

WORLD.COM'S 'LIVING AI SURVEY' REVEALS GLOBAL CEO CONFIDENCE CONTINUES TO SLIDE

***Confidence In United States Bounces Back – Up 25 Percent - But Still Lower Than 2018;
Europe Most Confident Region***

Leaders Have Lowest Confidence In Handling Government And Legislative Change

Global Views Of 54,000 C-Suite Executives Captured By A Breakthrough Artificial Intelligence Approach

NEW YORK (June 2020) – [World.com's](#) Confidence Index, an annual examination of the confidence and concerns of CEOs and CMOs, is now expanded to a living survey and will offer current perspectives of their mindset every month. As expected amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, overall confidence among global CEOs and CMOs has continued to slide since November 2019 - down 9.5 percent to a [World.com Confidence Index](#) score of 18.03. The analysis in April 2020, of online content from more than 54,000 chief executive and chief marketing officers, has uncovered useful insight into leaders' confidence about issues central to the COVID-19 crisis. The most significant fall in confidence was seen in Portugal (down 9 percent), but the United States saw the biggest increase (25 percent), moving from 14th to first in the World.com Confidence Index.ⁱ

"The impact of the COVID-19 crisis is plain to see in the results of the April 2020 World.com Confidence Index. It's driven a massive increase in engagement with topics related to the crisis and, no doubt contributed to a decline in confidence for 19 of the 24 topicsⁱⁱ", said Roger Hurni, Chairman of The World.com Public Relations Group. "It's one of the reasons we will be tracking leaders' confidence and concern on a monthly basis to provide actionable insight as the pandemic recovery evolves."

Leaders least confident about government and legislative change. Managing a crisis see drop in confidence

While governments around the world have made unprecedented responses to the current crisis, business leaders are least confident about handling government and legislative change. This topic is bottom of the World.com Confidence Index.ⁱⁱⁱ Leaders in the U.S. seem particularly concerned and have the third lowest confidence score^{iv}.

Crisis management has also taken a hit in confidence. It has the fifth lowest topic score.

"The pace of government and legislative change caused by the crisis has also impacted confidence," said Hurni. "Leaders are least confident in their ability to handle this, and confidence in their ability to manage crises is also one of the top five concerns."

Suppliers see huge rise in attention while influencers remain #1 audience for leaders

Along with global confidence, the insights identify the importance of reaching specific audiences and the confidence levels that c-suite executives have in reaching those audiences. In 2019, CEOs were most concerned with reaching influencers. And, while influencers remain the #1 audience for leader attention, the level of engagement fell 35 percent. However, confidence in reaching influencers increased significantly, up 68 percent since November 2019. The audience that saw a huge increase in attention was suppliers – up 273 percent. Although still the sixth placed audience, this rise suggests that the COVID-19 crisis has focused leaders' attention on securing their supply chains.

The impact and role of the media becomes the #1 topic for leader attention, but people-related topics take four of the top six places in the topic list

The COVID-19 pandemic has given the media a center-stage role, so it's perhaps not surprising that the impact and role of the media has moved to the #1 topic for leader attention (from #3 in November 2019). Leaders are also slightly (5 percent) more confident about dealing with the media.

Retaining talent, upskilling and reskilling employees and employee engagement are all in the top five topics. Upskilling sees the biggest improvement in confidence (17 percent), but confidence in other employee-related topics has taken a hit. Attracting talent has the biggest fall – down 13 percent.

Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic drive huge increases in topic engagement

The big risers^v in topic engagement relate to responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: Government and legislative change increased 1280%; Global trade agreements and tariffs increased 779%; Crisis management increased 472%. Confidence in handling some of these topics is low in some countries. For example, the U.S.^{vi} has the fourth lowest score for global trade agreements and tariffs.

The topic engagement for the impact of the way political leaders communicate on social media has also increased - up 419%. France^{vii} sees the biggest increase in confidence relating to this topic – up 9 per cent. Whereas Australia sees the biggest fall – down 14 percent. The U.S. fell 2% and has a below average confidence score.

Plastics and the Weinstein effect are major outliers in Index dominated by the COVID-19 impact

While many of the results can be directly related to the COVID-19 crisis, there are outliers that show that leaders continue to focus on other issues too. The topic of sexual harassment increased by a massive 451% and confidence in handling it was the second lowest on the Index. Reducing plastics and other sustainability issues was a new entrant at #4 in the topic Index. But leaders seem quite confident about handling this with the third highest Worldcom Confidence Index score.

“Despite the all-consuming nature of the COVID-19 crisis, it's not the only topic sustaining CEOs interest,” said Hurni. “The Weinstein effect and the global focus on plastics means sexual harassment and sustainability both saw significant growth in attention. It's a timely reminder for all leaders not to forget other issues that could shape their future once the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us.”

