



United Nations  
Global Compact

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The UN Global Compact-Accenture CEO Study 2021  
Special Edition

# CLIMATE LEADERSHIP IN THE ELEVENTH HOUR

accenture

# STAKEHOLDERS ARE INCREASINGLY FOCUSED ON SUPERIOR SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE



## PURPOSE DRIVES PURCHASE AMONG CONSUMERS GLOBALLY

66% of consumers plan to make more sustainable or ethical purchases over the next 6 months<sup>1</sup>



## LEADERS EXPECT THE PRESSURE AND OPPORTUNITY TO GROW

73% of CEOs expect the pressure and opportunity to act on sustainability demands to grow significantly over the next three years<sup>2</sup>



## EMPLOYEES PREFER RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

70% of employees at large US companies said they were more likely to choose to work at a company with a strong environmental agenda<sup>3</sup>



## INVESTORS VALUE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

**Investors are the 3<sup>rd</sup> most influential stakeholder group** on CEO sustainability management, up from 8<sup>th</sup> in 2016<sup>4</sup>



## SUPPLIERS ASSOCIATE WITH PURPOSEFUL BRANDS

8,000+ suppliers globally participate in the CDP Supply Chain Program, and disclose, measure and act on their environmental impact<sup>5</sup>

# THE UN GLOBAL COMPACT-ACCENTURE CEO STUDY DATES BACK TO 2007



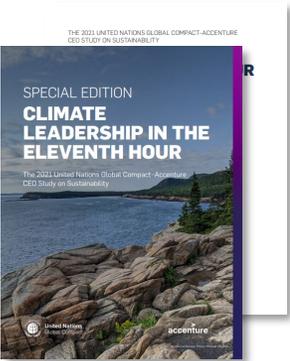
## Research Projects

Shaping the New Rules of Competition, Triennial CEO Study on Sustainability	A New Era of Sustainability, Triennial CEO study on Sustainability	Architects for a Better World, Triennial CEO study on Sustainability	Investor Study, Insights from PRI Signatories ----- Consumer Study on Sustainability, with Havas Media	A Call to Climate Action, Special Edition CEO Study	Agenda 2020: A Window of Opportunity, Triennial CEO Study on Sustainability	Towards Global Partnerships Report of the Secretary-General ----- Transforming Partnerships for the SDGs	UNGC Progress Report 2018 Partner ----- UNGC India-Accenture CEO Study: Insights from Indian Business	UNGC Progress Report 2019 Partner ----- A Decade to Deliver: A Call to Business Action, Triennial CEO Study on Sustainability	UNGC Progress Report 2020 Data Visualization	Special Edition CEO Study: Climate Leadership in the Eleventh Hour
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## Strategic Support

Partnerships Office project					UN Global Compact 2020 Global Strategy	UN Global Compact Digital Strategy		Executive Management Team Strategic Review and Board Paper	SDG Ambition lead implementation partner, with SAP	
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# WE ENGAGED A RECORD NUMBER OF CEOs ACROSS REGIONS, INDUSTRIES, AND COMPANY SIZES



**1230+**

CEOS ENGAGED

**110+**

IN-DEPTH ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEW

**113**

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

**21**

UNIQUE INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES

## Global Companies Interviewed



# KEY FINDINGS



**CEOS ARE UNEQUIVOCALLY CALLING  
FOR GOVERNMENTS TO STEP UP  
SUPPORT FOR 2030 AND 2050 TARGETS  
AND PROVIDE REGULATORY CLARITY**

# TO MAKE THE MOST IMPACT, CEOs SAY POLICY MAKERS MUST TAKE CRITICAL ACTIONS

Only 18% of CEOs say governments and policymakers have given them the clarity needed to meet their sustainability goals

## CEOs are asking for five critical policy actions:



Align Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) on the pathway to limit global temperature rise to a 1.5° warming trajectory



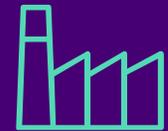
Enhance global cooperation on carbon pricing mechanisms aligned with the Paris Agreement



Meet and exceed the USD 100 billion commitment in climate financing goal for the Global South



Establish common standards for biodiversity protection and pathways for nature-based solutions



