



# 2021 CEO Outlook Pulse Survey

April 2021



# KPMG's Global CEO Outlook Pulse Survey

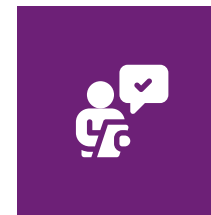
The Pulse Survey asks CEOs from the world's most influential companies to provide their 3-year outlook on the economic and business landscape, as well as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.



This Pulse looks at how their views have evolved since KPMG's annual CEO Outlook, conducted 6 months prior.



Five hundred CEOs from 11 key markets (Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Spain, UK and US) were surveyed from 29 January — 4 March 2021.



All respondents have annual revenues greater than US\$500M and one third of the companies surveyed have more than US\$10B in annual revenue.



KPMG 2021 CEO Outlook Pulse Survey  
Preparing for a new reality

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### No return to normal in the near-term

According to the 2021 CEO Outlook Pulse Survey, CEOs of the world's most influential companies are planning what a return to 'normal' will look like, mindful that their workforces' potential lack of access to a COVID-19 vaccine could force them to rethink their strategies.

Our 2020 CEO Outlook COVID-19 Pulse Survey revealed that executives were focused on stabilizing their business amid immediate unknowns, while our 2021 Pulse Survey, conducted in February and March, indicates that CEOs have a clearer, near- to mid-term strategy. In particular, close to half (45 percent) articulated that a return to 'normal' will not occur this year.

Based on a survey of 500 CEOs in 11 key markets, our 2021 Pulse Survey provides a timely snapshot of CEOs' views on business growth resumption, their views on vaccine distribution, their top-of-mind organizational risks, and business transformation priorities going forward.

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Before any major decisions are made, CEOs want to be confident that their workforce is protected against this virus. The COVID-19 vaccine rollout is providing leaders with a dose of optimism as they prepare for a new reality. CEOs are scenario planning for certain key markets that may experience vaccine shortages that could impact their operations, supply chains and people, leading to uneven economic recovery.  
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Bill Thomas  
Global Chairman and CEO  
KPMG

