

Research conducted February - March 2019

Confidence: The Destination or a Journey?



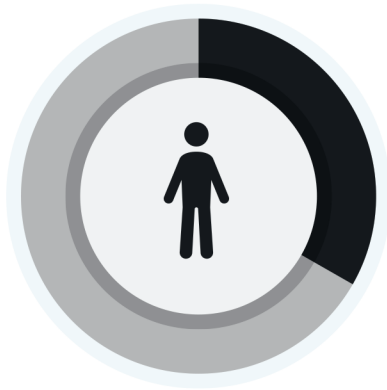
Self-confidence is important in all aspects of life, yet it's something that many of us struggle with.

We asked over 400 people how confident they feel, what impacts their confidence and what has helped them grow their self-confidence.

Here's what we found....

We surveyed **427
respondents and
found that...**

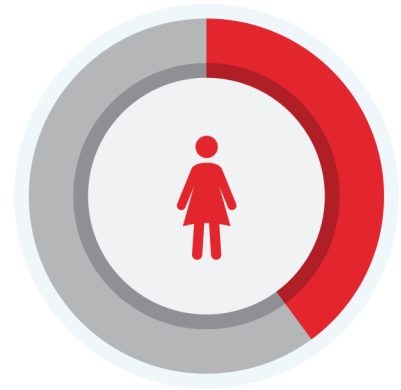
1. There is a Gender Confidence Gap ...but it's not as big as we think



44% of men

VS

56% of women



were often or always **bothered** by their level of **confidence**.

2. There is an Age Curve to Confidence

63% think others are more
confident than them.

Confidence is low up to the
age of **24**

(currently our
Generation Z those
born between
1994 and 2016)

Confidence then increases
between the ages of 25-54

and starts to
decrease again
in later life

3. Beware the Imposter

52%

of those surveyed felt that their level of Confidence often or always held them back.

They are likely to be experiencing Imposter Syndrome, that sense that as a minority you may doubt your accomplishments and have a persistent internalised fear of being exposed as a "fraud". As a result, you hold yourself back from taking opportunities.



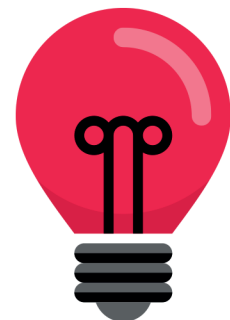
4. Your Boss Matters



Your boss and colleagues have the biggest negative impact on your confidence, followed by early life experience. Choose where you work and who you work with wisely, and if you are a boss, consider your impact!

5. Trying Something New is the Ultimate Confidence Boost

67% of respondents thought that new experiences had increased their confidence, from going for that promotion, learning a new skill to moving to another country. They'd benefitted from stepping out of their comfort zone.



In addition...

Confidence varied based on gender, age and ethnicity, but there were also other determining factors, such as early life experience and current life and work context.

Confidence isn't a destination, but an ongoing life journey, one in which there will be situations in which you are less confident or that knock your confidence.

People can become more confident with life experience, however to accelerate that process, gaining new experiences was the preferred way.



Demographic

Gender

91.8%
FEMALE



7.96%
MALE

Country of Residence



Just over three quarters (76.58%) of the respondents were based in the in UK
And the next highest population of **6%** were based in the US. The remaining respondents were scattered around the Rest of the World

Nationality/Ethnicity



Of the respondents who live in the UK,
56% were British and **45%** were from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds

Age

67%

of the respondents were
in the **35-54** year old age
range

14%

were **25-34**, **13%** were **55+**
and just **6%** were **under 24**
years old

Levels of Confidence

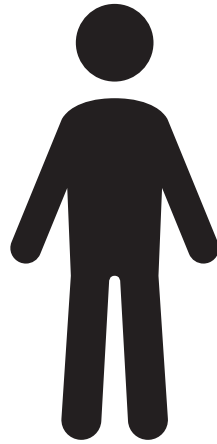
Overall **63%** of respondents often or
always felt that others were more confident
than them

For **56%** of respondents their level of
Confidence was something that bothered
them

And **52%** of respondents said that their
level of Confidence held them back

A Look by Gender

Men



Men overall were less bothered about their level of confidence and are less likely to let confidence hold them back than women

47%

of men thought others were more confident than them

44%

of men were often or always bothered by their level of confidence

44%

said that their level of confidence often or always held them back

"My confidence has increased, and become real rather than feigned, as I've learnt more about myself, my subject and many other things. When younger I faked confidence and came across as arrogant because I thought it was expected of me"

In contrast to...