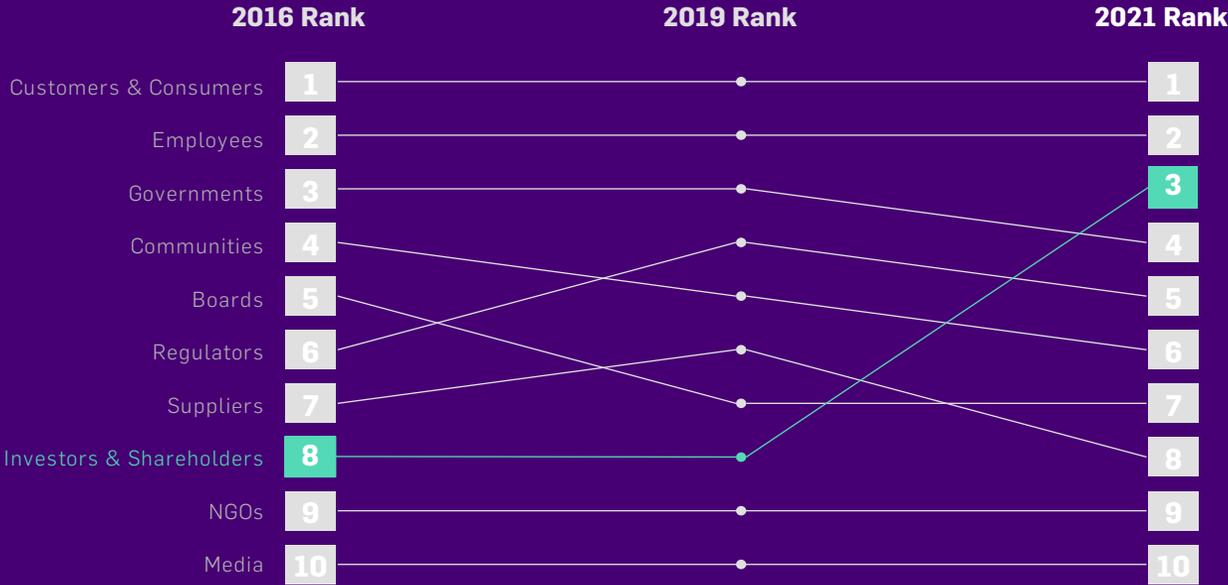
Increase business engagement in climate policy formation for collaborative climate action

An aerial night view of a city, likely Seoul, South Korea, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous buildings and streets illuminated by city lights. The sky is dark, and the city lights create a vibrant, glowing effect. In the background, a large mountain with a prominent white tower is visible. The overall scene is a mix of modern high-rise buildings and older, more traditional structures.

# **INVESTOR INFLUENCE HAS RISEN SHARPLY OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS**

# CEOS FEEL PRESSURE BUILDING FROM INVESTORS AND CAPITAL MARKETS, INCENTIVIZING MORE RAPID CLIMATE ACTION

CEOs ranked investors as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most influential stakeholder on future sustainability management in 2021, up from 8<sup>th</sup> in 2016



18%

of CEOs ranked investors as a top-three stakeholder influencing future sustainability management in 2016

31%

of CEOs ranked investors as a top-three stakeholder influencing future sustainability management in 2021

A photograph of a port with a large ship and stacks of colorful shipping containers. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue and purple gradient. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

**CEOS ARE ALREADY EXPERIENCING  
SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION FROM THE  
PHYSICAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

# CEOS SAY SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION IS THE TOP PHYSICAL RISK TO THEIR BUSINESSES, YET FEW ARE PLANNING FOR EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Half of CEOs (49%) surveyed globally – and 63% of CEOs of the largest companies in Europe and North America – see extreme-weather induced supply chain disruptions as a risk.



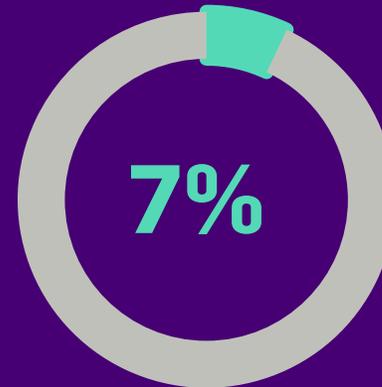
Supply chain interruptions due to extreme weather events



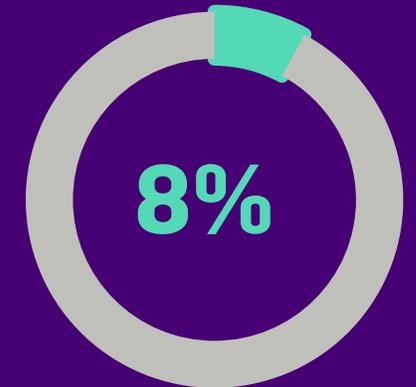
Negative health impacts across the workforce



