

THE LARGEST GLOBAL STUDY  
TO UNDERSTAND, MEASURE AND INCREASE

# WOMEN'S CONFIDENCE

A vibrant illustration of a diverse group of women in various colors and styles, standing in a circle and holding hands. Some are standing on the ground, while others are standing on the shoulders of those in front of them, creating a sense of unity and support. The background is a solid light pink color.

BRIEFING PAPER 2021

*it* COSMETICS + ERANOS

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**IT Cosmetics** commissioned this survey. Since launch in 2008, IT Cosmetics has been committed to helping women around the world look beautiful and feel self-confident. Through this study and a corresponding brand campaign, IT Cosmetics is asserting itself as a cultural actor and agent of positive societal change.

**Eranos** led this survey. Since 2005, our strategic consulting firm has been committed to reconciling companies and societies. We bridge humanities and businesses to help global corporations fulfill their mission of actors of civilization.

To **all the people** who have contributed to this mission in one way or another, to **all the women** who have opened their homes to us and shared their stories, to **all the academic experts** who shared their work and research with us, to **all the great witnesses** who shared their experiences with us, we would like to say: thank you.

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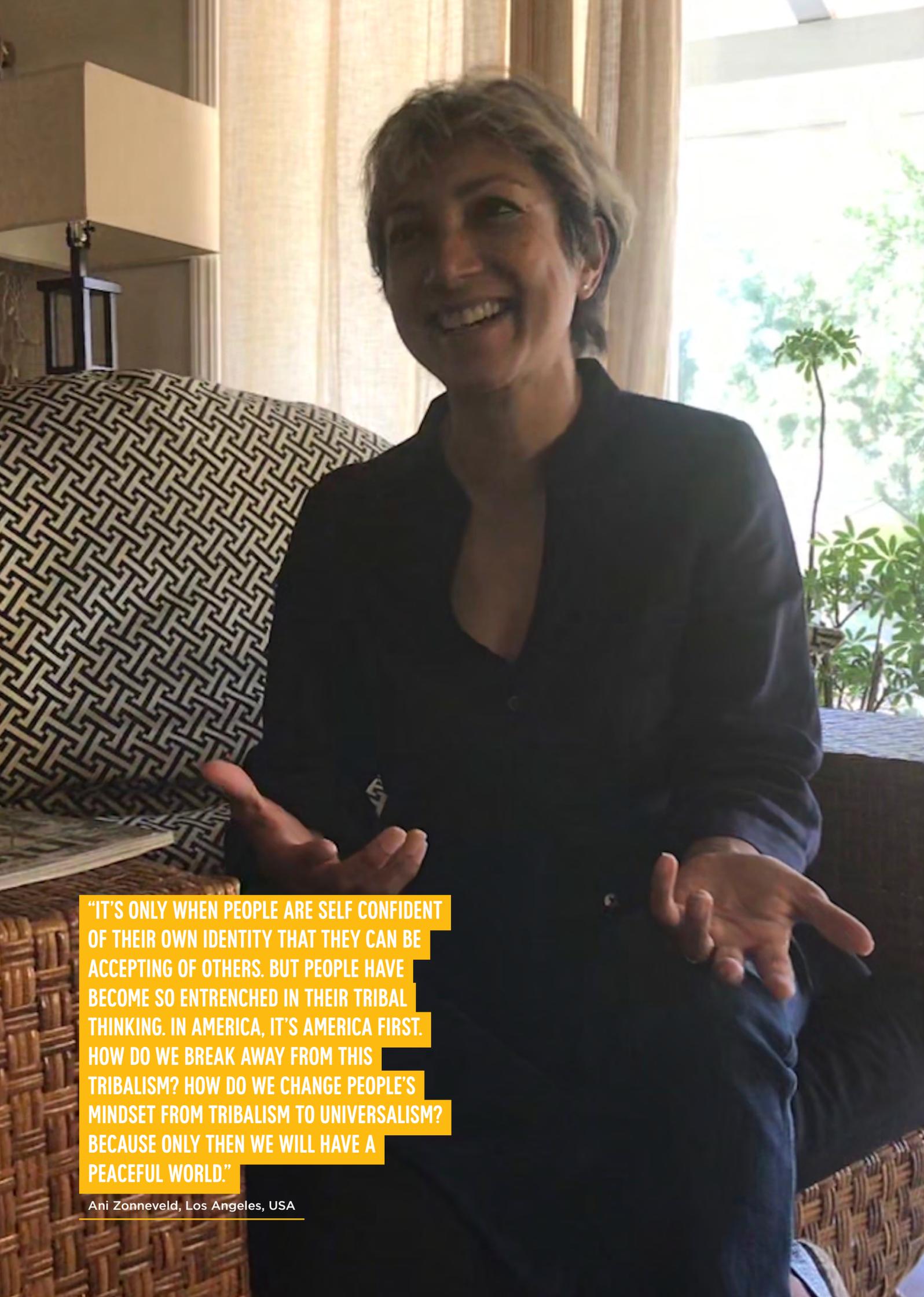
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## **Why does women's confidence matter?**

Because the more confident a woman is, the easier it is for her to act. Confidence empowers women to talk, write, raise their hands, raise their fists, get into politics or start a business. A lack of confidence can just as easily prevent women from thriving on a personal level as it can inhibit them from contributing to their communities in a meaningful way. And that's a problem for everyone, because when women thrive, societies prosper.

This briefing paper is the short version of a much richer White Paper. We would like to provide extensive data to world actors of civil society, as well as public and private sectors in order to reach businesses, organizations, academics, committed feminists and all curious readers who want to increase women's confidence. We wish to help them skip the trial and error process, and immediately address what drives confidence, what compromises it and where it's most needed.

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**“IT’S ONLY WHEN PEOPLE ARE SELF CONFIDENT OF THEIR OWN IDENTITY THAT THEY CAN BE ACCEPTING OF OTHERS. BUT PEOPLE HAVE BECOME SO ENTRENCHED IN THEIR TRIBAL THINKING. IN AMERICA, IT’S AMERICA FIRST. HOW DO WE BREAK AWAY FROM THIS TRIBALISM? HOW DO WE CHANGE PEOPLE’S MINDSET FROM TRIBALISM TO UNIVERSALISM? BECAUSE ONLY THEN WE WILL HAVE A PEACEFUL WORLD.”**

Ani Zonneveld, Los Angeles, USA

# GLOBAL INSIGHTS



## Confidence is relational, you can't increase it on your own

Contrary to popular belief, confidence is not a personal matter or an individual possession. It's something that you receive, give and grow with others. There is strength in joining forces: increasing confidence is something collective.

↳ "Women's confidence is relational and a collective matter" p.6



## Your confidence comes from 14 different sources

Confidence is not binary, the world is not made of people who are confident and people who aren't. Confidence stems from 14 different sources, with each a different role to play in helping you navigate the everyday world.

↳ "14 sources of confidence!" p.16



## Global women's confidence is rather low

Few women around the world actually feel extremely confident. The confidence that we often wish for, is really nothing more than an ideal. There is rarely any truth to the fact that others are exceedingly more confident than we are.

↳ "Linking numbers to feelings" p.22



## The roads to confidence are pretty much the same everywhere

Women around the world build their confidence in very similar ways. In spite of culture, life experience and personality some confidence sources are more sought out than others. This is because confidence always serves the same purpose: facilitating social-assimilation.

↳ "What drives and compromises confidence globally" p.36

# WOMEN'S CONFIDENCE IS RELATIONAL AND A COLLECTIVE MATTER

.....  
**If this 3year long study teaches us one thing, it's that contrary to popular belief, women's confidence is not a personal matter. The study's results led us to formulate a sociological position: confidence is relational and a collective issue. This is why we decided that the study's goal was to better understand confidence in order to act on it.**  
.....

