

Gen Z is poised to  
reframe the future,  
but are business and  
education ready?

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# Foreword



**Asheesh Advani,**  
CEO, JA Worldwide



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EY EMEA Area Managing  
Partner and EY Global Leader –  
Women. Fast forward

As the **largest generational cohort in history**<sup>1</sup>, Gen Z's attitudes and expectations are poised to shape the next normal. If businesses are to thrive, and education systems are to successfully prepare young people to adapt and flourish in the future of work, then it's vital for leaders to understand this generation's ambitions and expectations.

Born between 1997<sup>2</sup> and 2007, Gen Z is the first generation to have been born entirely in the internet age, with high mobile phone penetration<sup>3</sup>. Although many Gen Z youth may commonly be seen with a phone in hand, the heart of this generation extends well beyond a selfie-taking stereotype. Coming of age amidst the tumult of a climate emergency and a global pandemic, Gen Z has not only been **more digitally connected**<sup>4</sup> than any preceding generation during their formative years, but also more aware of environmental issues,<sup>5</sup> more likely to advocate on behalf of others, and more optimistic<sup>6</sup> about the opportunities presented by a world that's evolving faster than ever.

**Every day, in our work with students, we witness the world-changing attitudes that this generation proudly embraces. Every day, we are inspired by their curiosity, connectedness, ingenuity, and resilience.**

Where others see threats of automation-driven job loss, Gen Z sees a chance to dig into the more creative work that robots can't crack.

Where others feel fear about an unstable future, Gen Z feels optimistic about its abilities to set things straight and tackle global challenges.

Where others might back down, Gen Z stands empowered and confident.

In recognition of their great potential to navigate the future, EY and JA Worldwide (JA) teamed up to get a better sense of the attitudes and beliefs that drive the nearly 6,000 Gen Z survey respondents, all of whom have participated in JA programs.

Our two global organizations have worked together in more than 25 countries to bring entrepreneurship education to thousands of students. This has given us the opportunity to survey and speak with a vast sample of Gen Z youth from around the world, with 17 countries included in this study. Although our findings support the hypothesis formed in classrooms and virtual sessions over the years – that Gen Z is well-placed and well-prepared to take on the world – the results yield quite a few surprises as well.

We've grouped our findings into 10 key insights that together tell a story of how Gen Z youth see themselves: their skills, their learning preferences, their feelings about the future and their ambitions and dreams.

Although many business leaders and educators already understand what makes Gen Z tick, we hope the insights in this report inspire readers to go one step further. Consider your role in helping Gen Z youth achieve their larger-than-life aspirations.

How can your organization help to provide the experiential education this generation yearns for?

How can you personally support Gen Z in acquiring the skills and attitudes that the working world of the future will require?

Preparing Gen Z for employment and entrepreneurship takes a village. Working together, we can help prepare this generation of young people to take on the unprecedented challenges the world faces.

<sup>1</sup> "How the next generation will shape the next normal." *EY*, 28 January 2021

<sup>2</sup> Merriman, Marcie. "Is your business ready for Gen Z?" *EY*, 28 May 2018.

<sup>3</sup> "The Mobile Economy 2020." *GSMA Intelligence*, 2020. 67% of the global population has a mobile subscription and there are 8.0 billion SIM connections

<sup>4</sup> "Gen Z – a generation of contradictions." *EY*, April 2020.

<sup>5</sup> "Climate Change Ranks Highest as Vital Issue of Our Time – Generation Z Survey." *Amnesty International*, 10 December 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Maroney, Joyce. "Meet Gen Z – Optimistic and Anxious." *The Workforce Institute at UKG*, 23 Sept. 2019. The research included people from ages 16-25 across 12 countries and 4 continents

# Demographics



5,725

respondents

17 years

average age

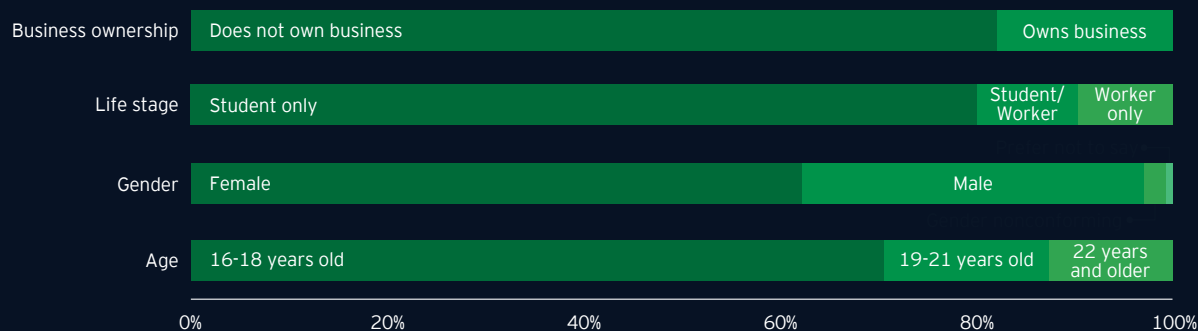
17

countries in 5 continents represented

Survey distribution spanned JA's global network of students and alumni, with 5,725 responses from 17 countries. Responses were collected from individuals in formal education (students) and in the workforce (workers).

Survey respondents ranged in age from 16-25 years, with respondents aged 16-18 comprising 71% of the overall sample.

The Gen Z sample group was drawn from JA participants and alumni who opted into taking the survey. Given JA programming is focused on entrepreneurship topics, respondents had been exposed to entrepreneurship education and future skills-focused topics. In other words, this survey's participants are likely more knowledgeable about the questions posed than peers who had not been through JA programs.



# Executive summary



In late 2020, EY and JA teamed up to conduct a quantitative evaluation of nearly 6,000 young people, all active or former JA participants, aged 16 to 25, concerning their experiences in education and their attitudes toward the future.

Respondents hailed from 17 countries across 5 continents and all had received some training in employment and entrepreneurship skillsets and mindsets. While not representative of Gen Z in its entirety, this comprehensive survey endeavored to get at the heart of these ambitious Gen Z representatives' thoughts, feelings and attitudes toward global trends, and how they believe the education system can improve.

The findings reveal a generation of young people who are highly engaged; who feel only somewhat prepared, yet largely optimistic about the future; who are eager for more hands-on experiential learning opportunities, especially in topics related to global citizenship and the environment; who feel their education should not be limited to the classroom and that business should be stepping up to offer new forms of learning.

Specifically, these leaders among Gen Z are asking for educators to offer innovative and creative learning opportunities that augment traditional teaching methods, and for businesses to support their development and education. Gen Z survey respondents said they feel technologically-adept and show a high degree of self-sufficiency. They are natural collaborators, keen to get involved in problem-solving. However, they said they are less confident that formal education is getting them job-ready – a feeling that deepens when they enter the workforce.

Gen Z seeks challenging, meaningful careers that are both intellectually and socially stimulating: jobs that will engage them in original thought and involve daily interaction with a diverse group of individuals. Unlike previous generations, they see the forces of globalization, automation and shifting work norms as opportunities that will free them to work flexibly and focus on high-value projects that matter.

To achieve their career goals, the youth in this study are eager to build human connections with people from other backgrounds and engage stakeholders outside the education system – such as those in business and government – as part of their educational experiences.

The business community, especially, has a significant opportunity to engage in Gen Z's education, both for their benefit and for the benefit of companies, who are looking to shape the skills of their future employees.