Women



64%

of women
thought others
were more
confident than
them

57%

of women were
often or always
bothered by
their level of
confidence

52%

of women said
that their level of
confidence often
or always held
them back

"Education and acceptance of confidence is critical in growth. We need to allow women to be confident, make mistakes, learn from them".

"I find that I am quite confident in some areas and extraordinarily lacking in confidence in others. I will happily do public speaking but am terrified of networking".

"My confidence is low because I don't feel that I am doing a good job at work, because there are too many demands on me, and I can't do everything justice".

If we take a look at the respondents with black and minority backgrounds...

Those from black and minority backgrounds overall were a little less bothered about their level of confidence and less likely to let confidence hold them back than the overall group.

However, if we compare men from black and minority backgrounds to the overall group of men - they were more likely to think that others were more confident than them, be bothered by their level of self-confidence and let their confidence hold them back than the wider group.

When comparing men and women from black and minority backgrounds to each other, men from black and minority backgrounds seem to be more bothered about their level of confidence than men in general, although this didn't translate to them letting confidence hold them back at higher levels.

60% of women from black and minority backgrounds thought others were more confident than them in comparison to **50%** of men from Black and Minority backgrounds.

49% of women from Black and Minority backgrounds were bothered by their level of confidence compared to **59%** of men from Black and Minority backgrounds.

50-51% of men and women from Black and Minority backgrounds let their confidence hold them back.

Some explanation for this could be their experience of Imposter Syndrome, the sense that as a minority you may doubt your accomplishments and have a persistent internalised fear of being exposed as a **"fraud"**.

It could also be the presence of Unconscious Bias, a bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences, such as all overweight people are lazy. This bias can impact perception and therefore impact confidence.

Women and those from minority groups are expected to be modest, in fact research shows that it is often frowned upon when they are not. A negative reaction to confident behaviour can set a person back.

What respondents from black and minority backgrounds said...

"English is not my first language and I used to work in an English-speaking country. During that time, I felt frontal communication lowered my confidence".

"I also feel that my knowledge and experience is under a microscope when I join a new firm/start a new role. This level of scrutiny (real or imaginary) can impact my confidence".

"It's about realising that I don't benefit from the 'selective helping' that other colleagues male and female have bestowed on them by their managers".

Age was more than just a number, in fact...

Age showed up to be one of the determining factors in the respondents' level of confidence.

We found that there is an age curve of Confidence, it is low up to the age of **24** and then increases between **25-54** with age and experience and starts to decrease again in later life.

Under 25's

85% think others are more confident than them

73% are bothered by their level of confidence

77% said their level of confidence holds them back.

"Being unprepared and the lack of experience to know how to handle certain situations impacts my confidence."

At 25-34

70% think others are more confident than them

67% are bothered by their level of confidence

65% say their level of confidence holds them back.

"I feel that my personal confidence has been a journey of sorts and has increased massively as I've gotten older, but also reaffirmed by other people as well as being content with who I am and my values."

At 35-54

60% think others are more confident than them

53% are bothered by their level of confidence

48% say their level of confidence holds them back.

"My confidence sky rocketed when I turned forty. Something in me just didn't much care what other people thought anymore"

55+

62% think others are more confident than them

58% are bothered by their level of confidence

53% say their level of confidence holds them back.

Poor health, redundancy, loss of a partner, or the breakdown of a relationship were cited as reasons for loss of confidence in later life.

In terms of what negatively impacted Confidence – the top 3 things were...

1. Relationships with Boss
2. Relationships with Colleagues
3. Early Life Experiences

"I was bullied at primary school which caused life long issues. Exacerbated by being targeted by my boss."