**T**here is an undeniable difference between female and male experiences with confidence<sup>1</sup>. Ongoing political, economic, social and technological changes in our contemporary societies have reshaped the roles played by women, as well as the conditions of their existences.

Why confidence?

Women often face obstacles when trying to achieve their goals, which invite them to question the validity of their requests and feasibility of their dreams.

Many events in the last decade have shed light on women's experiences confidence. In 2019, Germany declared Women's Day a national holiday in order to let women protest violence and champion equality. In 2018, the French movement "Nous toutes" organized a protest against conjugal violence and murders of women. In 2018, the Women's March celebrated its first anniversary in more than 30 countries (including Australia, France, Great Britain, Mexico, United States of America). Since launching in 2016, The Wing (a female-focused and co-working space collective) has continued to grow dramatically.

Since 2010, International Women's rights Day is celebrated annually throughout the world. What do these social phenomena tell us about women's confidence?

Women often face obstacles when trying to achieve their personal and professional goals. While society is more inclined to let women rise to higher ranks in theory, many conscious and unconscious practices in the workplace and in daily life continue to favor their discrimination. Wage gaps, maternity leave, access to education, infantilization, unequal chore distribution and sexual objectification are only some of the obstacles that prohibit women from breaking the glass ceiling. The common barriers that women face often invite them to question the validity of their requests and feasibility of their dreams. These self-assessments are not without consequence on women's sense of confidence, as their everyday experiences influence their perception of themselves.

<sup>1</sup>Please note that our subject is self-confidence, even when we use women's confidence, we talk about self-confidence, and never about confidence in other persons, things, neither trust.



**"OTHERS' OPINIONS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO KOREAN PEOPLE. HOW OTHERS THINK ABOUT THEM, HOW OTHERS LOOK AT THEM. BUT THESE DAYS ONE'S OWN VALUE, ONE'S OWN PERSONALITY ARE BEING CONSIDERED AS IMPORTANT TOO. I THINK SOCIETY HAS BEEN CHANGING."**

김현 (Kim Hyun), Seoul, Korea



“WHEN I STARTED HAVING SHORT HAIR, SOMEONE SAID, ‘YOU SHOULD HAVE LONG HAIR’, THEN I ASKED MYSELF, ‘SHOULD I HAVE LONGER HAIR? FOR WHAT? I SHOULD BE MYSELF. I TRUST MYSELF. I AM CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO SAY ‘NO, I LOVE MY HAIR.’”

Maiko, Tokyo, Japan

## Our position: confidence is an issue to be improved collectively

Confidence is not only individual, it is a collective phenomenon and it is built collectively.

In a time when we are mostly and primarily defined by our individuality, confidence appears, in the first place, as an individual quality. It is a personality trait, experienced differently by each and every one of us. We thought we could “have” it, “own” it, “grow” it by ourselves.

On the contrary, the Women’s Confidence study makes it clear that confidence is mostly a collective phenomenon. **Confidence is entangled in our interactions with others. The way we speak, act, interact and build our relationships all ultimately shape our confidence.** It must be shared, inspired and cultivated with others.

Confidence-building is a process linked to socialization, as well as the influence of an environment (relationships, material environment, culture, lifestyle) on a person’s existence. Consequently, confidence should be understood as a phenomenon that is both social and individual.

We draw our confidence from many different sources: our personal history, our daily

life, the laws and rules of the society we live in, its collective narratives and myths.

Understanding confidence as a collective phenomenon also implies the way we act in order to increase confidence. Empowerment grows through collective actions.

## Our goal is to understand, measure, and increase women’s confidence on a global scale.

The Women’s Confidence index (WOCO) measures what matters: it tells us not only how confident women are, but also what compromises their confidence and what drives it. Its goal is to identify levers of action to increase women’s confidence.

### Understanding & Measuring confidence...

Because confidence is a multifaceted phenomenon, we felt the need to break down the complexity of women’s confidence into different sources of confidence. Each source is like a bit of experience, a feeling you’d have in everyday life. Mostly, sources of confidence would come combined; you’d draw from two or three at the same time. The different sources of experiences don’t have the same impact on every woman’s confidence. Some of them drive women’s confidence, some of them compromise it. By identifying those sources, we intend to render

the variety of confidence-contributing-experiences available to women.

We were able to illustrate these impacts through the confidence index we developed, as well as through the testimony of the 11,176 women we solicited. The WOCO scores helped us understand the workings of their personal confidence, as well as that of their gender, within their country of residence.

As a consequence, confidence will vary depending on women’s ability to balance collective standards, personal values and aspirations.

### ...In order to act on confidence.

Through our index, we wanted to shed light on levers of action to increase women’s confidence on both a macro and micro level. Indeed, we are able to identify entry points to act on women’s living environments by concentrating on the experiences that inhibits their confidence. We hope to inspire a network of actions that support the development of women’s confidence.

#### Understanding confidence

**We thought we could have confidence, own it, grow it by ourselves, when in fact it must be shared, inspired and grown with others.**

# METHODOLOGY

.....

**We have attempted to grasp the multifaceted phenomenon of confidence by examining the fields of philosophy, sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis and practical psychology. We identified 14 different sources of confidence, led qualitative interviews, and launched a quantitative survey in 11 countries.**

.....

**B**ased on a preliminary study, we identified not one but 14 sources at play in the building of confidence. After testing these sources, we needed to adapt them for local variations, and measure how each one would drive or compromise the building of confidence.

## **A confidence Index: drivers and compromisers around the world**

To measure the role of each source of confidence, Eranos decided to build a confidence index. This confidence index is designed to inform three variables: the source of confidence, the intensity level of confidence experience, and the region where those experiences occurred. At the end of the day, this index enables us to answer 3 key questions: how self-confident are the women living in the same country? What drives and compromises their confidence? Where would an action be most impactful? With these inquiries, our mission is to better identify and understand the drivers of confidence everywhere.

### **Classifying confidence**

**If some components of self-confidence are international, others can depend on their country of origin, their culture and their individual experiences.**

The WOCO index makes it possible to circumscribe women's confidence to sources, places and age groups on a global scale. While some components of confidence are international, others may be dependent on their country of origin, culture and individual experiences.

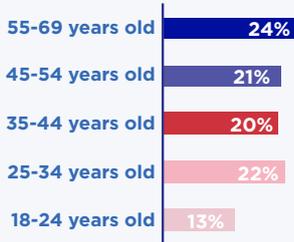
## **Cultural differences: incorporating women's realities**

Our database consists of qualitative and quantitative data. We conducted live interviews with 176 women and gathered the results of 11,000 online surveys completed by American, French, German, Mexican, British, Chinese, Hong Kong regional<sup>1</sup>, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Australian women. We defined one score per country, to draw a comparison between women's confidence experiences in countries with vastly different cultures.

With no less than 11,176 data points around the globe, this is the widest-ranging report of its kind.

<sup>1</sup>Our study's specific approach to confidence led us to differentiate the Hong Kong special administrative region from China in the analysis of both our field investigations and our quantitative surveys.

**We investigated confidence in 11 countries and retrieved sentiments from...**



**11,176**  
WOMEN TOTAL

Debiasing confidence  
**In order to get the fullest picture of a complex cultural phenomena, we mixed qualitative and quantitative data, and asked local experts to help us navigate that complexity.**



**11,000**  
ONLINE-SURVEY  
RESPONDENTS

Our team sent out an online survey to 1000 women in each country to measure individual and national levels of self-confidence. The respondents were of various cities, ages (18-69) and social-economic backgrounds.



**176**  
IN-PERSON  
RESPONDENTS

We mobilized teams in 11 countries and interviewed 176 women on the meaning of self-confidence. To assure viewpoint diversity we chose to interview women from both larger and smaller cities in each country.

