



2021  
Connected  
Leadership  
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“There has been a paradigm shift in the expectations of **modern leadership.** With teams and stakeholders globally dispersed, **business leaders must adapt** to be more accessible, transparent, and connected.”

**Craig Mullaney,**  
Partner, Brunswick Group

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### Key Considerations:

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1. How can you adapt your leadership to be more accessible and transparent?
2. Assess how your executive team has responded to the demand for accessible, transparent leadership. Does it compare favorably with your competition?
3. When prospective employees or investors search for you online, what will they find? Evaluate your reputation through the same lens as your stakeholders.
4. Determine which leadership adaptations should persist and evolve beyond the pandemic. What still needs improvement?
5. How will you lead through the next crisis? Build digital into your crisis response protocols.

# Introduction

**The bar has never been higher for leadership confronted by a global pandemic, economic turbulence, and social upheaval.** How can leaders lead when confined by lockdowns and physical separation from their teams? What does it take to bring equity into leadership conversations when employees are working differently depending on role and location?

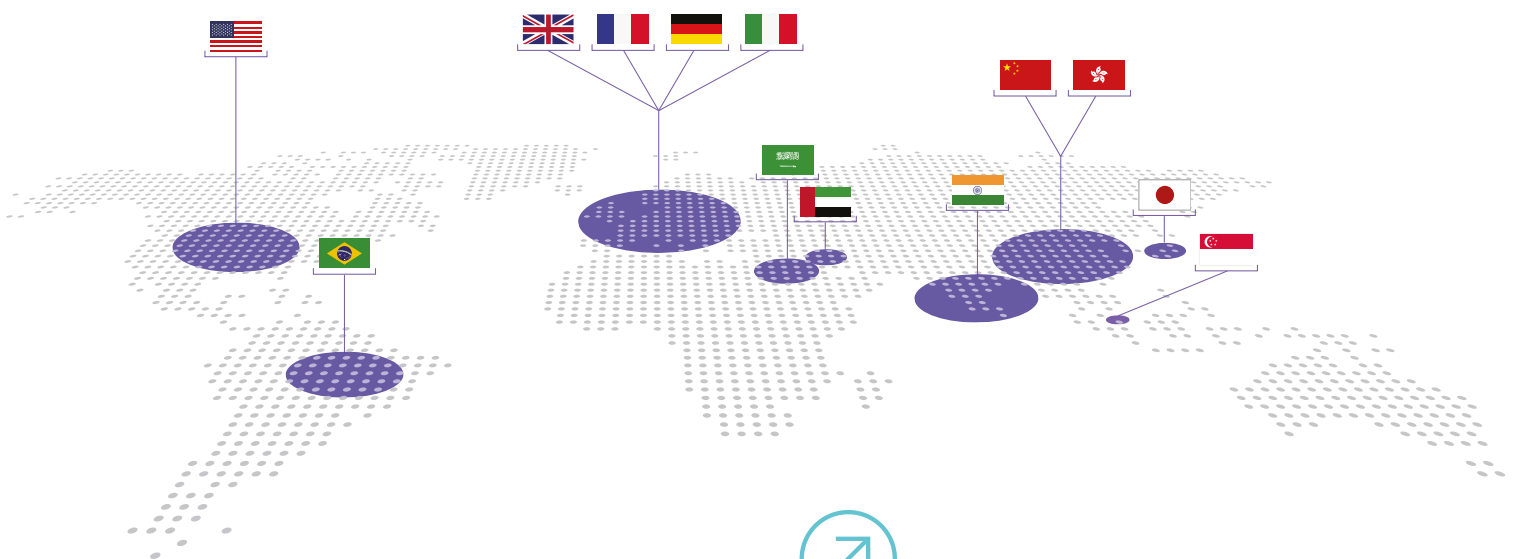
In the face of such unprecedented change, stress, and uncertainty, leaders must **adapt** to be more accessible and transparent, deepen connections with stakeholders, and embrace digital and social media tools to reach people. This style of effective, connected leadership will be a competitive advantage even after the current crises subside.

Connected Leadership is engaging, authentic, and sustained. Connected Leaders embrace digital sources to get closer to employees. They directly engage stakeholders through new forms of communication and on issues beyond the balance sheet. Their connectivity is their resiliency through today's crises and tomorrow's.

## The Connected Leadership Survey

We asked 5,200 readers of financial publications and 6,500 employees of companies with more than 1,000 employees – groups emblematic of the external stakeholders business leaders want to reach – about their communications expectations of corporate leaders across 13 different countries and markets. From misinformation to employee engagement to crisis, the data is clear. Stakeholders expect executives to adapt to the changing circumstances they face.

**They expect a Connected Leader.**



**Click here** to explore all of the Connected Leadership resources:

[brunswickgroup.com/connectedleadership](https://brunswickgroup.com/connectedleadership)

# 1. Reach people where they are

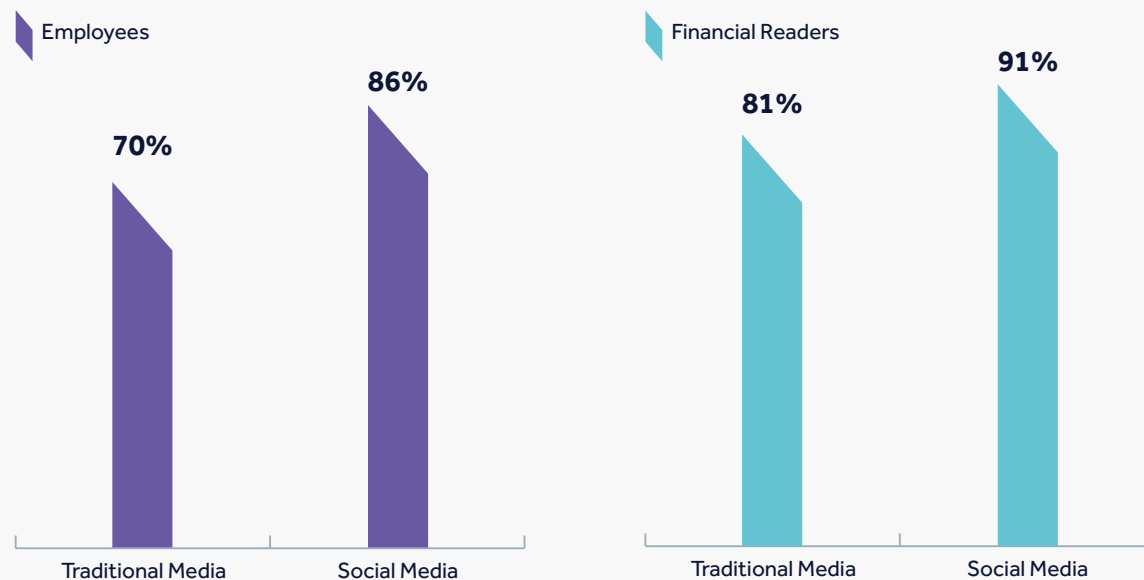
**People increasingly experience business leaders and their companies through their screens. To reach them, business leaders need to adapt to digital tools and earn their attention.**

Digital and social media are no longer a novel approach to leadership. Majorities of employees and financial readers globally use social media to stay informed – and 74% expect company leaders to use these platforms to communicate publicly.

Meeting these expectations has become a business imperative, but how executives communicate on social media is indicative of Connected Leadership. Understanding what platforms your stakeholders use and communicating with authenticity are required to break through the crowded online landscape.

Within the workplace, enterprise social media platforms have a growing presence. 89% of employees who use platforms like Slack, Workplace, and Yammer utilize them frequently, providing additional places for executives to communicate with their workforce. Like their public counterparts, the norms of workplace social media require a unique approach – two-way engagement, accessible language, and visual content are expected.

Which of the following sources have you used in the past month either for work or for personal use?