The Worldcom Confidence Index 10

The Worldcom Confidence Index highlights concerns/confidence across 24 topics and six audiences. We have outlined the top 10 findings in what we call “The Worldcom Confidence Index 10.”

#1 Confidence levels continue to slide – down 9.5 percent

- The United States is the biggest riser (up 25 percent) but confidence still lower than 2018 levels

#2 Government and legislative change sees huge rise in attention (up 1280%) and the lowest confidence of all topics

#3 In the heart of the COVID-19 crisis, crisis management has fifth lowest Worldcom Confidence Index score

#4 Influencers remain #1 audience, but suppliers see huge increase in leader attention - up 273 percent

#5 The impact and role of the media becomes the #1 topic for leaders' attention

#6 Employee-related topics continue to feature high on leaders' agenda

- Retaining talent - the #2 topic
- Upskilling and reskilling - the #3 topic
- Employee engagement - the #5 topic
- Economic migration – the #6 topic

- Employee related topics take four out of the top six topic places
- #7 Plastics and Weinstein effect create outliers in Index dominated by the impact of COVID-19
- The topic of sexual harassment increased by a massive 451% and confidence in handling it was the second lowest on the Index
 - Reducing plastics and other sustainability issues was a new entrant at #4 in the topic Index. But leaders seem quite confident about handling this with the third highest Worldcom Confidence Index score
- #8 Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic drive huge increases in topic engagement
- Government and legislative change increased 1280%
 - Global trade agreements and tariffs increased 779%
 - Crisis management increased 472%
- #9 The impact of the way political leaders communicate on social media is up 419%
- France sees the biggest increase in confidence relating to this topic – up 9 per cent
 - Australia sees the biggest fall – down 14 percent. The US fell 2% and has a below average confidence score
- #10 Over 65s are the most confident leaders – no doubt drawing on experience of many crises
- Generation X leaders are least confident, and the only age group with below average confidence.

Methodology

The study was able to operate at this scale, and in nine different languages, because the data was captured using a breakthrough approach powered by artificial intelligence (AI). The chosen research firm, [Advanced Symbolics Inc](#) (ASI), has developed a patented method of building representative samples and then capturing information with their AI tool.

Additional insights and charts can be seen [here](#).

About The Worldcom Public Relations Group

The Worldcom Public Relations Group (Worldcom) is the world's leading partnership of independently owned public relations firms, with 143 offices employing some 2,000 staff in 115 cities across six continents. In total, Worldcom partners reported a combined revenue of U.S. \$288 million last year from 3,034 clients. Established in 1988, the group was formed so that the strongest, most capable independent firms could inspire direct action from stakeholders in a way that delivers immediate results and lasting outcomes— wherever in the world a client needs support.

Worldcom's partners deliver unique connectivity to their marketplace. This provides clients direct access to the audiences they most want to take action and to specialists that can deliver on challenging problems. As a result, strategies and campaigns see immediate reactions that turn into sustained audience actions. Partners serve national, international, and multinational clients while retaining the flexibility and client-service focus inherent in independent agencies. Through Worldcom, clients have on-demand access to in-depth communications expertise from professionals who understand the language, culture, and customs of the geographic areas in which they operate. Learn more about Worldcom at www.worldcomgroup.com or by calling [1-800-955-9675](tel:1-800-955-9675).

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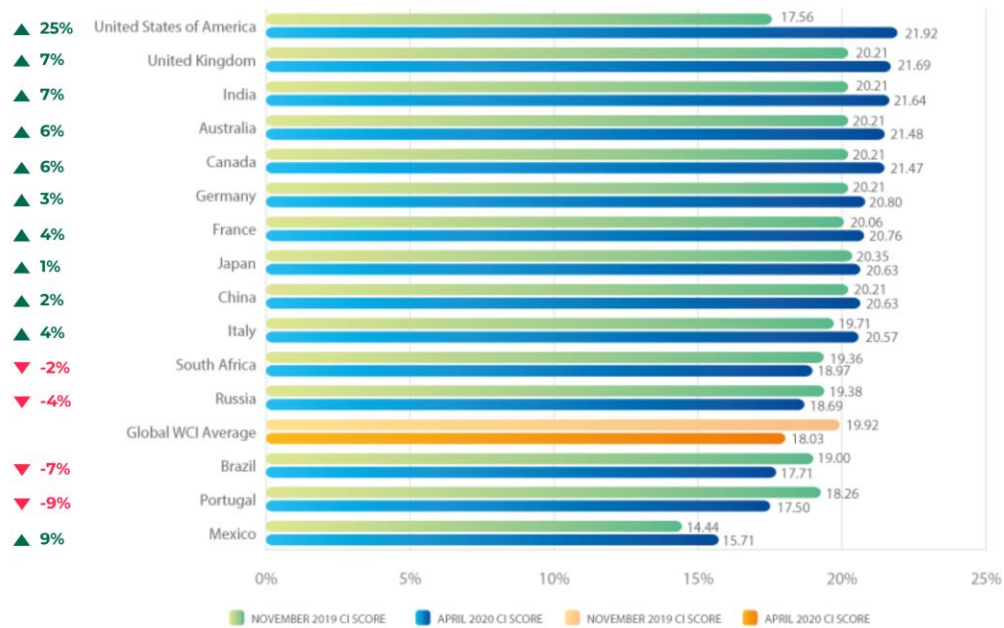