**152**  
INTERVIEWEES

Panelists (of various age, origins, backgrounds, and professions) shared their understanding of their own sense of self-confidence. These women helped us calibrate our surveys to regional specifics and decipher our quantitative data accordingly.

**24**  
EXPERTS

In addition to our female panel we retrieved expert testimony from women we considered to be wellversed on the subject of self-confidence. Within our expert group we made a distinction between Academic experts and great witnesses.

↘ "Expert Sources" p.122 in the White Paper

**4** TYPES  
OF DATA  
POINTS

↘ "Methods paper" p.158 in the White Paper

**12**  
ACADEMIC  
EXPERTS

Academic experts are women who directly or indirectly study/publish women's self-confidence. They were able to provide us with reference material and scientific perspective.

**12**  
GREAT  
WITNESSES

Great witnesses are women whose professional or personal achievements can be attributed to the expression of a great deal of confidence in the face of adversity and institutionalized misogyny. These women provided us with data on the mechanics of confidence in high stress/intense situations.

# Women's confidence in a few numbers

Overviewing confidence

An overview of experiences that influence women's confidence around the world.



## 67%

of **British women** think that they would not find a better job if they were to lose the one they already have. Contrary to common belief that finding a job is easier in a liberal culture, it reflects the fact that 1 out of 5 British women live below the poverty line.

↳ "British confidence" p.26



## 64%

of **German women**, or more than 2 out of 3 German women, believe that the people they meet are not kind to them and will not tell them the truth. Meanwhile, 43% of them say that they cannot count on their intuition to figure out people's intentions.

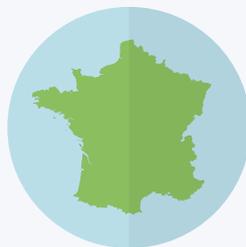
↳ "German confidence" p.29



## 62%

of **Mexican women** consider themselves to be resilient, as they don't get discouraged even when they experience injustice. As many Mexican women take part in female networks and support groups, they may find the strength to fight back by gathering together.

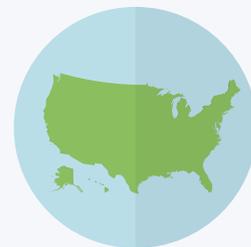
↳ "Mexican confidence" p.33



## 56%

of **French women** still do not believe that their actual job is their vocation. In a society where intellectual abilities and diplomas are highly valued, finding the right job is so important that it can create a deceptive counter-effect. When they find an actual job, women do not feel like it is the right one either because it is not as fulfilling as it could be or because it doesn't reflect their hard work.

↳ "French confidence" p.28



## 66%

of **American women**, or 2 out of 3 American women, do not feel like they have a lucky star watching over them when they have an important decision to make. This number is very high considering that 56% of American women consider religious practice to be important in their daily lives.

↳ "American confidence" p.24



# 28%

of **Australian women**, or almost 1 out of 3 Australian women, affirm that in a professional context they have special skills as women, which give them an advantage over men. This echoes the idea that womanhood gives them an edge over their male counterparts.

↳ "Australian confidence" p.25



# 62%

of **Hong Kong women**, or nearly 2 out of 3 women, say that they would hesitate to break the rules even if they deemed them unwarranted. Respecting the rules is still a strong cultural standard and contesting them openly is not welcomed.

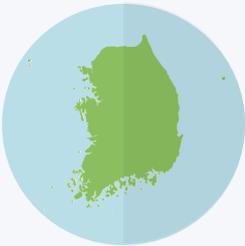
↳ "Hong Kong confidence" p.30



# 35%

of **Chinese women**, or more than 1 out of 3 Chinese women, believe they are viewed as strange in their everyday lives. This underlines how the cultural and community standards are so strong that they make it hard for you to be yourself, even when you conform to them.

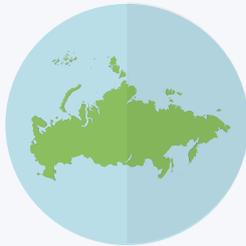
↳ "Chinese confidence" p.27



# 40%

of **Korean women** tend to think that when people try to discourage them, it makes them want to succeed even more. This number is very high compared to other countries because validation and support is often highly valued in Korean cultures.

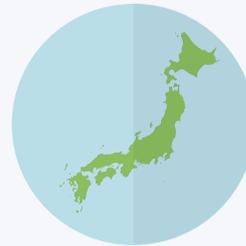
↳ "Korean confidence" p.32



# 71%

of **Russian women**, or almost 3 out of 4 Russian women, believe that in a professional context they know how to behave suitably in order to be well perceived by their colleagues and superiors. In Russia, knowing the rules is a way to master them and give you confidence.

↳ "Russian confidence" p.34



# 34%

of **Japanese women**, or more than 1 out of 3 Japanese women, think that all bad things happen for a reason, and we have to accept that, even if it is hard. Indeed, contrary to Europe, Australia and the USA, the ability to accept fate is valued in Japan.

↳ "Japanese confidence" p.31

# CONFIDENCE IS THE AWARENESS THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE SELF AND YOUR ACTIONS

.....  
**What does self-confidence mean? It's the merger of two components: that of the self and that of confidence. Self-confidence = confidence + self.**  
.....

**W**e questioned these notions using four main sources: philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Through the synthesis of these disciplines, we isolated the theoretical frameworks of self-confidence.

## Confidence

The term “confidence” is derived from the latin “confidere” (con- “with” + fīdō “trust”), which literally means “with faith”, “to trust” or “to confide”. At the heart of confidence, there is a strong dynamic, a relationship or exchange symbolized by the act of trusting another person or a thing.

Thus, confidence designates, first and foremost, a form of social interaction or an exchange rite. The immaterial object that is “trust” can be placed in a group of individuals, a company or an institution (“i trust them”), but it can also be given to oneself, a god, a person, a product or a technical device<sup>1</sup>.

1 Sources: A. Giddens, N. Luhman, G.

## Self

“Self” is a blurry concept behind which we can find many different ways to qualify our personal experiences. The self is at the same time personal and social. The self is inconceivable without society, and society is inconceivable without the self. This means two things: first, that the self cannot be defined without others (we see ourselves through others’ eyes); second, that our self is shaped by our environment (symbols, language, political and social norms etc.). What does it mean to be me? If we display a series of masks to others, **there is no “true self” behind the roles we perform**<sup>2</sup>.

## Self-confidence

Self-confidence is confidence applied to self, meaning that it expresses one’s ability to trust in oneself and act accordingly within the bounds of society.

.....  
Simmel, Olivetti Dictionary  
2 Sources: G. Simmel, J.L. Borges, D. Hume, P. Ricoeur, J-P. Sartre, C. Leguil, J. Lacan, E. Goffman

Self-confidence is an “expectation of expectations”: when you have it, it feels like you know what the world expects from you—and your next move becomes obvious! This entails that one’s conception of self is not endangered by one’s social experiences.

Self-confident people have the ability to take a step back, as there lies a relative continuity between what society requires of them and their ability to meet those demands. Through their way of being, they can reduce the uncertainty of the world they live in allowing themselves to act rather than react<sup>3</sup>.