### Return to 'normal' in 2022

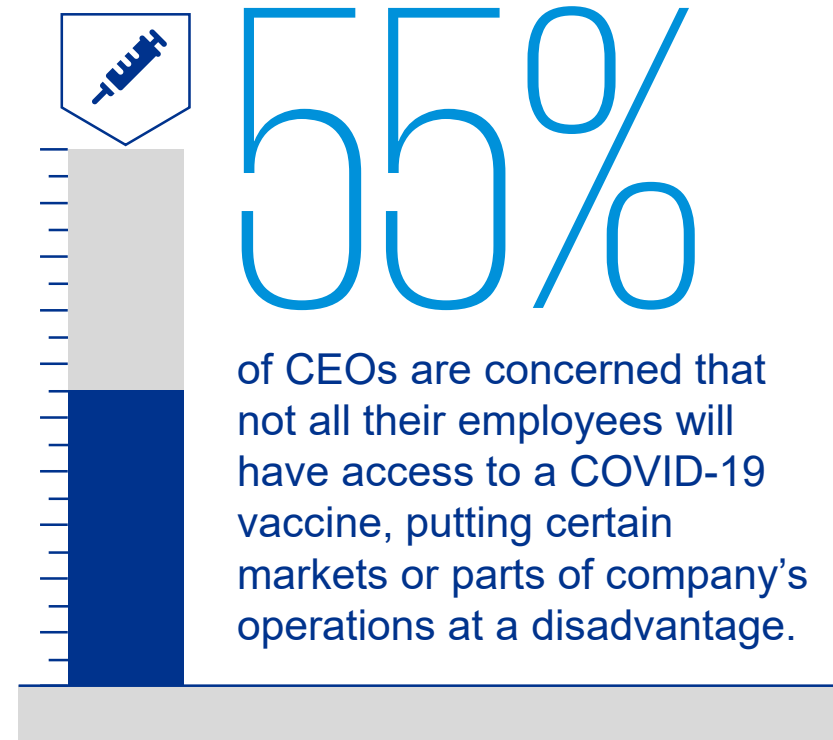
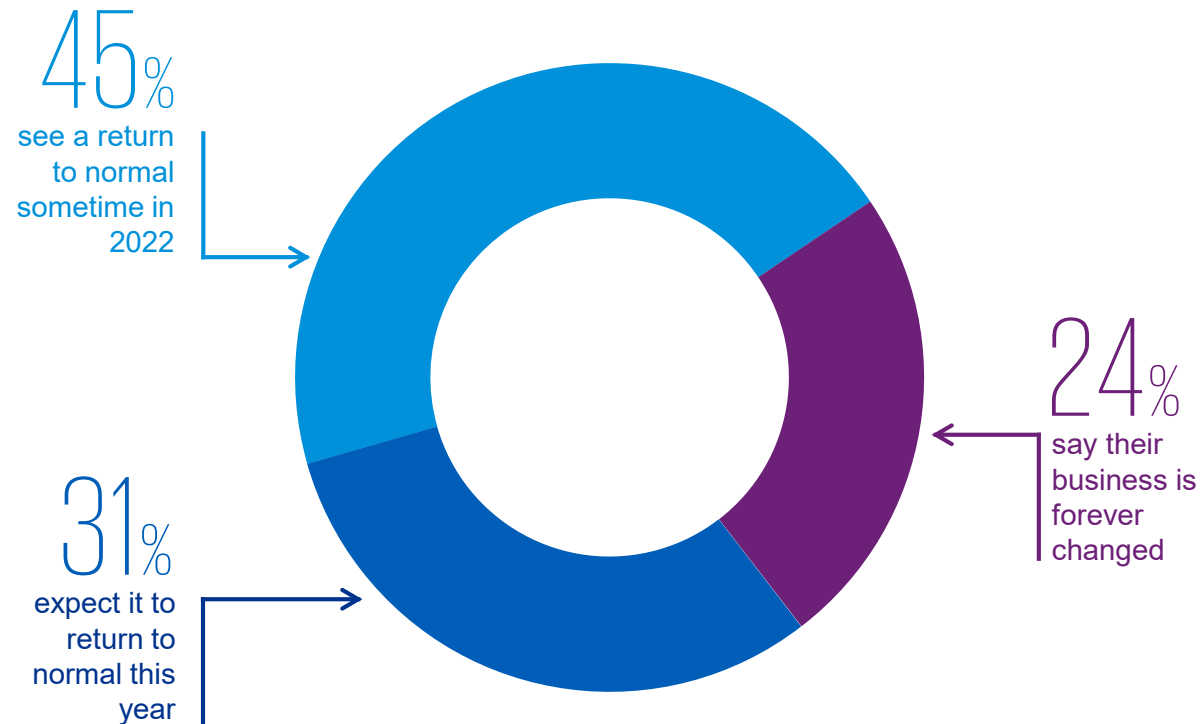
CEOs of the world's most influential companies are planning what a return to 'normal' will look like, but their workforce's lack of access to a COVID-19 vaccine is forcing them to rethink their strategies. With only one-third (31 percent) anticipating a return to normal in 2021, nearly half (45 percent) expect normally to resume in 2022. Significantly, 24 percent of leaders say that their business has changed forever.