**As this report concludes, in listening and responding to the voices of Gen Z, educators and the business community can better realize the distinct roles they can each play to best prepare this rising generation for the future it is soon to own.**



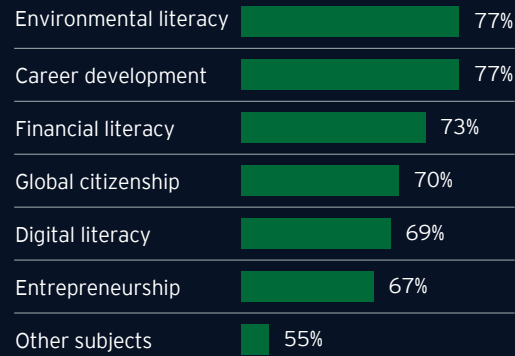
# Gen Z: A generation poised to reframe the future

## 82%

of Gen Z respondents feel hopeful about finding meaningful work and addressing global challenges in 2030

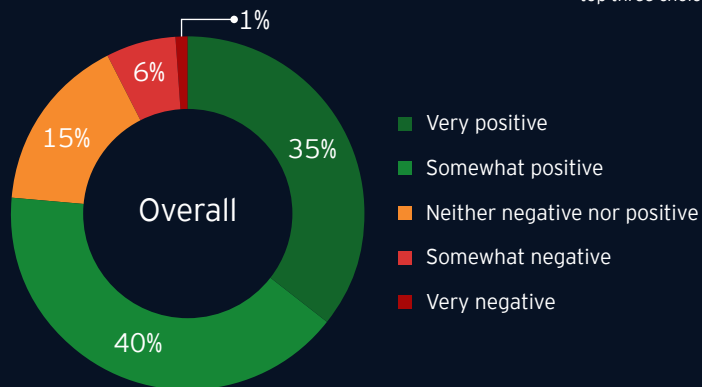
### School subject ranking

Respondents conveyed a preference for school subjects with a forward-thinking focus



\*Percentages indicate respondents ranking response in their top three choices.

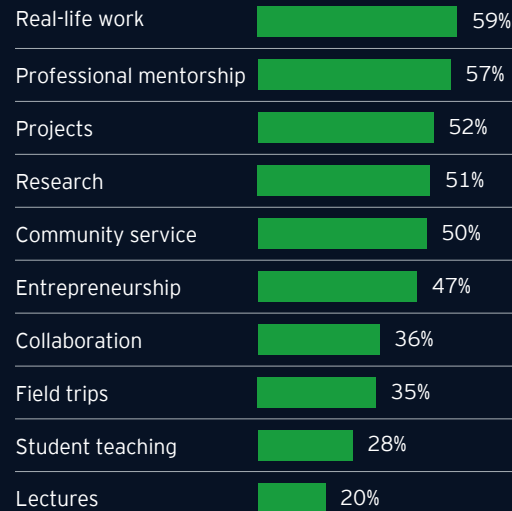
### Feelings about automation, globalization and new work norms



## 54%

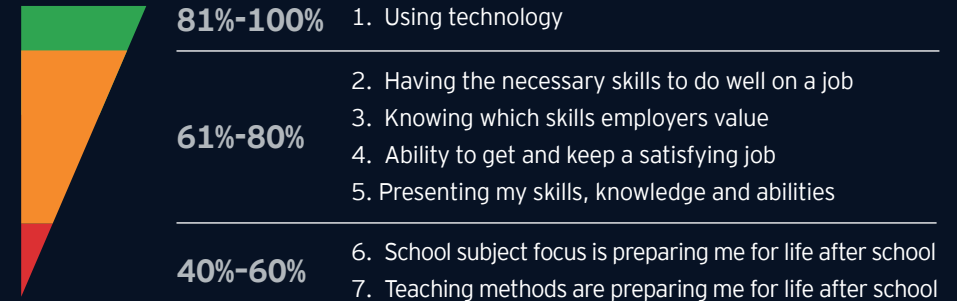
of Gen Z respondents feel their education has successfully prepared them to succeed in 2030

### The education system would be improved with more learning opportunities focused on

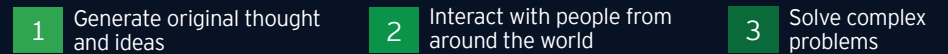


\*Percentages indicate respondents ranking response in their top three choices.

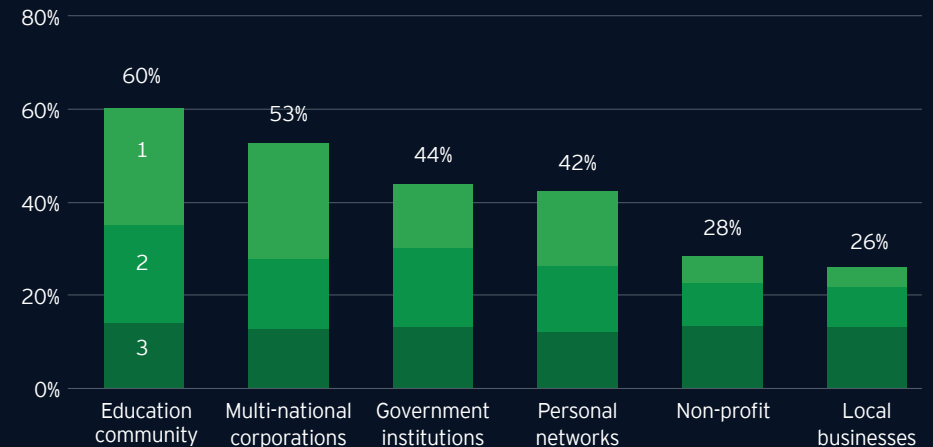
### Confidence rankings: Gen Z'ers feel confident in



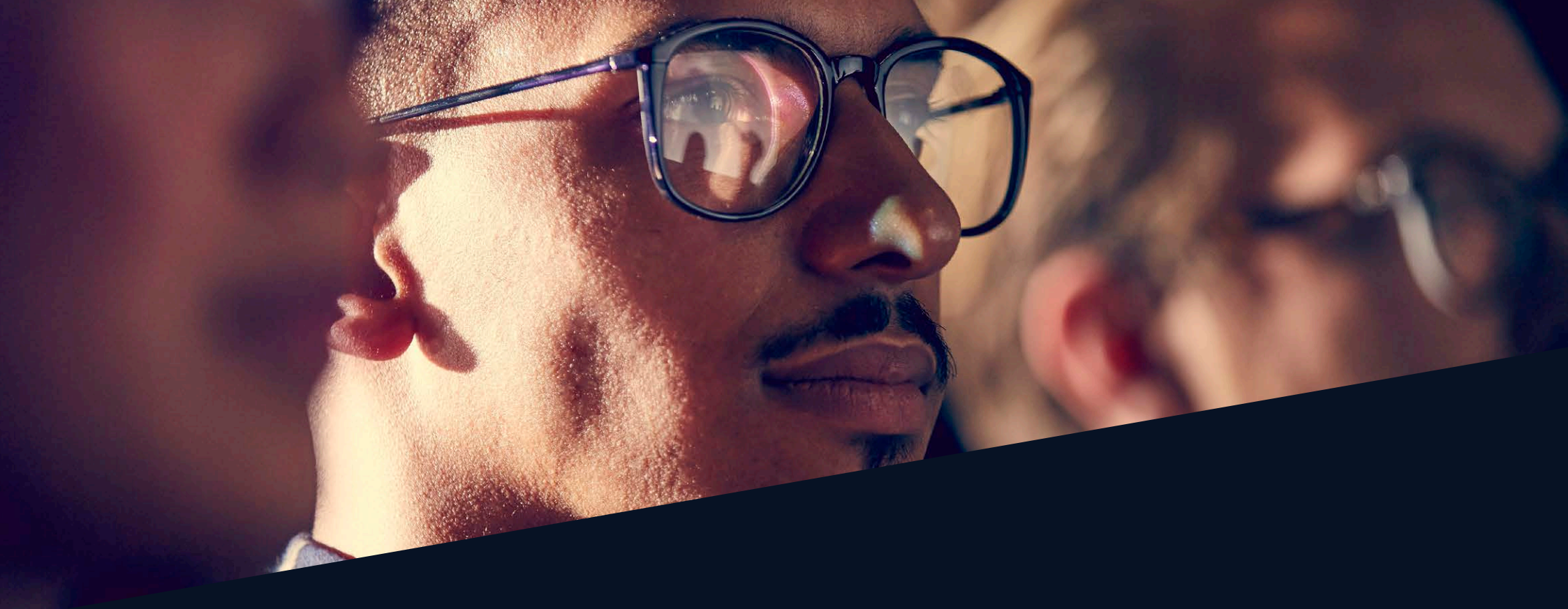
### Top three traits of an ideal career:



### Who is responsible for preparing Gen Z for the future?



\*Percentages indicate respondents ranking response in their top three choices.