In a nutshell, **Self-confidence is the awareness that exists between the self and your actions. The more confident you are, the easier it is to act.**

↳ “Self-Confidence” p.29 in the White Paper

.....  
3 Sources: F. Fanget, E. Erikson, G. Durand, S. de Beauvoir, J. Butler

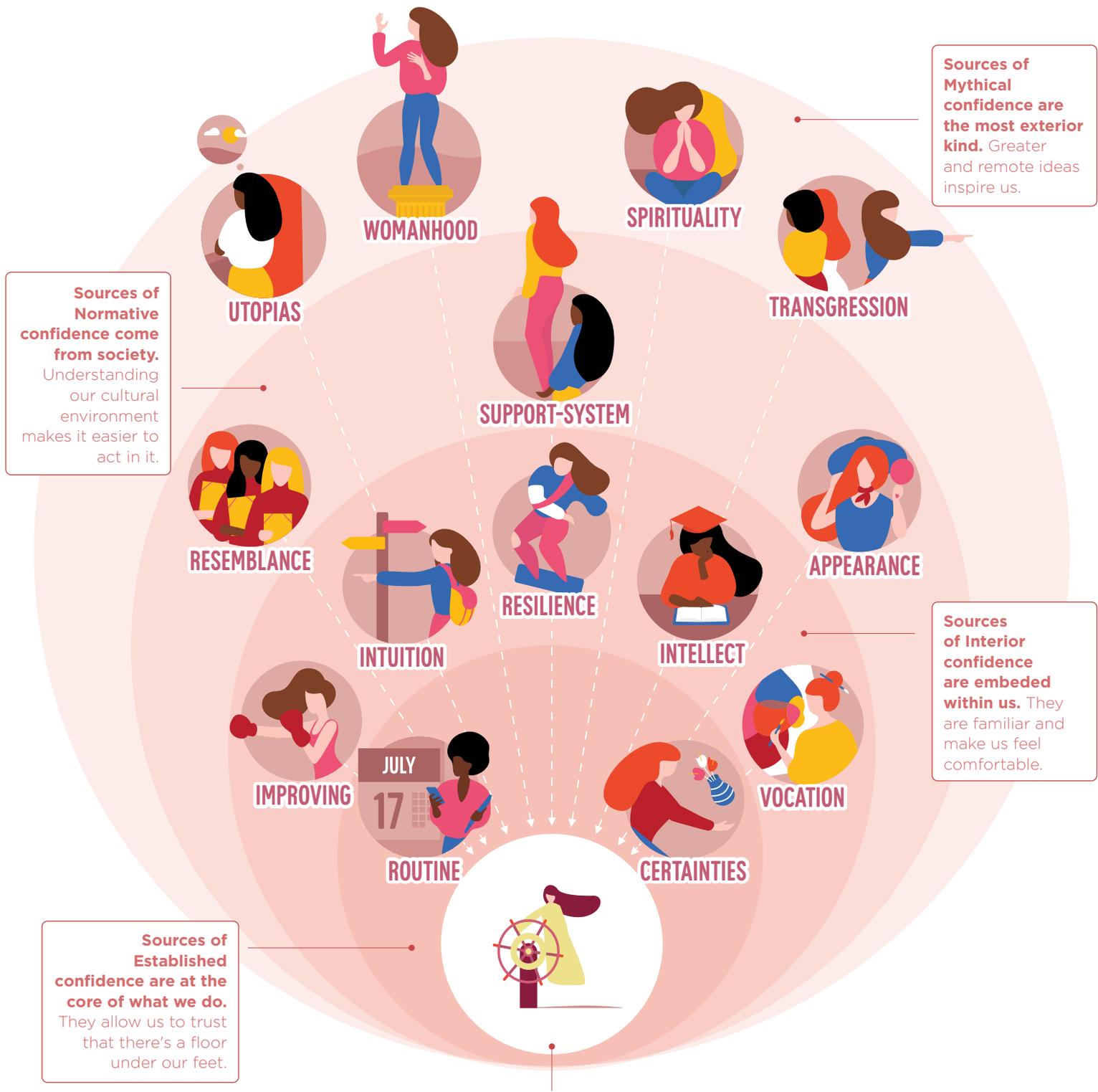


**“EVERY SINGLE TIME I INITIATED SOMETHING NEW, THAT MADE ME FEEL STRONGER AND IT MADE ME KNOW MORE WHO I AM. SO LIKE IN A WAY BUILDING, A MIX OUT OF BUILDING AND FINDING OUT WHO I AM.”**

Debbie, Munich, Germany

# 14 SOURCES OF CONFIDENCE!

Confidence can not be defined by one thing, it stems from 14 different sources. The way we draw on them depends on our personalities, the hour of the day, the stage our lives are in... These 14 sources of confidence range in kind, from the most exterior to the most interior.



**There is a space between our will to act and the actual action.** We navigate this space everyday, even in small things like riding a bike or jumping a step. So we draw from 14 different sources of confidence to shorten that space, and make it easier to act.

# THE 4 SOURCES OF MYTHICAL CONFIDENCE

The mythical register of confidence refers to all the myths, representations and collective narratives that people use to guide their actions.

A person draws self confidence from mythical sources when they are inspired or when they find legitimacy in heroes (fictional or real), ideals and/or faith.



## UTOPIAS

Form of confidence drawn from a capacity to have a positive outlook on life or idealize it, even in dire straits

**“I draw confidence from the fact that if I lost my job, I am convinced that I will find a better one.”**



## WOMANHOOD

Form of confidence drawn from a subconscious reference to an archetype or a collective image

**“I draw confidence from my ability to challenge expectations others can impose on my femininity.”**



## TRANSGRESSION

Form of confidence drawn from a form of transgression, a hijacking of established standards

**“I draw confidence from the fact that I do what I want even if it contradicts standards and creates chaos.”**



## SPIRITUALITY

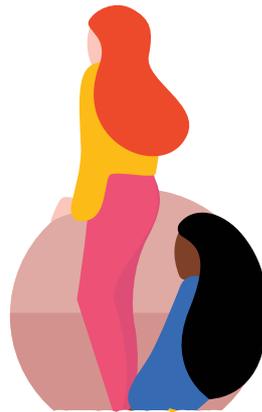
Form of confidence drawn from the certainty of being protected or guided by a metaphysical presence (God, destiny, a lucky star...)

**“I draw confidence from my natal chart when I pass exams.”**

# THE 3 SOURCES OF NORMATIVE CONFIDENCE

The normative register refers to all norms or rules (whether implicit or explicit) that an individual acknowledges and feels protected by.

A person draws confidence from normative sources when they find comfort in the fact that they are doing things the “right” way (respecting the status quo).



## SUPPORT-SYSTEM

Form of confidence drawn from others' validation, approval and encouragement

**“I draw confidence from the fact that my manager values and endorses my actions when I take initiative at work.”**



## RESEMBLANCE

Form of confidence drawn from subconscious integration of standards, values and society's coercitive power over individual actions

**“I draw confidence from the knowledge that my behavior will not be seen as crazy when I walk around town.”**



## APPEARANCE

Form of confidence drawn from embracing standardized tangible signs of differentiation, such as clothing or makeup choices.

**“I draw confidence from my knowledge of the proper dress-codes for each situation, it helps me to feel and appear like I belong.”**

# THE 5 SOURCES OF INTERIOR CONFIDENCE

The interior register refers to all the aspects of one's past, baggage, beliefs, and convictions that legitimize their identity and give them purpose in a social environment.

A person draws confidence from the interior register when their actions or aspirations find meaning within their personal journeys.



## IMPROVING

Form of confidence drawn from the tension between guilt or shame, and a necessity to take action

**"I draw confidence from the permanent fight between my desire to get on stage, and my fear of being paralyzed by stress."**



## RESILIENCE

Form of confidence drawn from a capacity of resilience, and acceptance of one's destiny

**"I draw confidence from my belief in destiny, even when something bad happens to me, because I know it doesn't depend on me."**



## VOCATION

Form of confidence drawn from feeling certainty in one's path or ability. Being where one needs to be

**"I draw confidence from my ability to rise to the occasion when I'm told to reconsider or rewrite an idea at my job."**



## INTELLECT

Form of confidence drawn from certainty in one's intellectual background: culture, knowledge, expertise, diplomas

**"I draw confidence from the fact that I know my subject material. This makes me feel legitimate when I speak in public."**



## INTUITION

Form of confidence drawn from a experiential certainty and one's intuitive ability

**"I draw confidence from my instinct to be able to make important decisions."**

# THE 2 SOURCES OF ESTABLISHED CONFIDENCE

The established register refers to all stable elements of one's life, those they believe will not and cannot change.