24% say their business is forever changed

31% expect it to return to normal this year

# No return to normal in the near-term

**Global CEOs don't see a return to a normal course of business this year and think their businesses have transformed forever by the pandemic.**



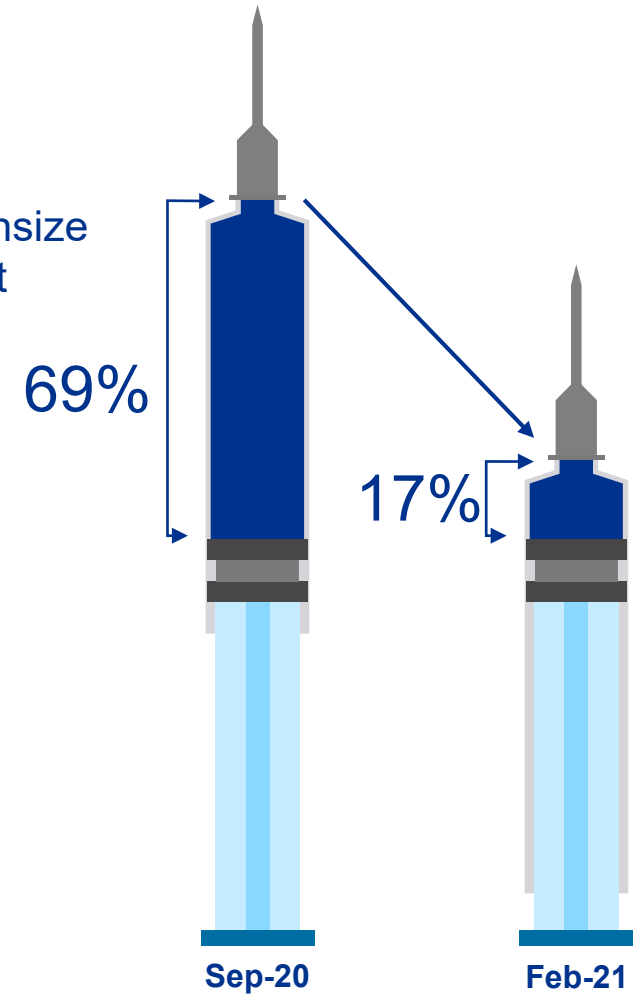
Source: KPMG 2021 CEO outlook Pulse

# Defining rules in the 'new reality'

**Leaders are keen to ensure the safety of their employees and customers. Vaccination rates will have impacts operations.**