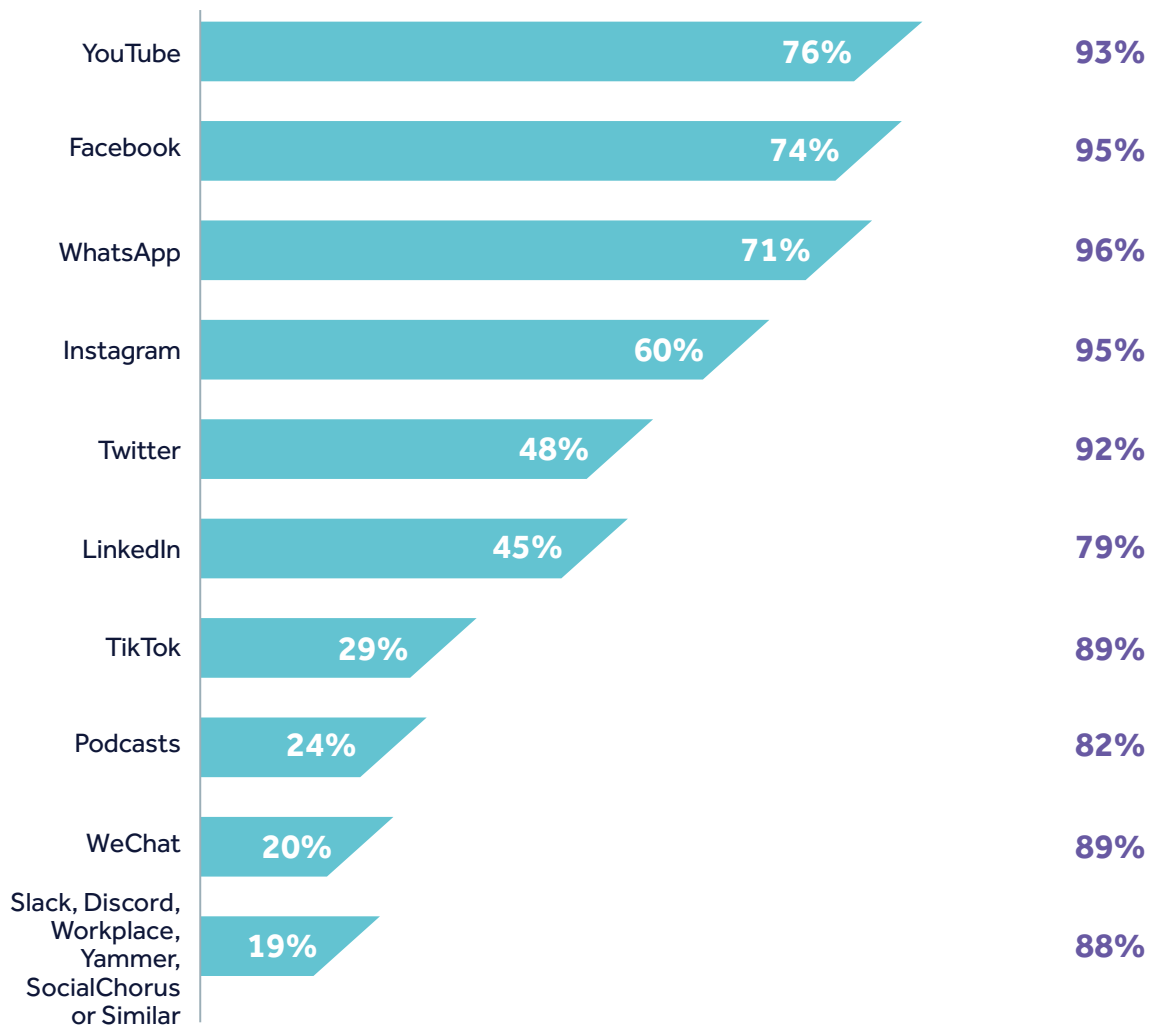
# Digital engagement is habitual



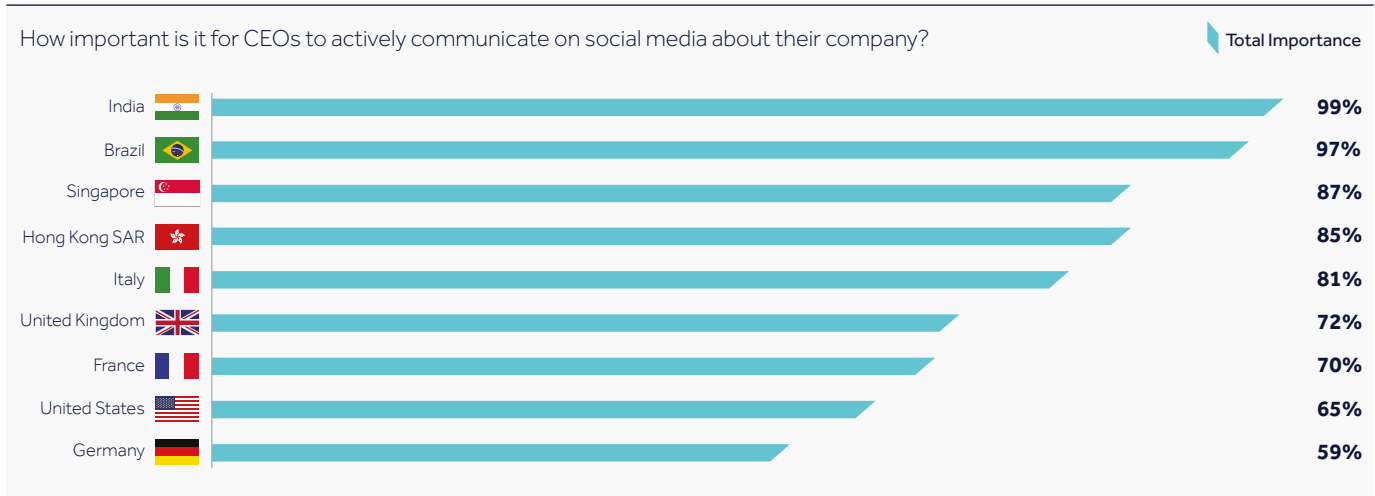
## Platforms tend to be used daily or multiple times per week.

Which of the following sources have you used in the past month either for work or for personal use?

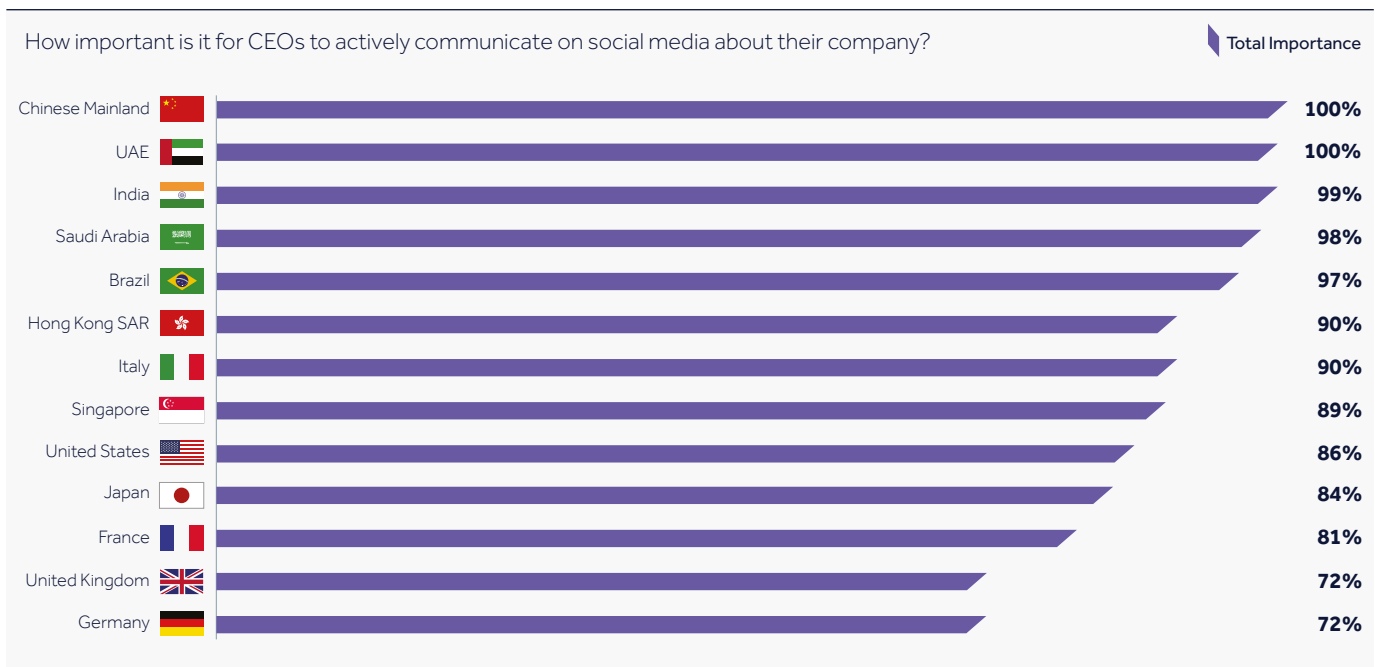
If you used this source, did you use it at least a few times a week?



## Employees expect business leaders to use social media to communicate with the public



## Financial readers especially see social media communications as important to the role of a modern CEO



## The popularity of social media platforms varies by market

Understanding these differences is important as you engage stakeholders beyond your market.