A person draws confidence from the established register when they're reassured by the routine they are following.



## ROUTINE

Form of confidence drawn from habits, integrated common sense and everyday life

**"I draw confidence from the fact that nothing has ever happened to me, because that makes me feel secure."**



## CERTAINTIES

Form of confidence drawn from a subconscious integration of the existence of my material environment and operational motor functions

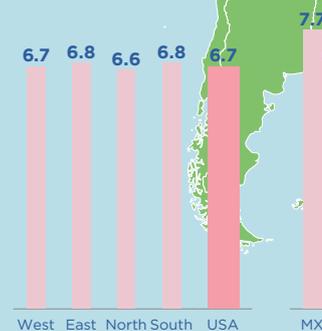
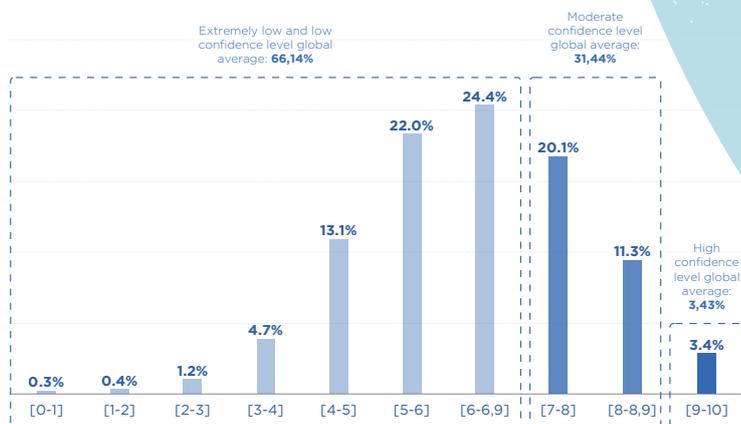
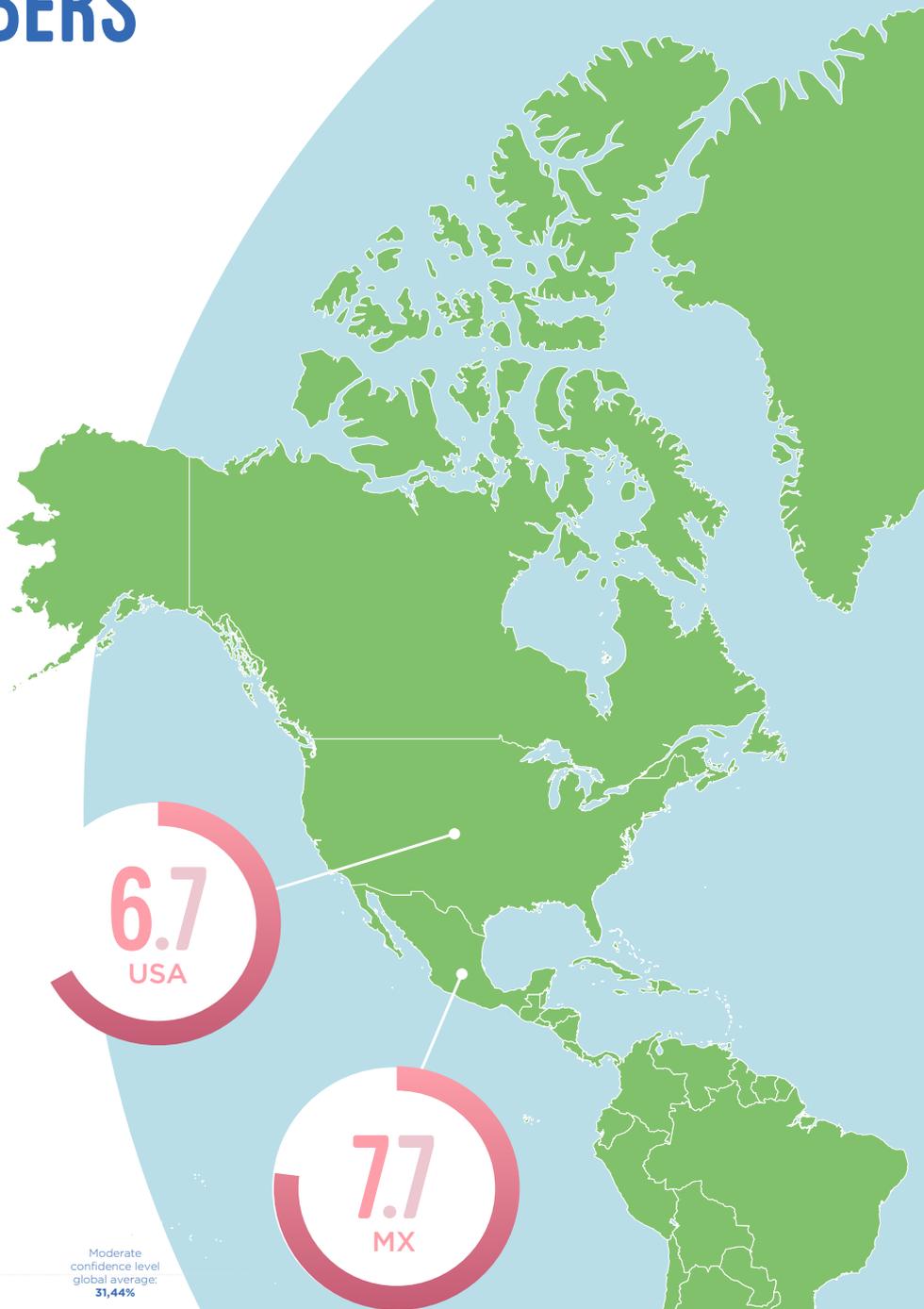
**"I draw confidence from my ability to adapt my route when there's a table in the middle of the room."**

# LINKING NUMBERS TO FEELINGS

The scores showcased on the map represent the average confidence scores of the 11,000 women (1,000/country) who answered our online survey in each region.