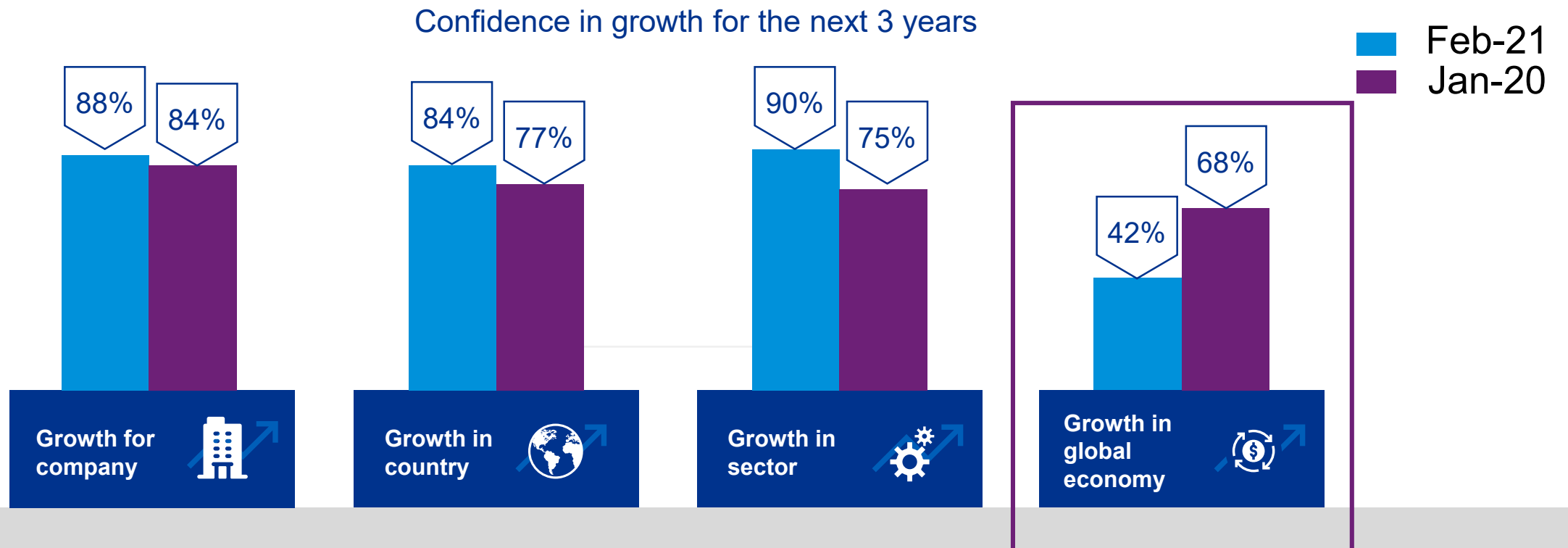


Intention to downsize physical footprint



# Confidence is up in most areas

**CEO's confidence in their company, sector and country is up, however, their outlook for the global economy is lower.**



# Shifting focus on risks

**Cyber security, tax and regulatory risk has climbed to the top risks to growth.**



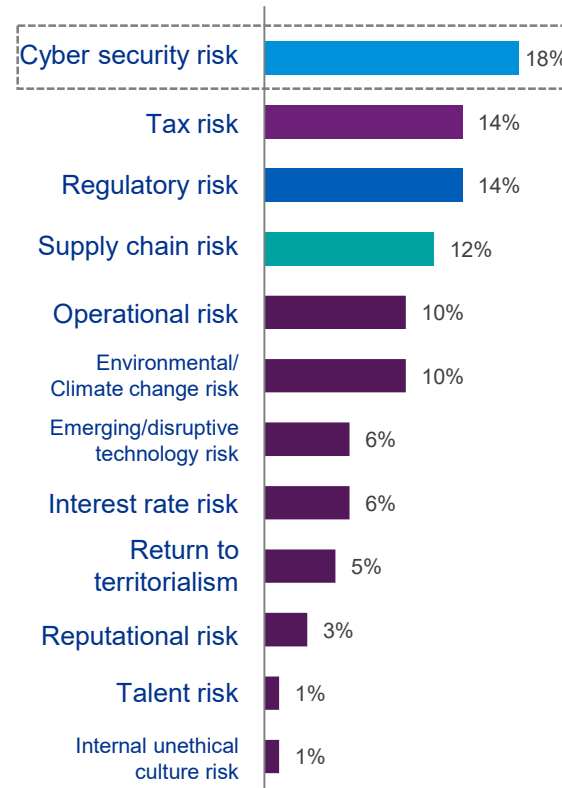
Talent risk has normalized from high in September 2020.



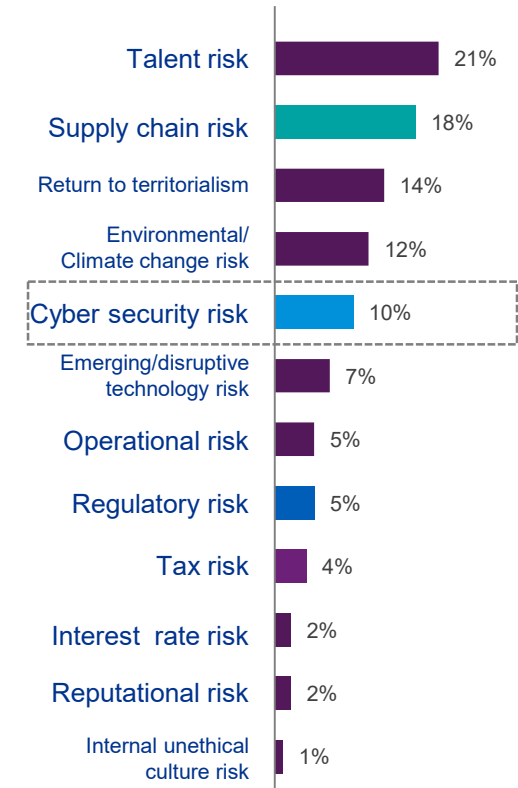
Supply chain has moved from #2 to #4, as leaders come to grips with new reality.

