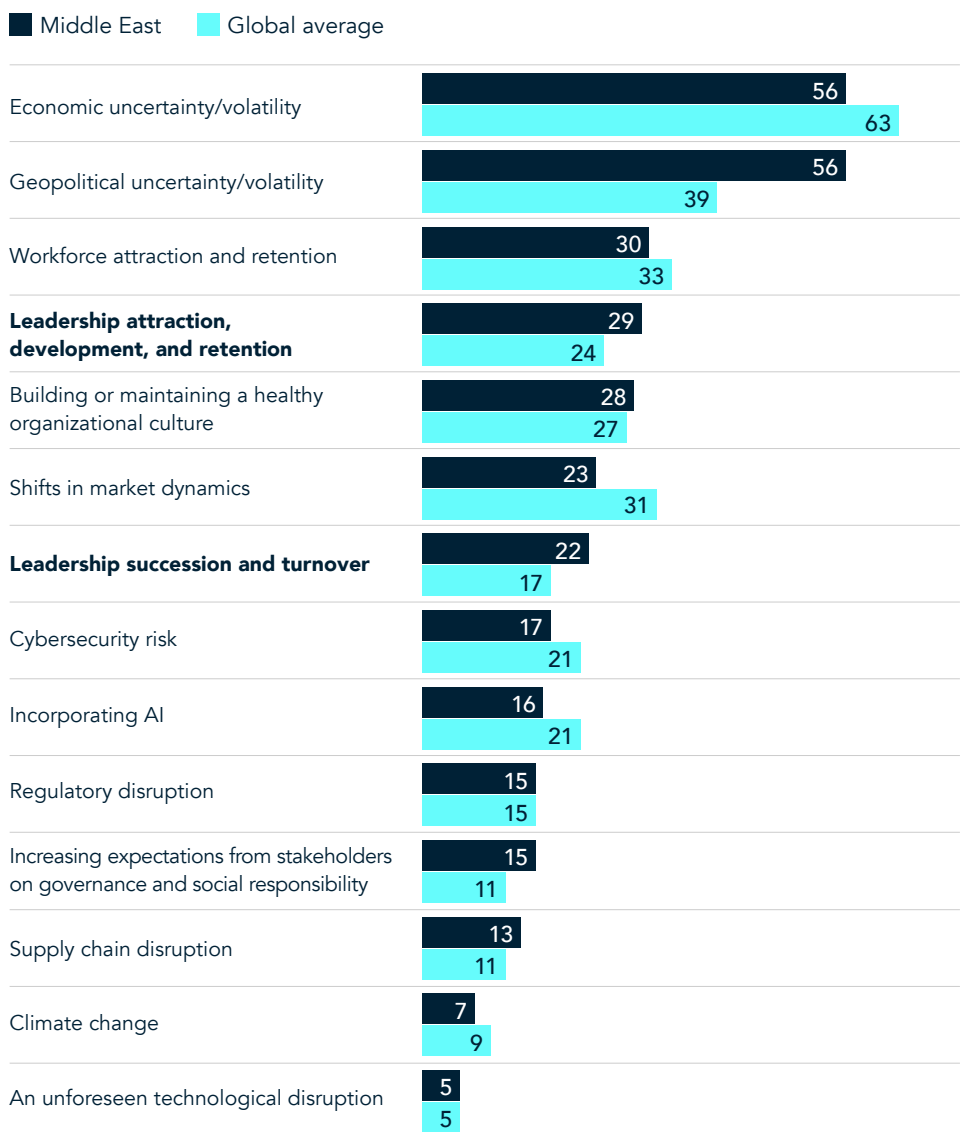ARTICLE

CEO and board confidence monitor: A deep dive on the Middle East

A recent survey of 112 CEOs and board members in the Middle East highlights leaders' concerns about leadership attraction, development, and planning.

Leaders in the Middle East generally see the same topics as significant for their organizations as leaders in other regions: economic and geopolitical uncertainty and volatility as well as building and maintaining and healthy organizational culture are in the top five globally and in the region. However, leaders in the Middle East are more often concerned about leadership attraction, development, and retention, as well as leadership succession and turnover.
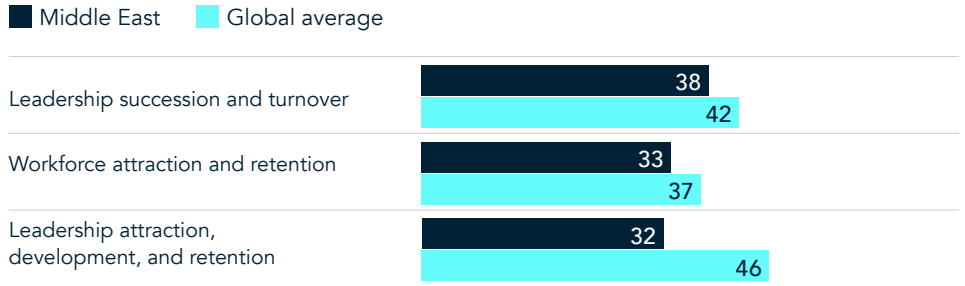
Most significant issues your organization is facing in 2024 (%)