Digital usage among financial readers within the past month:

	YouTube	Facebook	WhatsApp	Instagram	Twitter	LinkedIn	WeChat
Global 	81%	76%	69%	65%	58%	50%	27%
India 	94%	94%	96%	89%	77%	66%	26%
Brazil 	94%	86%	93%	87%	66%	63%	15%
Hong Kong SAR 	91%	91%	88%	72%	50%	45%	65%
UAE 	89%	88%	55%	86%	81%	50%	32%
Singapore 	89%	85%	88%	62%	39%	51%	39%
Saudi Arabia 	89%	80%	90%	75%	84%	56%	15%
Japan 	85%	58%	12%	56%	65%	13%	10%
United States 	84%	85%	47%	69%	71%	57%	18%
Italy 	84%	84%	92%	77%	52%	63%	16%
France 	76%	66%	67%	53%	49%	56%	9%
United Kingdom 	71%	69%	76%	40%	47%	47%	5%
Germany 	69%	61%	77%	48%	36%	41%	9%
Chinese Mainland 	39%	42%	18%	29%	34%	48%	90%

# 2. Where and how people work won't be the same after the pandemic

The global COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the way people live and work. 68% of employees<sup>1</sup> report doing most of their work in a different location than before the pandemic and 20% expect to work from home after the pandemic ends. 89% of these dislocated employees actively use social media, 85% of whom say it's important for company leaders to actively communicate on social media about their company.

For many employees, post-pandemic working environments will no longer mean the office, and digital will be an essential tool to reach them.

**The evidence is clear: if you want to connect your employees to a shared purpose and vision, then you must adapt to connect across your entire workforce through digital media.**

**COVID-19 has created a new audience of people working from home. 20% of global employees expect to continue working from home after the pandemic subsides.**



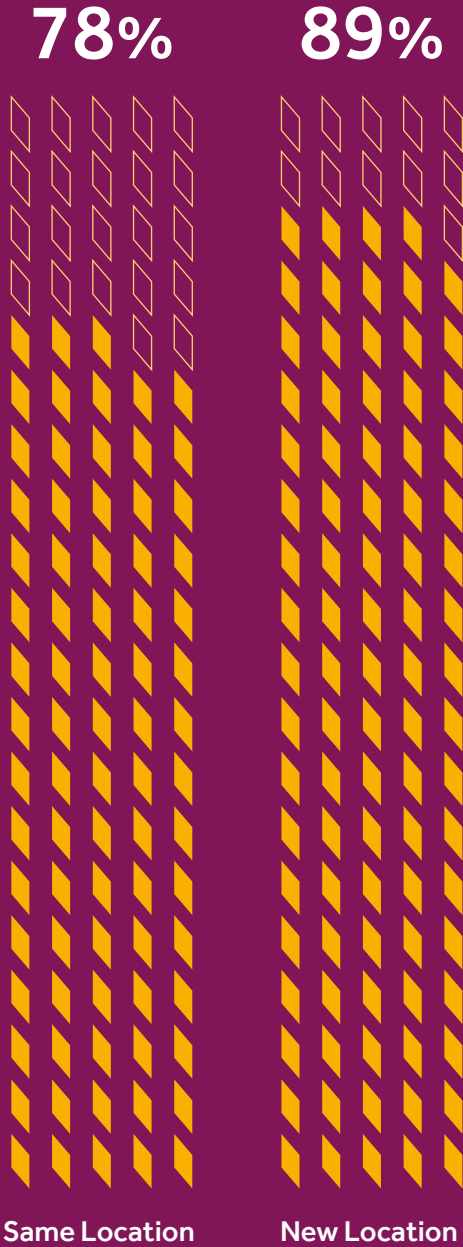
<sup>1</sup>Employees of companies with more than 1,000 employees.



# Currently dislocated employees are more engaged with social media

Globally, employees who report working from a new location due to COVID-19 are **more likely to get information from social media** than employees who have not changed locations.

Employees who say they've used social media in the past month either for work or for personal use:



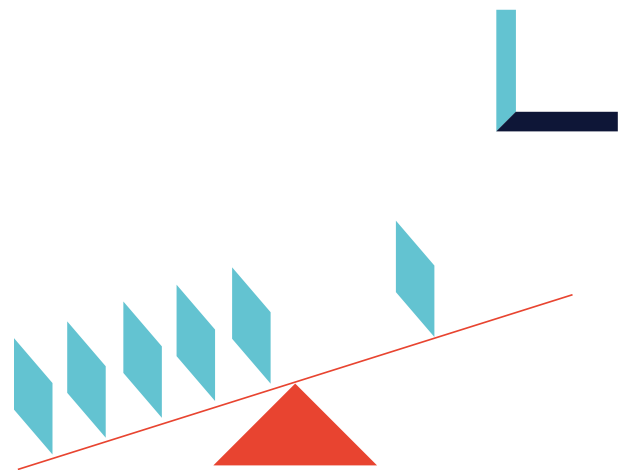
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# 3. A competitive business advantage

**If you want to attract and keep the best talent, then you need to be a Connected Leader. Direct and transparent leadership is a competitive business advantage with talent.**

Competition for talent is fierce. Today's employee engagement and talent strategies must incorporate Connected Leadership. Employees would prefer to work for a CEO who uses social media by more than a 5:1 ratio compared to a CEO who does not, a significant increase in certain markets from 2019.

Today's talent investigates a CEO's digital reputation when considering joining a company, and once hired, desire accessible, transparent, and Connected Leadership. In fact, when reflecting on the factors considered most important for either staying at a job or changing jobs, 51% of global employees cite "leaders that communicate directly and transparently with employees" as a very important reason to stay. This number grows among younger employees.

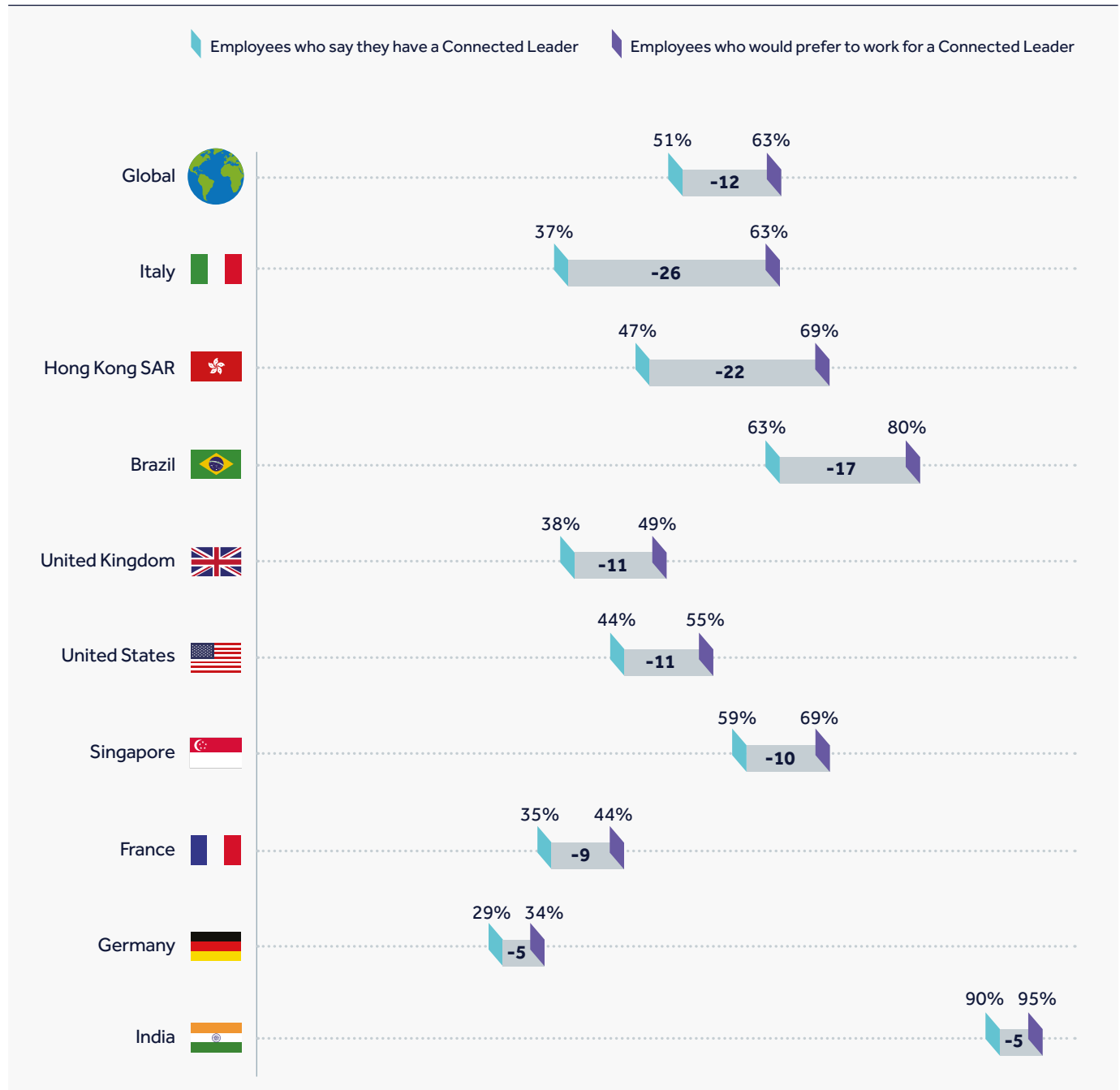


Employees would prefer to work for a CEO who uses social media by **more than a 5:1 ratio** compared to a CEO who does not.

