



## First Steps into the Labour Market

2021 International survey of students  
and recent graduates

Competition for top talent is already intense, and this will only get fiercer in the post-Covid world that's getting closer. This is why we recommend that employers take every opportunity to get under the skin of the best graduate talent. And that's what we hope First Steps into the Labour Market 2021 will allow them to do.

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# Welcome

## Taking the pulse today of tomorrow's leadership talent

We would very much like to welcome you to the 2021 edition of the Deloitte Central Europe 'First Steps into the Labour Market' report, based on interviews with more than 9,000 students and recent graduates from universities across our region, including a sample from France.

The information from this iteration of our research naturally builds on our previous editions, from 2013, 2015 and 2018. But there is, of course, one overriding factor that makes the external conditions that prevailed during our interview programme in late 2020 quite different from those that existed in previous years. The Covid-19 pandemic and resultant lock-downs and other restrictions have created a socially-distanced world of business – and of study – in which the use of new remote ways of working has rapidly expanded.

In fact, the accelerating move towards flexible or hybrid working practices is one of the most important takeaways from the 2021 report. Half (49.6%) of all respondents told us they would

prefer to work in various locations in flexible hours (up from 42.6% in 2018), while just 9.6% wanted the traditional model of working in an office for a fixed number of hours (2018: 13.7%). These are meaningful shifts, which show just how important it is that employers across our region properly tune in and listen to how members of the upcoming generation see their future. Large proportion of all the best candidates may simply be more interested in employers that do not impose the straightjacket of eight hours+ in the office every day.

They want to work everywhere and at any time.

Of course, the shift to hybrid ways of working is not entirely driven by the pandemic. However, we believe that it has accelerated an existing trend – bringing the future forward. We also believe it is here to stay, and that it should be a fundamental concern for every employer who is serious about engaging the best talent and properly balancing the needs of the business and its customers with those of its people.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic does not appear to have had a particular impact

on our respondents' salary expectations. However, their confidence in their ability to find a good job within a reasonably short time has fallen by 20% when compared to the 2018 edition of the survey. It is difficult, however, to differentiate the effects that the pandemic has had on their attitudes and aspirations from 'normal' generational variations.

That said, we believe a picture has emerged of a remarkably mature, self-reliant and self-aware population of young people. Ranging in age from 18 to 30, and largely with a focus on business and finance-related studies, they appear to place personal development, growth and experience ahead of pure financial gain. And when it comes to work, one feature they share with previous respondents is that they're more interested in developing expertise than assuming roles in managerial positions. Much the most important work-related motivational factor in their lives is the opportunity to learn something new, far outranking in importance those tasks that deliver professional benefits such as promotions, salary increases and bonuses.

We believe it's essential that those employers targeting the best graduate talent appreciate the extent to which professional work is only one important value among others. Others include success across many facets of life, from good health and having a happy family to experiencing adventures and great friendships, from behaving ethically to earning the respect of other people. This again places significant value on the need for employers to offer flexible working practices that give young recruits the scope to develop in many areas of life.

Another fundamental point for employers to consider is that this generation of young people recognises sustainable corporate and personal behaviour, including ethical environmental and community best practice, as a vital global priority. Our respondents, however, overwhelmingly believe that businesses across the world are focused more on their own agendas than on the needs of wider society. Again, this is an indicator that the companies aiming to employ the outstanding business leaders of the future need to earn their respect and support through a transparent and clearly evidenced commitment to sustainable practices.

When it comes to leadership, we again believe that companies would do well to listen to the opinions of this upcoming generation. The kinds of leader they are looking for have strong strategic abilities, a desire to develop employees, a democratic approach and an inspirational ability.

Understanding the need to tune in and listen carefully to the expectations of this generation will help businesses identify, attract, recruit, retain and develop the exceptional talent that will help them compete and excel in a post-Covid 19 world. At Deloitte Central Europe, we believe that our First Steps 2021 report is an exceptionally powerful tool for getting under the skin of this generation and gaining the insight that's essential to stand out in a crowded and competitive market place.

We very much hope that you find it an interesting and effective tool that helps you sharpen the focus of your recruitment strategies and activities.



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# The story

This report investigates the plans and motivations of future business leaders from across 19 European countries – those ambitious and hard-working young people who are already proving themselves at some of the continent's best universities.

The questions we put to them in our survey covered many areas relating to what matters most when choosing a job and an employer. We also asked how they perceive businesses around the world and about how their attitudes have changed since before the Covid-19 pandemic. Interestingly, most claimed that this has not influenced their thinking. However, in certain areas (particularly the rise in the popularity of hybrid working), we believe there is evidence that the pandemic has accelerated trends that were already underway.

The research has given us a new, yet familiar, picture of an emerging generation taking its first steps onto the career ladder – young people preparing themselves to face the latest technological and economic disruptions in today's fast-changing world. They do not shy away from hard work, although their approach to work-life balance differs from previous generations. They are keen to spread their wings and explore the world away from home. And they are motivated by personal goals and ambitions, not only a level of salary they can achieve.

In particular, they are keener than ever to experience the benefits of truly hybrid working conditions – that is, working from various locations, including home, in flexible hours. Half (49.6%) of all the 9,000+ students and recent university graduates interviewed for the 2021 Deloitte Central Europe (CE) 'First Steps into the Labour Market' report would prefer a working arrangement that allows them to work from various locations, including home, during flexible hours (2018: 42.6%). To illustrate just how much expectations regarding working condition have changed in recent years, less than 10% of respondents said they would prefer the traditional model of working in an office for fixed hours.

In other words, they want success in all facets of life. If employers want the best and brightest graduates, they therefore need to tune in and listen carefully to their expectations – the 'what' and the 'why' behind their ambitions. If not, employers may run the risk of losing valuable, new and exciting young talent to the competition.

Our report will help you understand the issues involved and how the brightest young people from across Europe are responding to them.



# Survey sample and the four groups

The survey gathered the views of 9,107 people aged 18 to 30, most of whom were students and recent graduates from leading universities from across Central Europe and France. For the first time, we have also included a proportion of technical-college students in our sample. Our respondents include Millennials and some of the earliest members of Generation Z.

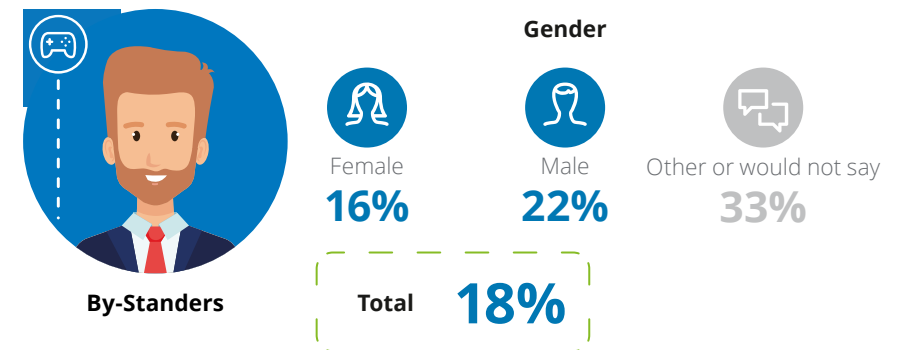
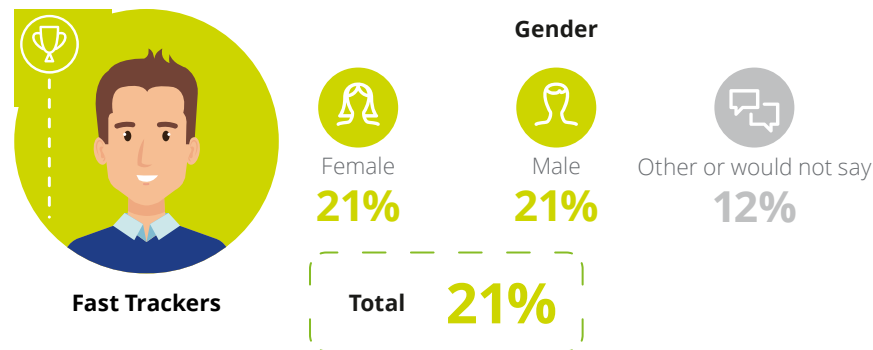
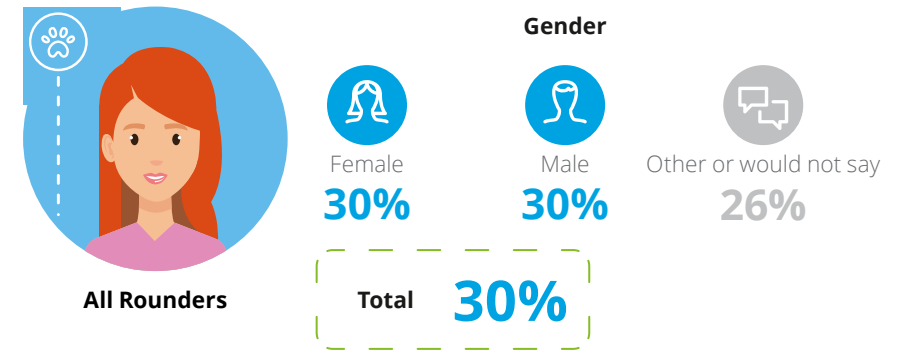
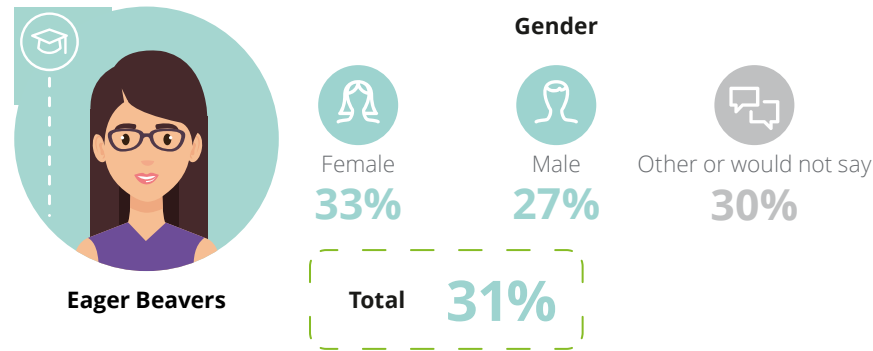
The average age of all respondents was 22.9, with those aged 24 or younger accounting for 76% of the sample. More women (67%) than men (33%) participated.

The great majority (82%) of the sample was made up of day students, with 8% studying part time and another 8% working online. The remainder is made up of correspondence or evening students.

More than 90% are at university, and almost 11% attend professional schools, such as technical colleges. More than 77% attend public universities.

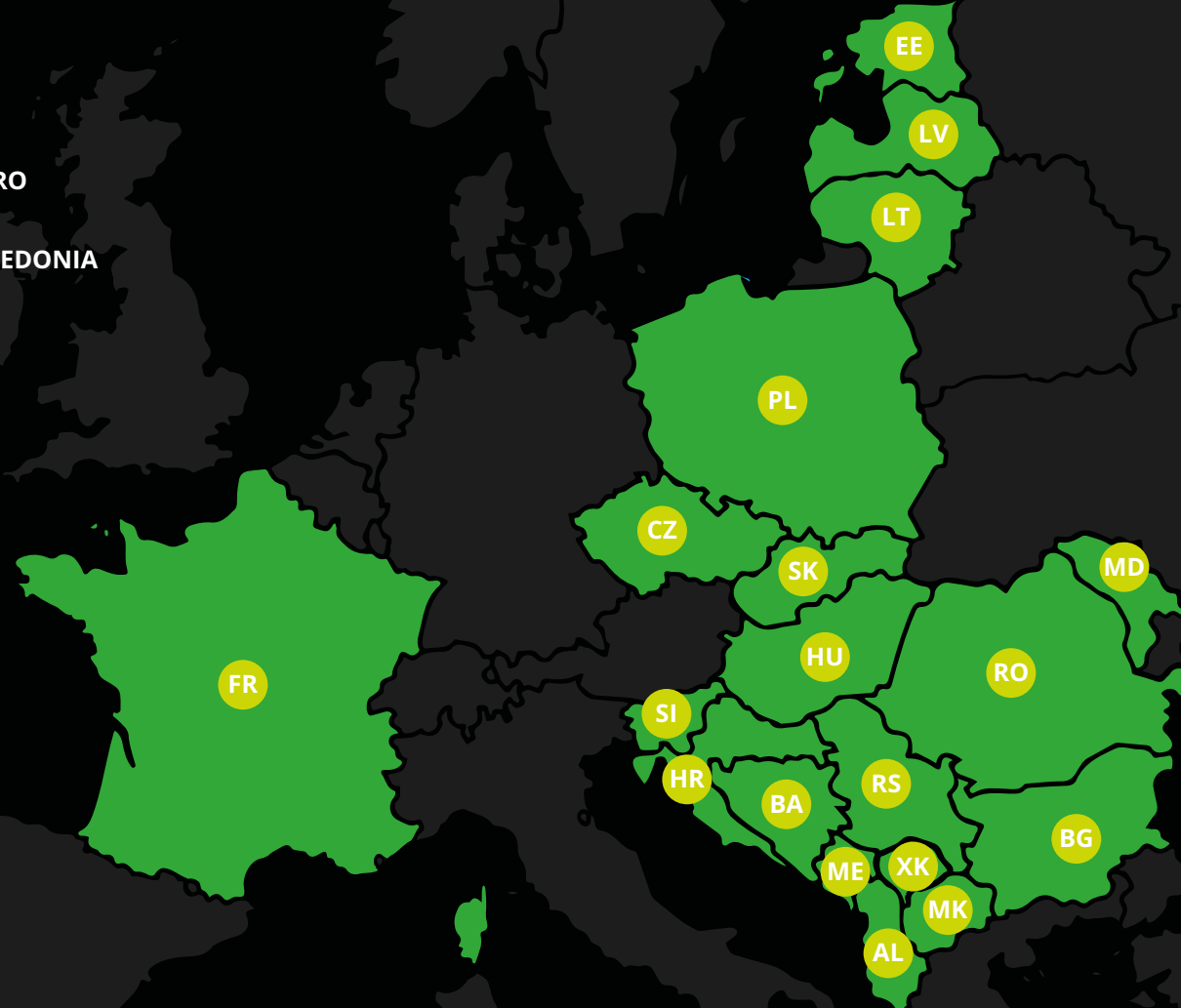
More than 50% study business-related subjects (economics, finance and banking, accountancy etc); 8% are engineering students (e.g. chemical, electricity, electronics, mechanics); 7% are studying law, and almost 10% specialise in subjects related to information and communications technology (ICT).

## Percentage of four groups among surveyed – total and by gender



# Countries participating in the survey

- AL ALBANIA
- BA BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
- BG BULGARIA
- HR CROATIA
- CZ CZECH REPUBLIC
- EE ESTONIA
- FR FRANCE
- HU HUNGARY
- XK KOSOVO
- LV LATVIA
- LT LITHUANIA
- MD MOLDOVA
- ME MONTENEGRO
- MK NORTH MACEDONIA
- PL POLAND
- RO ROMANIA
- RS SERBIA
- SK SLOVAKIA
- SI SLOVENIA



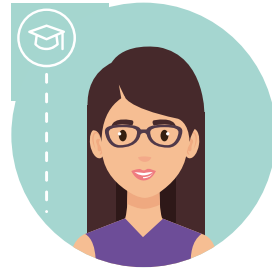


We've broken down our respondents into four key groupings, determined by their attitude to work, family life, money, society well-being, success, fame and other factors.



### 'Fast Trackers'

They want nothing more than to get on in their careers. This is central not just to their financial progress, but to their social advancement too. That is why they commit 100% of their total potential to the job – rather than having time off, they would rather use it to get more done at work. They have the confidence to believe that whenever they make an effort they can always outperform others. But they're not easily satisfied – because working hard is all about that next promotion, they get little satisfaction from a day of intensive effort.



### 'Eager Beavers'

For them, work is its own reward. Nothing beats the satisfaction they can gain from a good day at the office. So, while they firmly believe that they should make sacrifices in their private life to get on at work, they never see it as an unpleasant duty. While they certainly see work as key to their social and financial advancement, however, they also have some interests outside their jobs.