■ Middle East　　■ Global average

Issue	Middle East	Global average
Economic uncertainty/volatility	56	63
Geopolitical uncertainty/volatility	56	39
Workforce attraction and retention	30	33
Leadership attraction, development, and retention	29	24
Building or maintaining a healthy organizational culture	28	27
Shifts in market dynamics	23	31
Leadership succession and turnover	22	17
Cybersecurity risk	17	21
Incorporating AI	16	21
Regulatory disruption	15	15
Increasing expectations from stakeholders on governance and social responsibility	15	11
Supply chain disruption	13	11
Climate change	7	9
An unforeseen technological disruption	5	5

Source: Heidrick & Struggles' CEO and board confidence monitor survey, November 2023, n=112 CEOs and board members in the Middle East

And on those key issues, only around a third of leaders in the Middle East who are concerned are confident in their organization's ability to manage them. They are even less confident on these issues than leaders around the world.
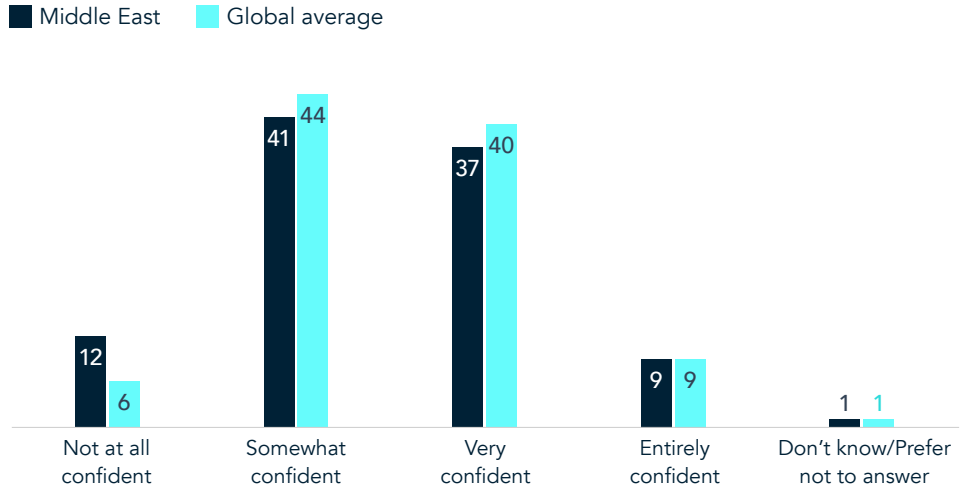
Confidence in organization's ability to manage those issues (very or entirely confident) (%)

■ Middle East ■ Global average

Leadership succession and turnover
- Middle East: 38
- Global average: 42

Workforce attraction and retention
- Middle East: 33
- Global average: 37

Leadership attraction, development, and retention
- Middle East: 32
- Global average: 46

Source: Heidrick & Struggles' CEO and board confidence monitor survey, November 2023, n=112 CEOs and board members in the Middle East

And although the region's leaders have about the same level of confidence in how their leadership development strategy is positioning the organization for the future, a startling 12% have no confidence at all—double the global share.

Confidence in leadership development strategy (%)

■ Middle East ■ Global average

	Not at all confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident	Entirely confident	Don't know/Prefer not to answer
Middle East	12	41	37	9	1
Global average	6	44	40	9	1

Source: Heidrick & Struggles' CEO and board confidence monitor survey, November 2023, n=112 CEOs and board members in the Middle East

These findings highlight the challenges leaders in the region are facing as they seek to develop more leadership talent at home while also being attractive to the best talent from around the world. Our work with clients suggests three steps boards can take to meet those challenges.

1 Strategic workforce planning for the future

Boards and leaders must engage at the top in terms of the organization's strategic planning road map (ideally on a three-to-five-year horizon), skill sets for the future, and the plan to attract best-fit talent from the market and develop leaders from within the organization. Often talent acquisition planning is limited to annual cycles. Therefore, shaping a rolling, forward-looking perspective is helpful in enabling the talent strategy to deliver the desired results in a timely manner.

2 Encouraging leaders' learning and development

Boards can help organizations keep the focus on building internal capabilities via a systematic approach to leader development. Bringing succession planning discussions (at least up to two or three levels below the C-suite within an organization) as an agenda item to board-led committee discussions serves as a mechanism to allow for the visibility and development of current and emerging leaders. It also allows for a check on diversity and talent mobility. Regular assessments of leaders, review of individual and collective competency gaps, and plans to close those gaps for the future are encouraged as an ongoing discipline for organizations that focus on talent health.

3 Enabling a culture that attracts talent and is aligned to your organization's business ambition

To ensure that leaders stay and positively contribute to an organization's goals, it is critical that boards and the C-suite define and lead the cascade of culture within an organization. How leaders role model the desired culture and values of an organization influences how self-motivated individuals will be to perform within that environment.

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CEO & Board of Directors Practice

Heidrick & Struggles' CEO & Board of Directors Practice has been built on our ability to execute top-level assignments and counsel CEOs and board members on the complex issues directly affecting their businesses.

We pride ourselves on being our clients' most trusted advisor and offer an integrated suite of services to help manage these challenges and their leadership assets. This ranges from the acquisition of talent through executive search to providing counsel in areas that include succession planning, executive and board assessment, and board effectiveness reviews.

Our CEO & Board of Directors Practice leverages our most accomplished search and leadership consulting professionals globally who understand the ever-transforming nature of leadership. This expertise, combined with in-depth industry, sector, and regional knowledge; differentiated research capabilities; and intellectual capital, enables us to provide sound global coverage for our clients.

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