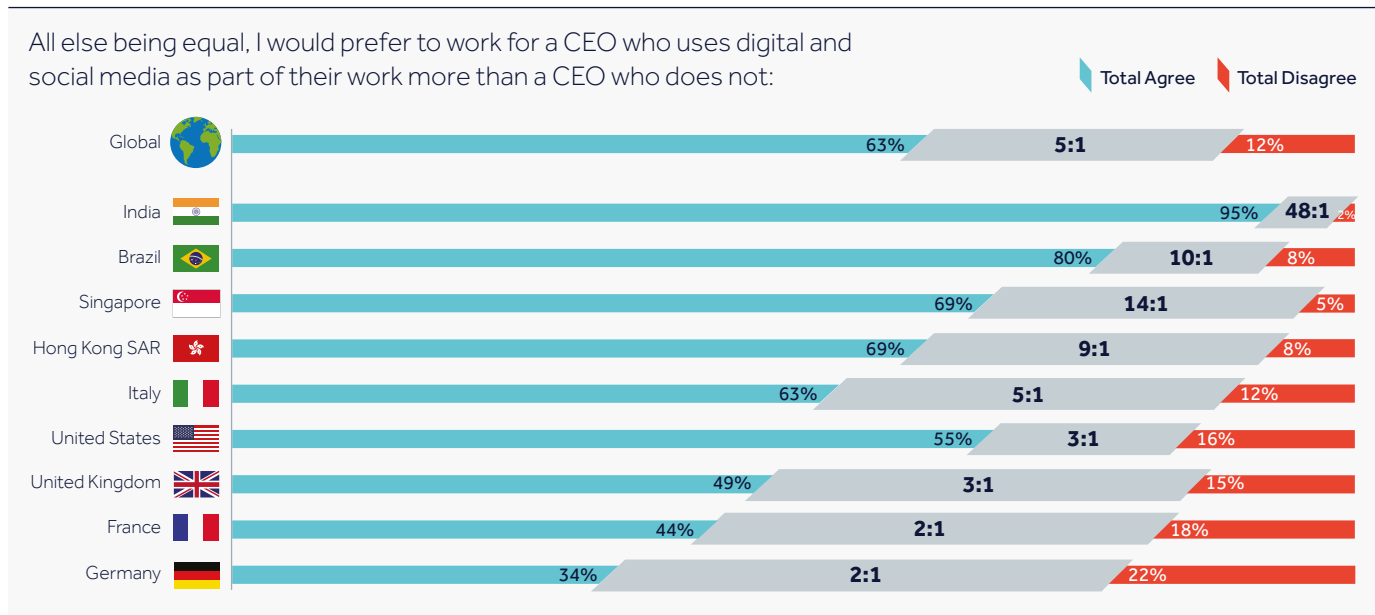


## Despite growing opportunities, business leaders today are not meeting their employee's digital expectations

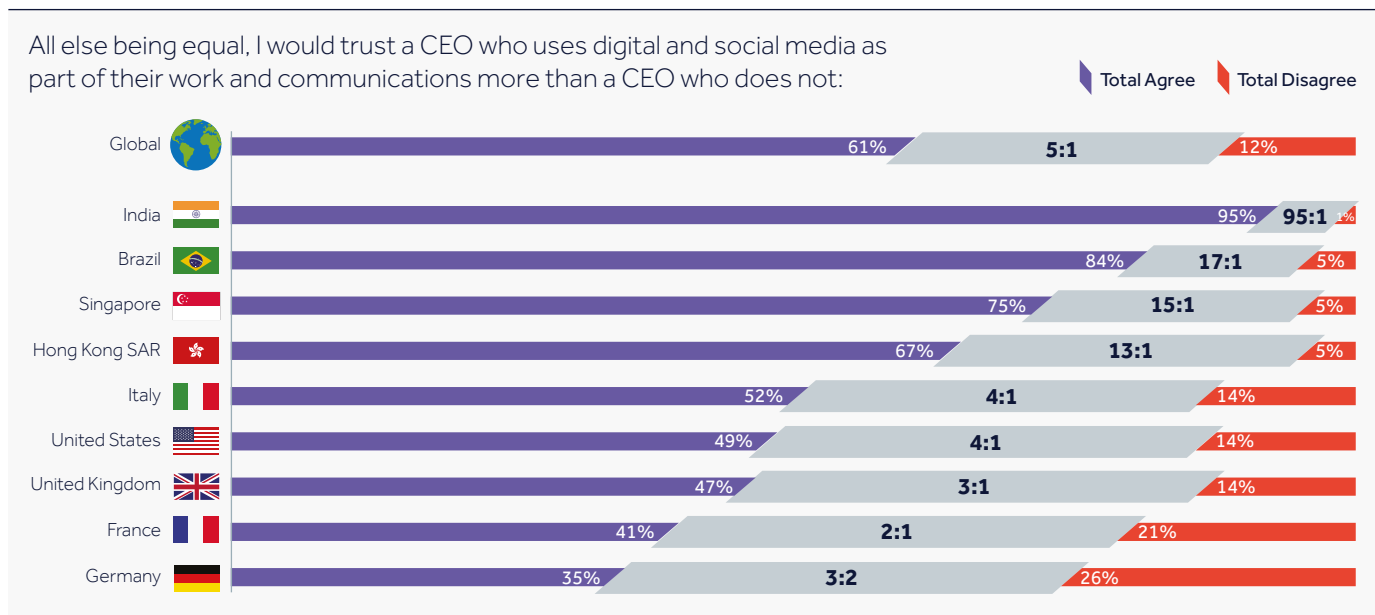
Only 51% of employees say their company leaders are using social media to reach them and their co-workers. There is a significant gap between employee demands for Connected Leadership and their experience.



