP and FPIC in their policies. It is an important shift. But with an average of just 15%, the gap between promises and practice remains unacceptable. Indigenous Peoples know where the real impacts happen. We communities struggle especially with their upstream suppliers, mines, smelters, and others that feed so called "clean" cars. Disclosure and risk-mapping are not enough unless they lead to enforceable action. FPIC as a binding supplier requirement, full traceability to extraction sites, Indigenous engagement and participation, and real consequences and remedy when violations and abuses occur. The test is simple: will automakers use their purchasing power to keep minerals taken without consent out of their vehicles?*
Edson Krenak, Krenak People - Cultural Survival Brazil program
Manager
- *“By pushing for improvements across a variety of issues, electric vehicle makers are demonstrating that they have the ability to help transform mineral supply chains. As influential buyers, they can steer the mining industry towards practices that respect Indigenous Peoples’ rights, workers, human rights, and the environment.” - Ellen Moore, Mining Program Director at [Earthworks](#)*

- “The SIRGE Coalition acknowledges modest but meaningful progress on Indigenous Peoples’ rights in this year’s automaker Leaderboard. While overall scores remain low, eight automakers improved their performance and the sector’s average score rose by three percent compared to last year, signaling growing recognition of Indigenous Peoples’ rights at the policy level. For the first time, automakers with no commitments to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Indigenous Peoples’ rights are in the minority.

Yet, these commitments have not translated into tangible action and respect for rights on the ground. Across supply chains and transition mineral mining, concrete implementation lags far behind corporate policy statements. The auto industry must now pivot from recognizing rights to operationalizing them.

The SIRGE Coalition will continue pressing automakers to demonstrate meaningful implementation, accountability, and respect for Indigenous Peoples’ rights where impacts are occurring." - Galina Angarova, Executive Director of the Securing Indigenous Peoples’ Rights in the Green Economy (SIRGE) Coalition.

- "Steel is one of the largest contributors to automakers’ Scope 3 emissions, yet many East Asian automakers, including Hyundai Motor and Kia, still lack clear, steel-specific decarbonization roadmaps. Compared to global best practices, they have not established time-bound targets for green steel adoption or credible implementation mechanisms.

At the same time, the absence of a globally aligned green steel definition further weakens accountability. To ensure credibility, green steel definitions must align with IEA principles and prioritize transparent, verifiable, and physically achieved emissions reductions.

As trade measures such as the EU's CBAM increasingly link carbon intensity to market access, steel decarbonization is no longer just an environmental issue but a matter of competitiveness." - Heather Lee, Steel Team Lead with Solutions For Our Climate (SFOC)

- "At a time when critical mineral extraction continues to drive environmental damage and human rights abuses, the poor performance of some automakers is unacceptable. With an industry average score of just 25%, and some companies failing basic due diligence, the human and environmental costs remain severe.

Box-ticking audits are not enough. Automakers must go beyond formulaic compliance and scale up targeted, supply chain-specific actions that create real impact. Policymakers, especially in major consumer markets, must enforce strong, mandatory regulations to ensure minimum standards across the industry.

This year's Leaderboard shows that meaningful progress is achievable and already demonstrated by leading companies. There is no justification for leaving producing countries and affected communities to shoulder the burden of the transition alone" - **Eric Ngang**, Program Director with Afrewatch International

- "Transparency is a cornerstone of companies' international human rights obligations to conduct ongoing human rights due diligence, and investors have increasing expectations that companies provide key information in this regard. Disclosure from companies on their human rights diligence, in particular, is critical information for investors to make prudent and sustainable decisions" - **Aaron Acosta**, Program Director at Investor Advocates for Social Justice

- "This year's leaderboard demonstrates it is possible to disclose more granular data on supply chain practices and emissions, catalyzing a race to the top. Ford, Volvo and Mercedes set the curve and demonstrated how much climate laggards like Toyota have fallen behind. To remain competitive, other automakers must disclose disaggregated emissions and sourcing information on their steel, aluminum, and battery supply chains." - **Abhilasha Bhola**, Director of the Auto Supply Chain Campaign, Public Citizen
- "By rejecting weak systems that drive a race to the bottom like the Consolidated Mining Standard, automakers can demonstrate their commitment to human rights and the environment. The European Union and U.S. are rolling back human rights and environmental protections to fast-track mining projects. Automakers must join civil society and demand high road mining practices. While voluntary mining standards cannot replace the need for strong legislation, they can improve mining industry practices and reduce automakers' vulnerability to financial risks and supply chain disruptions." - **Chelsea Hodgkins**, senior ZEV policy advocate with Public Citizen's Climate Program.
- "Consumers don't want to drive over climate destruction or human rights abuses. More than 56,000 people – including 70 of Hyundai's own shareholders – are calling on the company to clean up its supply chain. The Leaderboard gives consumers and investors the facts they need to make informed choices, showing which automakers are driving real change – and which are simply stalling." - **Nish Humphreys**, Campaigns Manager at Ekō