### 'All Rounders'

They're really balanced. They value the importance of professional work and their friends almost equally. And work's not only a way to develop personally, it's also how they fulfil their duties to society. It goes without saying that they'd work even if they didn't have to. And while work is far more important than simply helping them gain promotions and make more money, it's not the be-all-and-end-all for them. Their life away from work really matters too, and they never feel that they ought to give up outside interests because of the demands of the job.

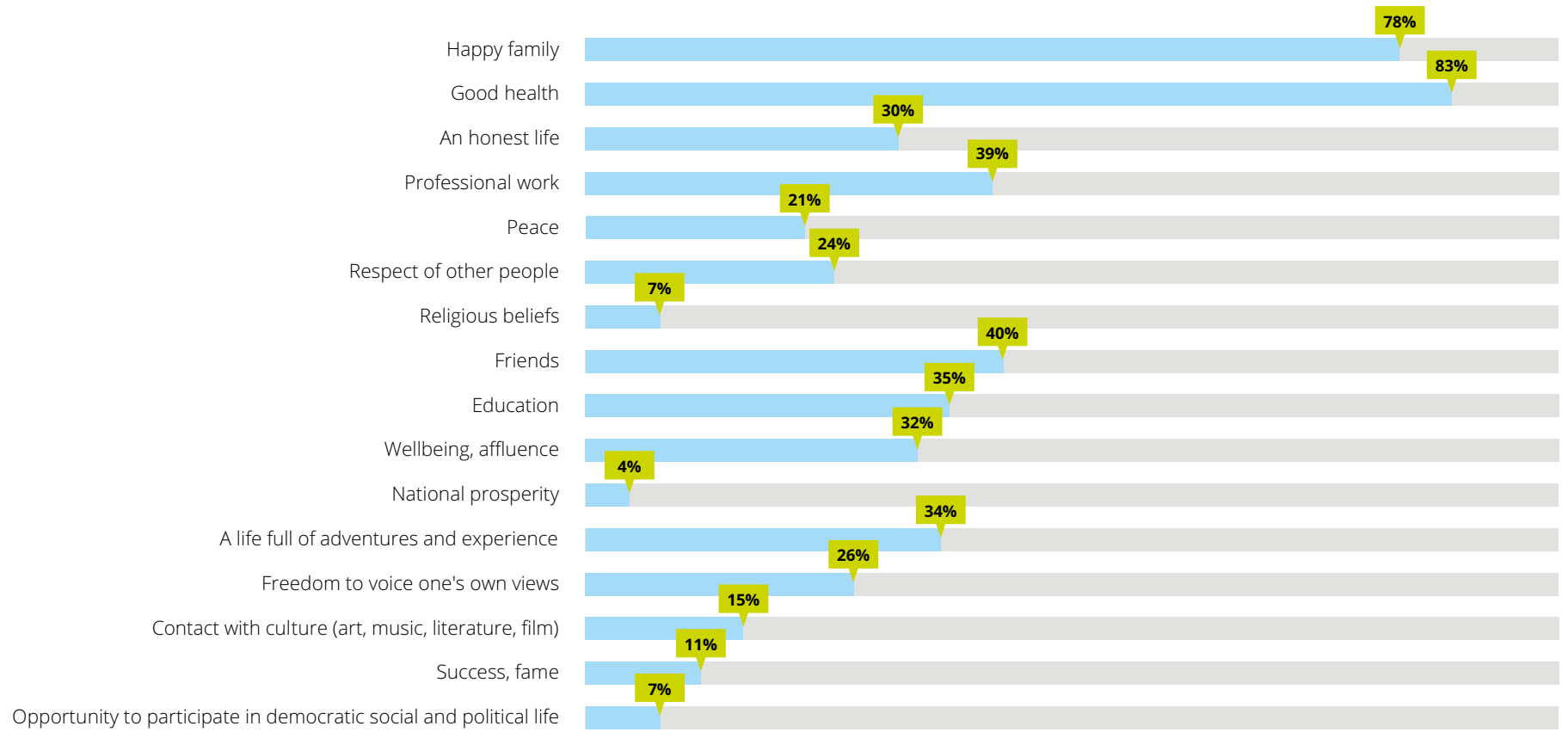


### 'By-Standers'

Work is far from the most important thing in their lives. They also have little regard for education, so work isn't even a foundation for self-development or learning. They don't want to let it get in the way of enjoying life and seeing their friends. It's merely something to put up with because they've got to earn money somehow – if they could get by without a job, they'd probably give it up like a shot. But money does matter: they see wellbeing and affluence as important factors, so working is a necessary part of their lives whether they like it or not.

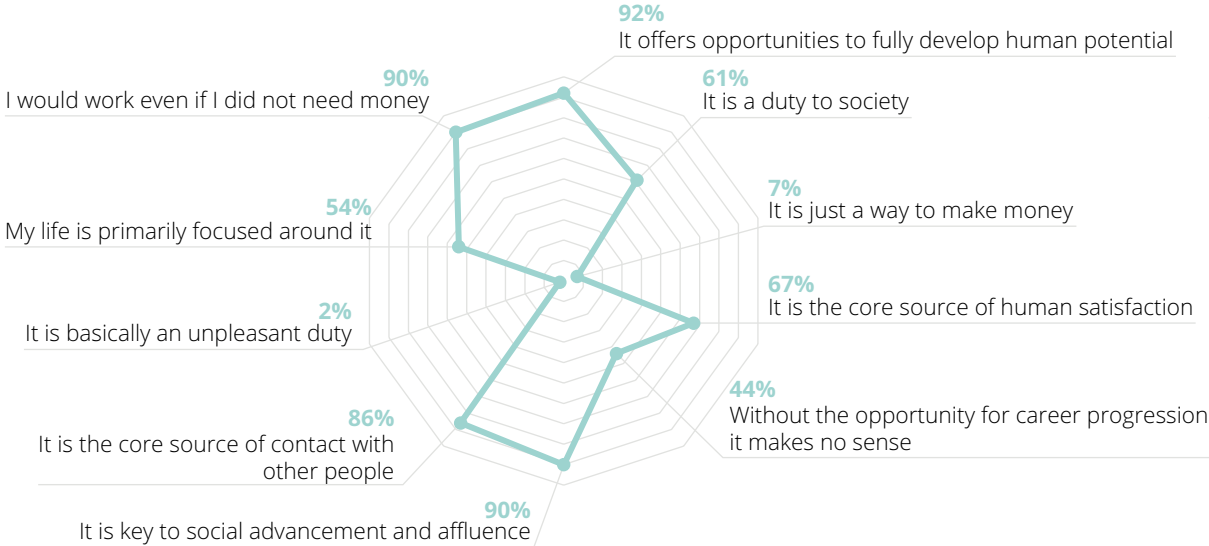
It's worth pointing out that having a happy family and good health are the most important factors to all four groups, while professional work comes third for two of them (Eager Beavers and Fast Trackers); friends are also essential for two groups (By-Standers and All Rounders). The fourth priority for Eager Beavers and Fast Trackers is education; well-being and affluence are important for By-Standers. Having a life full of adventures and experience is the fourth in priority for All Rounders.

**Most important values - for all the respondents**

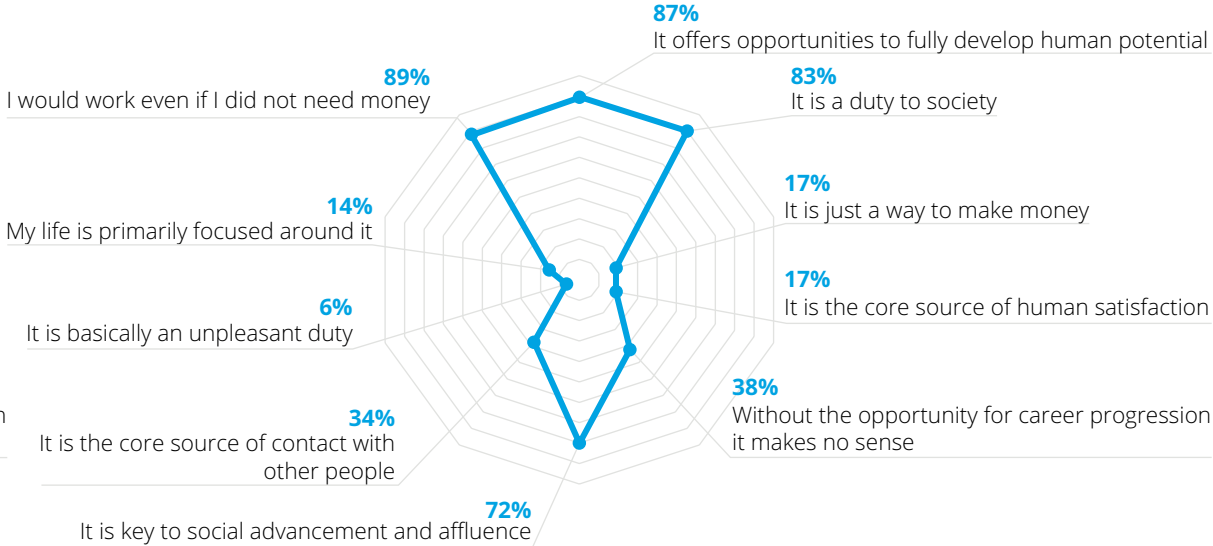


**Attitudes towards professional work**

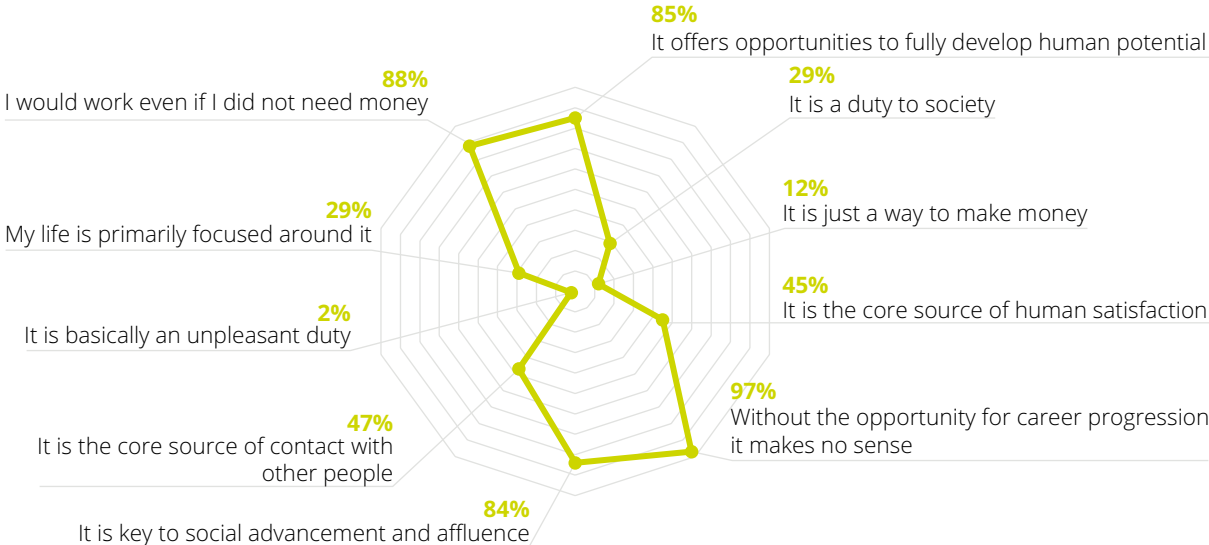
**Fast Trackers**



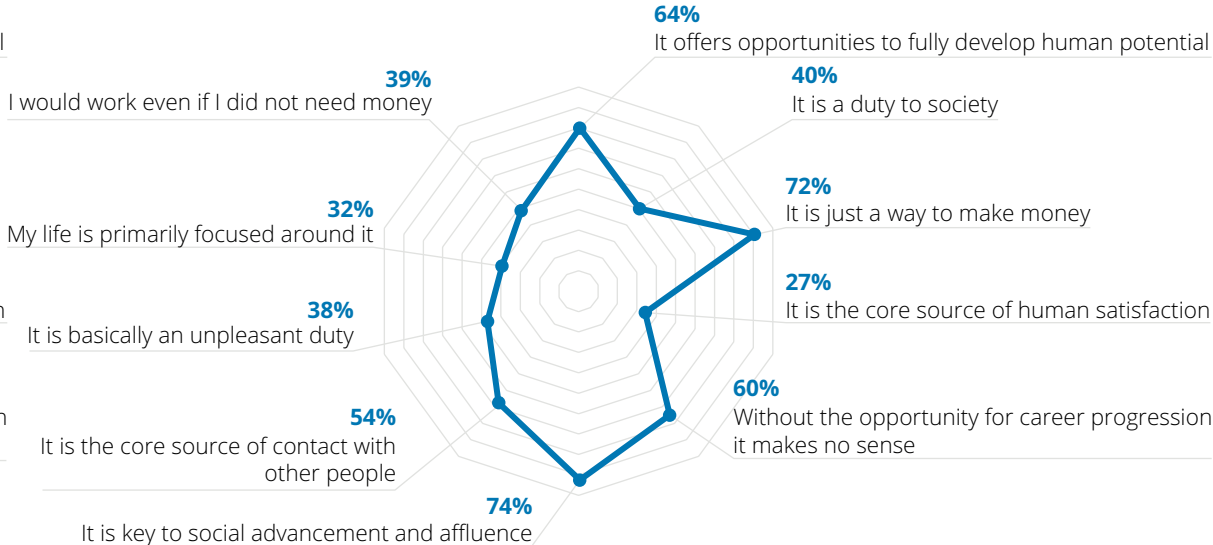
**All Rounders**



**Eager Beavers**



**By-Standers**



# Key findings

## The new hybrid working model: 'everywhere and any time'

Working from various locations (such as in the office or at home) with flexible working hours is the preferred choice for close to half (49.6%) of our young respondents, up from 42.6% in the previous 2018 edition of the First Steps survey. Fixed working hours with the freedom to work from different locations is the best option for 15.5%, while the traditional model – working in the office for a fixed number of hours – is attractive for only 10% of those we surveyed (down from 13.7%). In our view, this indicates a continuing shift in attitude in a majority of surveyed countries, and it is essential that employers carefully balance the expectations of high-achieving recruits with the needs of the business and its customers.

It was also interesting to note that many of their own personal capabilities that respondents value particularly highly are those that will flourish in a flexible or virtual working environment: these include the ability to plan and meet deadlines, problem solving capabilities, strong communications, independence and more. In particular, 82% selected 'resilience' (the ability to persist in the face of challenges, obstacles and disruptions). This was a new option in 2021, which we believe is particularly appropriate in the Covid-19 era.

Almost two-thirds (64%) of our respondents tell us that a full-time/permanent contract with a single employer is what they are looking for. One in four would rather be

a freelancer or consultant working on a flexible or short-term basis.

Loneliness and a lack of human interaction is what our respondents (56%) fear most when they think about remote working, almost regardless of gender and age. The one exception is that of the youngest students, who are more worried about potential interruptions, such as family duties, that can happen at home.

## State of the economy and the labour market

Our respondents are more positive about the labour market in general than about the state of the economy in their individual countries. Although 38% see the labour-market situation as poor, more than 70% are confident that it will take them only around one to six months to find a good job. In the 2018 research, this view was shared by 89% of our respondents. The COVID-19 pandemic has not significantly affected young people's financial expectations. A majority still expects their salaries to match pre-pandemic levels.

## Mobility and professional experience

More than a quarter of students plan to move abroad to pursue their professional career, and 72% are willing to move to another country for a job. More than 50% of our respondents have work experience that is compatible with their studies or profession. A majority are or have been employed in a full-time job.

## Aspirations

Almost half of our respondents are aiming to become experts in their professions – not necessarily to hold managerial positions. Just under 40% aspire to management roles, including more than 20% at the most senior level.

## Important values, motivation and self-confidence

Good health and a happy family life topped the ranking of values, chosen by 83% and more than 78% of respondents respectively as the areas they value most. Having a professional career is one of the most important values for 39% of the sample.