## Employees prefer to work for Connected Leaders by a more than **5:1** ratio

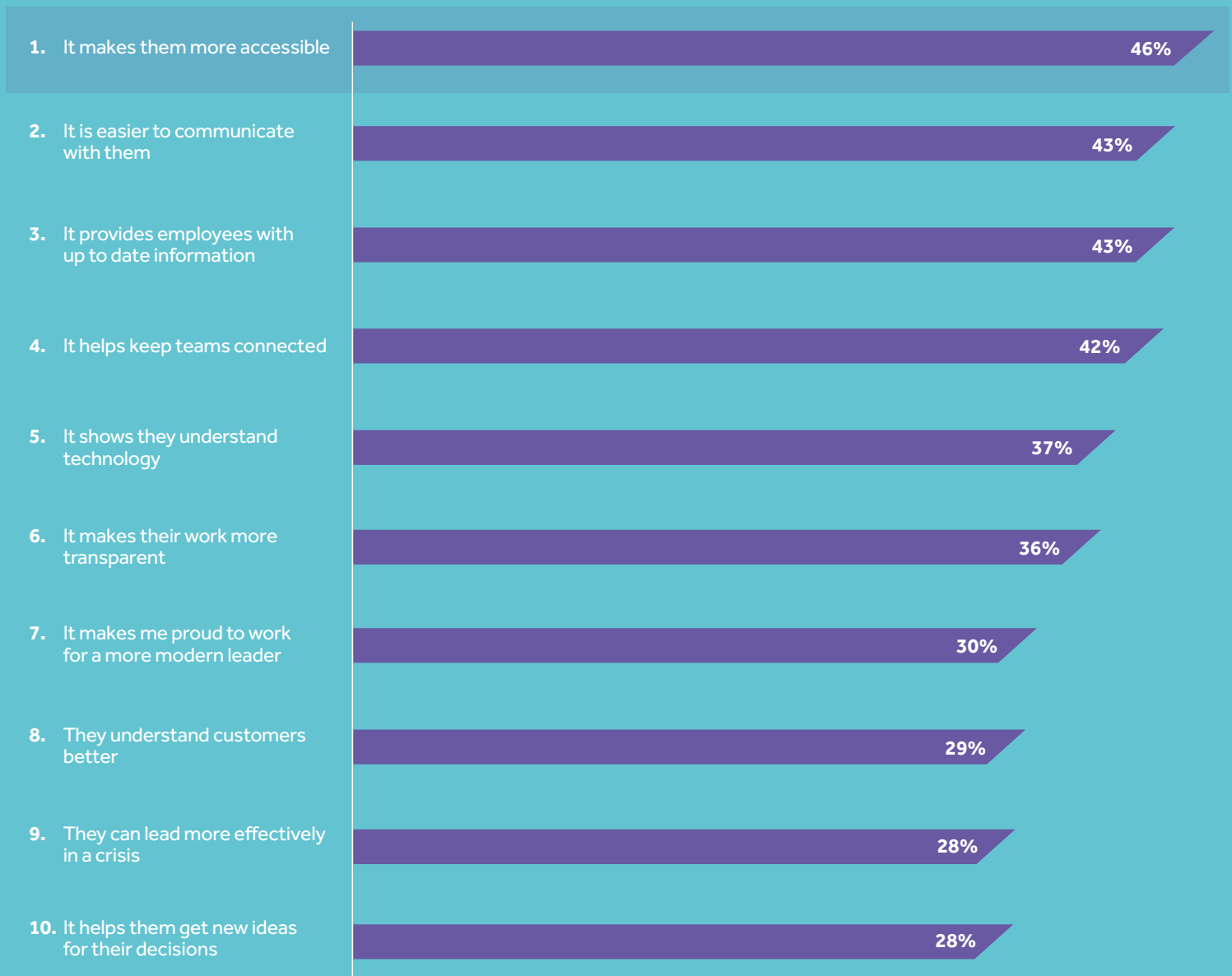


## Employees trust Connected Leaders by a more than **5:1** ratio

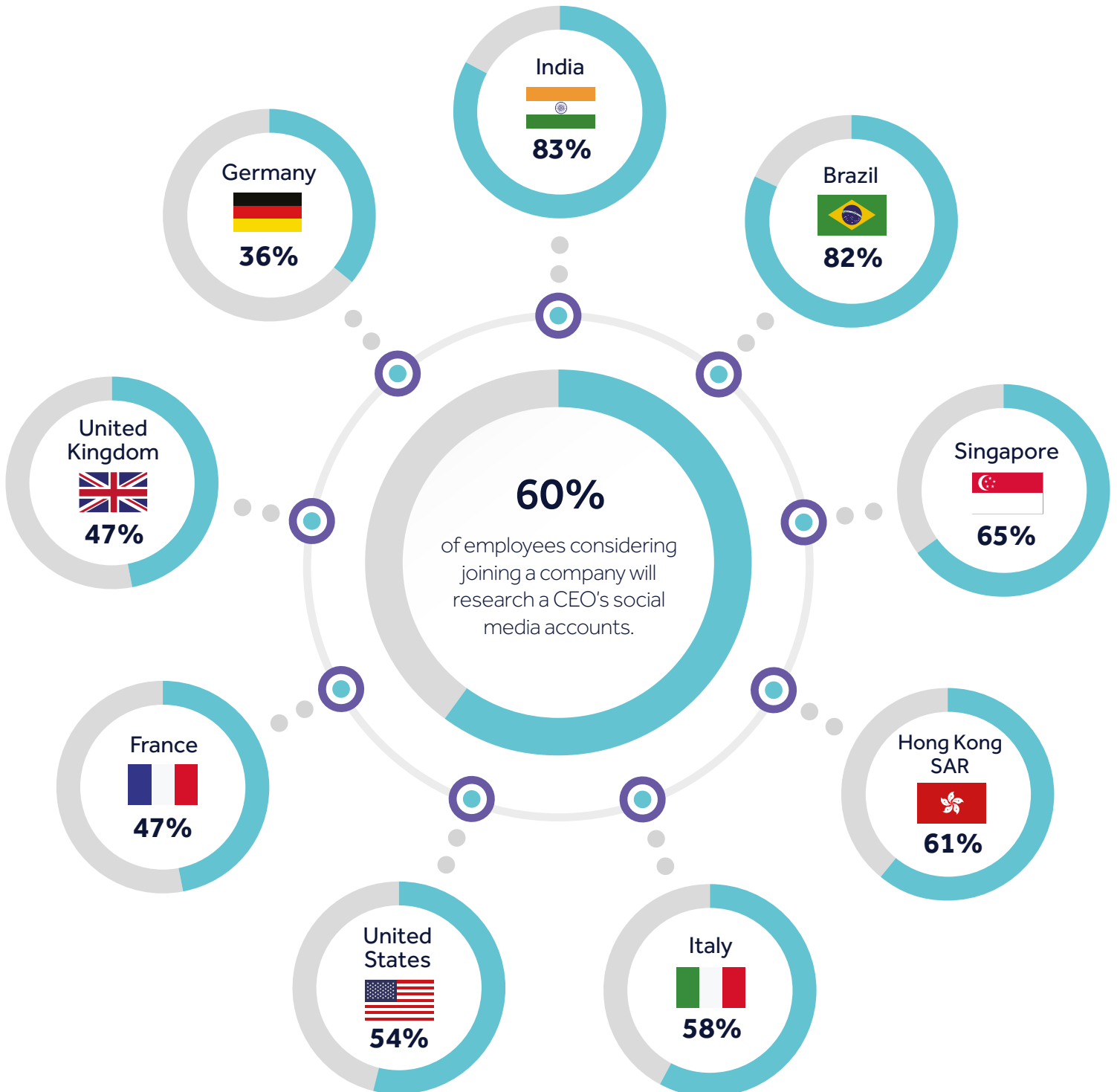


# Practical benefits drive employee preference for Connected Leaders

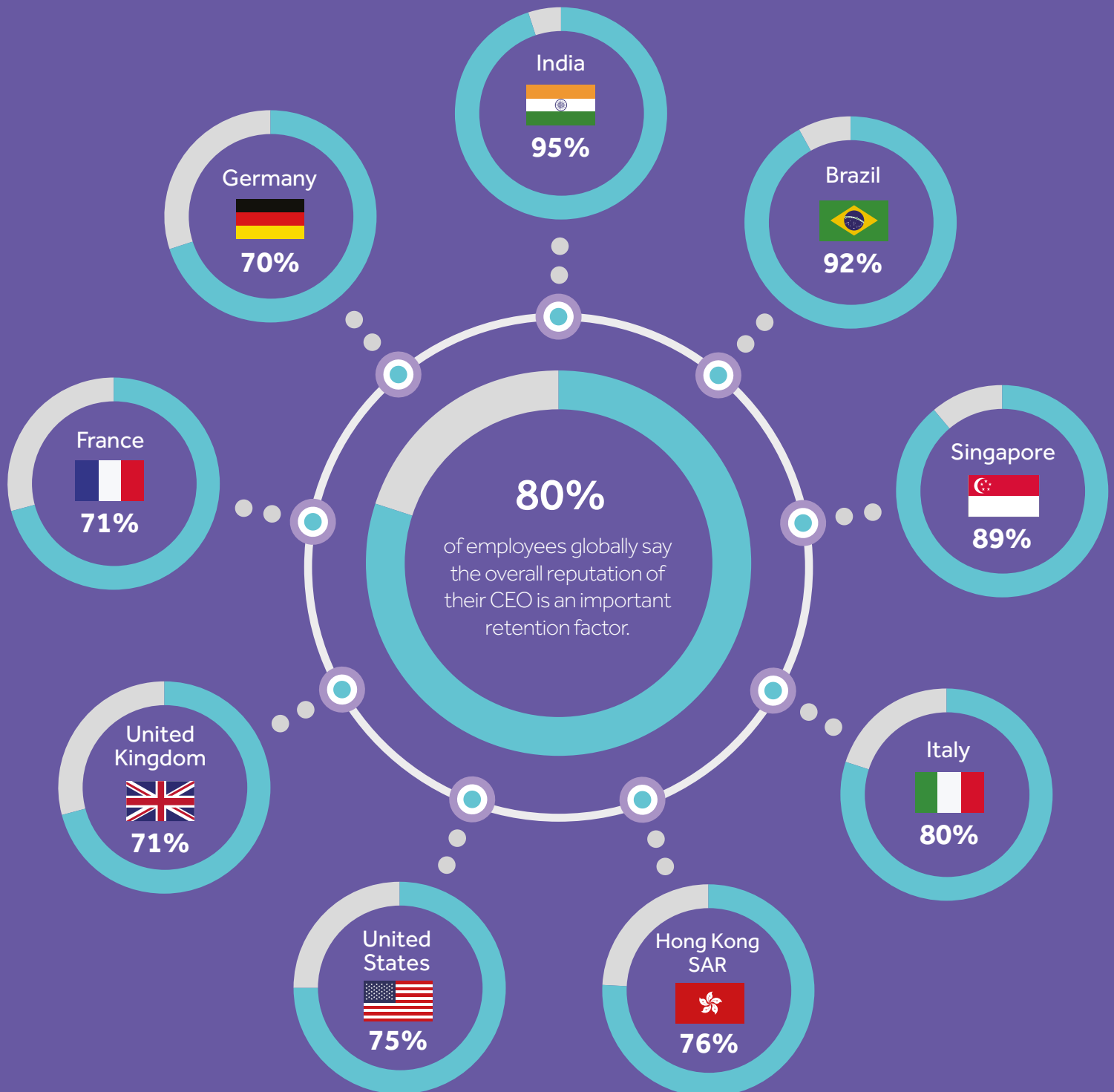
Why would you prefer to work for a CEO who uses digital and social media?