## Attributes and aspirations of an entrepreneurial Gen Z cohort

Gen Z encompasses the approximately 1.3 billion young people in the world<sup>7</sup> aged 14 to 24 – ranging from those in primary education, to those actively in the workforce and entering the professional workforce. As uncovered in a 2020 EY study, **Gen Z – a generation of contradiction**, Gen Z differs in many ways from the generation that preceded them. Unlike millennials, who grew up during an economic boom, this generation has been defined by coming of age during the Great Recession with previously unknown levels of digital connectivity, and then redefined by the global pandemic.


Gen Z has also navigated an increasingly polarized political landscape in a world saturated by smartphones, social media

and a 24-hour news cycle. Overall, the generation faces an unpredictable world economy, the global strain of climate change and the rapid-fire technological evolution that will accompany the world's response to these challenges. This generation will require new skills and mindsets, adapted for new contexts, and nurtured by their educational experiences.

**The following 10 key insights together tell a story of an entrepreneurial cohort within Gen Z: who they are, what they want and how they see themselves.** Read on to discover their key attributes, their learning preferences, their feelings about the future, and their ambitions and dreams.

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<sup>7</sup> World Population Prospects 2019. *United Nations Population Division Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. 2020 estimate of ages 14-25.



# 1

Overwhelmingly optimistic about 2030

**55%**

of Gen Z respondents feel hopeful about finding meaningful work and addressing global challenges in 2025

**82%**

feel hopeful about finding meaningful work and addressing global challenges in 2030





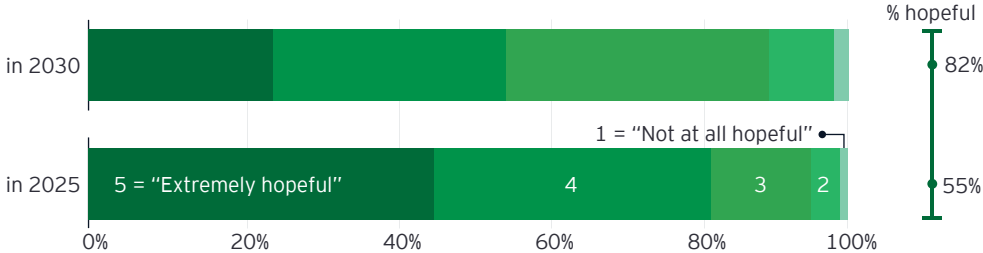
Despite being in the midst of a global pandemic and concurrent recession, Gen Z respondents are incredibly hopeful about finding fulfilling work and addressing global challenges in the next 10 years.


These results are surprising and deeply meaningful. Gen Z's optimism and intention to shape the future are core tenets of this cohort of respondents, one that drives their interest in a learning environment and career trajectory that will prepare them for the challenges and opportunities unique to the era ahead.

Additionally, Gen Z respondents are much more hopeful about finding work and addressing global challenges in 2030 than they are in 2025. This

may be due to the fact that the average age of survey respondents was 17; students may feel more optimistic about a timeframe when they are sure to be out of school and have more control over their lives. They may feel that, in 10 years' time, they will be old enough to have the knowledge and skills to address global challenges, make their way in the world of work and even run their own businesses.

Gen Z's sense of hope for finding meaningful work and addressing global challenges





Entrepreneurial ambitions abound, with a yearning for original thought

65%

of Gen Z respondents already in the workforce expect that, in 10 years, they will be running their own business\*

\*Given JA Worldwide's emphasis on entrepreneurship education and that survey respondents were self-selected JA alumni and students, this response may skew favorably toward entrepreneurship.





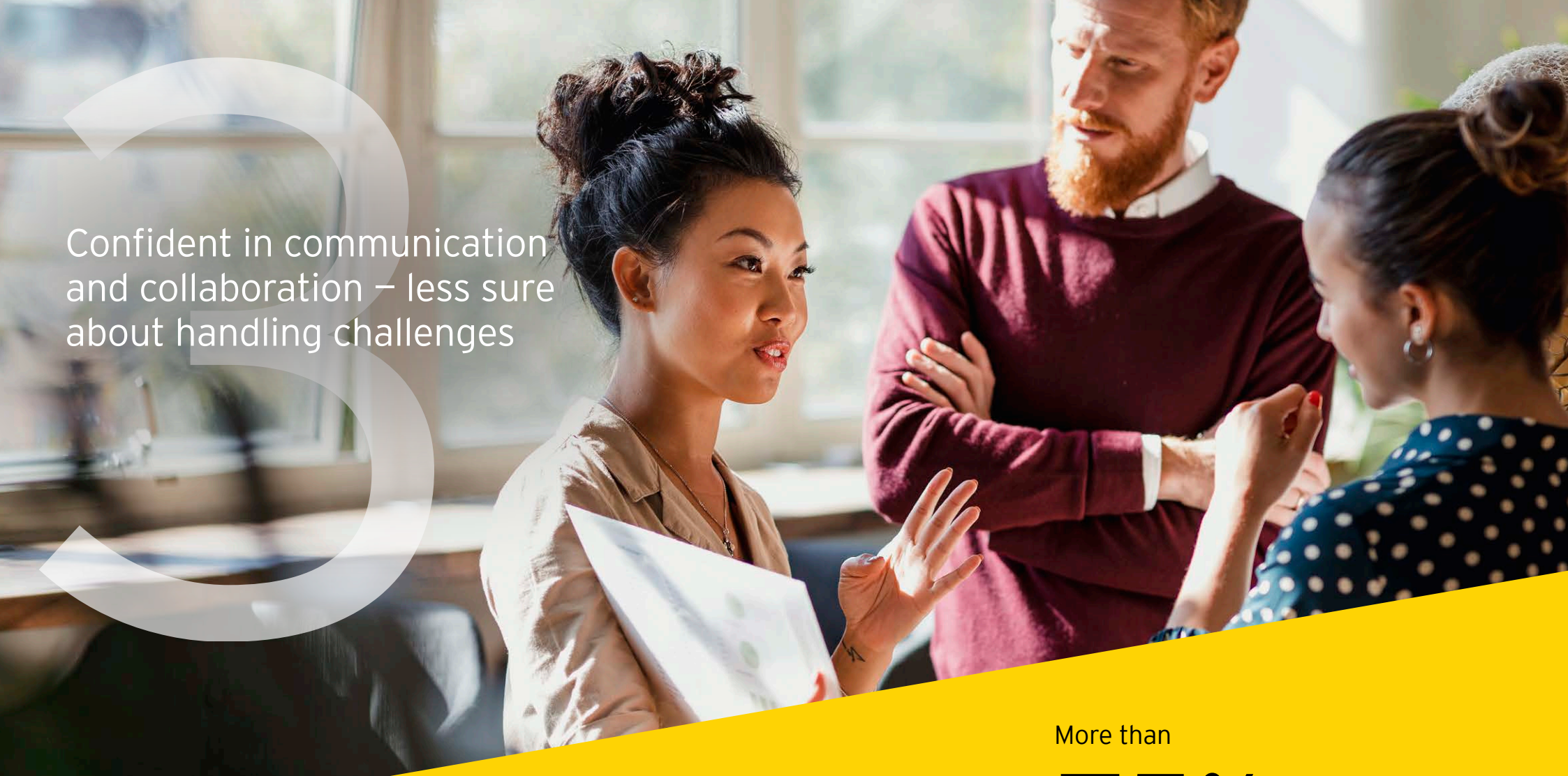
This Gen Z cohort ranked the opportunity to generate original thought and ideas as the #1 trait of an ideal career.