Young people are most motivated by those tasks at work that give them the opportunity to learn something new and acquire expertise (73%). This is by far the highest-ranked motivational factor, followed by tasks that develop and expand their expert knowledge (45%) and that are important for professional benefits (such as promotion, raise and bonus).

Almost 90% of respondents told us that finding an attractive job is dependent solely on their own efforts and experience.

## Leadership competencies and priorities

According to our respondents, the characteristics of a good leader must include strong strategic abilities (60%), the skills required to develop employees (44%) and the ability to demonstrate a democratic approach (43%). In addition, leaders should be decisive and inspire the people they lead (40%).

The top four leadership priorities are first to secure the long-term future of the organisation (almost 44%), then employee development (43%), next to make a positive impact on clients (41%), and then employees' well-being (40%).

## Expectations regarding employers

When choosing an employer, 42% of our respondents, regardless of gender, see individual plans and opportunities to develop their careers as most important. Salary, unsurprisingly, continues to be an important consideration when choosing an employer and was our respondents' second most important priority.

When it comes to choosing the type of company where young people wish to develop their careers, one 'ideal' type stands out. Well over a third of the sample (almost 38%) identified large international companies as the kind of employer they would like to work for.

### Ways to interact with employers

Social media sites account for the two top sources that young people use to find information and insights about potential employers and jobs. LinkedIn is the first choice for 27% overall. It is also the first choice for several sub-groups: respondents over 25 years of age (36.5%), those with more extensive experience (34%), those who wish to work for an entity owned by a third party (30%) and those aspiring to become managers (30.5%).

Facebook is the primary source of information for 20% of those surveyed, being equally popular among female and male respondents and, unsurprisingly, slightly more popular among less experienced and younger respondents aged under 22 (22%).

When applying for a job, the face-to-face interview is the preferred method of connecting with a potential employer, selected by almost 77% of young people.

### Perceptions of business organisations and national governments

Nearly three-quarters (71%) of our respondents think that businesses across the world focus on their own agenda rather than considering wider society. Almost half believe that businesses around the world take a strong leadership position on issues that impact wider society. More than half (55%) believe that businesses are doing better than governments when it comes to demonstrating strong leadership on important social

issues. Almost 12% of students are unable to present an unequivocal opinion.

### The diversity agenda

The great majority (92%) of the young people who participated in our research told us they would prefer to work in an organisation with a diverse workforce (in terms of age, gender, nationality, etc).

While for 35% the age of a supervisor is unimportant, almost 39% of all respondents would like to have a boss aged between 36 and 50. In particular, those who do not have managerial aspirations do not see age as an important issue.

While almost 18% of our respondents would prefer their supervisor to be a man (compared with 8% who would sooner have a female boss) it is reassuring to see that almost 75% have no gender preferences when it comes to who they report to. Scarcely 7% of respondents would prefer to work only with members of the same gender.

While the great majority (85%) would prefer to work alongside people from different cultural backgrounds, it should be noted that 15% would not wish to share their professional life with people from diverse backgrounds. One in five male respondents hold this attitude, as do 13% of females in the sample.



# The personal outlook

## A somewhat pessimistic perception of the economic environment

The survey shows that, in general, students hold mixed views about the region's economy. Nearly half of our respondents (48%) see the economic situation in a country where they work/study as poor or quite poor, while a significant 40% see it as average. Only 13% see the economy as quite good or very good (9 p.p. lower than in our survey of three years ago).

Our respondents are more positive about the employment market in a country where they work/study and plan to work, with 23% holding an optimistic outlook. At the same time, 38% see labour-market conditions in their countries as poor and the rest as average.

Most students (almost 54%) have not changed their opinion on the state of the labour-market since the pandemic struck, while 44% believe they would have been more positive about the labour market if the pandemic had not happened. The same proportion of respondents sees their current financial situation as average (neither poor, nor good). Just 4 p.p. fewer (40%) believe they are doing fairly or very well.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not significantly affected financial expectations. More than three-quarters (77%) confirm that their salary expectations are the same as they were before the pandemic. One in five says that they would have asked for higher pay.

While, as mentioned above, almost 40% think the labour market is in a very or quite poor condition, a quarter of respondents believe they could find a good job within just six months, while 34% are confident that this would take no more than three months.

## Professional experience matters, and mobility is high on the agenda

A high 90% of participants are either studying or have completed their studies in the same country where they finished their secondary education. More than 28% of our respondents plan to move abroad to pursue their careers, while 53% are still not sure where they want to settle.

At the same time, 28% would not be willing to consider the idea of moving to another country to find a job, while 72% are happy to consider such an idea. In this context, and as a result of COVID-19, one in five of those questioned told us that their willingness to leave their country of residence has decreased since the outbreak of the pandemic. For almost 70% of respondents, however, the pandemic has not affected the inclination to relocate.

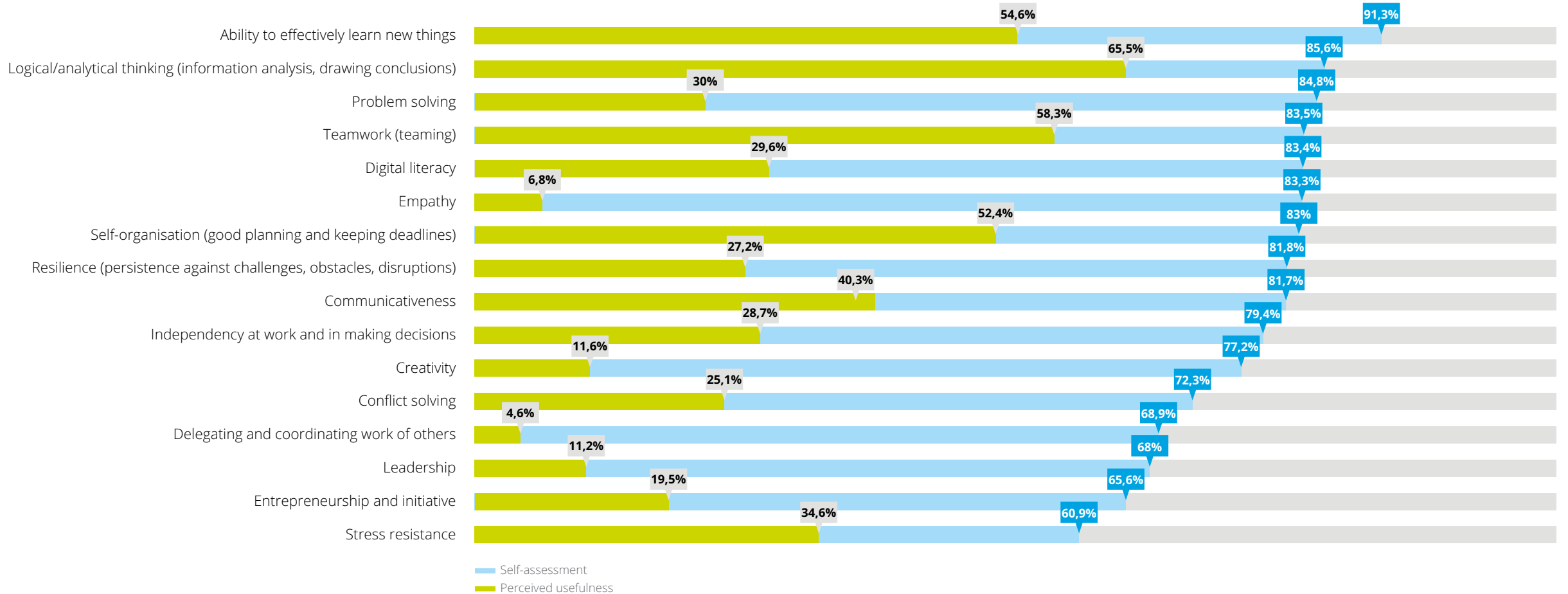
More than half (55%) of our sample are either in work or doing an internship. When asked in which country they are planning to pursue their careers, one country – Germany – is the clear leader, with 18% of young people saying this is their preferred location to start or continue a professional career. The United States and Great Britain come second (both slightly at above 10%), followed by Switzerland at 6%.

Our findings reflect very well on the preparation for work that students receive at university, with 47% finding it good or very good, and 37% seeing it as average. This is not a big surprise though, taking into account that our respondents come from some of the leading universities or professional schools in their respective countries.

When choosing an employer, the most important is to have an individual development plan and opportunities to develop careers. This is the first choice for 42% of our respondents.

### Ranking competencies

#### Self-assessment of competencies vs perceived value to employers

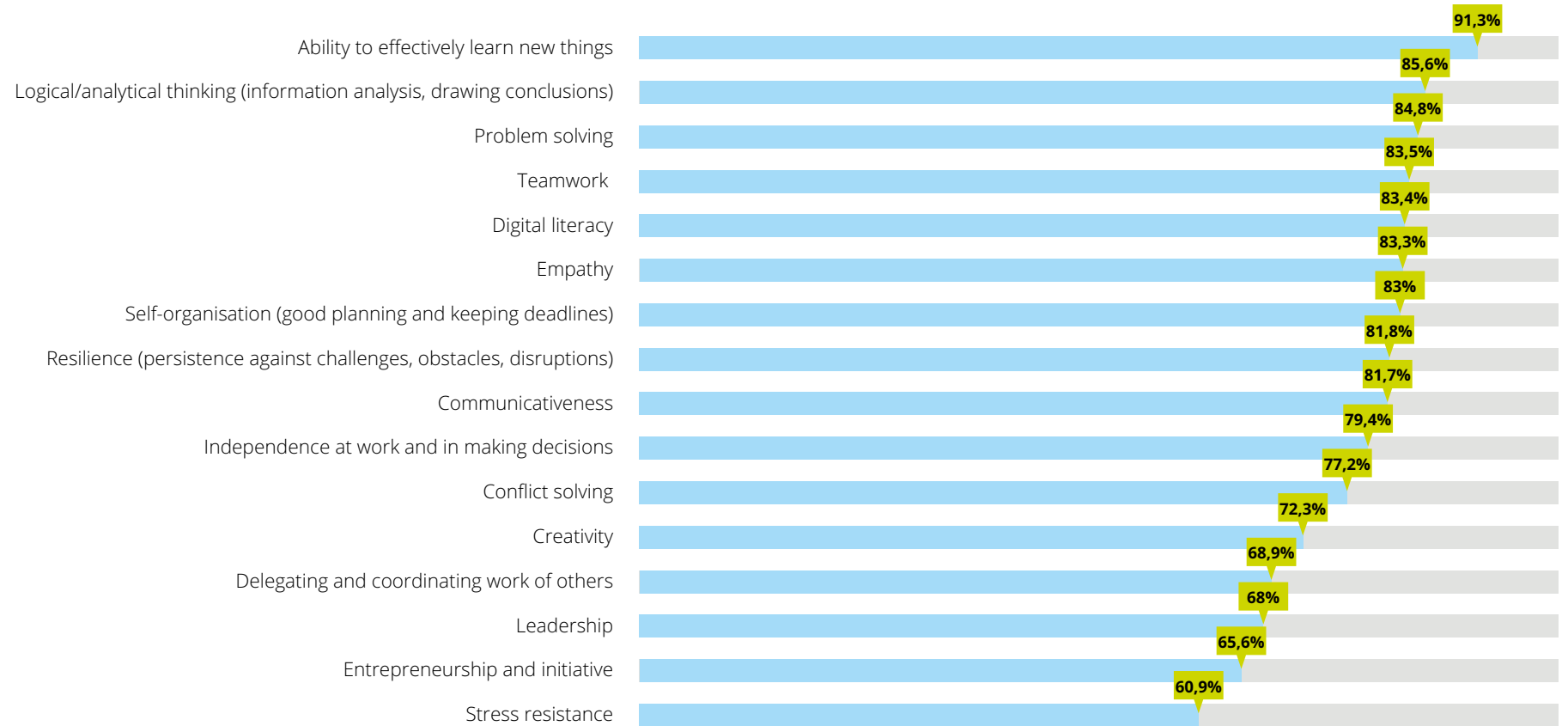


Young people entering the labour market can sometimes be accused of over-confidence. Inexperienced people tend to overrate the level of their skills and abilities, often assuming that they are more skilled than they actually are. Our respondents aged between 18 and 22 appear to be less confident when asked about the great majority of the competencies we analysed. Surprisingly, however, when asked about their ability to delegate and coordinate the work of others and about their leadership skills, this group appears to be more confident than their counterparts aged between 23 and 30.

However, our respondents are very realistic about the expectations of them held by their current or future employers. Appreciating that they will enter organisations at a junior level, they understand that leadership skills or the ability to delegate assignments, to solve conflicts or demonstrate empathy, are not what their superiors will be looking for. They believe that the competencies sought after among junior staff members are logical and analytical thinking, teamwork and the ability to effectively learn new things.

Older and more experienced participants appear to be just as confident as their younger counterparts.

**Self-assessment of competencies skills and abilities – percentage of respondents giving themselves *high* rates**





### Clear expectations regarding employers

When choosing an employer, the most important factor is to have an individual development plan and opportunities to develop a career. This is the first choice for 42% of our respondents, regardless of gender, and is especially important for those aged 23-24. This was rated far ahead of the third and fourth-placed factors (having a flexible work schedule and a friendly working atmosphere).

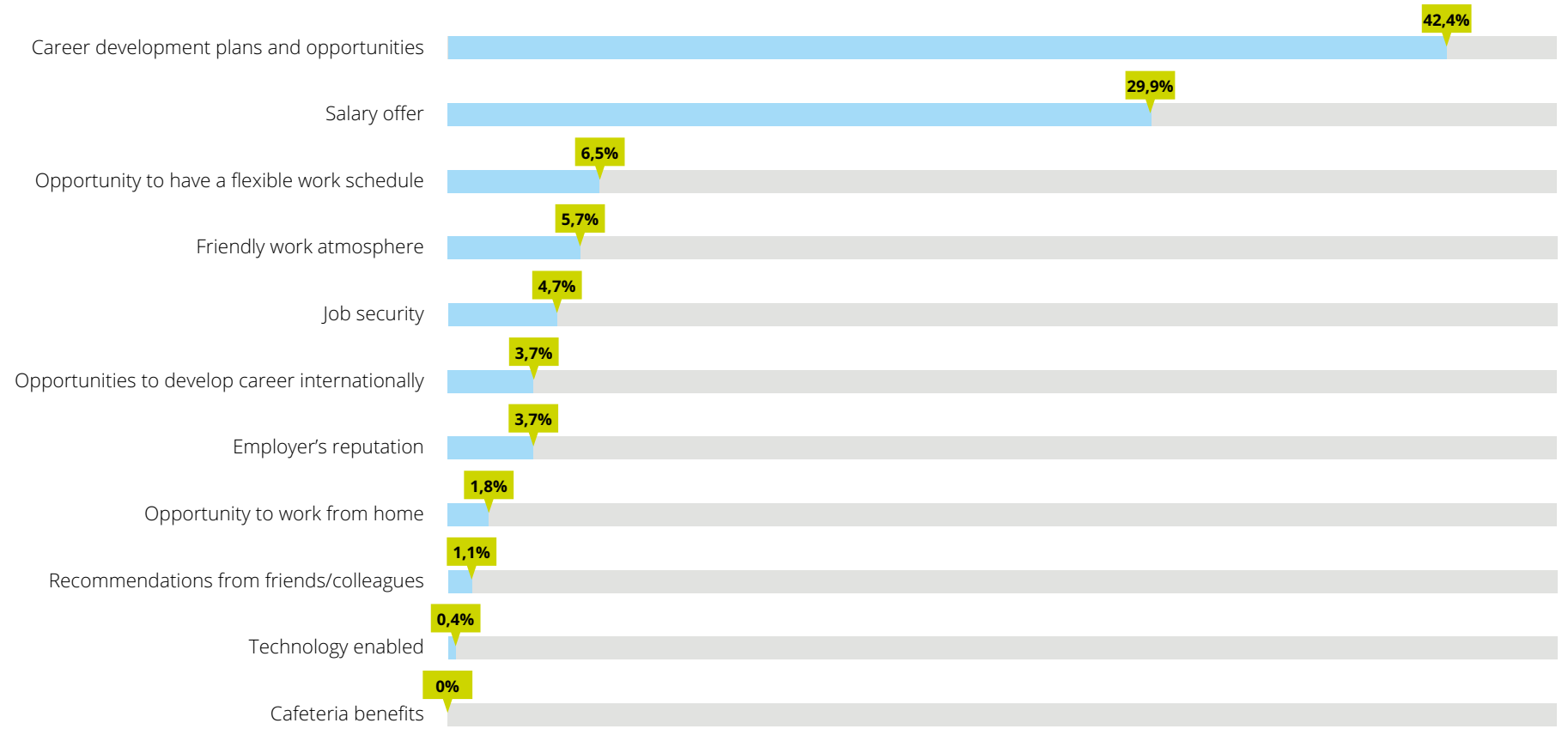
It is no surprise that salary continues to be an important factor when it comes to choosing an employer. This was the second-ranked priority for our respondents, with 30% telling us it is the first factor they take into account when choosing an employer.