# Leaders using social media have a competitive advantage in attracting and keeping talent



# A CEO's reputation is crucial to employee retention



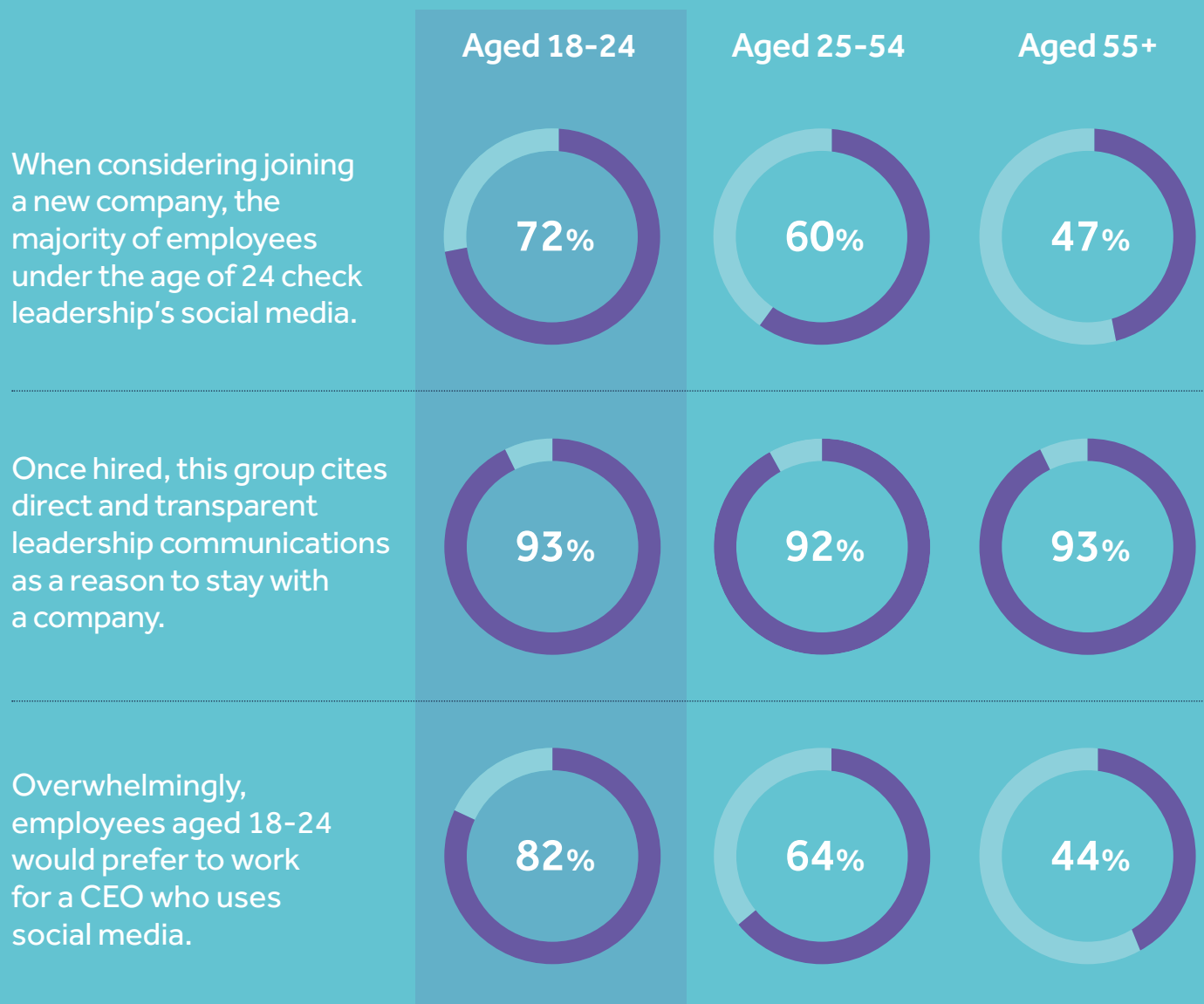
# Employees want **direct** and **transparent** leadership

How important are each of the following factors when deciding whether you will stay at your current employer?





# Younger employees have high expectations for company leaders



# 4. Build and sustain trust

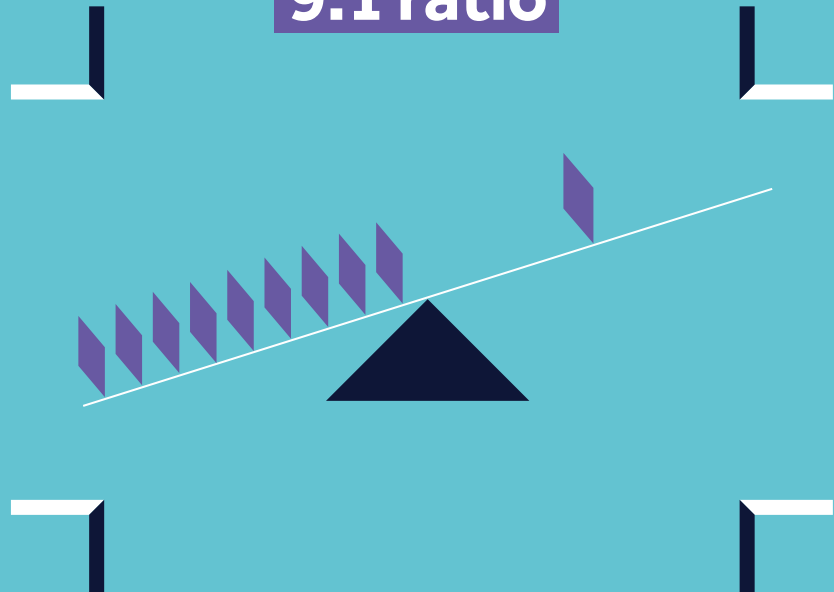
**To build and sustain trust at a time when trust in leadership is fragile, executives must adapt to forge and fortify their reputation online.**

Financial readers believe CEOs can make a positive impact on their company through social media. Like employees, 78% will investigate the CEO's social media accounts when researching a company and trust a CEO who uses social media more than 9 times more than one who does not.

Considering a CEO's reputation directly impacts the company, digital and social media are critical tools for building and protecting their reputation – both online and offline.

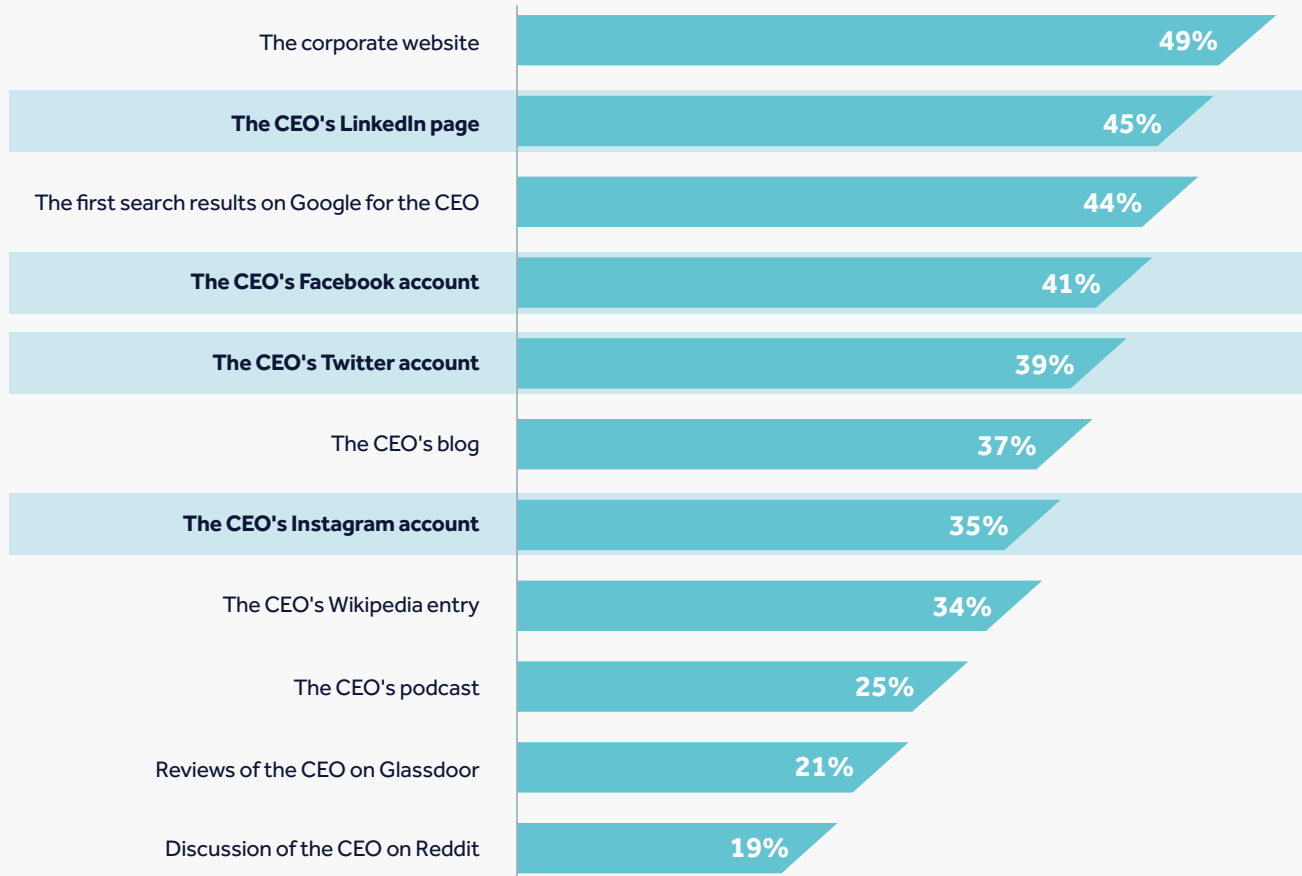
**Financial readers trust Connected Leaders more than offline executives by a**