Overall, 53% of survey respondents hope to be running their own businesses in ten years; this aspiration is more common among those already in the workforce, with 65% of Gen Z workers stating a desire to own a business in ten years.

Given their exposure to employment and entrepreneurship programming, it follows that the entrepreneurial aspirations of this group shine through when asked to rank their ideal career traits. This group said they are increasingly seeking out careers that are both intellectually and socially stimulating, with the most attractive opportunities being those that engage them in original thought and involve daily interaction with a diverse group of people. These findings suggest that Gen Z will likely seek dynamic, challenging and meaningful careers that see them solving community problems by working collaboratively across borders.

#### Ranked characteristics of an ideal career

- 1 Generate original thought and ideas
- 2 Interact with people from around the world
- 3 Solve complex problems
- 4 Extend compassion and empathy to others
- 5 Perfect my skills
- 6 Build new technologies
- 7 Build tangible products
- 8 Collaborate with others
- 9 Analyze data



Confident in communication  
and collaboration – less sure  
about handling challenges

More than

**75%**

of respondents state they know  
how to listen and work with others,  
solve problems, participate and  
voice their ideas



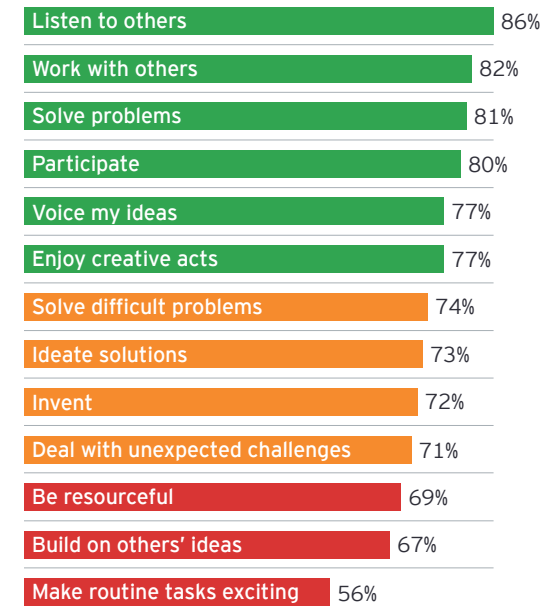


This generation will need to be equipped with the mindsets and cognitive flexibility needed to embrace the unknown: communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking – also known as the “4Cs.”


Gen Z participants report feeling a high level of confidence in the 4Cs, with more than 75% of respondents stating they feel they know how to listen and work with others, solve problems, participate, voice their ideas and enjoy creative acts.

Notably, relative to collaborative skills, Gen Z respondents feel slightly less confident in skills related to ideating such as thinking on their feet and dealing with the unexpected. The areas in which they felt least confident are related to resourcefulness and to improving upon what exists – suggesting that while they identify as a generation of original thinkers, they may struggle to integrate into the workforce or combine their ideas in meaningful ways once there.

I know how to...\*



\*Percentage of Gen Z respondents who indicated they know how to do the following tasks



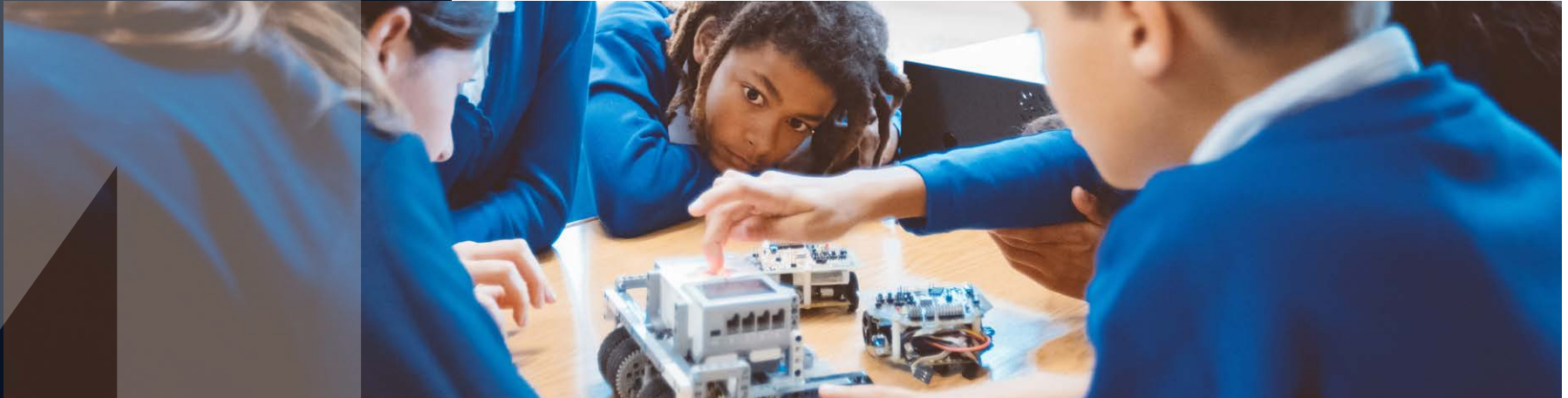
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High confidence in job skills and tech abilities despite mixed perceptions of school

54%

of respondents believe their education has prepared them for success in 2030

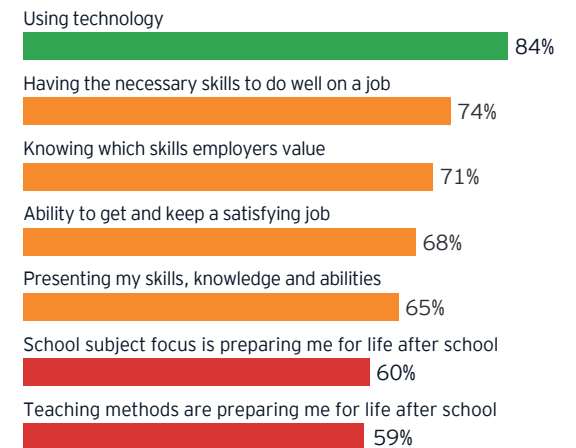




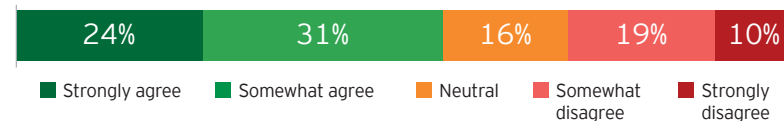
When it comes to their sense of preparedness for the future working world, Gen Z respondents display a strong confidence in their ability to use technology, ranking their confidence in this area well above other areas.


However, respondents are less confident that formal education is fully aligned to the demands of the future and global citizenship. Notably, approximately 40% of Gen Z workers surveyed do not believe the subject focus or teaching methods in their education will successfully prepare them for life in 2030. Just over half of survey respondents agreed that the education system is preparing them for the future, lending credence to calls for the system to evolve. Teaching methodologies, breadth of school subjects and learning tools should be evaluated and reconfigured to ensure that Gen Z will be prepared with the mindsets and skills needed to succeed in the future.