Operating challenges due to physical impacts on assets (e.g., heat waves, storm surges)



of CEOs say they have advanced maturity on early-warning systems for preparedness to climate-risk events



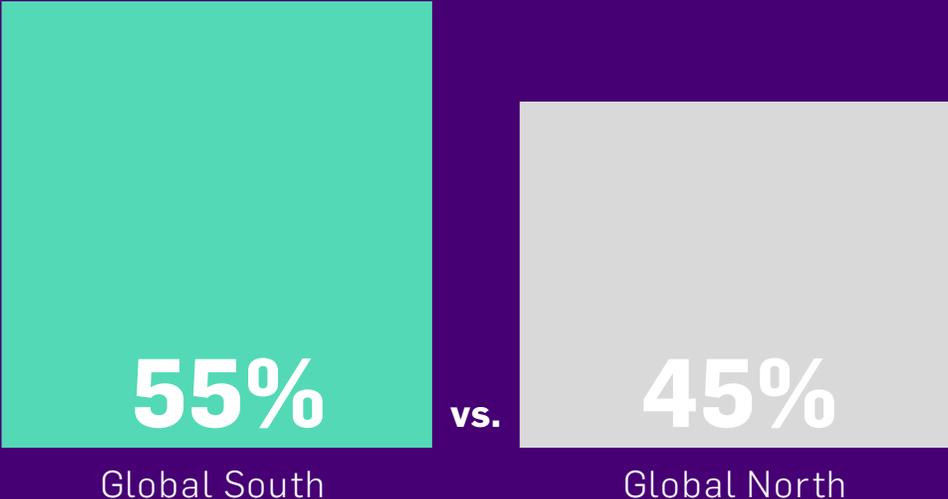
of CEOs say they have advanced maturity on scenario analysis to identify physical and transition risks



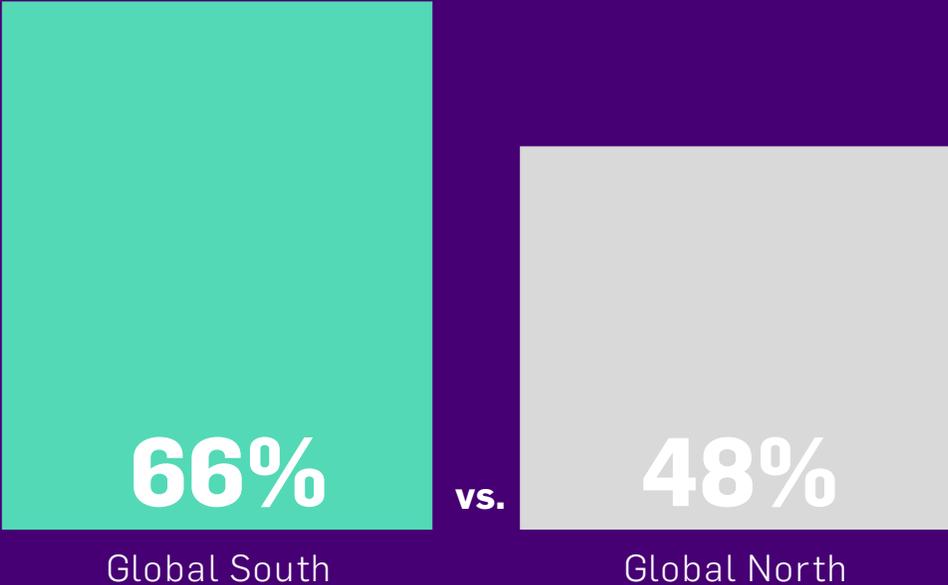
**CEOS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH SAY THEY  
NEED CAPITAL, KNOWLEDGE AND  
TECHNOLOGY TO ACCELERATE CLIMATE  
ACTION, OR ELSE WE RISK THE ENTIRE  
CLIMATE AGENDA**

# CEOS SAY MORE CAPITAL MUST BE CHANNELED INTO THE GREEN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The cost of capital and risk profile of green infrastructure is still high in the Global South and CEOs say it's a barrier to their sustainability efforts.



of CEOs cite a lack of financial resources as a top barrier to implementing their sustainability strategy



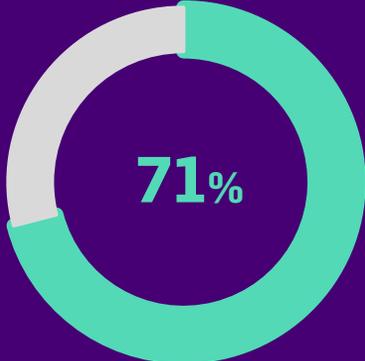
of CEOs cite affordability of available technology as a top barrier to implementing their sustainability strategy

The background of the slide is a photograph of a wind farm. Several wind turbines are visible, some in the foreground and others receding into the distance. In the background, there are also power line towers. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, suggesting a clear day. The overall tone is professional and focused on renewable energy.