## Which of the following risks poses the greatest threat to your organization's growth over the next 3 years?

2021 Pulse (Feb–Mar 2021)



2020 COVID-19 Pulse (Jul–Aug 2020)

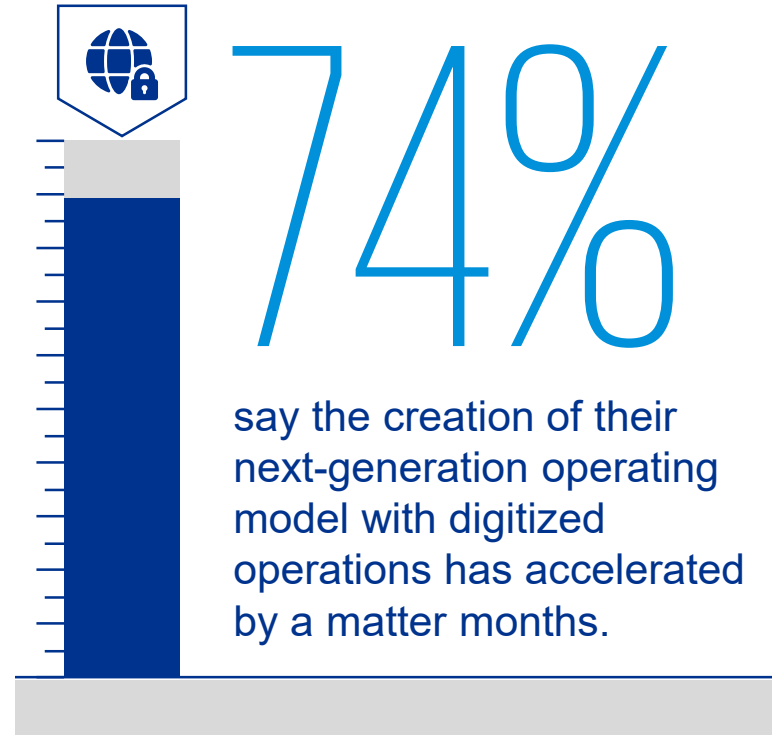
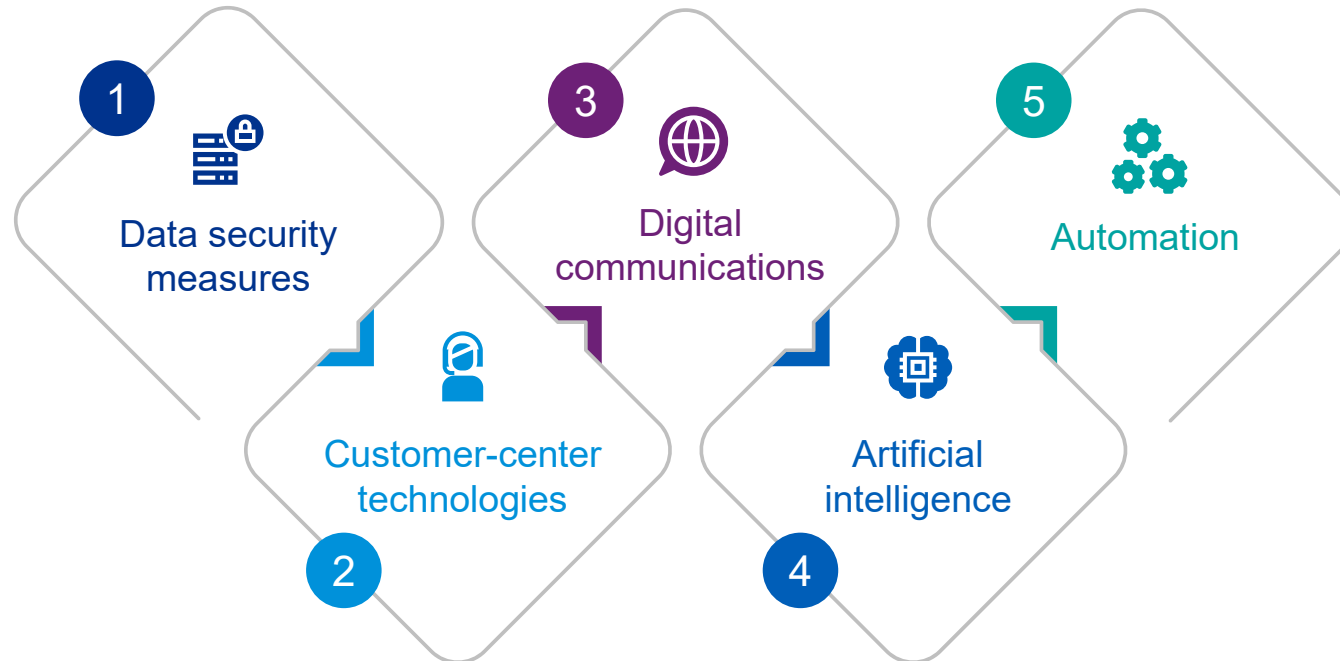