Salary is more important for male students than for females. It is definitely more significant for those aged 25 or older than it is for the youngest group of respondents (aged 18-22 years).

As a corollary, career-development opportunities become less important with each year for those already active in the labour market. A friendly work atmosphere, job security and an employer's reputation have little significance for young people. These were respectively the first-choice answers for respectively less than 6%, 5% and 4% of respondents.

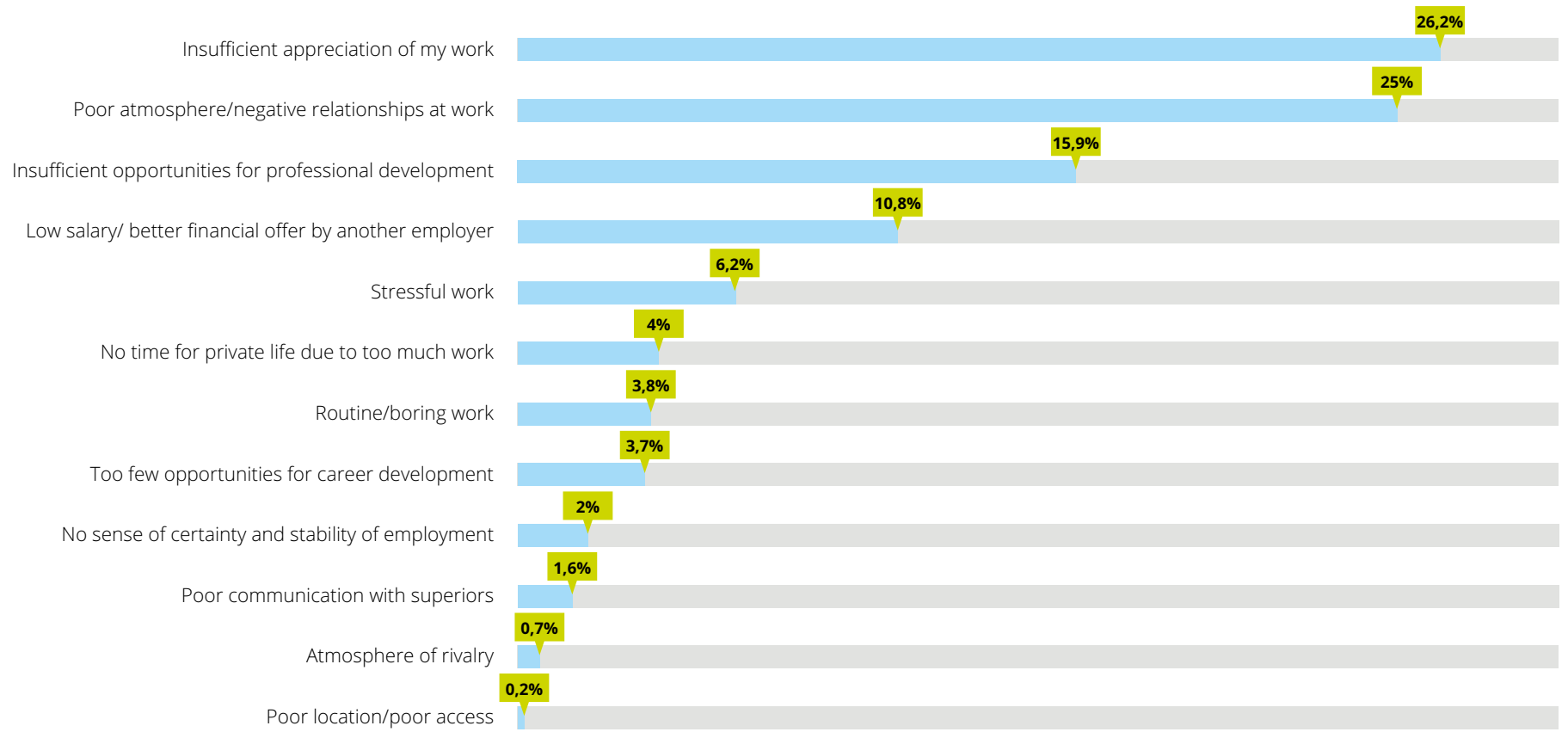
Interestingly, while salary is of fundamental interest, other aspects of the overall benefits package are not insignificant in the selection process.

### The important factors when choosing an employer (first choice)



As in 2015, 'insufficient appreciation of my work' ranked first when making a decision to leave an employer, accounting for 26% of responses. A poor atmosphere/negative relationships at work were equally important for our respondents (even though they are not key factors when choosing an employer). Insufficient appreciation was more important for males than females, while a low salary was the reason to leave a company for only 11% of respondents. Stressful work, having no time for a private life and dull work do not appear to be decisive factors when choosing to leave an employer.

**Reasons to leave an employer**



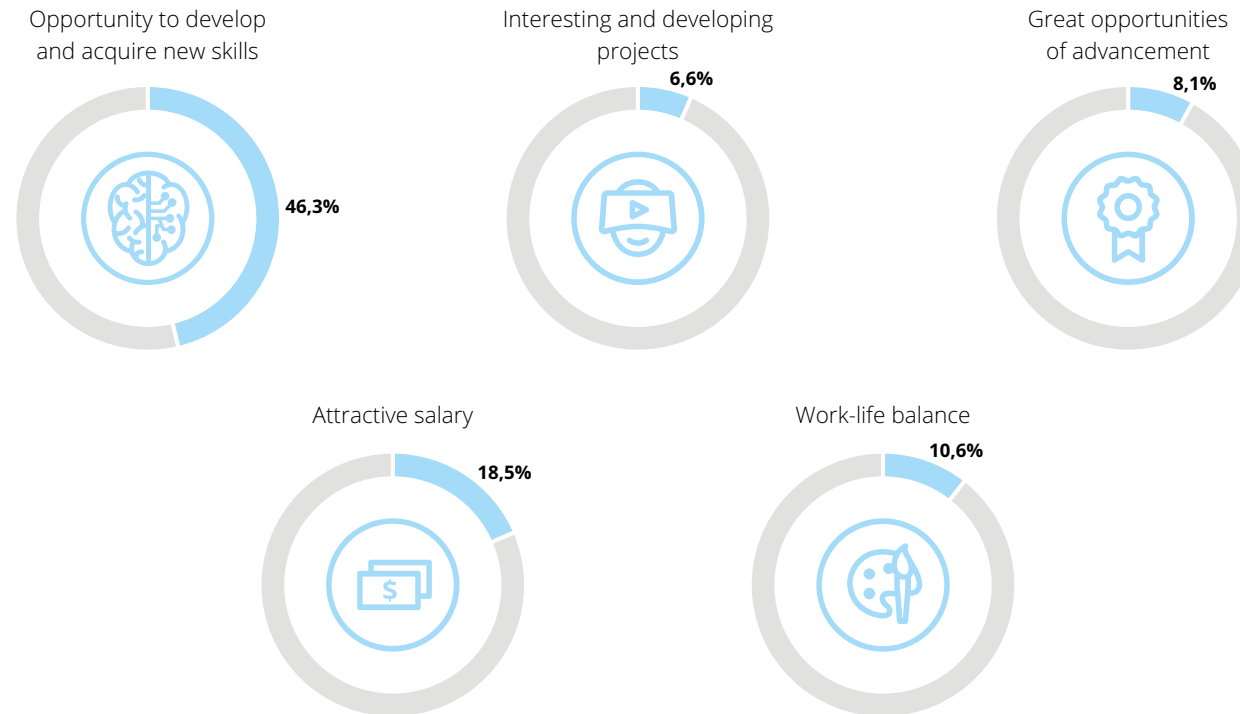
### Decisions about a job

Nearly half (46%) of our respondents see the potential for acquiring and developing new skills as an important factor when choosing a job, with an equal spread among men and women. People aged 25 and over are less likely to make a decision based on this factor than their younger counterparts.

An attractive salary is the most decisive factor for close to a fifth of our respondents. It is more important for men than women, and older respondents (between 25 and 30) are more likely to make a decision based on salary than younger students.

Our respondents chose work-life balance as the third most important factor, with more than 10% placing it first. Opportunities for advancement and interesting projects were in fourth and fifth places. Interesting and developing projects are more important for older respondents aged between 25 and 30.

### Important aspects when choosing a job (first choice)



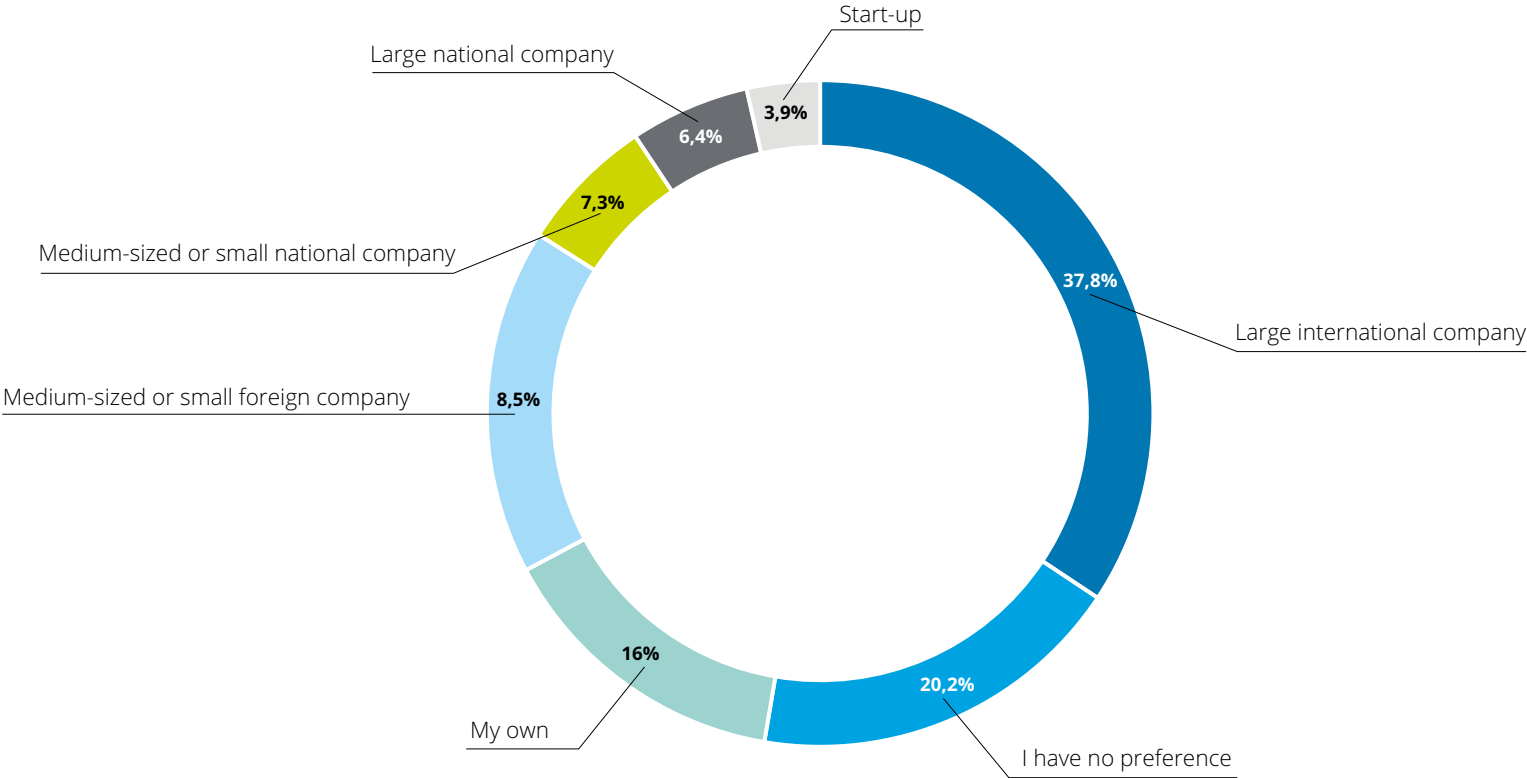
**Target employers**

When it comes to the particular type of company with which young people wish to launch their careers, one 'ideal' type stands out. More than a third of the sample (almost 38%) identified large international companies as the kind of employer they would like to work for. Large international companies are a particular target for those aspiring to managerial positions and those who already have a significant amount of experience.

The two next most-selected categories are 'no preference' and a 'business of my own', meaning that the closest actual competitor is a 'medium-sized or small foreign company', with almost 9% of preferences. This clearly suggests that smaller, locally and regionally-focused business will find it increasingly difficult to attract the best graduate talent.

However, they can compete in other ways. Young people also seek other qualities in an employer, including factors like work-life balance and the potential to acquire and develop new skills. Interestingly, just 4% of our respondents want to get professionally involved with start-ups – a type of enterprise with a well-established image of being driven mostly by energetic and innovative young people. This might be yet further confirmation that young people, at the beginning of their professional journeys, value the stable working environment offered by larger international organisations over business models with relatively high uncertainty. However, even though start-ups ranked low in the overall ranking, 16% of respondents are considering establishing their own businesses.