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April 2020 Worldcom Confidence Index by Country - %age change since 2019

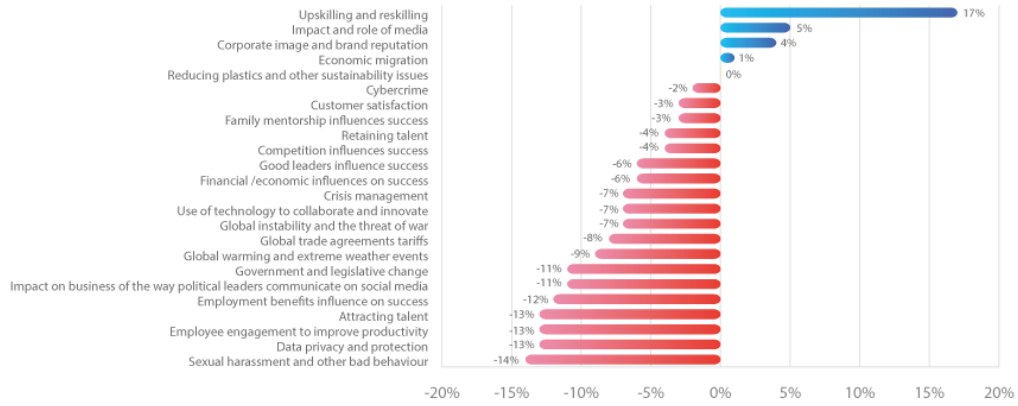


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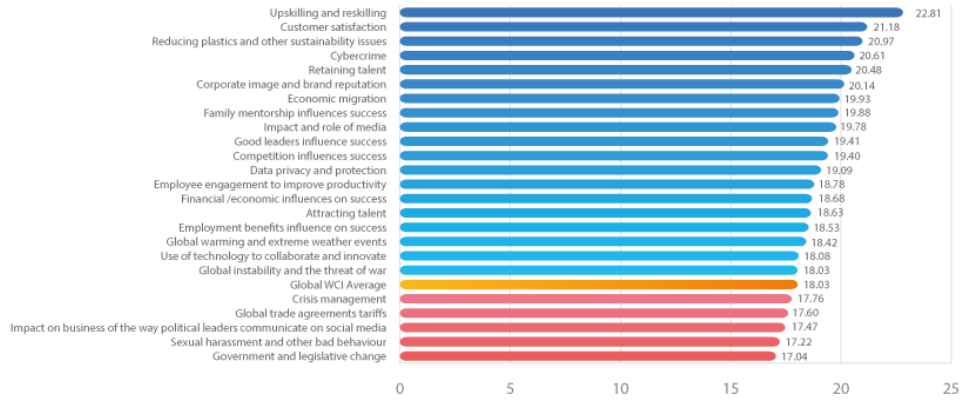