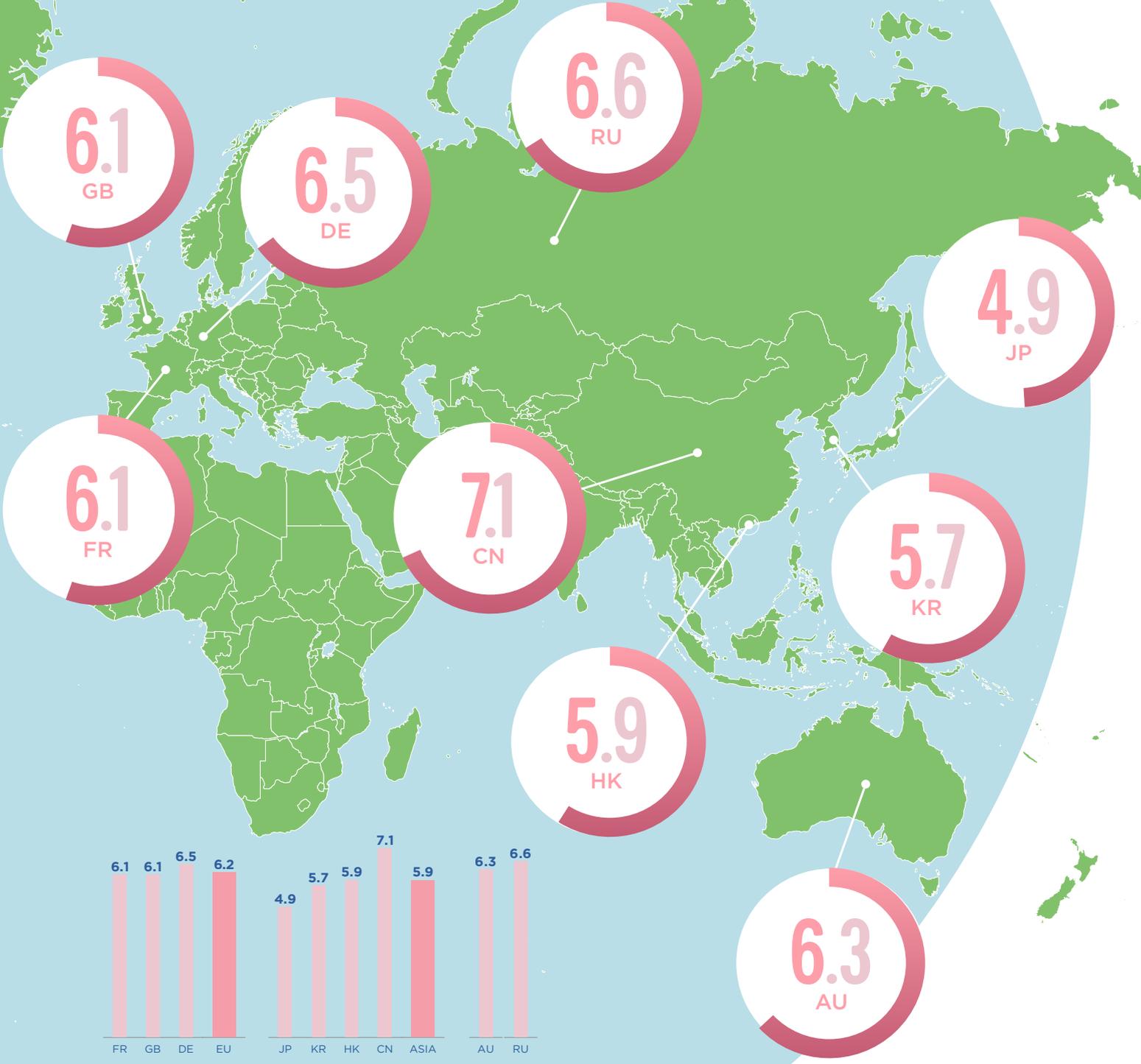
Based on the distribution of global averages, we can say that a confidence score between 0 and 3.9 is considered extremely low, a confidence score between 4 and 5.9 is considered low, a confidence score between 6 and 7.9 is considered moderate and a confidence score between 8 and 10 is considered high.

The average scores attributed to Korean, Hongkongese, Chinese, Russian, Japanese, American, Mexican, French, British, German and Australian women on the map indicate that globally, women's sense of confidence is rather moderate.



Measuring confidence

Since 6/10 is considered a low score, globally, women's sense of confidence is rather moderate.





# AMERICAN CONFIDENCE

While confidence in the USA is often considered to be a personal and individual matter, women find that receiving support and recognition from others helps to make them feel more confident.



## What compromises American confidence

**UTOPIAS • Dealing with dystopian beliefs.** The majority of American women find themselves disengaged and afflicted by a fear of “acts of God” that make them doubtful about what lies ahead. Nonetheless, the security that stems from a sense of community encourages projection and optimism in women. Latinas and African Americans perhaps best exemplify this statistic, as they achieve top ranking scores in utopian confidence.



**RESILIENCE • Experiencing discouragement & failure refusal.** In a society where victory is worshiped, and exceeding one’s own limitations is viewed as equally important, all forms of regret or discouragement become irrelevant. Everyone is responsible for their own failures and must find ways to avoid them at any cost. The cult of meritocracy and equal opportunity that has nourished the “American Dream” isn’t compatible with the idea of destiny.



## What drives American confidence

**ROUTINE • Believing in the power of local regency.** Because they focus on their own separate realities, individuals struggle to find common ground in a greater good. Indeed, legitimacy given to the independence of the different states mirrors individuals’ belief in the validity of their local community’s experience. Moreover, attachment to surroundings and habits conveys a profoundly American confidence in known situations and experiences.



**SUPPORT-SYSTEM • Seeking validation from others.** Seeking external validation, even though it may be contrary to individualistic values, leads some American women to voluntarily modify their social circle to obtain the approval they seek.



**INTUITION • Thriving from an instinct-survivalist culture.** Across the USA, an imbalance of access to information and technology has raised a society that has survived by relying primarily on their instinct. Those privileged enough to exist within safer environments have developed more trusting behaviours. Today, the heirs of this intuitive mindset have formed their own distinctive opinions, ultimately making for a more divided society.



# AUSTRALIAN CONFIDENCE

Australian women believe that whatever issue you're dealing with, you can benefit from the help of others. The *mateship* ideal, a legacy inherited from the first settlers, is a major value of Australian women's confidence.



## What compromises Australian confidence

**RESILIENCE • Never sit back.** Australian women's ability to accept their fate is hindered by their strong sense of unfairness, coupled with the inability to accept failure. They prefer to react to bad things, rather than accept fate.



**UTOPIAS • Being an unflinching self-made woman.** In a society where everyone is responsible for their own achievements, Australian women feel that they must avoid failure at any cost, even if it means not trying. The myth of the self-made man leaves little compassion for those who fail.



## What drives Australian confidence

**ROUTINE • Life experiences as a strength.** Routine is a strong source of confidence for Australian women, mostly because they feel that they are able to demonstrate good judgement in their everyday life. This ability can be based on life experiences; the older you become, the more self-confident in your judgement you are.



**INTUITION • Cautiousness inherited from pioneer spirit.** Australian intuition can be interpreted as "cautious"; if they feel that something is going to turn wrong, it will often deter them from going on. It can also be interpreted as a "pioneer intuition", or a reaction to the hostility of their country and its isolation.



**SUPPORT-SYSTEM • The mateship ideal.** The ideal value of "mateship" - a notion coming from the first settlers - is based on the belief that any situation should be able to be sorted out thanks to the help of others. In a society where individualistic values are prevalent, mateship strengthens confidence.



# BRITISH CONFIDENCE

Influenced by a liberal and cosmopolitan culture, British women believe that diversity is a source of strength; however, their economic instability makes it difficult to envision the future.



## What compromises British confidence

**UTOPIAS • When tomorrow rhymes with uncertainty.** When one British woman out of five lives under the poverty line, envisioning a bright future might prove difficult. Indeed, the possibility of poverty in post-industrial economies contributes to women's uncertainties and makes them doubtful about their ability to face challenges.



**RESILIENCE • Keep control over your future.** Resilient confidence relies on the ability to accept future uncertainties. This is precisely what Great Britain decided not to do. By being the first country to exit the EU, Great Britain is playing its last hand to take back control over its destiny.



## What drives British confidence

**ROUTINE • Finding strength in everyday life.** When you grow up in cosmopolitan societies, intercultural relations are part of your day-to-day life. Common sense, practical intelligence and respect are needed to forge social bonds between people of other backgrounds, cultures, ideas and life choices.



**SUPPORT-SYSTEM • Getting support from micro-communities.** In a liberal country where working communities are characterized by changes and instability, getting support or validation from your closest relatives and being part of a micro-community is a strong way to enhance your confidence. Family is an important structure that may help to provide validation for your choices and paths. British women have high expectations tied to receiving support from their relatives.



**INTUITION • Improving your self-made mind.** In traditional protestant cultures, salvation mostly depends on the individual, which favours the myth of the self-made, self-examined mind. For the responsive and proactive woman, intuition may be a good ally. This chain of consequences and its pragmatic orientations brings to light why British women count on their intuition to build confidence.



# CHINESE CONFIDENCE

Chinese women feel torn between traditional cultural values and their desire to thrive independently and be themselves.



## What compromises Chinese confidence

**RESEMBLANCE • Existing in a community.** Although individualism has grown stronger over generations, social relations continue to be ruled by communal standards. Parents' influence over their children's choices in life is criticized, but remains very powerful. To accept oneself means to accept one's family. Women are torn between two roles to play: the good wife-mother, discreet, beautiful and strong, and the successful, independent working woman.