**Preferred company types**



### Values that are essential for young people

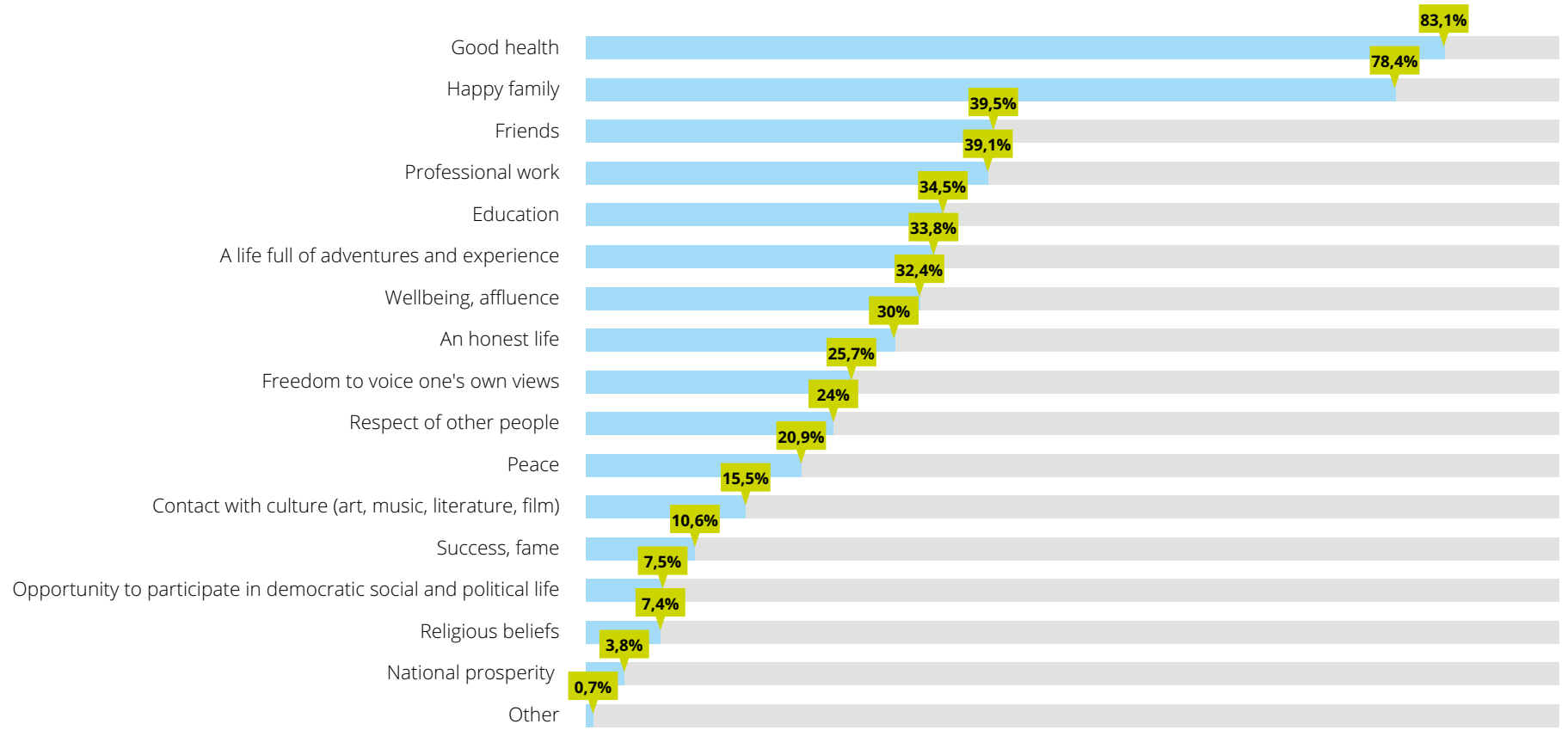
When we asked respondents to select up to five values that are most important to them, good health and a happy family topped the ranking with 83%. More than 78% of young people confirmed that these are the factors they value most. Happy family is the most important value for almost 80% of young people aged between 18 and 22 – slightly more important than for their older colleagues. Consequently, professional work is important for not quite 37% of these young people, the lowest score among all age groups.

Overall, having a professional career is one of the most important values for 39% of our respondents. Having a group of good friends is another popular choice for our respondents. Work is the most important value for almost 42% of those aged 23 and 24, making this factor more important for them than for other age groups.

While leading an honest life is one of the most important values for 30% of our respondents, it is more important for men than women and for people of over 25.

Religious beliefs and the opportunity to participate in democratic social and political life were selected as important by just over 7% of respondents. The chance to participate in democratic life is more significant for men (close to 9%) than for women. It is also far more important for those who chose not to reveal their gender (close to 19%).

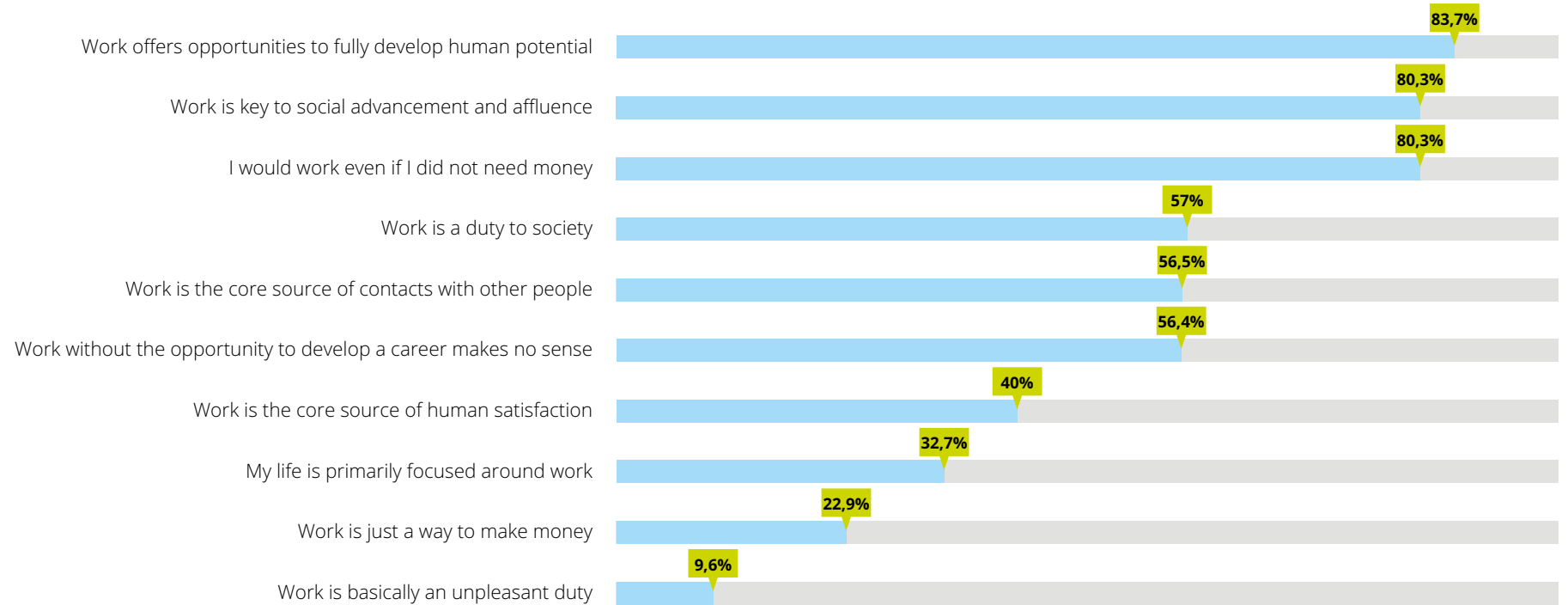
### Most important values



As much as a third of our respondents said that their life is focused primarily around work. This is especially true for men and for those aged between 25 and 30. Almost 84% see work as a way of developing human potential. Almost the same proportion (81%) sees work as a key factor to social advancement and affluence, confirming that they would work even if they didn't need money. More than half (57%) think that work is a duty to society. While social advancement is important for these young people, so is developing one's potential and having a sense of responsibility towards society. More than 56% of our respondents also confirmed they do not see much value in work unless they can develop a career, with almost 60% of our male respondents holding this view.

While it is reassuring to see that young people think of work as a way of achieving social status, it is worth noting that almost 10% of our respondents see work as just an unpleasant duty, while 23% think it is just a way to make money. Once again, more male than female respondents express such beliefs. These views were also more common between older respondents than their younger counterparts.

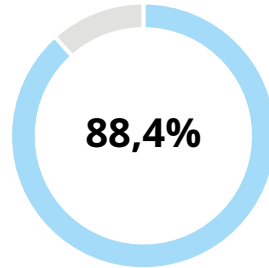
**Value of work (top choices)**



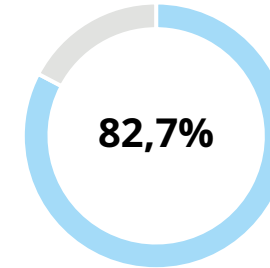
Young people are self-confident and have a lot of faith in their abilities and competencies. Close to 90% of our sample believe that finding an attractive job is dependent solely on their own efforts and experience. Almost 80% are confident that their careers will be driven primarily by their efforts and actions. Close to 83% say that professional life has always had an important value in their families and that the majority of their friends either work or are looking for ways to gain professional experience.

**Importance of work and self-confidence**

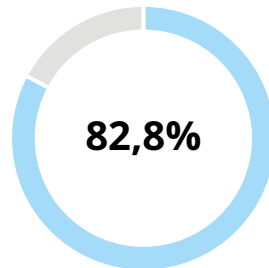
Finding an attractive job is primarily up to my efforts, experience and competences



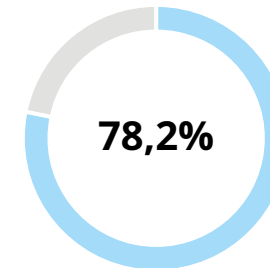
Most of my friends work or try to gain valuable professional experience



Professional work in my family has always been an important value – something to value and respect



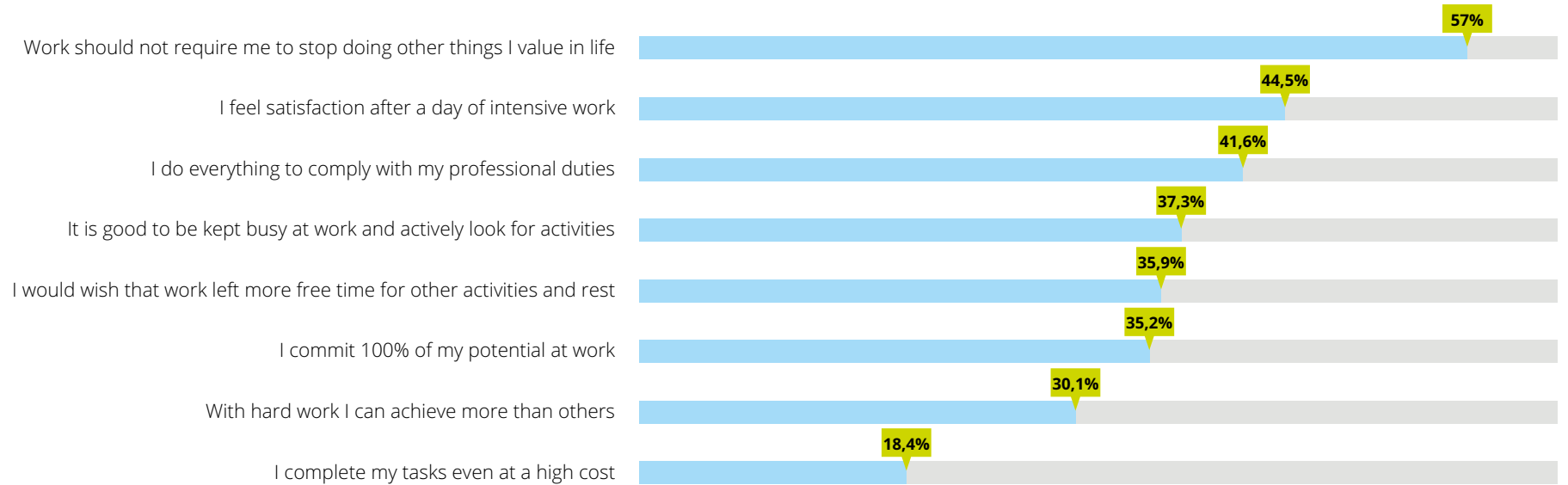
Only I and my efforts related to work will drive my career



Young people from Central Europe and France also believe that work is a way of developing human potential. While they would work even if they didn't have to, they are certainly not willing to sacrifice other activities and values for their jobs. Over half (57%) think their work should not require them to drop other activities in their lives.

Work is definitely a source of personal satisfaction, but it is clear that not many young people are willing to complete professional tasks if the cost of doing so is too high. Nearly a third (30%) believes hard work is a way to achieve success and outperform others. For 40%, it is a core source of satisfaction, and many tell us they are ready to commit their full potential to work and comply with their duties. Certainly, the work ethic is high on the agenda for young people and work is an important part of their lives, but this is only the case provided it does not take more than is officially required and their private lives do not suffer.

### Professional life, work ethics and work-life balance





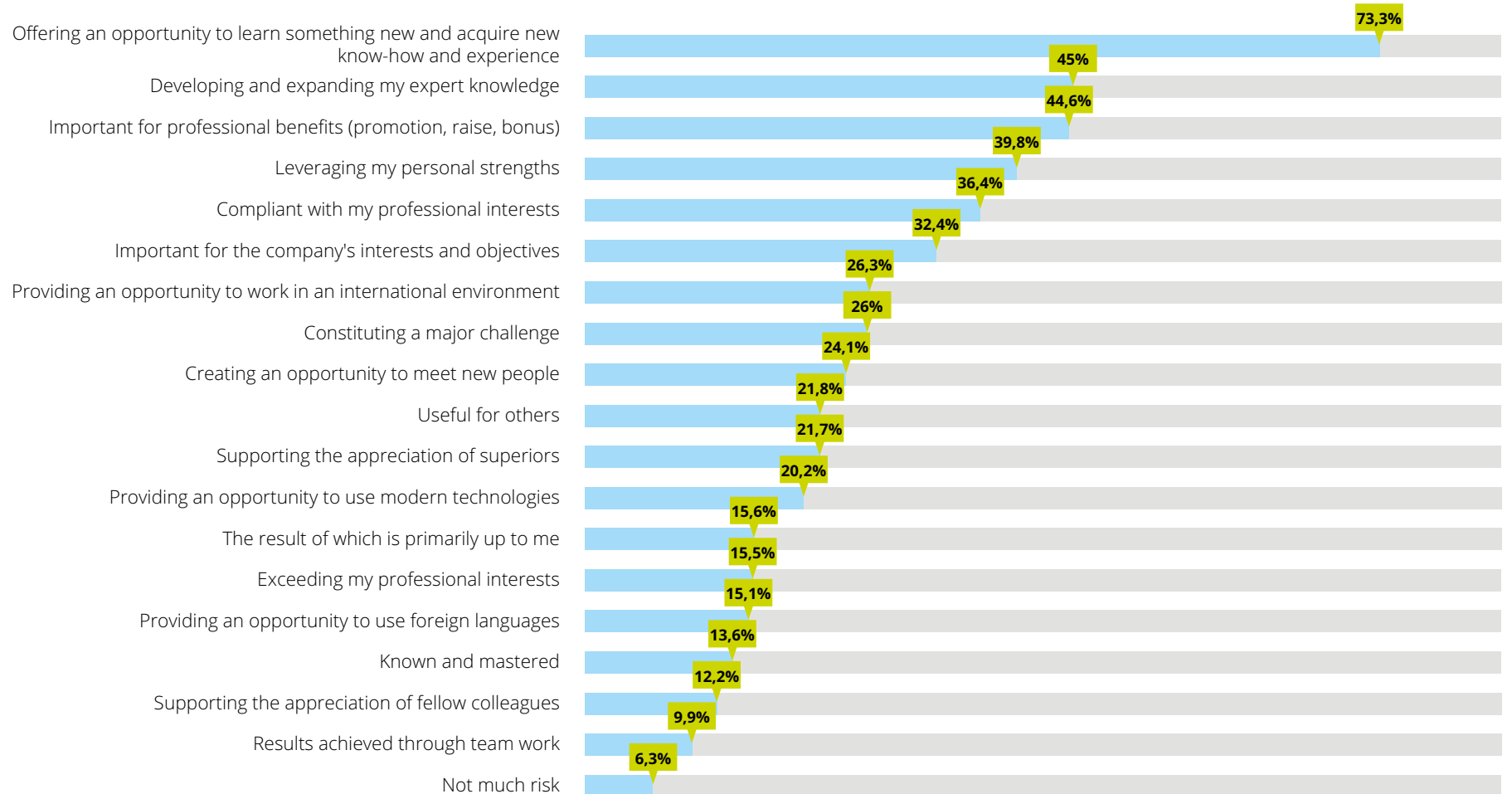
### Motivating factors

When we asked respondents to select five tasks, that motivate them at work the most, the opportunity to learn something new and acquire expertise emerged as by far the highest-ranked motivational factor (73%). This is followed by the desire to develop and expand expert knowledge (45%) and those tasks, that deliver professional benefits, such as promotions, salary increases and bonuses. It is not surprising that learning opportunities are so important to the group. Not only do they come from the leading universities in each of the countries we surveyed, they also are at a stage in their lives where everything to date has focused on learning, providing them with the route forward to fulfil their ambitions.

Young people are certainly not looking for security at work: only 6% are motivated by having little risk at work, and what is already known and mastered has any value for less than 14%. Appreciation from colleagues (12%) and team work (10%) are also of little importance. However, appreciation by superiors is a motivating factor for more than 20% of those surveyed. According to our study, appreciation from peers has more value for men than women.