- “While this year’s leaderboard shows improvements in battery recycling disclosure, far more quantitative and qualitative data are urgently needed from all automakers. Companies must both know—and show — how much battery-grade material they are recovering, and how they are protecting communities’ right to know across this expanding supply chain” - **Lien De Brouckere**, Global Batteries Lead, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA).
- “The latest Lead the Charge Leaderboard makes it clear that industry leaders, such as Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, and Geely automakers, are making significant investments in incorporating low-carbon steel and aluminum into the vehicles they sell, not just in sustainability reports. The Leaderboard exposes just how far behind other automakers are in meaningfully addressing the embodied emissions from steel and aluminum in their vehicles. As automakers drag their feet on committing to low-carbon steel and aluminum, they send a signal to suppliers that pollution from fossil fuel-fired blast furnaces and smelters is still acceptable. Hopefully, the latest Leaderboard findings will be a wake-up call to laggard automakers to clean up their steel and aluminum supply now or risk falling even further behind their competitors.” - Matthew Groch, Senior Director at Mighty Earth

“As the Trump administration attempts to roll back U.S. climate policy and vehicle emission standards, it is more important than ever for automakers to advance global efforts to clean up their supply chains while continuing to produce electric vehicles,” said Katherine García, Sierra Club Clean Transportation for All Director. “The auto industry thrives on regulatory certainty, and the current administration is once again throwing the industry into disarray.

This year's Lead the Charge analysis shows that greater EV adoption and advancing more sustainable and responsible supply chains are not mutually exclusive. In fact, growing the EV market can serve as a catalyst for clean and equitable supply chains. Automakers have the power to lead us toward a healthier, more sustainable future."

- "To maintain their credibility as part of the solution to the climate crisis, the electric vehicle industry must strengthen their human rights due diligence, including by pushing mining companies in their supply chains to respect the rights of communities, end environmentally destructive practices, and decarbonize. As Climate Rights International has documented in Indonesia, the world's largest producer of nickel, the consequences of the rush for battery minerals can be disastrous for local communities and the climate, including land grabbing, severe air and water quality pollution, attacks on environmental human rights defenders, and the buildout of new captive coal plants to power the nickel industry. But it doesn't have to be this way. Electric vehicle companies have unique leverage to demand that the minerals used in their supply chains are mined and processed in an environmentally sustainable and rights-respecting way and could position themselves as global leaders in the fight against climate change if they step their due diligence." - **Krista Shennum**, Senior Researcher, Climate Rights International

"Such win on positive progress the automakers have made in recent years addressing deforestation risks, strengthening due diligence, and improving transparency across their supply chains. These signals show growing recognition of the importance of responsible sourcing and nature-related risk management.

. However, important gaps and shortfalls remain, and further improvements are needed to ensure consistent, comprehensive implementation. Investors require greater certainty that these efforts will translate into long-term value creation, and robust action to protect nature is a critical component of that confidence.” - Jasmine Puteri, **Rainforest Foundation Norway**

"EV makers are in a position to raise the bar for the mining industry at a critical time, as demand for 'transition' minerals surges. We have been pleased to see some companies beginning to engage more meaningfully and directly with upstream suppliers and with affected communities, but there is so much more they could be doing. For example, automakers should routinely use site visits to engage with affected communities to understand their concerns, and they should be using their leverage to address harms and enable remedial actions where needed. EV makers also have an opportunity to prevent harm and secure genuinely responsible supply chains by supporting upstream mineral suppliers to negotiate and enter into fair and equitable land access agreements with communities before new projects start." - David Pred, Executive Director of Inclusive Development International

About the leaderboard:

- The Leaderboard is designed to give companies a score out of 100%. This enables an analysis of relative performance between automakers and of how close or far companies are to meeting the expectations within the scorecard.

- *The Leaderboard considers 1,584 data points, evaluating each company across 88 indicators. The indicators are divided into two main sections: fossil-free and environmentally sustainable supply chains, and human rights and responsible sourcing. Within each of these there are four subsections, representing different supply chain issue areas*
- *This year's Leaderboard's total average score across all 18 automakers stands at 25%, with no company achieving a total score of 50% or over. Tesla has the highest score at 49%, followed by Ford and Volvo at 45% and 44% respectively. China's SAIC has the lowest score at just 3%*

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