## What drives Chinese confidence

**IMPROVING • Best by comparison.** From childhood to adulthood, comparisons are highly valued and play a crucial part in confidence building. Women struggle to be themselves, when they have to be better than others and can't be too different from others. When they succeed, they feel self-confident, but it also makes them feel highly pressured.



**RESILIENCE • Facing destiny in the biggest country in the world.** The will to choose one's path often faces social barriers and creates a feeling of inescapable destiny. At the same time, the Chinese society is undergoing so many changes that it creates feelings of unpredictability. Both feelings shape women's confidence. In the biggest country in the world, resilience can be a question of survival.



# FRENCH CONFIDENCE

Influenced by strong feminist figures, French women are perceived as free-minded, self-assured and at ease when speaking publicly. But it turns out that they feel doubtful about their life path.



## What compromises French confidence

**UTOPIAS • Today is better than tomorrow.** Utopias rely on grand myths, such as progress: tomorrow will always be better than today. This myth is balanced by an urge to live in the moment, as it is becoming more and more difficult to be able to look to the future in a country where the economic situation is not bright and a world where natural resources are not limitless.



### VOCATION • Get lost to find yourself.

Feeling that you have a vocation implies that your intimate voice is stronger than the surrounding noises. But for French women, who are exposed to daily contradictory injunctions and role models, all coming from multiple sources, finding your own path can be difficult.



## What drives French confidence



**SUPPORT-SYSTEM • Demanding recognition.** Family, friends and peers can play an immense part in confidence building. In France, the need for approval and recognition from others is particularly high in work situations. However, it is a need for gratitude rather than a need for validation. Nonetheless, the more qualified you are, the less you will feel the need for others' approval.



**CERTAINTIES • Finding stability in bodily experiences.** As France was the pioneer country in child psychology studies in the 60's, motor and intellectual skills became a crucial part of children's education and development. Consciousness is both psychological and linked to bodily experiences. It is the core of individual identity. This is why it is an important source of French women's confidence.



**INTUITION • Experiencing spontaneity.** Intuition doesn't need to be proven right. It is proof by itself. But this ability to understand oneself is grounded in past experiences. The French women who value their experiences; are quick to follow their spontaneous instincts before making a decision.

# GERMAN CONFIDENCE

In Germany, women oscillate between strong-willed behaviour and doubt of both the short and long-term future.



## What compromises German confidence

### UTOPIAS • What about tomorrow.

German women are characterized by their social agility, i.e. their ability to change easily, which may be seen as a strength. But adaptability can make it more difficult to envision the future clearly and give you peace of mind.



**RESILIENCE • Feeling in control to escape destiny.** The lack of resilient confidence is a consequence of the will to control their lives, and a capacity to deal with failure. Rationality and desire to be in control are still important, even though German women tend to lose confidence in grand myths driven by rationality.



## What drives German confidence

### SUPPORT-SYSTEM • Becoming the One.

German women seek validation for their efforts at irreproachability - though they may seek more internal validation than external. This would explain their desire to depend less on people in order to feel self-confident.



**ROUTINE • Being strong every day.** German women often demonstrate a mindset of strong confidence, especially at work. Their disciplined actions give them a disciplined mindset. This protestant way of thinking allows German women to trust in their common sense and practical intelligence.



**INTUITION • Intuition as a philosophical inheritance.** German women's intuition is tempered by their intellect, where they find arguments to justify their life choices. We need to remember that "Intuitionism", a way of thinking based on subjectivity, is a theory developed by German philosophers.





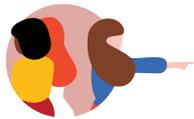
# HONG KONG CONFIDENCE

Women in Hong Kong experience confidence building as an internal fight. This fight represents the difficult path between respecting the rules of society and forging one's destiny.



## What compromises Hong Kong confidence

**TRANSGRESSION • Passive-aggressiveness.** Hong Kong citizens have no problem voicing their political views and ideals, though this transgressive trait does not extend to every aspect of their lives. In fact, while women of Hong Kong sometimes go against the grain, it's only rarely voiced out loud.



**CERTAINTIES • Burns Out.** In Hong Kong, physical self-awareness is highly impaired by fatigue and stress. While this isn't uncommon in large cities, the commonly prescribed remedies are ignored because of a strong female avoidance of doctors due to consultation waits and high medical rates.



## What drives Hong Kong confidence



**SUPPORT-SYSTEM • Seeking Expertise.** Still concerned with others' approval, Hong Kong women minimize their scrutiny by leaving only parts of their lives up for debate. It is not uncommon for them to seek professional advice or tutoring tips. It is much less likely that they will discuss their personal friendships, marriages or finances.



**IMPROVING • Aiming higher and never settling.** In Hong Kong, competition is an important component of success, whether this means getting into the right school, the right college, finding the right job, or overcoming financial trouble. The relentless competition between citizens pushes women to constantly strive for loftier goals in order to maintain their place in society.



**ROUTINE • Being over-prepared.** As a major part of housework weighs on women's shoulders, handling demanding jobs, housework and raising children can prove difficult. Many women hire maids to manage their domestic responsibilities which allows them to focus guilt-free on their other work.

# JAPANESE CONFIDENCE

Japanese women's ability to keep face can make them appear cold or distant. However, this is done in an effort to establish homogeneity, as showing confidence is not valued in Japan.



## What compromises Japanese confidence

**UTOPIAS • Traditions vs Personal ambition.** Japanese women tend to abide by traditions and social standards and disapprove of complaining. While this does enable them to find acceptance in dire situations, it can also prevent them from imagining and striving for greater possibilities. This ultimately inhibits the confidence and creativity they would obtain by dreaming or imagining a different world.



## What drives Japanese confidence

**IMPROVING • Keeping face.** Although they are significantly more independent today than in previous years, keeping face is still an integral part of womanhood. These seemingly constraining standards are more protective and empowering than one would think. While others perceive you to be complacent, you are free to be and think whatever you want.



**RESILIENCE • Seeking advice from Shintoite and Buddhist culture.** As Japanese culture encompasses many teachings of both Shintoite and Buddhist beliefs, many women have strong attachment to the idea of destiny as something you accept. Instead of having regrets, they often prefer to seek advice from a “spiritual” type guide or fortune teller—helping them understand where life might lead them.



**ROUTINE • Finding balance in organization.** As many Japanese women hold part-time jobs in order to support their families, they lead very organized lives. Every little detail needs to be planned down to the minute, so that women can be consistent and present for their husband, children, bosses, friends and families. This system allows them to be sufficient, but also provides them with a sense of security.



# KOREAN CONFIDENCE

Amidst an ever-changing and competitive society, Korean women feel the need to be supported and surrounded by their loved ones who give them a sense of stability.



## What compromises Korean confidence

**RESILIENCE • Being responsible today and tomorrow.** In a success-oriented society, failure is particularly difficult to admit. As an individual, you feel responsible for not achieving your goals in both your professional and personal life. This difficulty is further compounded as the current future feels more uncertain than during the years of economic growth.



**CERTAINTIES • Dealing with an adverse reality together.** The “we” is more common in Korea than the “I”. “I” will be employed only to differentiate oneself from the group. Because ever-changing reality can be threatening, it is important to stick together.



## What drives Korean confidence

**SUPPORT-SYSTEM • Being backed up.** Validation, approbation and encouragement from others is apparent in daily interactions, as Korean language is extremely hierarchic. Appearances matter a lot. Women frequently emphasize how it matters to them that their parents—mothers especially—be supportive of their choices.



**IMPROVING • Losing face and finding it again.** The ability to fight back is highly valued in a society where losing face is probably the biggest confidence compromiser. The capacity to challenge social norms can be externalized, or on the contrary internalized for the sake of appearances.