**Confidence rankings: Gen Z feels confident in...**



**My education is preparing/has prepared me to succeed in 2030**



A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue and white polka-dot button-down shirt and dark pants, stands in an office. She has her right hand on her hip and is holding a tablet in her left hand. The office background is blurred, showing desks, computers, and shelves.

Once in the workforce,  
diminished sense of  
preparedness and  
increased self-sufficiency

10%

drop in confidence that school  
had prepared them once Gen Z  
respondents entered the workforce





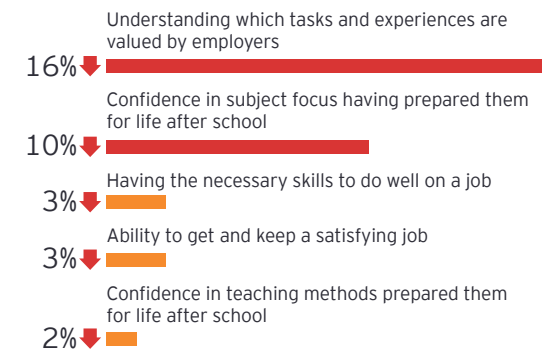
Once in the workforce, respondents' confidence in their level of preparedness diminishes.

Some in this cohort discovered they did not understand which job-ready skills employers value. In particular, they report feeling less prepared to think on their feet and solve problems than current students.

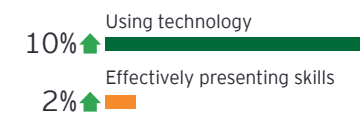
The grittiness students report seems to wane as they experience the true demands of workforce, in comparison to their preliminary expectations. Once in the workforce, Gen Z respondents also reported a decline in their level of certainty that their education had prepared them for the working world.

The findings of this survey and other research suggest that a greater focus on job-ready skills is needed. Only 54% of this Gen Z cohort believe the education system is preparing them for the future of work. Employers feel similarly,<sup>8</sup> often finding that new employees don't have the required skill sets in both hard and soft skills.

**Compared with current students, Gen Z respondents who have entered the workforce feel a diminished sense of confidence in:**



**Level of confidence increased in only two competencies for workers compared with their student counterparts:**



<sup>8</sup> Wiley Education Services, & Future Workplace. (2019). Closing the skills gap 2019. Louisville, KY: Wiley edu, LLC.



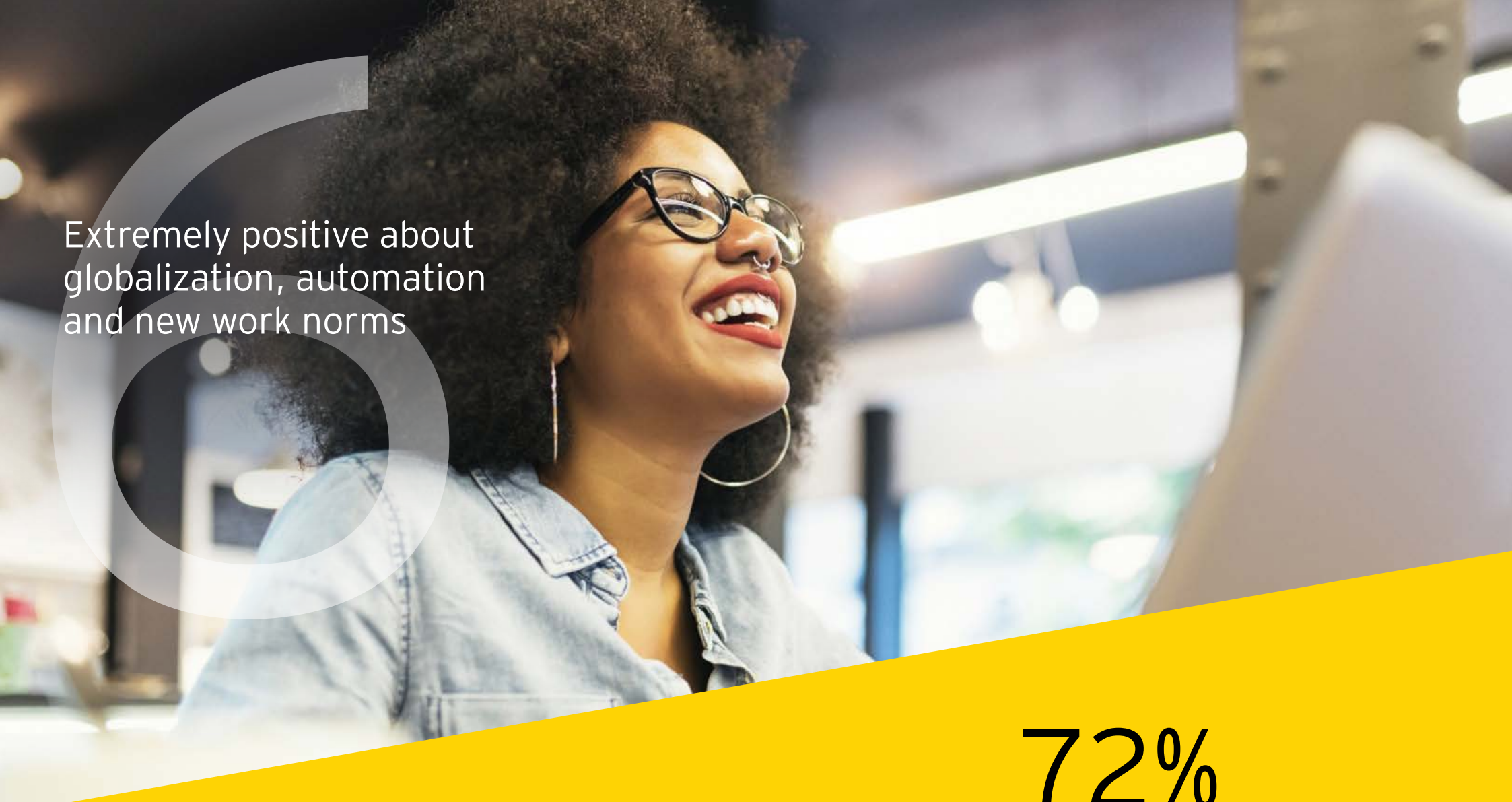
## How leaders among Gen Z see education and the future of work

Already displaying considerable self-direction in their pursuit of learning and their positive disposition toward entrepreneurship, Gen Z survey participants not only seek meaning and impact from their life's work – they are also willing to go their own way to find it.

This perhaps helps to explain why respondents are so optimistic about the future. Rather than seeing the forces of globalization, automation and shifting work norms as threats, they see them as opportunities to forge a new path that frees them to focus on work that matters to them, to each other and to the world.

Survey participants revealed a generation that is eager to see – and be part of driving – more rapid progress toward the transformational reforms necessary to tackle the interconnected challenges of climate change, social justice and equity of economic opportunity. As well as shaping their interest in starting their own business, these same attitudes are liable to affect their views on potential employers, and on the conduct of businesses and governments.