Meeting new people is important for almost one quarter of our respondents; a slightly smaller share is motivated by being useful to others. The opportunity to meet new people is definitely more important for those aged between 18 and 22, as well as for our female respondents. The results of team work might not be a priority for young people, but at the same time being primarily responsible for the outcomes of work is a key motivating factor for less than 16% of respondents.

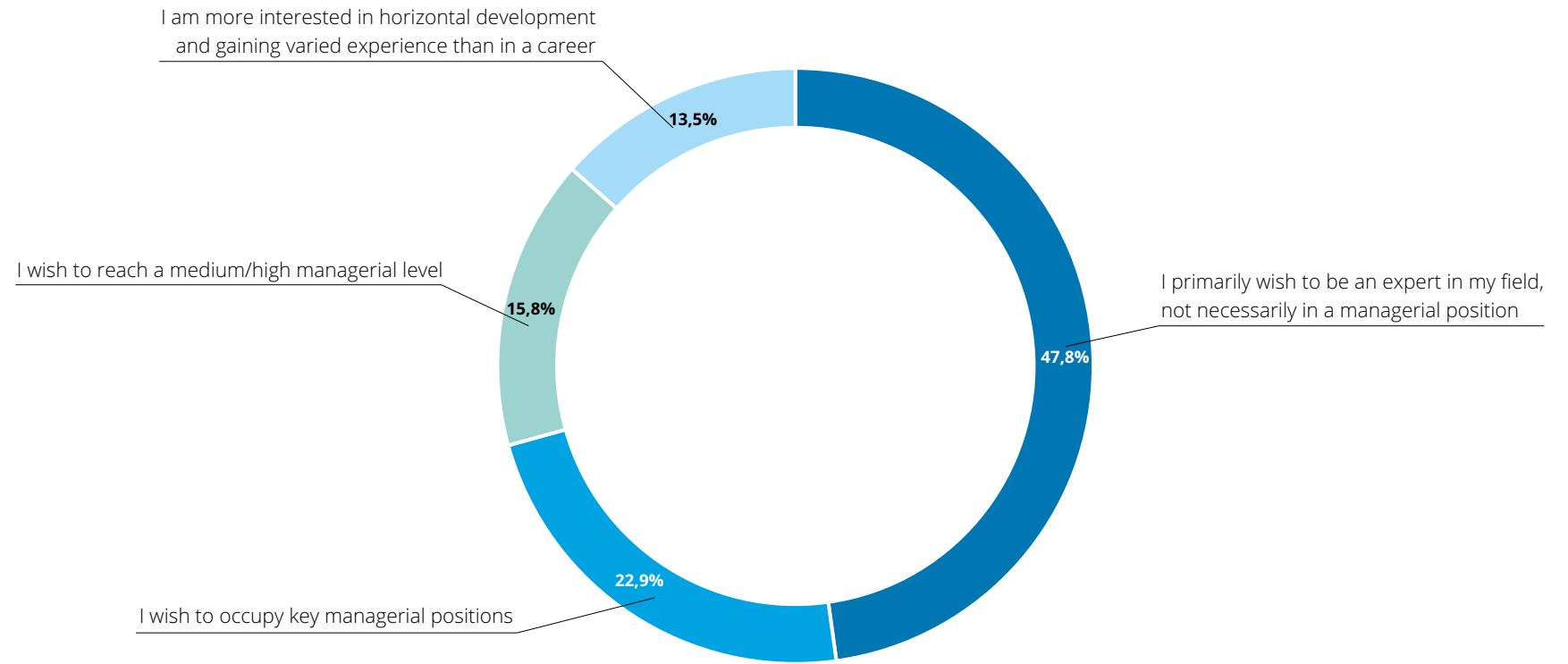
### Source of motivation



**Which way to go**

Almost half of our respondents wish to be experts in their professions, not necessarily holding managerial positions. Almost 40% aim to reach managerial functions, including more than 20% who aspire to senior positions. Key managerial positions are especially important for our male respondents, with close to 30% of them saying that this is their goal. Horizontal development and gaining a range of experience is valuable for more than 13% of the sample.

**Young people's aspirations**



Young people recognise sustainable corporate and personal behaviour, including ethical environmental and community best practice, as a vital global priority.



# Understanding leadership

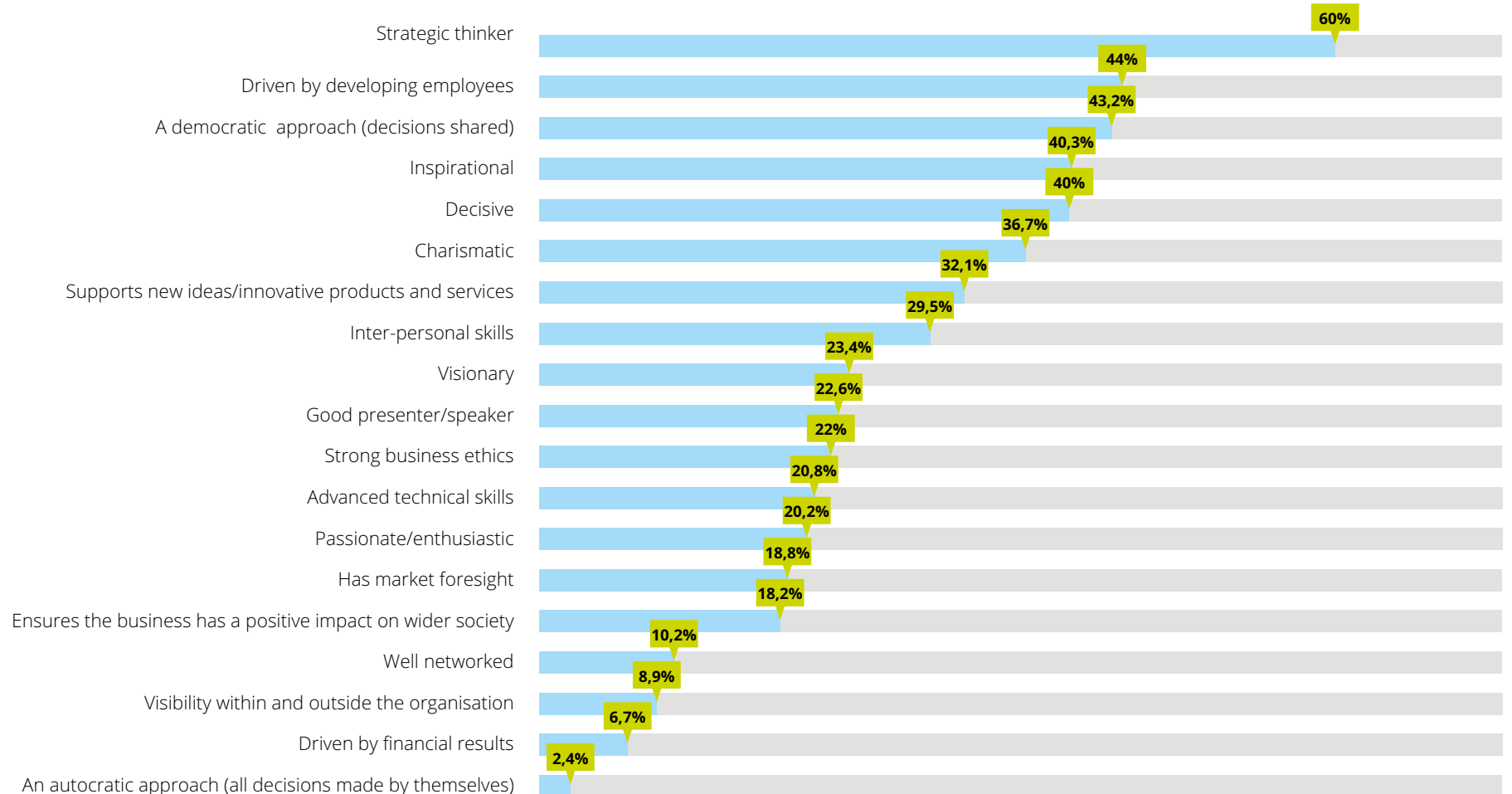
## Faces of leadership

According to our respondents, leaders' characteristics must include strong strategic skills (60%), the ability to develop employees (44%) and a democratic approach (43%). In addition, leaders should be decisive and inspire the people they lead (40%). Not surprisingly, they also need to support new ideas (32%) and have good interpersonal skills (30%).

Our research confirms again that female respondents tend to value factors such as taking a democratic approach, developing employees, supporting new ideas and high ethical standards more than males do. Men, meanwhile, are more likely to admire a strategic thinker, or a charismatic and visionary leader. In our findings about male and female attitudes to leadership, there is – again – a danger of appearing to support stereotypes. Indeed, females more frequently selected perceived 'soft' factors, while males appear to value more 'tangible' aspects of leadership more highly. However, we should not take the stereotypes too far: doing so would make it easy to assume that females are more likely to make collective rather than autocratic decisions, or that they are more ethical in their outlook and actions.

Strategic thinking is the key leadership attribute for those who aspire to managerial positions. The older group of our respondents, and those with more experience, tend more than their younger colleagues to value leaders who are driven by developing employees. Our youngest respondents saw demonstrating passion and enthusiasm

## Definition of a 'true leader'



as an important leadership attributes, as did those who would rather establish their own business rather than work for an entity owned by a third party.

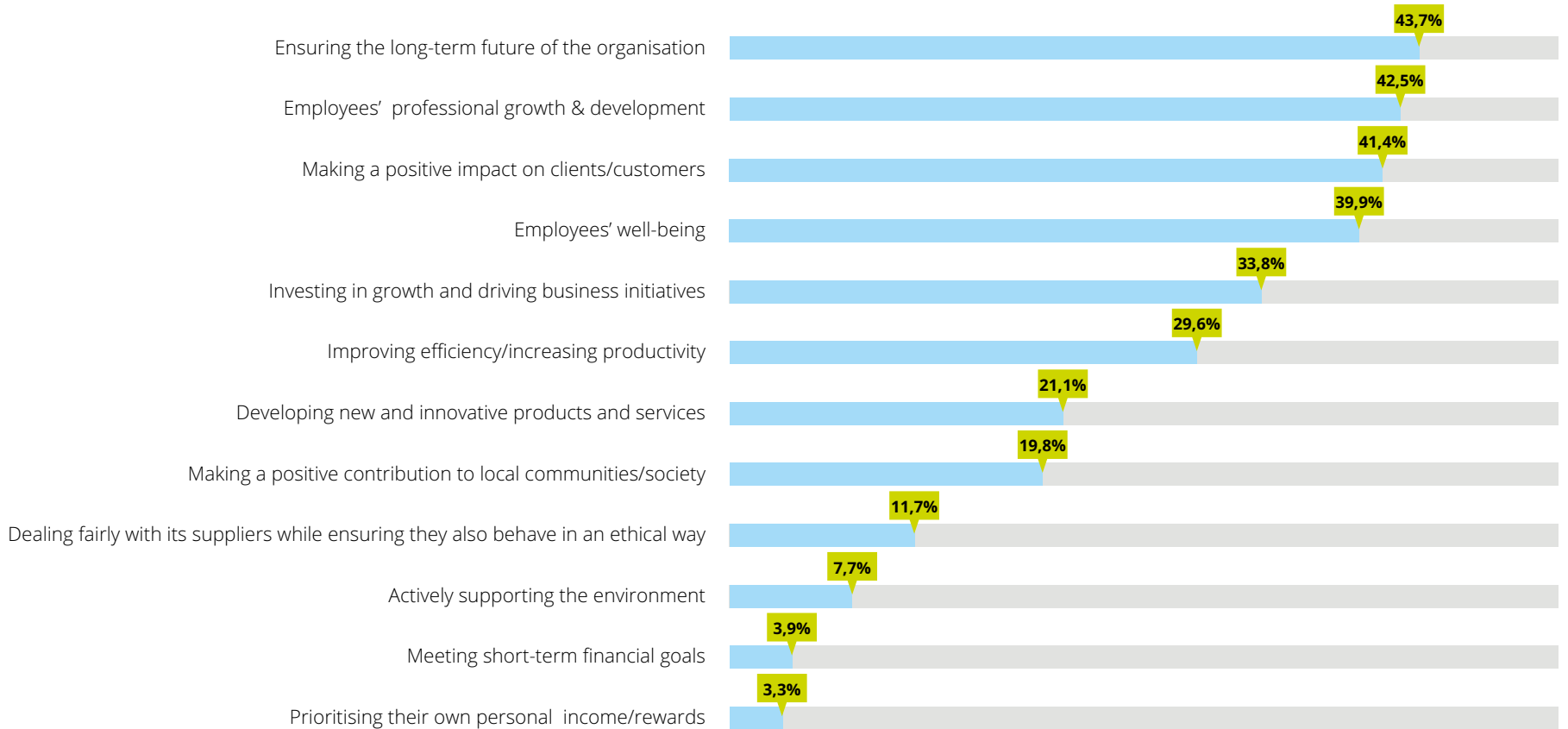
Only just over 6% associate being driven by financial results as being a key aspect of good leadership. This opinion is more commonly held by men and by those who plan to hold managerial positions. Only 18% of our respondents see having a positive impact on society as a key leadership attribute. This is more important for women and for members of the youngest group of respondents with relatively little experience, as well as for those who wish to create their own businesses.

### Leadership priorities

Respondents identified the top four leadership priorities as first securing the long-term future of the organisation (just under 44%), then employee development (42.5%), then making a positive impact on clients (41.4%), and finally assuring employees' well-being (40%). Our older (especially between 25 and 30 years of age) and more experienced respondents were more likely to prioritise employee development than their younger counterparts.

Making a positive contribution to local communities should be a priority for business leaders, according to 20% of those surveyed. Among the least-selected factors were dealing fairly with suppliers while ensuring they act in an ethical way (12%) and actively supporting the environment (8%).

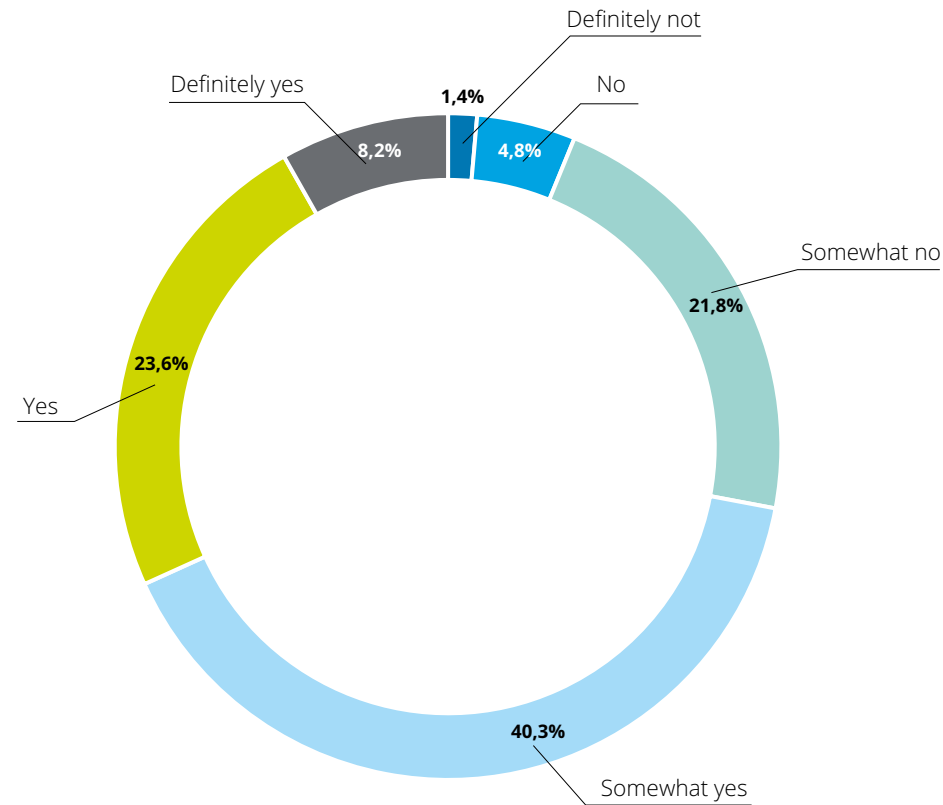
### Essential priorities



### Self-appraisal for leadership potential

More than 70% of the people we surveyed said that others may see them as leaders, while a mere 6% were certain that they would not be seen as one. Surprisingly, more of those aged between 18 and 22 than their older counterparts believe they are perceived as leaders. Another surprise was that the gap between the views of the men and women who answered this question was smaller than might be expected. While 47% of males answered in the affirmative, they were exceeded by the remarkably high proportion of women who did so (49%).