**9:1 ratio**



# Stakeholders will draw their first impressions of you from digital sources

Sources financial readers use to learn more about company CEOs:

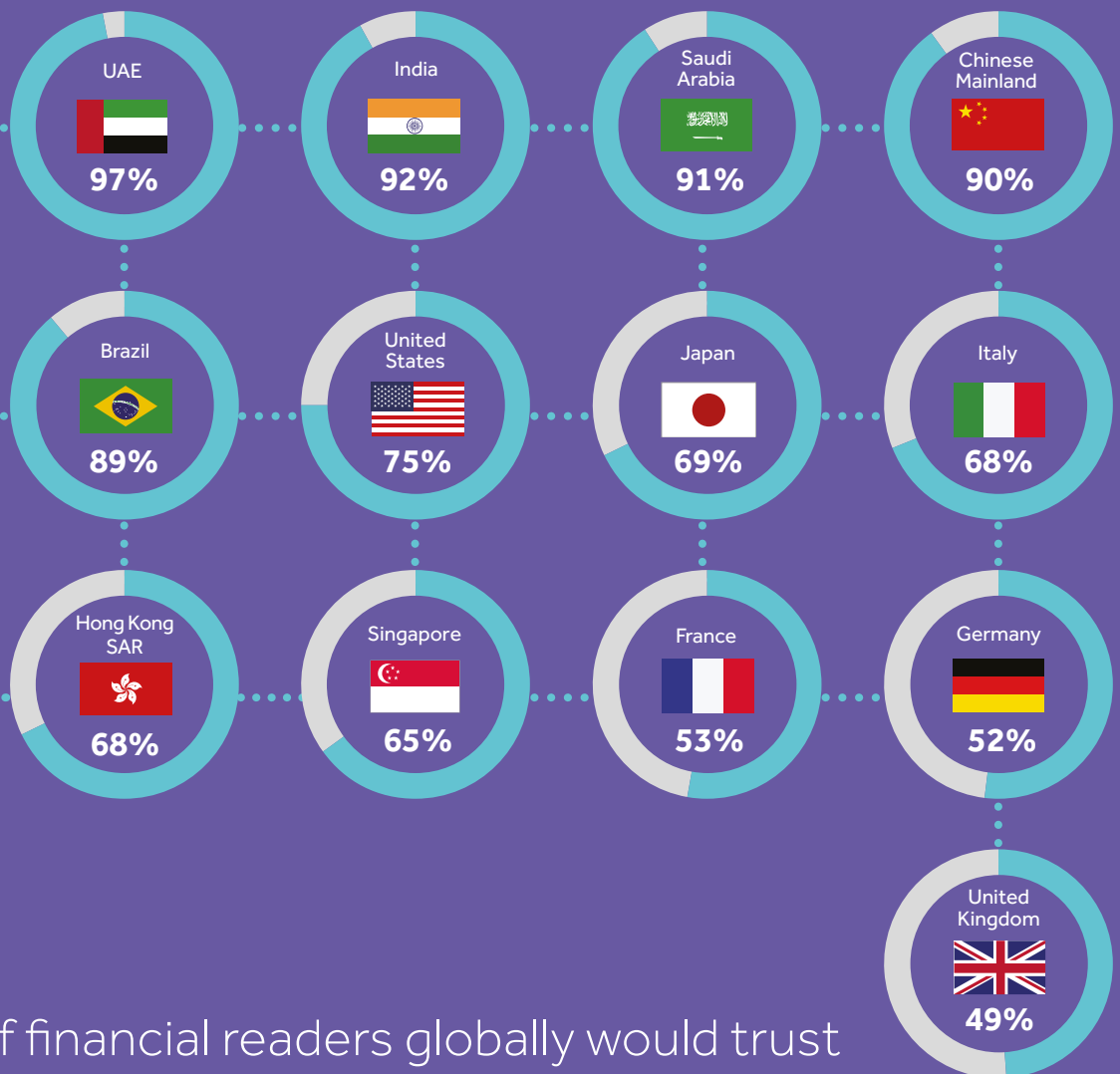


**78%**

of financial readers check out at least one of a CEO's social media accounts to learn more about them

# Financial readers view Connected Leaders as more trustworthy

All else being equal, would you trust a CEO who uses digital and social media as part of their work and communications more than a CEO who does not?



**74%** of financial readers globally would trust a Connected Leader more than a CEO who does not use social media as part of their work.

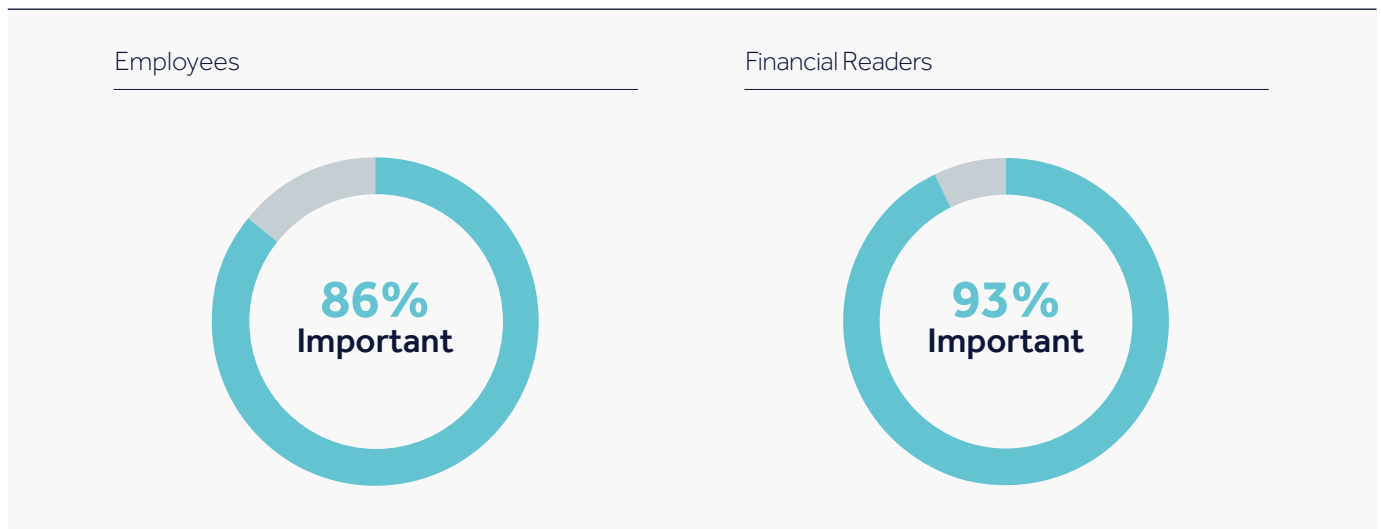
# 5. Lead through crisis

**If you want to get through a crisis with your reputation intact, you have to engage with speed, authenticity, and transparency on social media. Crises are magnified without Connected Leadership.**

In today's saturated news environment, social media provides a direct line of communication to inform and reassure stakeholders when clarity, control, and scale are essential. Adaptive executives who build trust before it's needed and have an established channel for digital engagement are better positioned to lead more effectively when it matters most. Underscoring this finding, nearly all employees and financial readers expect a CEO to communicate on social media during a crisis.