"I was bullied at school for being bright and in STEM subjects...recently in my last position, a new senior manager was generally aggressive and bullying towards their staff and highly critical of everything I was doing."

There was a plethora of other responses, including family relations, breakdown of a romantic relationship and the loss of a job.

When asked what positively impacts confidence

The top responses ranked in order were:

1. New Experiences
2. Friends and Family
3. One to One Coaching/Mentoring
4. Colleagues
5. Group Training

"Just forcing myself out of my comfort zone regularly; also, writing out a bio of my experience as though I'm talking about someone else makes me realise how much I've accomplished."

"Support from various therapists over the years, support from family and friends and the desire to show my daughter that if I can do things so can she."

"Career coaching was invaluable in giving me confidence. Listening to feminist empowering podcasts...also helped me hugely as I realised that many others felt like I did."

Again, there were many other responses, such as books, support groups, and receiving feedback which all helped.

Lastly, confidence is situational

Many respondents felt that confidence isn't at a constant level for them, it varies depending on the situation.

"I'm really confident until it comes to applying for jobs or a promotion. I read a job description and initially think 'it's got my name all over it' and then suddenly get plagued with self-doubt."

"I feel like my confidence affects me when I least expect it to, or in times where I need it the most. I sometimes feel betrayed by my confidence or lack of. I feel I lack confidence in things that I don't need to lack confidence in."

"I find that I am quite confident in some areas and extraordinarily lacking in confidence in others. I will happily do public speaking but am terrified about networking; I speak up in meetings, but I lack confidence in my technical abilities."

One respondent summarised the confidence journey beautifully

"I have found that self confidence is a daily task to get rid of the fear and try to do small things that you get you out of your comfort zone."

Questions that arise from this research:

How can we help 'bosses' recognise the impact of their behaviour on staff confidence and the implications for workplace happiness, productivity and success?

How can we preserve our confidence into old age?

Why are black and minority men more bothered about their levels of confidence than other groups?

Here are some final tips to help step out of your comfort zone and increase your confidence:

1. Stop & Reflect – Life is so busy that we are often so keen to move forward on to the next thing, that we can often miss out on reviewing our past successes and gaining the confidence boost that provides.

TRY THIS: Think of why you were employed for your last role. What qualities, attributes and skills did they see in you that they thought would be a valuable addition to the organisation? Now remember that perception is reality, if they saw it in you, it must be true.

2. Take an Experimental Attitude – The only way to know if you can do something is to try. Craft experiments outside of your usual area of expertise that you can learn from.

TRY THIS: Volunteer in a safe space to do something that you wouldn't usually do. For example, if you've been given feedback that you are not developing good relationships with your team, you could volunteer at a charity where developing relationships is an essential part of the role. There are many community groups, faith groups and charities that would welcome your support. Win-win.

3. Develop Realistic Self-Awareness – It's natural to be self-critical and to compare how you're feeling inside with how others look on the outside. In situations where we feel that we are the minority, we can feel this more acutely. Often, we have an unrealistic sense of our flaws and try to overcompensate for them.

TRY THIS: Get feedback. Ask your colleagues,

friends, family and clients how you are doing. Be specific about the areas that you want feedback on and try to gain an insight into your blind spots, the things that they have noticed about you that you might not have seen in yourself. Take on board the strengths that they notice in you and use those to overcome your weaknesses.

4. Look Confident until you become it – They say we eat with our eyes and I think we look for signs of confidence with our eyes also. How you look, your voice and language all matter. This is not more important than your competence, but it helps.

TRY THIS: Stand in front in the mirror and practice standing tall, speaking slowly and clearly, and not fidgeting. Wear clothes that make you feel confident. Observe those who exude confidence and see what you can learn from their body language.

5. Continually develop yourself – Knowledge is power and the more informed you are, the better decision you can make. We all feel unconfident when we don't have all the facts or the know-how.

TRY THIS: Look for industry publications, courses, networking events, mentors or coaches to help you improve your knowledge.

For further tips, online programmes and coaching to help you develop your Confidence see www.jennygarrett.global