**ROUTINE • Cultivating daily wisdom.** In Korea, habits, common sense and everyday life provide a feeling of stability that strongly correlates with the support received from family and loved ones. You draw confidence from the people you know you can trust. “To believe” and “to trust” are generally translated as the same word in Korean.



# MEXICAN CONFIDENCE

Raised in a country where *feminicidios* are numerous, Mexican women nonetheless feel very self-confident. They find strength in their education and the support of their loved ones.



## What compromises Mexican confidence

**RESILIENCE • Accepting one's fate.** While Mexican women's resilient confidence is not that low, it ranks lower than many others. It is particularly low for younger women and women without children or alone with a child. It might be due to the social pressure experienced by young Mexican women, who are pressured to get married and start a family.



## What drives Mexican confidence

**INTELLECT • Being educated and skilled to face everyday life.** Being educated and skilled is very important to Mexican women who feel like it's an advantage in their daily life (especially older women, who place it above 9 on a ten point scale). They never doubt their skills and intellectual abilities. In a country where 57% of a generation never graduates high school, being educated makes a difference.



**SUPPORT-SYSTEM • Being valued and supported by others.** It is important for Mexican women to be complimented and feel external validation. The more surrounded they are by their loved ones, the better they feel. This plays a huge part in confidence building.



**ROUTINE • Finding strength in your well-known environment.** Demonstrating good judgement in their daily decisions is not only important for Mexican women, it is also a survival strategy. It helps them in scenarios when they feel threatened, like walking alone by night.

# RUSSIAN CONFIDENCE

Emancipated by work and economic prosperity, Russian women feel that they are experiencing political changes in their very core. Nonetheless, everyday life, and traditional family ties offer them a feeling of stability.



## What compromises Russian confidence

**RESILIENCE • Pattern-driven behavior.** Because past and present Russian institutions are rather procedural, citizens often know or are told, by a teacher, a superior or an administrator, the proper steps to follow in most situations. As these patterns make it hard to fail, this can be reassuring. Nonetheless, cultural automatism leaves little room for Russian women to envision the many possibilities and outcomes of difficult situations.



**CERTAINTIES • Trusting stability.** In an era of prosperity, recent historical events remain vivid in Russian people's minds. Many women clearly remember transitioning from very government-organized lives, to a new world in which their economy and political systems underwent drastic transformations. In the midst of these unstable circumstances, women's faith in the future of their country was shaken.



## What drives Russian confidence

**SUPPORT-SYSTEM • Feeling strong blood-ties.** In every family across the world there are ups and downs, moments of disagreements, tensions, and feelings of distance. In Russia, the bonds that link family members are especially strong as family was a significant pillar of the soviet ideology. Because these values transcended the era, Russian women draw confidence from the fact that they can count on the support of their families even in dire times.



**ROUTINE • Clinging to slavic lore.** Despite being some of the most emancipated women in history, Russian women remain very traditional. Traditions provide a sense of stability and reassurance. Women draw their confidence from habits, integrated common sense and everyday life. This is why Russian folklore and history remain crucial in order to understand the inhabitants' cultural and social habits.





**“SELF CONFIDENCE IS A PROCESS. IT’S NOT SOMETHING THAT YOU’RE BORN WITH, OF COURSE. BUT IF YOU ARE BORN TO A FAMILY WHERE EVERYBODY TELLS YOU THAT YOU ARE SMART AND BEAUTIFUL AND ALL SORTS OF THINGS, THEN I THINK THAT YOU CAN BE CONFIDENT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.”**

**Lilit, Moscow, Russia**

# WHAT DRIVES AND COMPROMISES CONFIDENCE GLOBALLY

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On a global scale, the construction of women's confidence is driven by 6 sources (**Support-systems**, **Routine**, **Certainties**, **Intuition**, **Resemblance** and **Improving**) that allow women to facilitate their social integration. Yet, it is compromised by 5 sources (**Utopias**, **Womanhood**, **Resilience**, **Vocation** and **Transgression**) which are less useful skills for social integration. What drives and compromises confidence globally is a thirst for social integration.

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Analyzing the mechanisms of women's confidence has allowed us to better understand the system on which it is founded. Confidence sources are developed in different capacities, according to the functions they must serve. To use a metaphor, our self-confidence mimics the mechanisms of a train: it is powered by an engine (driving sources of confidence), burdened by a load (compromising sources of confidence) and stabilized by a wagon (intermediary sources of confidence). Overall, the key learning is that sources allowing women to integrate themselves better in society are stronger sources of confidence.

## Compromisers: the load

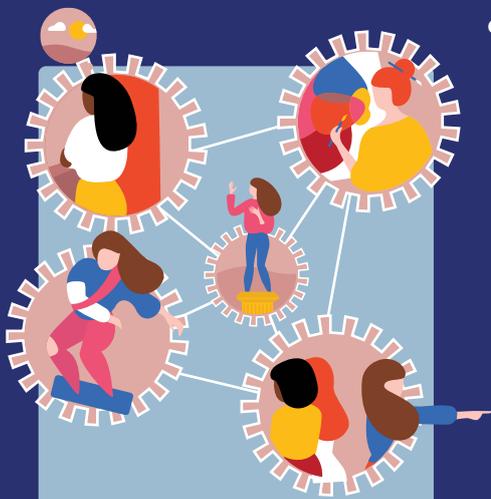
Compromisers are sources that pull women's confidence scores down. When a person recognizes that a source is key to their confidence, and declares that this source is dry, it becomes a compromiser. When a source of confidence becomes a compromiser, improving it can also drastically improve confidence. The "load" gathers experiences that hinder confidence levels, which are consequently called "compromisers": Utopias, Womanhood, Resilience, Vocation and Transgression. To put it in a nutshell, they create an opposing force that partially counters the positive effects of the power engine and drivers.

## Useful sources: the wagon

Other useful sources of self-confidence may be less valued for their ability to build actual confidence. While they still have an impact, they do it in a less consequential way. These less significant factors constitute what we refer to as "the wagon". Yet, even though Intellect, Appearance and Spirituality sources are considered less important, they are generally well-graded. Since these types are navigational and goal-oriented tools, women tend to build self-confidence by asserting themselves (showcasing or giving more importance to their social and academic success, for instance). These experience types are more individual and generally contribute less to confidence levels than their collective-based counterparts.

## Drivers: the power engine

Drivers are sources that increase women's confidence scores. When a person recognizes that a source is key to their confidence, and declares that this source is strong, it becomes a driver. When a source of confidence becomes a driver, improving it can drastically improve confidence. Support-system, Routine, Certainties, Intuition, Resemblance and Improving sources are all driving forces of confidence. This is especially alarming because those sources are restricted in essence.



### COMPROMISERS THE LOAD

**Utopias, Womanhood, Resilience, Vocation and Transgression.** They create a counterforce that partially negates the effects of the power engine and its drivers.



### THE WAGON

**Intellect, Appearance, Spirituality.** The most individual sources generally contribute less to confidence levels than their collective-based counterparts.



### DRIVERS THE POWER ENGINE

**Support-System, Routine, Certainties, Intuition, Resemblance and Improving.** The most collective (normative and established) sources are driving forces of confidence.

# TAKE ACTION!

This document is only the abstract of the 180+ pages White Paper! The purpose of the Women's Confidence initiative is to understand, measure and increase women's confidence globally. We would like to provide extensive data to world actors of civil society, **as well as public and private sectors** in order to skip the trial and error process, **and increase women's sense of confidence now!**

Get the full report on  
[womensconfidence.report](http://womensconfidence.report)

## SHARE THE REPORT

Would you like to share the report? The more we share, the more we participate in increasing women's confidence. **Join us on social media!**

   @wocoreport

## SEND FEEDBACK

If you have great ideas or projects that could benefit our cause, we **would love to discuss them with you. Share your feedback and chat with us!**

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