Source: KPMG 2021 CEO outlook Pulse

# Doubling down on digital

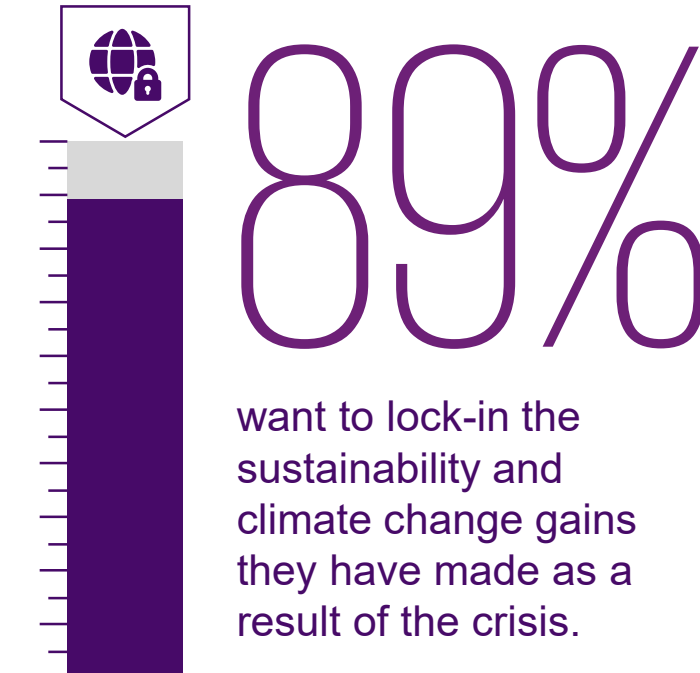
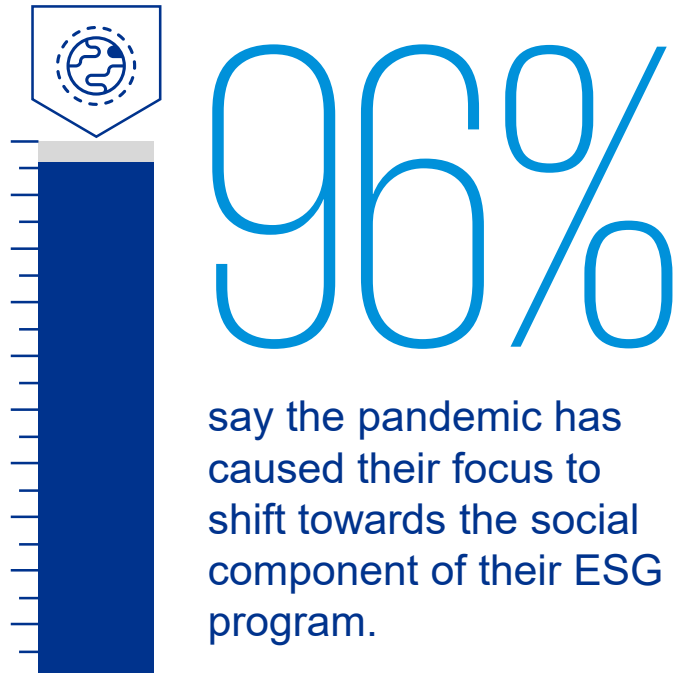
The global pandemic has prompted CEOs to intensify their commitment to digitalization.