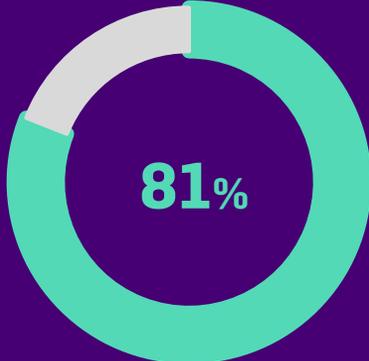
**THE TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS  
MODELS CEOS NEED TO ADDRESS THE  
CLIMATE CRISIS ARE AVAILABILE, AND  
THE CAPITAL IS WAITING ON THE SIDE-  
LINES**

# CEOS ARE REALIZING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES FROM SUSTAINABILITY, BUT SYSTEMATIC CHANGE IS REQUIRED NOW TO ACHIEVE A 1.5°C WORLD

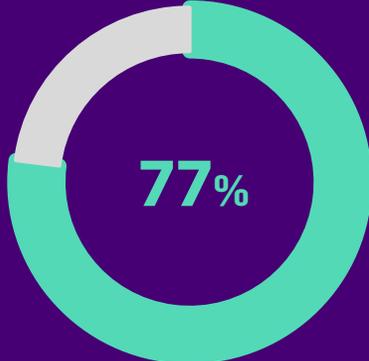
Globally, 65% of CEOs have begun transitioning to net zero business models, but almost half of these CEOs (45%) describe their efforts in this area as only “basic.”



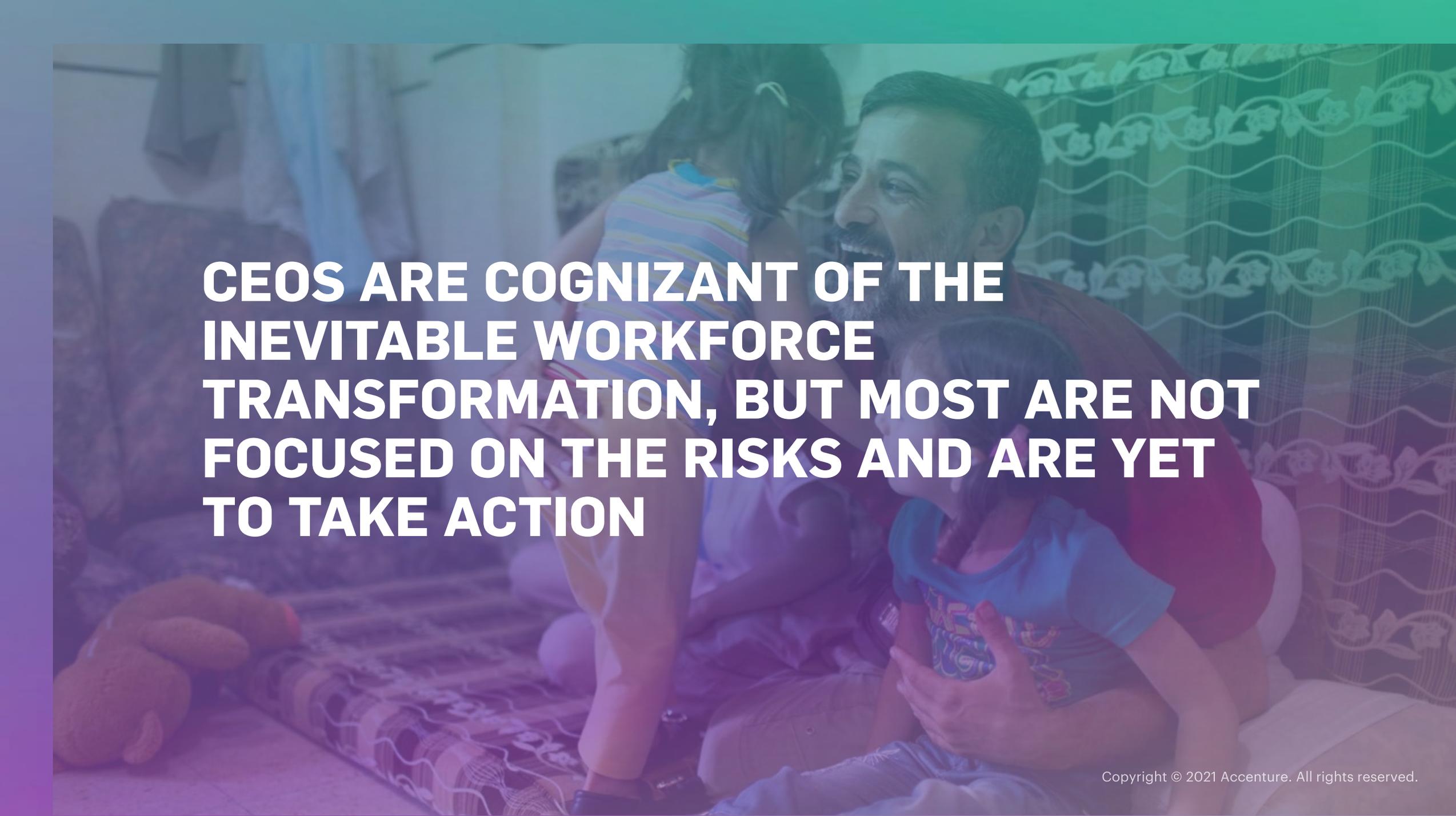
of CEOs are leveraging technology to collect and manage organization-wide ESG data