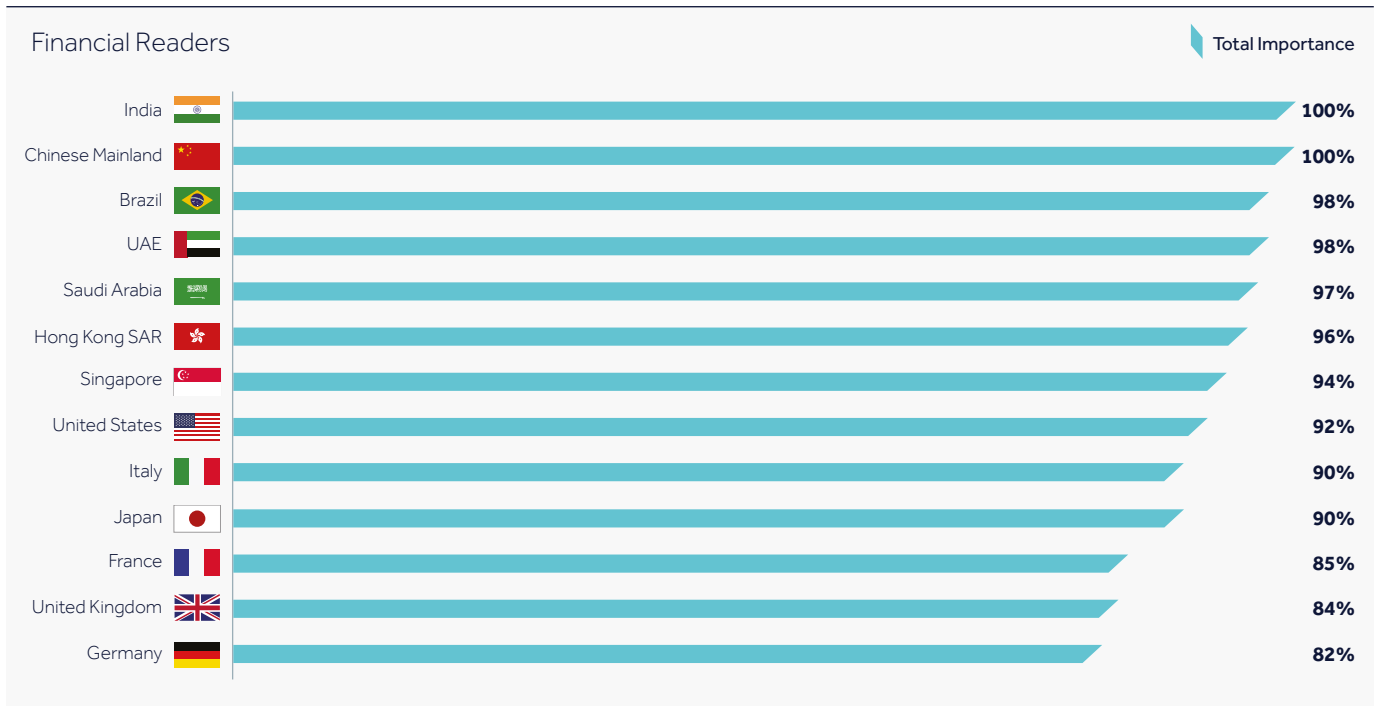
We also learned what types of crises employees and financial readers want to hear about from leaders on social media. Respondents believe it's important for corporate leaders to communicate with them on social media about COVID-19, political and social issues in the media, and broader Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives. Further still, 92% of financial readers and 87% of employees agree that "correcting misinformation about the company" is an important responsibility for a corporate leader on social media.

## How important is it for CEOs to actively communicate on social media about their company during a crisis?



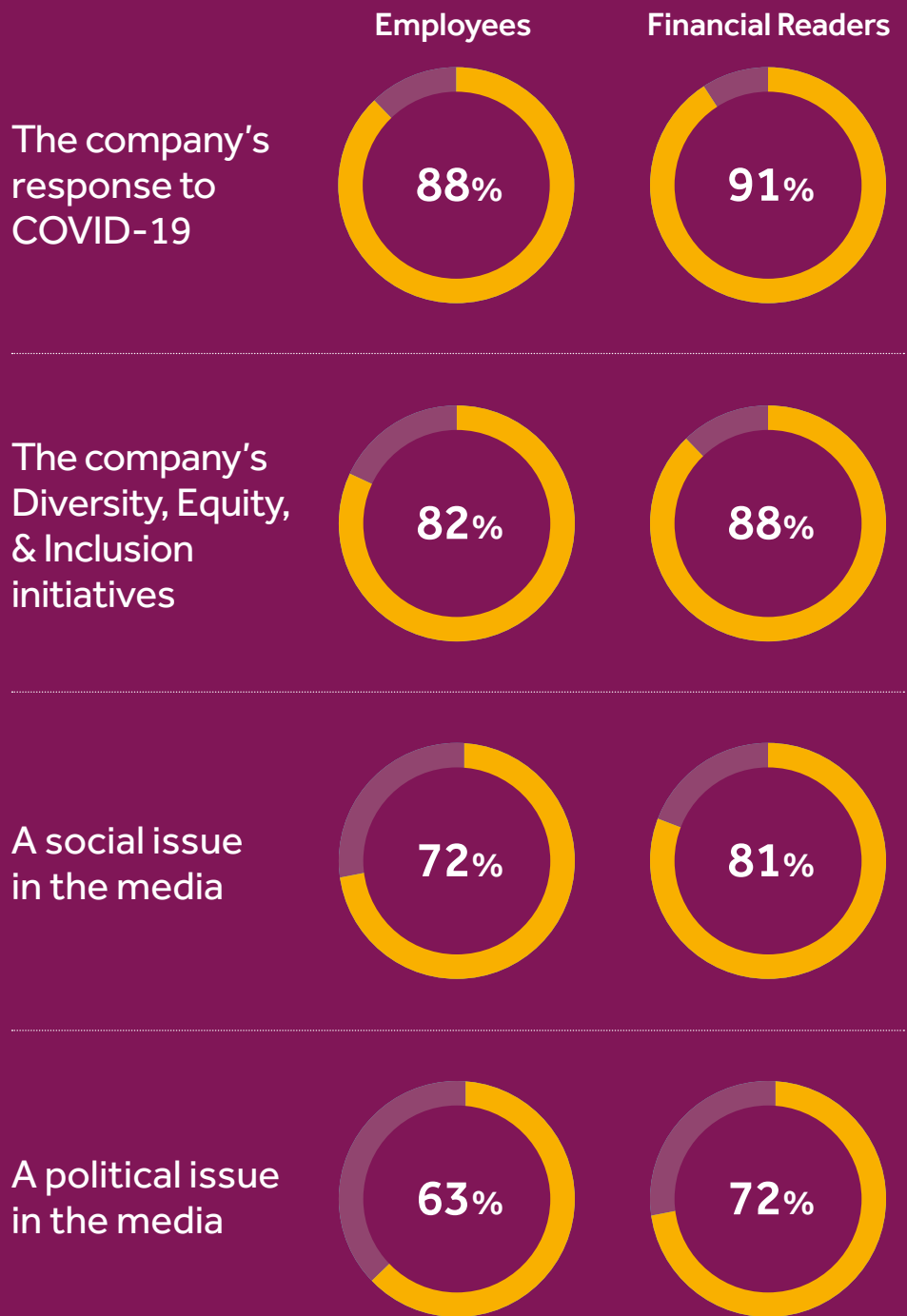
# Connected Leaders are better prepared for a crisis

**During a crisis, CEOs are expected to respond through social media.**



# During a time of multiple crises, digital platforms provide a critical tool for company leaders to communicate

How important is it for leaders of your company to communicate on social media about the following?



 Total Importance

# Conclusion

**The bar has been raised for how executives must lead. Business leaders must adapt to changing circumstances and, above all, be Connected Leaders.**

Realizing the full potential of Connected Leadership is a journey that executives in any industry can take to advance their business objectives, connect with stakeholders, and lead with the unmatched scale and agility of digital and social media platforms.



Explore the Connected Leadership website and get in touch with us to learn more about how Brunswick can help you with your Connected Leadership journey.

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[brunswickgroup.com/connectedleadership](https://brunswickgroup.com/connectedleadership)

## About this report

### Connected Leadership Survey

The Connected Leadership Survey was conducted by Brunswick Insight. The 6,500 employees surveyed were individuals across major global markets who are full-time or part-time employees at a for-profit company with over 1,000 employees. The margin of error for the overall sample is +/- 1%, but increases per specific markets and subgroups. Data was collected from September 28 to November 29, 2020. The 5,200 financial readers surveyed were members of the public across major global markets that regularly read at least two financial news publications. The margin of error is +/- 1% and the data was collected from September 28 to November 24, 2020.

The survey was conducted among respondents that had affirmatively opted into participating in a pre-existing GDPR-compliant online sample. The survey did not collect sensitive personally identifiable information. Surveys for both audiences were fielded in English with the option of the market's native language, where applicable.

Market	Employees	Financial Readers
United States	N=1,000	N=400
United Kingdom	N=1,000	N=400
France	N=600	N=400
Germany	N=600	N=400
Italy	N=600	N=400
Brazil	N=600	N=400
India	N=1,000	N=400
Singapore	N=600	N=400
Hong Kong SAR	N=500	N=400
Chinese Mainland	--	N=400
Japan	--	N=400
United Arab Emirates	--	N=400
Saudi Arabia	--	N=400

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