## Top areas of investment



# ESG and sustainability remains a priority

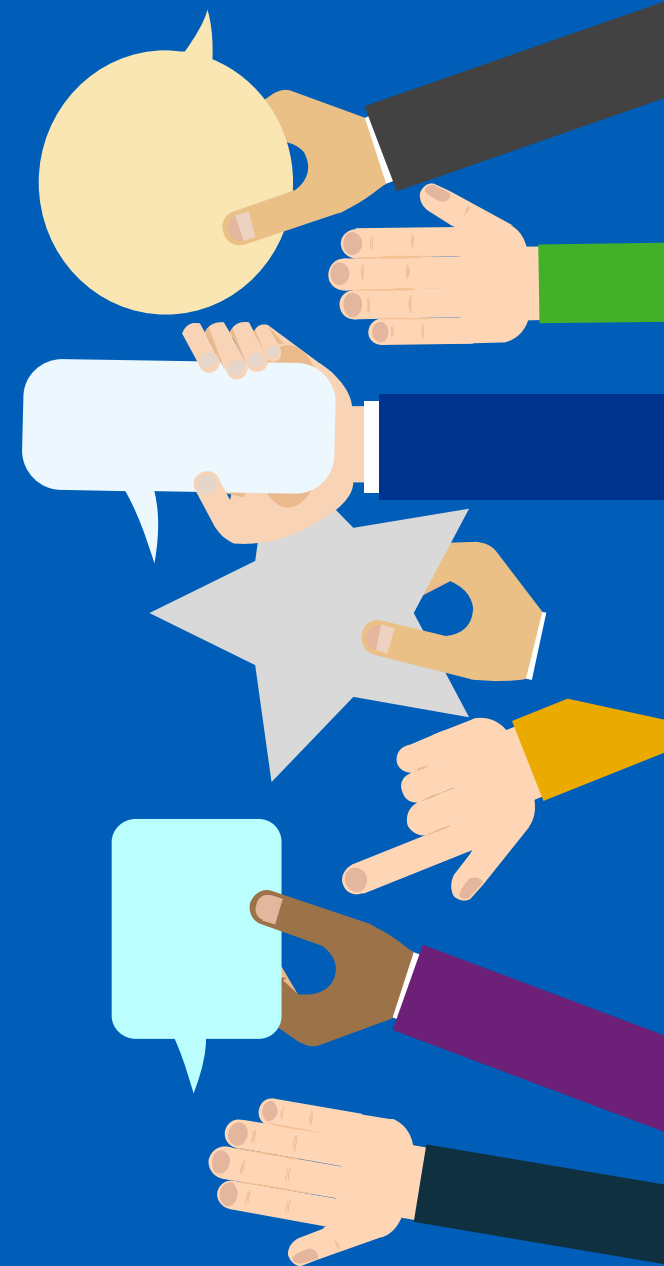
**CEOs look to lock-in gains on sustainability they made during the global pandemic.**







# Questions





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