Extremely positive about  
globalization, automation  
and new work norms

72%

of Gen Z respondents feel  
positive about the impact  
globalization automation and  
new work norms will have on  
their experience in the workforce

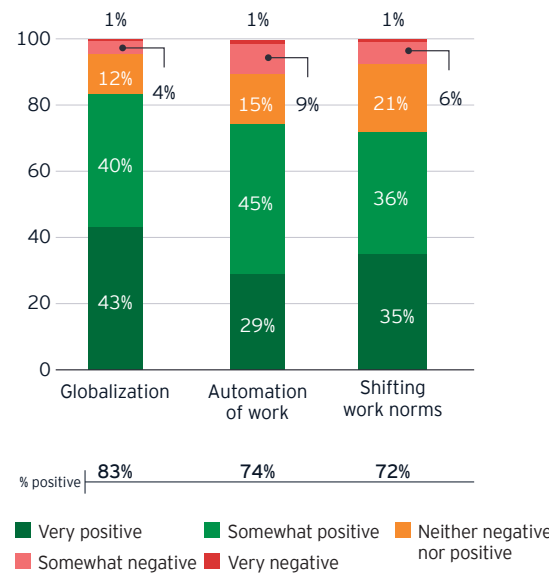


Among this sample, Gen Z is considerably more optimistic about these future trends than previous generations. Only about 40% of adults over age 30 reported being optimistic about the impact of automation,<sup>9</sup> whereas 74% of Gen Z respondents are optimistic about its effects. To Gen Z, automation and AI may be seen as empowering in their potential to eliminate mundane and routine tasks, allowing them instead to focus on the things they most enjoy – solving complex problems, generating new ideas and working on meaningful endeavors.

Gen Z is also looking for mentoring from professionals to help prepare for the future, particularly with regard to shifting work norms.

This study found that respondents believe trends such as the automation of work, globalization and shifting work norms will have a positive impact on their experiences in the workforce.

What kind of impact will megatrends have on your experience in the workforce?



How will you adapt to automation, globalization and new work norms?



<sup>9</sup> Mulas-Granados, Carlos, et al. "Automation, Skills and the Future of Work: What do Workers Think?" *IMF Working Paper*, 20 December 2019.



A woman with her hair in a braid, wearing a white short-sleeved shirt, is seen from behind, drawing on a dark chalkboard. She is holding a piece of chalk. The chalkboard has some faint white lines and a small green object hanging on it. A large, semi-transparent grey number '7' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Education on future-focused skills more important than traditional school subjects

A woman with her hair in a braid, wearing a white short-sleeved shirt, is seen from behind, drawing on a dark chalkboard. She is holding a piece of chalk. The chalkboard has some faint white lines and a small green object hanging on it. A large, semi-transparent grey number '7' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

77%

of Gen Z respondents rated environmental literacy and career development as the most important subjects in their education



This research revealed that Gen Z leaders of tomorrow want more time spent on subject areas that will better prepare them for their future careers and roles as global citizens.

This generation is asking for educators to incorporate themes they will be faced with as they enter adulthood – particularly topics related to environmental and economic insecurity. Nearly three-quarters of Gen Z respondents desire more career development and entrepreneurship

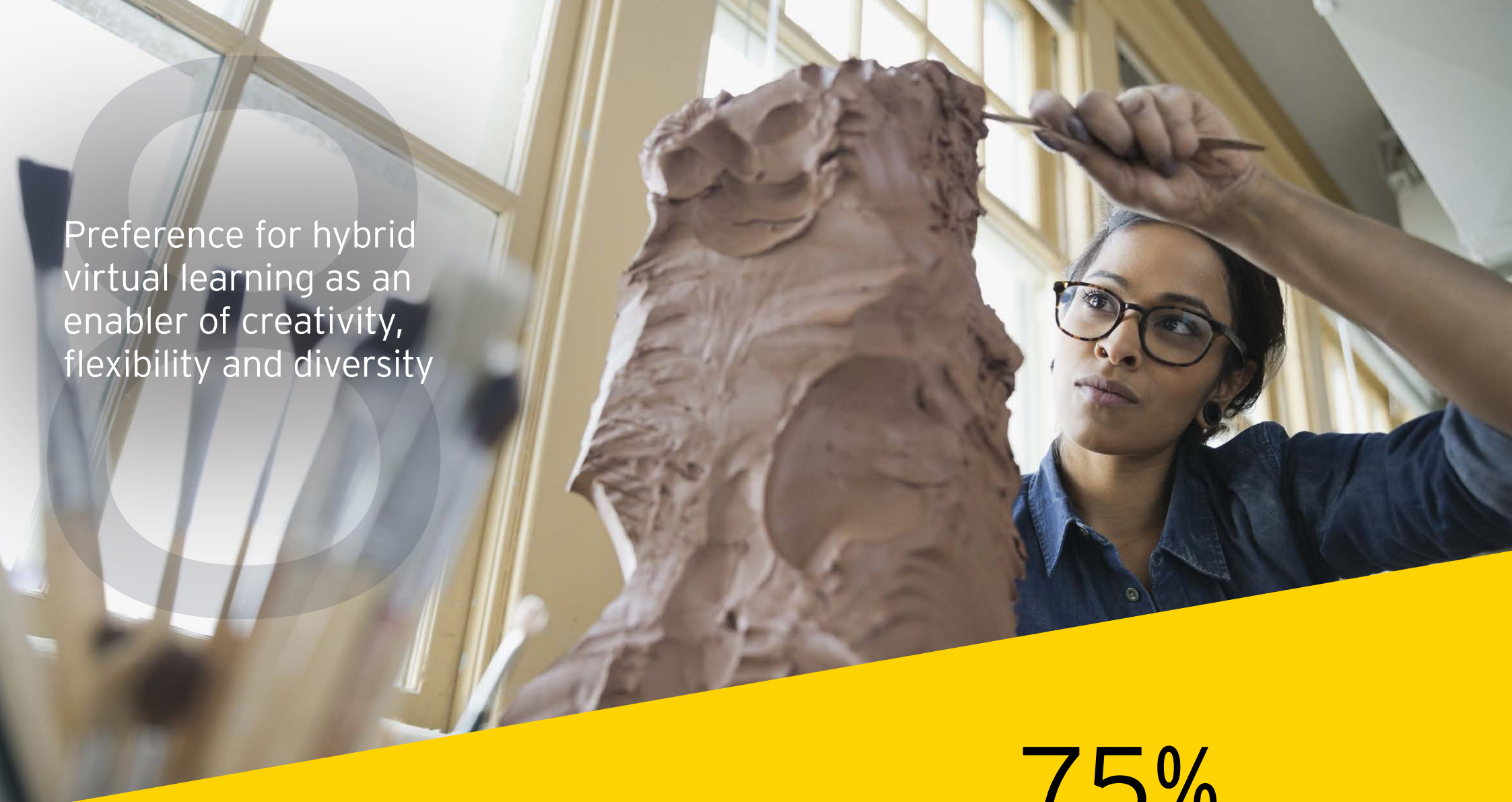
opportunities in the classroom. Their preferred school subjects emerge to have interdisciplinary themes, including financial and entrepreneurial literacy, environmental literacy and global awareness.

**School subject ranking**



\*Percentages indicate respondents ranking response in their top three choices.