### Would your friends/colleagues describe you as a leader?



Making a positive contribution to local communities should be a priority for business leaders, according to 20% of those surveyed.

# Thinking about businesses around the world

## Business agenda, ethics and important social issues

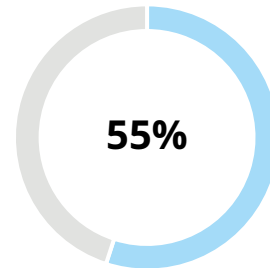
Nearly three-quarters (71%) of our respondents think that businesses around the world focus on their own agenda rather than considering that of wider society. This view is shared by almost 81% of Hungarian students and 78% of their counterparts from France. Students from Lithuania seem to have more faith in business organisations – almost 40% of them believe businesses do also consider the society in which they operate.

While 44% of our sample agree that businesses behave in an ethical manner, 48% think otherwise. It is worth noting that between 69% and 71% of respondents from Hungary, France and Estonia do not associate ethics with businesses activities. Students from Albania (23%), Kosovo (31%), Romania and Moldova (35%) have far more belief in the noble motivations of businesses.

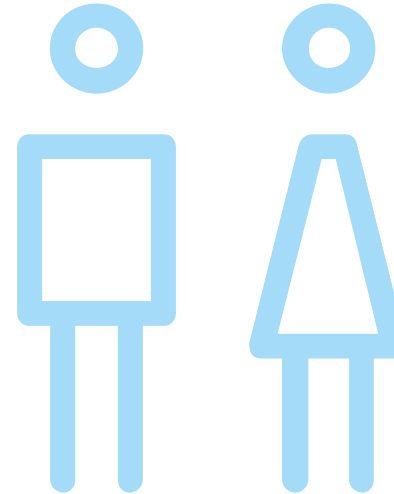
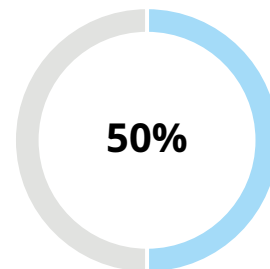
Just over 44% of our respondents say they do not agree with the statement that business leaders are committed to helping improve society. Again, students from southern European states – Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia (almost 66%) and Kosovo (56%) – are exceptionally positive when it comes to evaluating leadership attitudes in this matter. By contrast, young people from Hungary (almost 65%) and Estonia (74%) are again shown to have somewhat negative perceptions of business leaders around the world.

## Perception of business

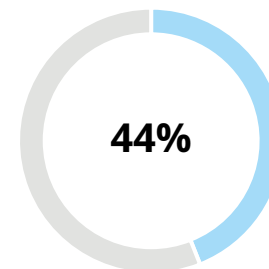
They show stronger leadership than governments on important social issues



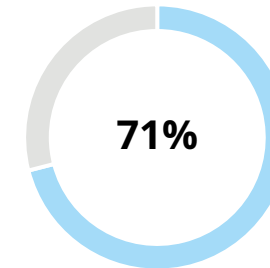
They take a strong leadership position on issues that impact wider society



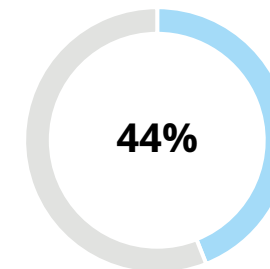
Their leaders are committed to helping to improve society



They focus on their own agenda rather than considering wider society



They behave in an ethical manner



### Having an impact on society

Half of our respondents believe that businesses around the world take a strong leadership position on issues that impact on wider society. Those from southern states – Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia (almost 70%), Kosovo and Serbia (each more than 64%) again evaluated business attitudes in a more positive way than their peers from Hungary (where 58% do not think business take a strong leadership position on issues impacting wider society) and Estonia (where more than half the sample shares this view).

### Leadership on important social issues

When it comes to strong leadership on important social issues, comparing businesses with governments has some interesting outcomes. More than half (55%) of those surveyed believe businesses are doing better in this area, while almost 12% of students cannot make a firm decision. Consequently, our respondents from Southern and Central European countries such as Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia (almost 65% each), Bulgaria (more than 64%), Kosovo (65%), Poland (60%) and Slovakia (slightly above 59%) have a better perception of business leaders than they do of their governments. This view is shared by 45% of students in France and Hungary. However, as 47% of respondents in both these countries hold the opposite view, so the gap in opinions is largely insignificant.

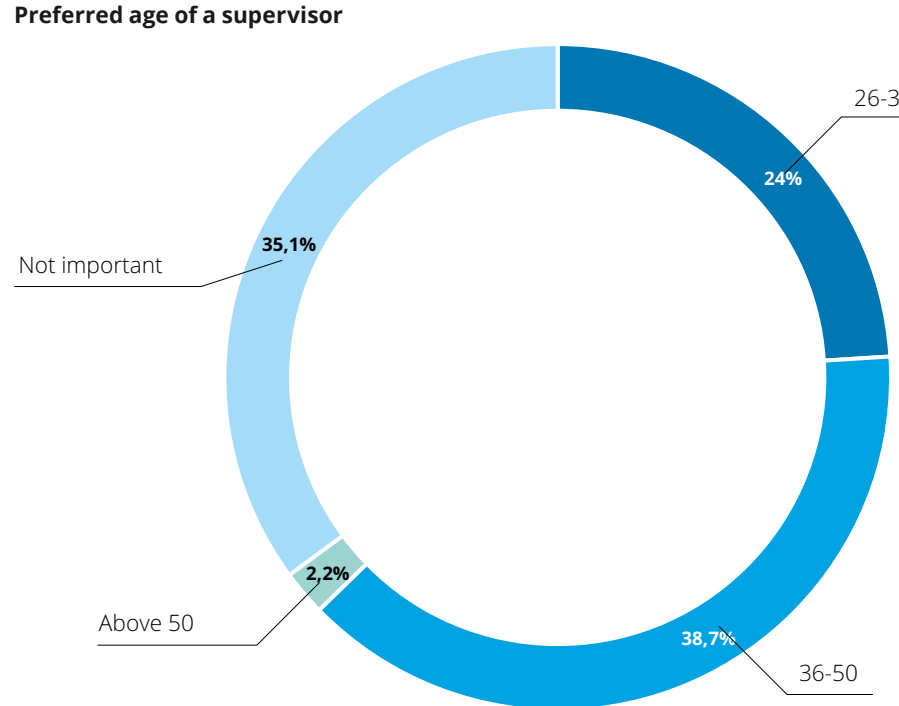
Nearly three-quarters (71%) of our respondents think that businesses around the world focus on their own agenda rather than considering that of wider society.





# Age, gender and cultural diversity matters

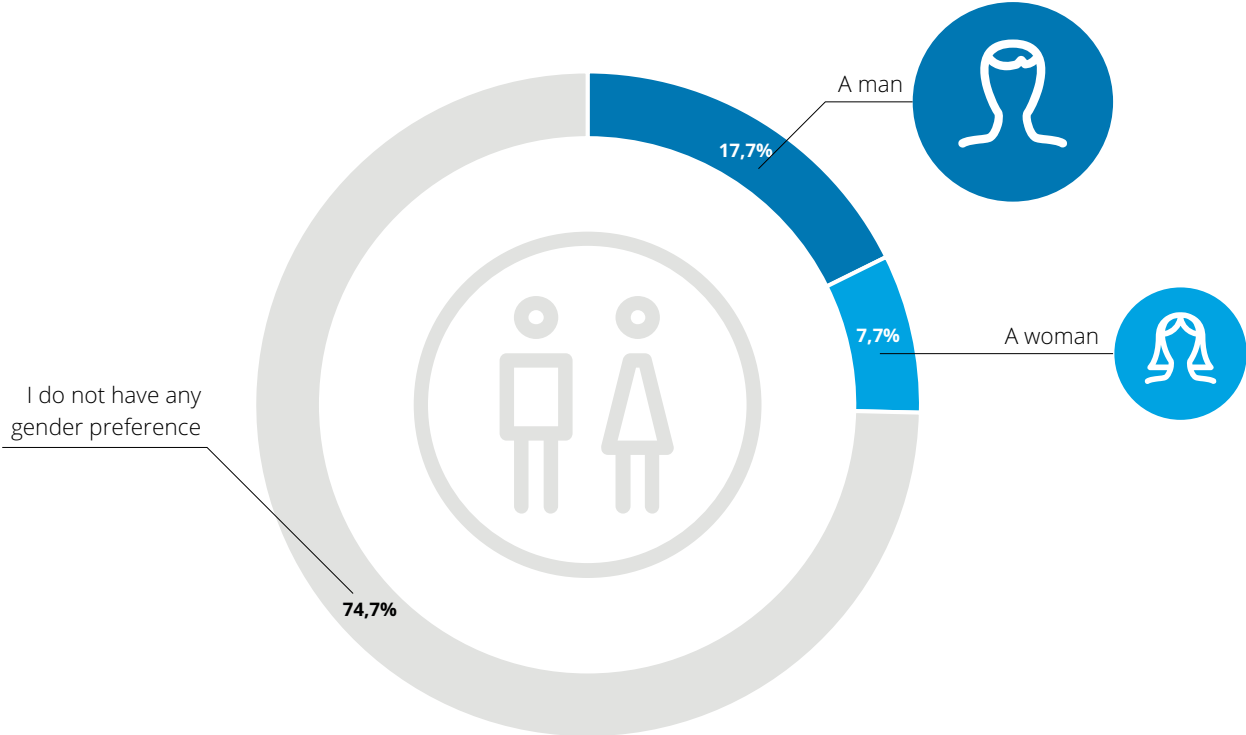
While the age of a line manager does not play a significant role for 35% of the young people who participated in our research, almost 39% of all respondents would rather have a boss aged between 36 and 50. Age is not an important consideration especially for those who have no managerial aspirations and those who have not yet decided whether they want to work in a business owned by a third party or set up a business of their own. Not surprisingly almost 30% of younger respondents (22 and below) would like to have managers who are younger (between 26 and 35) than those preferred by their older colleagues. Older respondents – especially those between 25 and 30 (46%) – would prefer their managers to be in the 36-50 age group.



More than half (55%) of our respondents think any generation gaps are more about mindset than actual age.

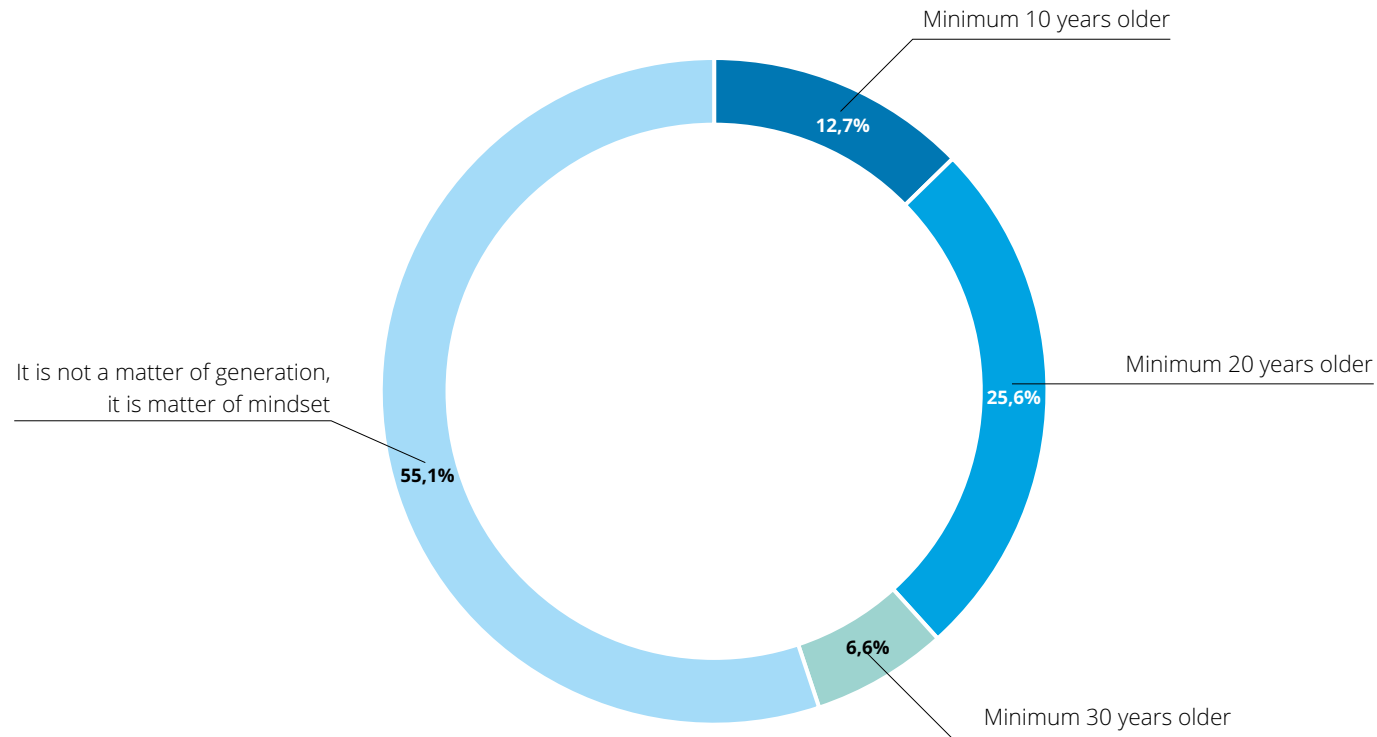
While 17.7% of our respondents would prefer their boss to be a man, and 7.7% would rather have a female boss, it is reassuring to see that almost 75% have no gender preference when it comes to the people who will supervise and manage their work.

**I would prefer my boss to be...**



More than half (55%) of our respondents think any generation gaps are more about mindset than actual age. This opinion is particularly common among those aged 22 and under. It is also shared more often by female respondents and by those who would rather work for their own business (60%) and who do not aspire to managerial positions (58%). One in four of those we surveyed think we can only talk about a different generation when dealing with a minimum age gap of 20 years; 12.7% think that 10 years make a generational difference.

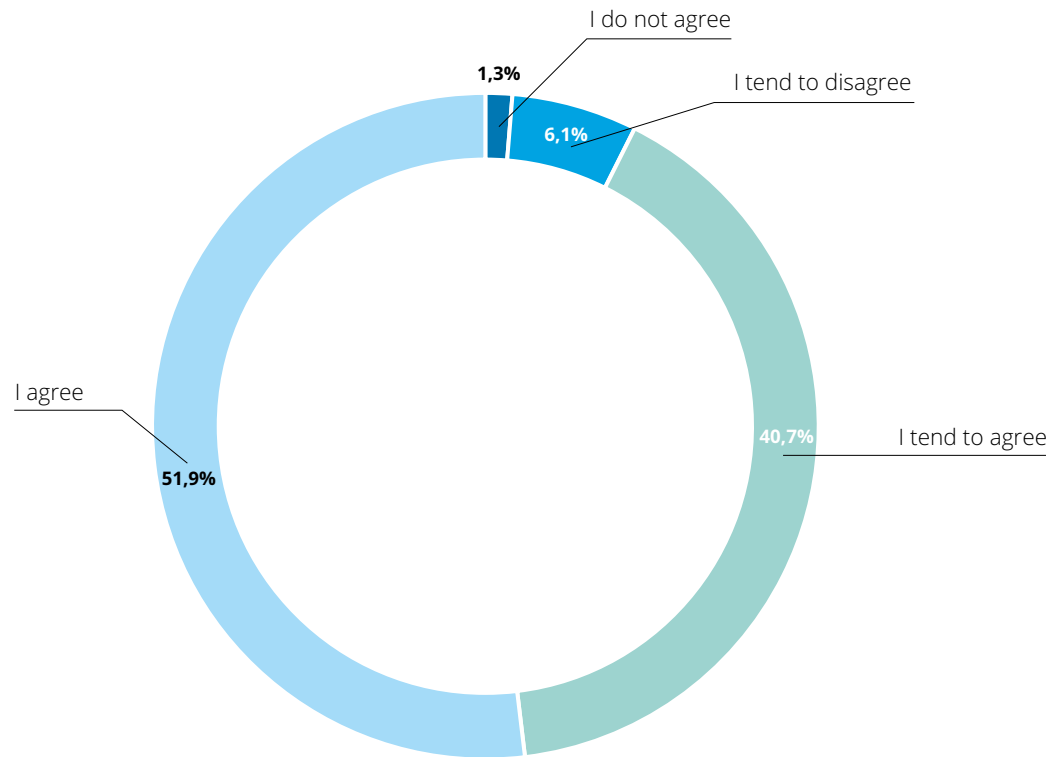
**Employees of the previous generation**



**Knowledge comes with time**

Almost 93% of our respondents agree that employees with a long career behind them are a source of valuable knowledge for people who are just starting out: this view is shared by almost the same percentage of female and male respondents, as well as by those who declined to indicate their gender or do not identify with either gender. There is no major difference between age groups (barely 1.1 p.p.) when it comes to evaluating the relationship between the length of a professional career and the possession of valuable knowledge.