of CEOs say real-time track-and-trace of materials or goods will have a significant impact on sustainability in their industry in the next 5 years

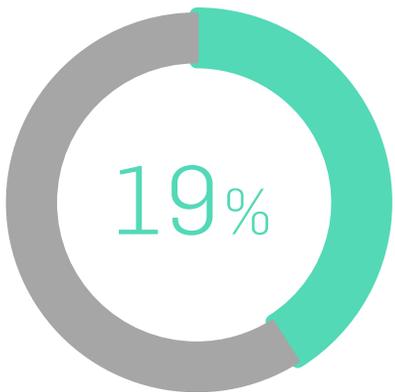


of CEOs are promoting sustainability-focused research and development

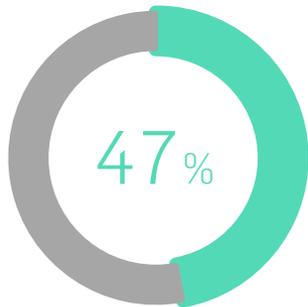
A photograph of a family scene. A man with a beard and a red shirt is sitting on a patterned rug, smiling and looking towards a young girl in a blue shirt who is holding a colorful toy. Another child in a striped shirt is partially visible behind them. The background shows a patterned curtain and some furniture. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green and purple gradient.

**CEOS ARE COGNIZANT OF THE  
INEVITABLE WORKFORCE  
TRANSFORMATION, BUT MOST ARE NOT  
FOCUSED ON THE RISKS AND ARE YET  
TO TAKE ACTION**

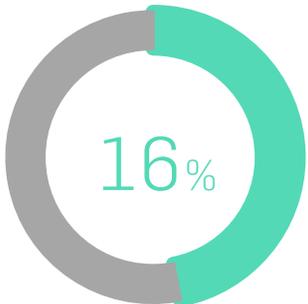
# CEOS SAY THEY ARE YET TO IMPLEMENT MEASURES TO MITIGATE WORKFORCE DISRUPTION AND ENSURE A JUST TRANSITION



of CEOs consider widening social inequalities across the workforce to be a top risk



of CEOs are investing in green jobs to deliver on the Paris Agreement



of CEOs are at advanced maturity in investing in worker and union skills development

“

Upskilling the workforce is critically important to prepare for the level of change we are experiencing. If workers do not have the proper skills today, they may be left out of the labor market as soon as next year.

Clara Arpa  
CEO  
ARPA

”

# 10 Numbers that Matter from COP26 in Glasgow

While there is still significant work to be done, promising agreements took place at COP26 that will shape the future of the climate transition

**\$130t**

Will be mobilised by 450+ financial institutions by 2050

**44**

Countries will end coal by 2030 including the entire OECD

**80**

Countries will reduce methane by 30% by 2030

**134**

Heads of State will end deforestation by 2030

**100**

Companies will be nature-positive by 2030

**\$100b**

For the Global South

**+14%**

GHG emissions from pre-Covid levels

**100**

Partners from the mobility sector committed to end the sale of internal combustion engines by 2035

**45GW**

The scale of green hydrogen deployment by 2027

**\$10b**

In funding toward equitable energy transitions in developing economies

# QUESTIONS