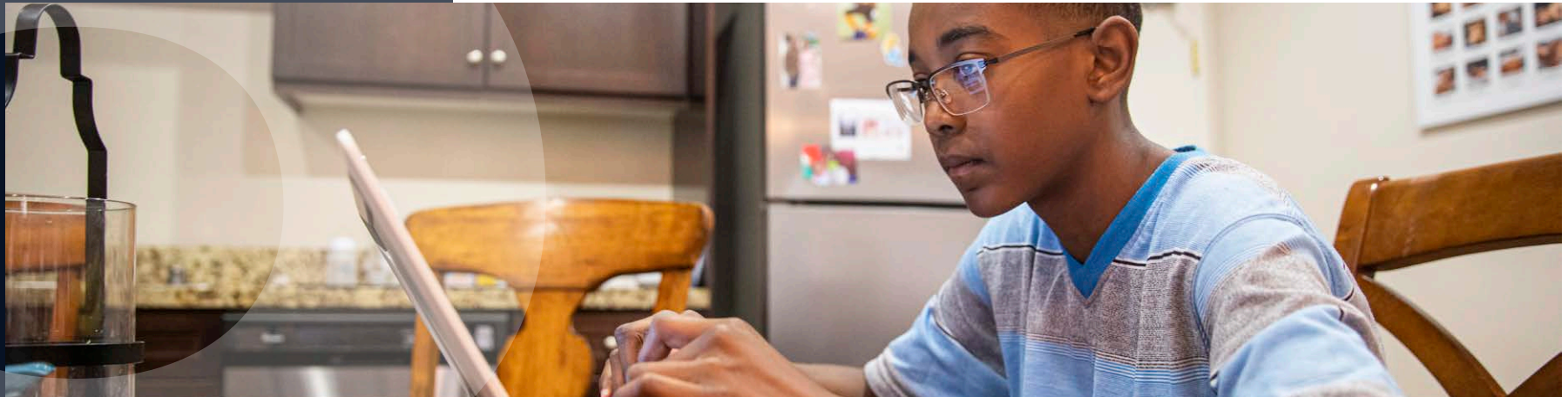




Preference for hybrid  
virtual learning as an  
enabler of creativity,  
flexibility and diversity

**75%**

of students wish to continue  
virtual education in some form  
after the pandemic



At the time of the survey (October 2020-January 2021), most respondents were partaking in a form of virtual schooling due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Around 75% of surveyed students stated that, when the pandemic concludes, they wish to continue virtual instruction in some form – indicating a strong preference for hybrid education.

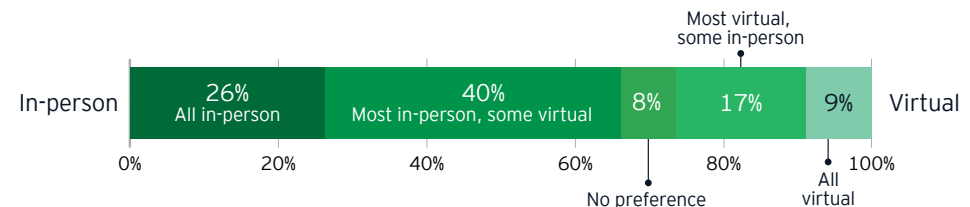
Of those who prefer virtual instruction, one in four cite “more creative” and “innovative ways to access and receive content” as a primary reason.

A Workforce Institute report found that flexibility is a job perk that would drive Gen Z to work harder and stay at a company longer; findings in this survey indicate it may well have the same impact in their education.<sup>10</sup>

**Ranking: Why I prefer virtual instruction**


- 1 More creative
- 2 Flexible to fit my lifestyle
- 3 Ease of access
- 4 Meet people I wouldn't normally meet
- 5 Ease of communication with instructors
- 6 Build digital literacy skills
- 7 Build community with students

**Instruction preferences post-pandemic**



<sup>10</sup> Maroney, Joyce. “Meet Gen Z - Optimistic and Anxious.” *The Workforce Institute at UKG*, 23 Sept. 2019.





Eagerness for more true-to-life work experiences and self-directed activities

59%

of Gen Z respondents ranked more learning opportunities focused on real-life work as the top way to improve the education system

## Eagerness for more true-to-life work experiences and self-directed activities

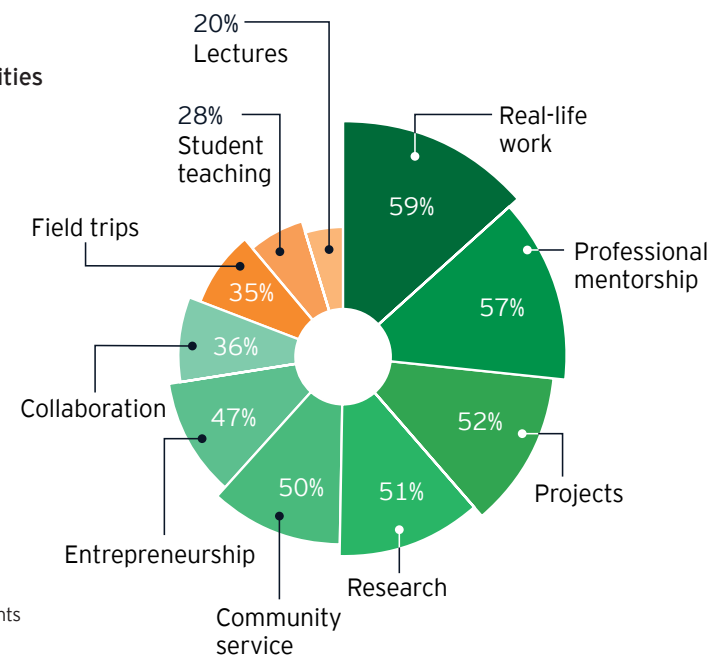


Gen Z respondents welcome the opportunity to learn from professionals and learn through real-life work experiences, project-based learning and community service.

When asked how the education system might be improved with a variety of teaching methods, the most popular responses are experiential opportunities that engage the business community: “real-life work” and “professional mentorship”. Gen Z is also excited about learning that involves self-direction and internal motivation, such as projects, research, community service and entrepreneurship.

Finally, those options that most closely align with traditional teaching methodologies of the past and present – lectures, student teaching and field trips – ranked lowest, suggesting that Gen Z is eager for a more innovative and true-to-life approach to education. This generation isn’t looking to the education system for their chance to shine – they want to learn through the real-world experiences that today’s fluid economy offers.

The education system would be improved with more learning opportunities focused on



\*Percentages indicate respondents ranking response in their top five choices.





Seeking guidance from formal education, multinationals and governments

53%

of Gen Z respondents look to corporations and large businesses to prepare them for trends such as automation, globalization and new work norms

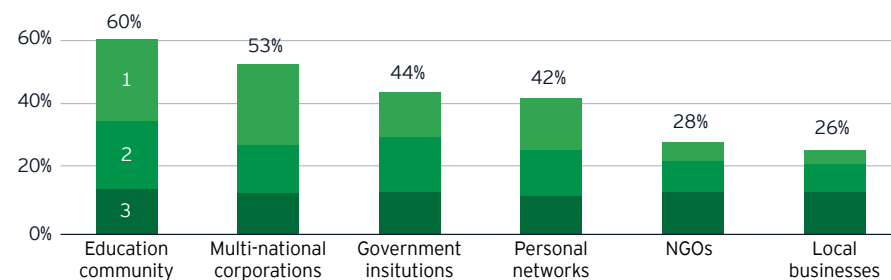


While 60% of Gen Z participants rank the education system the most important institution to prepare them for the future, they are also looking to the business community, government institutions and personal networks to help them get ready for work.

In particular, more than 50% of Gen Z respondents expressed that they look to corporations and large businesses to prepare them for trends such as automation, globalization and new work norms. While this generation is often painted as being distrustful of big business, the tide may be turning – the more that corporations partner with educators to provide the hands-on work

this generation craves, the more likely they are to see the value of the skills and experiences these contributors bring to the classroom. Gen Z may also recognize that large companies are leading the charge on embracing new technologies and trends, and are well-positioned to educate them on these topics, as well as being able to have a large impact on environmental sustainability.

Responsibility for preparing Gen Z



\*Percentages indicate respondents ranking response in their top three choices.





## How can business and education help Gen Z reframe the future?

The world is changing. Gen Z will change the world, too. They're the future workforce, business owners and global problem-solvers. To connect with them effectively, the education and business communities must understand who they are and how they intend to shape the world around them.