Worldcom Confidence Index Topics - %age change in confidence since 2019



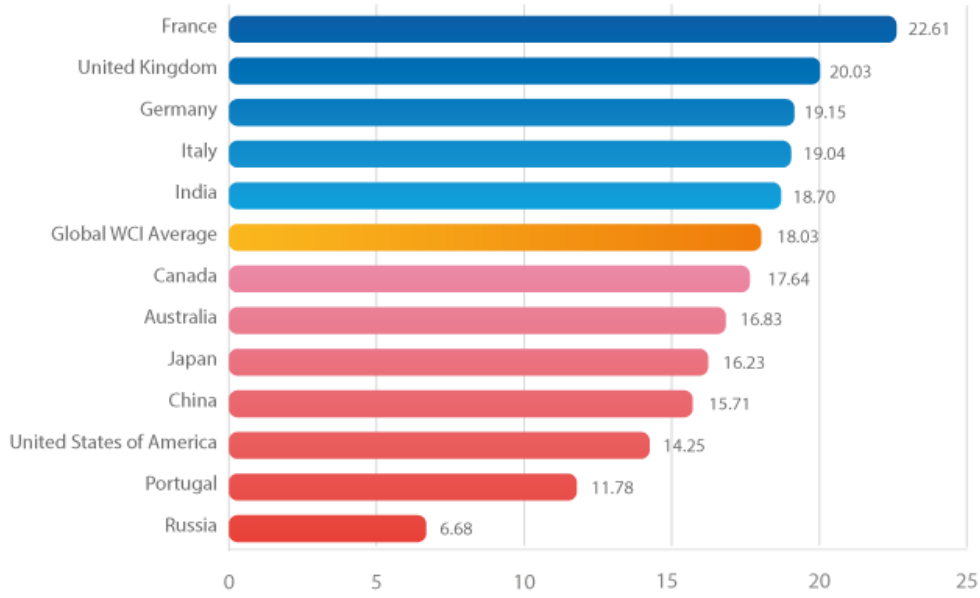


April 2020 Worldcom Confidence Index by Topics





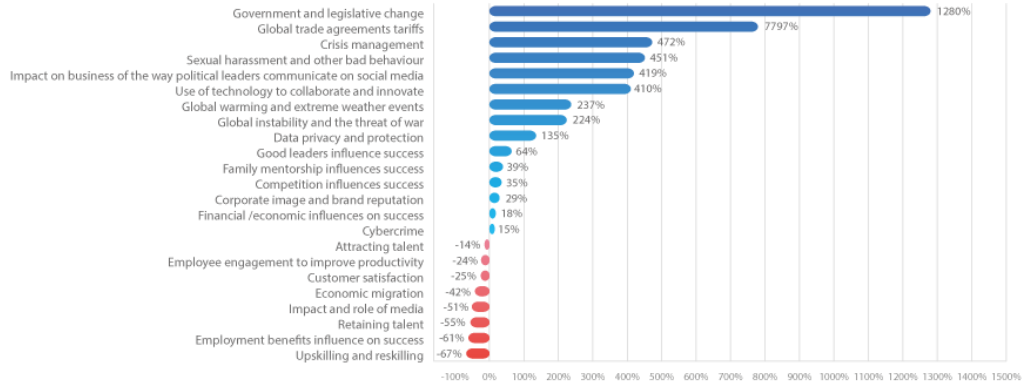
Confidence about government and legislative change



#WorldcomConfidenceIndex

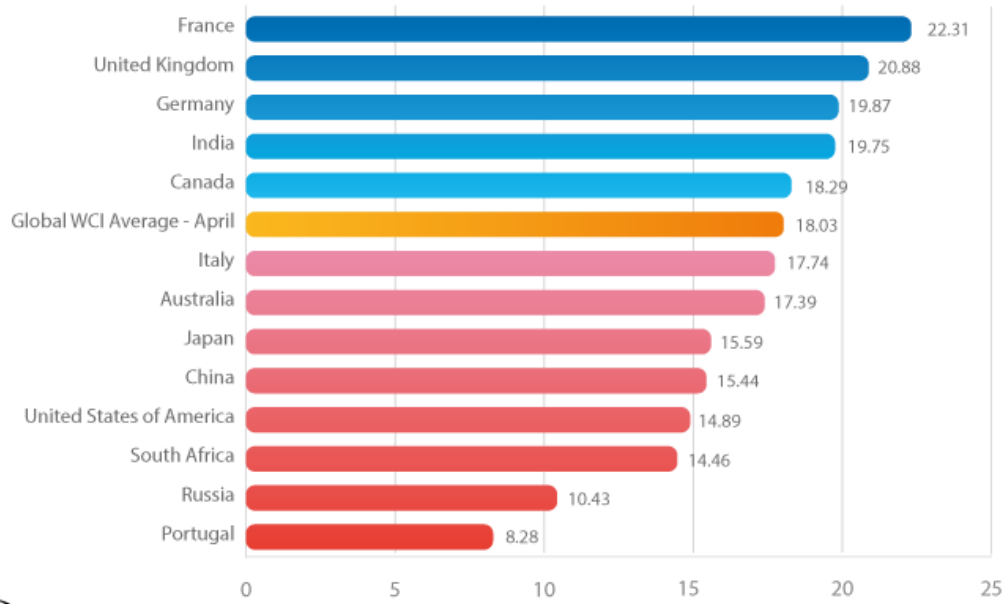
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Leaders' engagement level for topics in April 2020 - %age change since 2019





Confidence about global trade agreements and tariffs



Change in confidence for impact of the way political leaders communicate on social media - by country