The responsibility of preparing Gen Z for the future of work rests on a variety of institutions, not just the education system. The findings of this survey underscore the

need for the business community not only to build a deeper understanding of Gen Z, but also to build deeper relationships with them and take a more active role in their education.

At the same time, government has a huge role to play. Education policies and national curricula should emphasize development of transversal human competencies over proficiency in individual subjects, and grant educators greater license to innovate within that framework.

# Education



To better prepare Gen Z for the future of work and for global challenges, educators have plenty of opportunities to innovate – especially in ways that enable experiential learning both in and out of the classroom.

Ultimately, there is no one-size-fits-all approach, allowing significant leeway for creativity and experimentation – an evolutionary undertaking that should include Gen Z and their preferences in the process.

Disruption in traditional schooling has given us a window into the possibility of reimagining learning experiences, and how technology can enable that. Paired with Gen Z's input on what should be included in their education – including a strong preference for experiential learning over passive learning – the call to action is clear.

### Reimagine educational delivery

Having experienced virtual education first-hand, **Gen Z expect and prefer a hybrid/in-person model**,<sup>11</sup> with a leaning to in-person delivery. It would be a disservice to the next generation if we fail to consider how some of the positive aspects of the shift to virtual education can be carried forward once the pandemic has concluded. Now is the time for educators to re-imagine how blended time can be used and how technology can enable learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Given that employers typically find the skill sets of incoming employees lacking,<sup>12</sup> education curricula and teaching methods should be reconsidered to make them more in line with both Gen Z's and employers' desires for experiential and vocational learning opportunities. Gen Z is looking for their formal education to include future trends, such as environmental literacy.

They also want access to workplace learning and mentoring from professionals. Currently, teachers endeavor to extend the classroom well beyond the four walls of the class and introduce students to a variety of settings and experiences. Based on this Gen Z cohort's feedback, this extension of the classroom could be strengthened by broadening educational experiences to include more work-based learning, and by broadening subject focus to include topics like global citizenship, environmental literacy, and other future-focused subjects.

### Connect with the community

To embed entrepreneurial mindsets and interdisciplinary themes into learning experiences for students, educators should look outside school to identify new types of learning partners in their communities, including nonprofits and business leaders.

As young people are clearly eager to see the real-world application of their studies, it's important to recognize that business professionals and nonprofits can be teachers, too, sharing valuable perspectives and role modeling behaviors that help contextualize students' learning. Nonprofit organizations can also uniquely support students both inside and outside of school, acting as a bridge to business.

For educators wanting to capture Gen Z's entrepreneurial spirit, practical experiences such as developing a business idea or carrying out a social impact project can harness and amplify that spirit.

<sup>11</sup> "How the next generation will shape the next normal." EY, 28 January 2021.

<sup>12</sup> "Wiley Education Services, & Future Workplace. (2019). Closing the skills gap 2019. Louisville, KY: Wiley edu, LLC.





With the eldest members of Gen Z now entering the professional workforce, understanding their mindsets and motivations will better help employers understand how to attract, cultivate and retain their rising employees.

Not only will collaborating with educators and working with students earlier on give businesses a window into this generation, it may also support recruitment and growth efforts while better equipping the next generation with the skills needed for jobs of the future.

#### **Provide opportunities for work-based learning**

Business must help Gen Z acquire the future skills required to benefit both business and society at-large. Gen Z is asking for businesses to step up and provide more opportunities for work – and project-based learning, as well as mentorship from business professionals. These and other opportunities for earlier engagement with young people – including internships and job shadow opportunities – can also help companies to win the trust and loyalty of the emerging talent pool.

#### **Fulfill the promise of purposeful work**

For this generation – both as consumers and as employees – empathic leadership and an authentic commitment to all stakeholders will be key.

To attract Gen Z talent, leaders will need to authentically commit to sustainability and equality goals, making them core to corporate purpose and strategy, and foster trust by communicating targets, actions and progress that are backed by data and science. Underscoring the importance of business being forward-thinking, an EY-led September 2020 study with 35 Gen Z participants found that they overwhelmingly call for companies to address inequality and climate change, and for leaders to act with empathy.<sup>13</sup>

Given how quickly roles are changing, employers need new recruiting approaches based on skills and aptitude rather than on resumes and experience. To retain Gen Z employees, businesses will need to offer dynamic and engaging career pathways, innovative and collaborative forms of working, and opportunities for continued learning and development. Leaders should also be rethinking their business and operating models to enable a global remote workforce, and ensure equal opportunity for learning and development.

<sup>13</sup> "How the next generation will shape the new normal."  
EY, 28 January 2021.



## Conclusions

This research conveys a generation optimistic about the future, as represented by a cohort who have already benefited from some training in entrepreneurship and future-focused skills. While this cohort's focus on creativity, diversity, and authentic work may reflect a stronger sentiment than the entirety of Gen Z, their entrepreneurial mindsets underscore the utility and importance of an education that includes topics and experiences relevant to the working worlds of today and tomorrow.

This cohort's middling sense of preparedness for the future indicates that more could be done to equip them with the confidence, skills and knowledge needed for future success.

The global community – businesses large and small, policymakers, Non-profits, and beyond – all bear a responsibility to authentically engage in formal education. Opportunities for innovation abound, and the first step is to listen and respond to the voices of Gen Z.

By driving for collaborative change in how the global community engages the next generation, we can shape the lives of millions of Gen Z youth in meaningful ways. In doing so, we will support them in building lifelong educational journeys – creating a ripple effect of impactful change across communities and institutions – and ultimately allowing this rising generation to reframe a future that is brighter, fairer and better.



# Methodology



## Participating countries

- ▶ Brazil
- ▶ El Salvador
- ▶ Estonia
- ▶ France
- ▶ Guatemala
- ▶ India
- ▶ Indonesia
- ▶ Malaysia
- ▶ Mauritius
- ▶ Mexico
- ▶ Nigeria
- ▶ Philippines
- ▶ Romania
- ▶ Spain
- ▶ Tunisia
- ▶ United Arab Emirates
- ▶ United States of America

Due to variances in survey participation by region, the initial survey sample was heavily skewed toward respondents living in the Asia-Pacific region. To account for this geographic skew and to enable statements about global trends, we weighted respondents in countries with more than 30 raw respondents in accordance with the percentage of Gen Z in their country relative total population of Gen Z in the 17 countries in the sample, using UN population size estimates (ages 15-24).

Weights were chosen such that all countries had the same number of weighted responses per capita as the country with the lowest number of raw responses per capita. In this process, we used

UN population estimates for the size of the Gen Z population (ages 16-24) in each country. All figures and visualizations in this report show the weighted survey data. Adopting this weighting process did not differ drastically from analysis of unweighted raw survey responses. Additional analysis involved grouping countries based on development (for example, the strength of education system, GDP per capita, strength of digital connectivity) while also excluding overrepresented countries. This ancillary analysis confirmed the results of weighted survey analysis outlined above.

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This Gen Z survey was conducted by the EY Ripples team in collaboration with JA Worldwide.

EY Ripples is a global corporate responsibility program which sets forth a vision to positively impact one billion lives by 2030. Through EY Ripples, every individual and organization in the EY network can create a positive impact by supporting the next generation workforce, working with impact entrepreneurs, and accelerating environmental sustainability.

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### JA Worldwide

As one of the world's largest youth-serving Non-profits, JA Worldwide prepares young people for employment and entrepreneurship, delivering hands on, experiential learning in work readiness, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship. Reaching more than 10 million young people last year, JA is one of few organizations with the scale, experience, and passion to build a brighter future for the next generation of innovators, entrepreneurs, makers, and managers.

Building skill sets and changing mindsets. JA prepares young people for the future of work.

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