**Employees with a longer career are a source of valuable knowledge for people who are just beginning their careers**

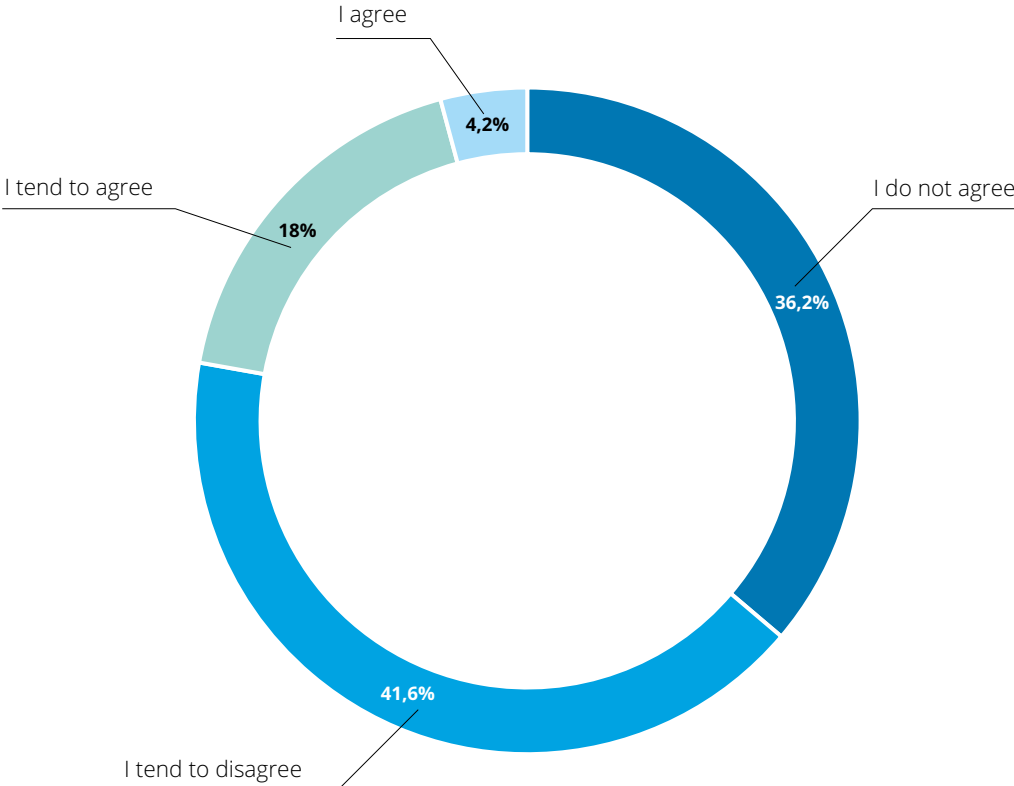


Age is not an important consideration especially for those who have no managerial aspirations and those who have not yet decided whether they want to work in a business owned by a third party or set up a business of their own.

**Finding common language and understanding**

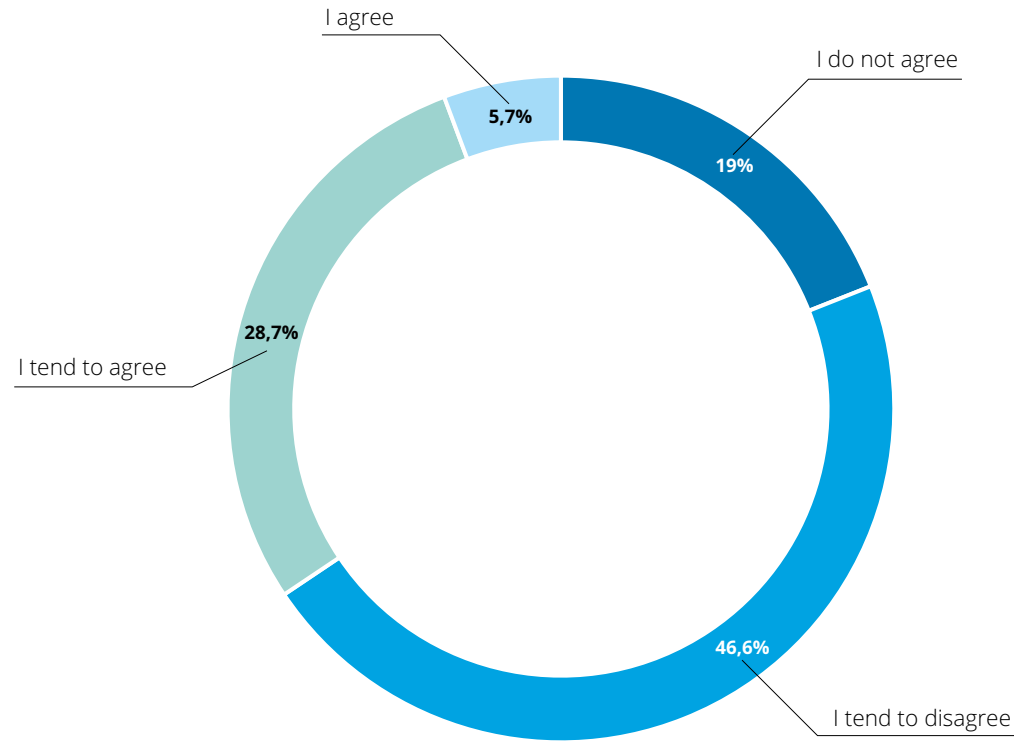
More than three-quarters (78%) of our respondents believe they will not find it hard to find a shared or common 'language' with colleagues who have had a longer career, including 82% between the ages of 25 and 30. While younger respondents, up to the age of 22, are slightly more sceptical than their older counterparts, a high proportion (75%) does not see a longer career as an obstacle to finding common ground. Having more experience also leads to more openness around finding a common language with those who have worked for longer.

**It is hard to find a common language with colleagues who have been working for many years**



More than a third of the students who participated in our study think that older managers and colleagues do not understand the needs of young employees. More males than females express this opinion. Experience plays also an important role here: almost 70% of those with longer work experience believe that the age of a boss or a peer is not an obstacle to understanding the needs of a younger generation.

**Older superiors and colleagues do not understand the needs of young employees**

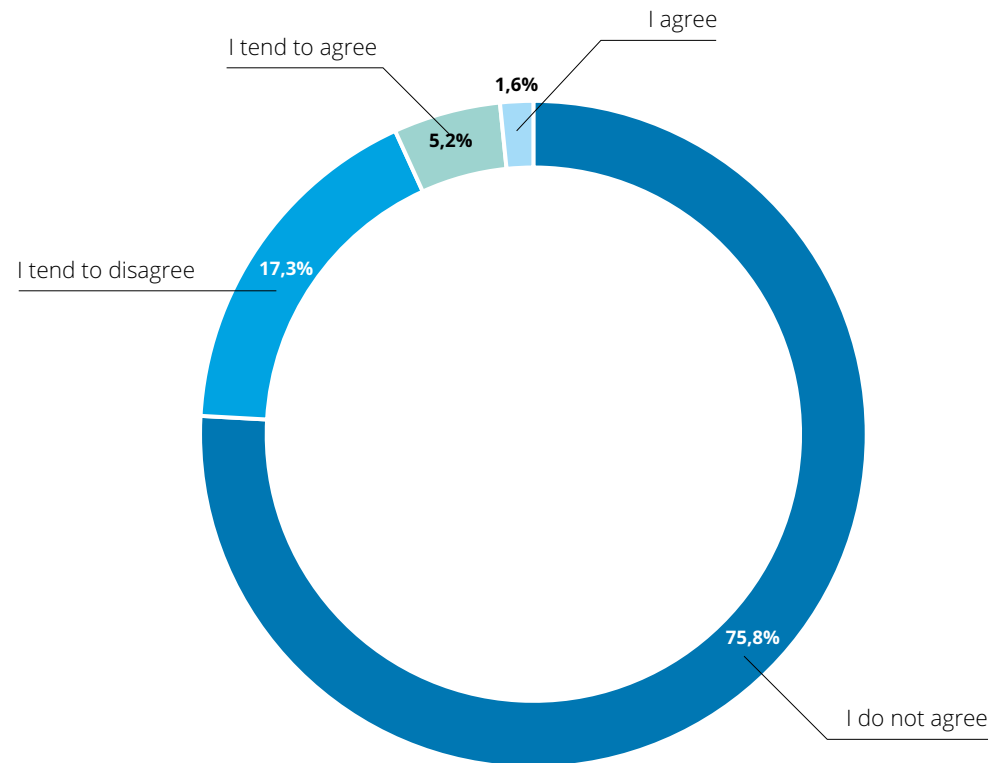


More than three-quarters (78%) of our respondents believe they will not find it hard to find a shared or common 'language' with colleagues who have had a longer career.

### Diverse workforce

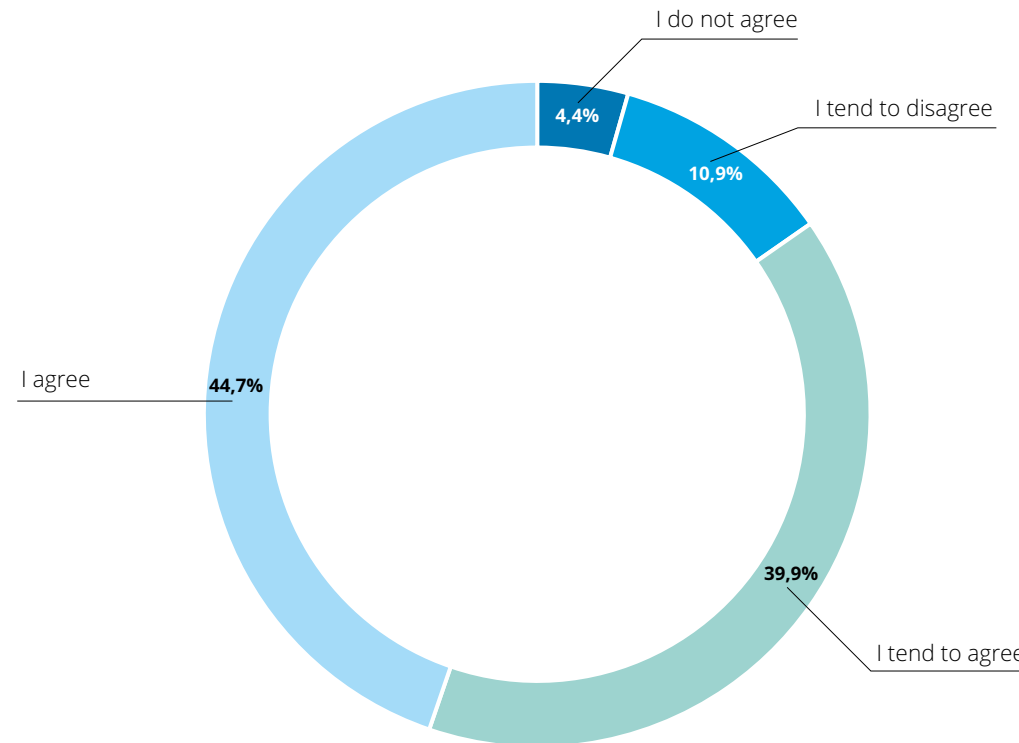
Just under 7% of respondents would prefer to work only with members of the same gender. Female students are slightly more open to diversity (with 6% agreeing with the above statement) than men (8%).

### I would prefer to only work alongside members of the same gender



Cultural background is another area we wanted to explore in our research. While a great majority (85%) would prefer to work alongside people from different cultural backgrounds, it should be noted that 15% are not keen to share their professional life with colleagues from other backgrounds. One in five male respondents admit this is their attitude, and 13% of female students hold the same opinion. Those aged between 18 and 22, and those with more professional experience are more open to accepting differences at work than their older or less experienced colleagues.

**I would prefer to work alongside people from different cultural backgrounds.**

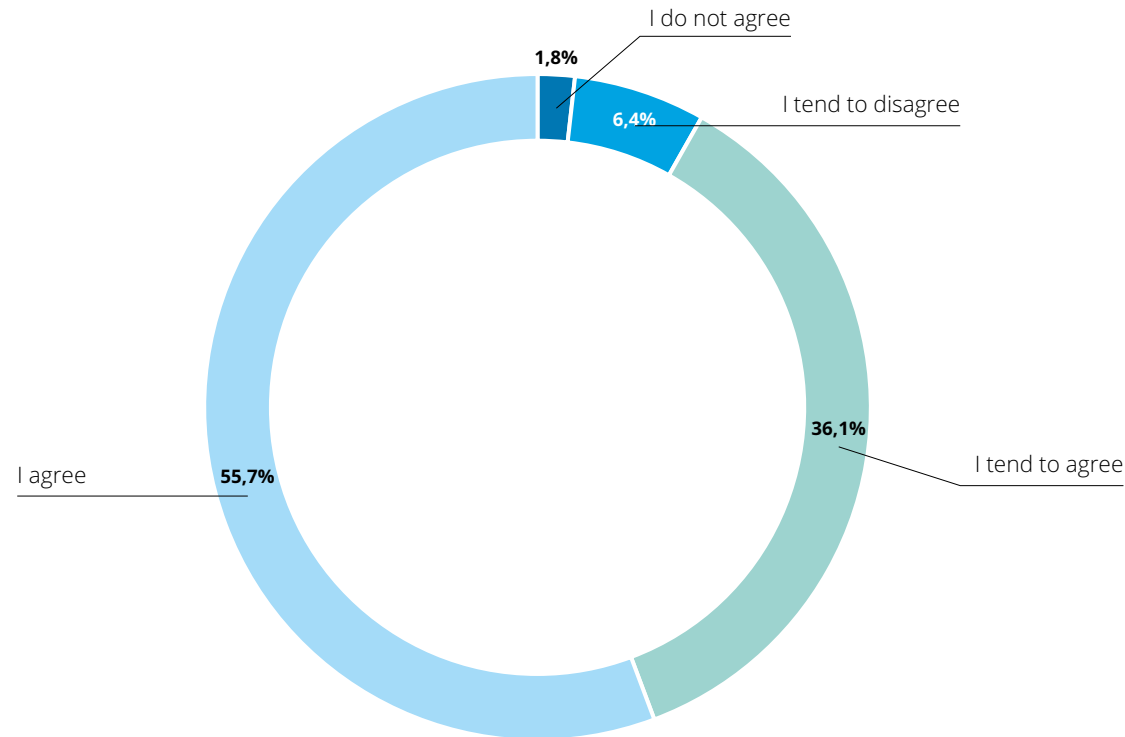


More than a third of the students who participated in our study think that older managers and colleagues do not understand the needs of young employees.

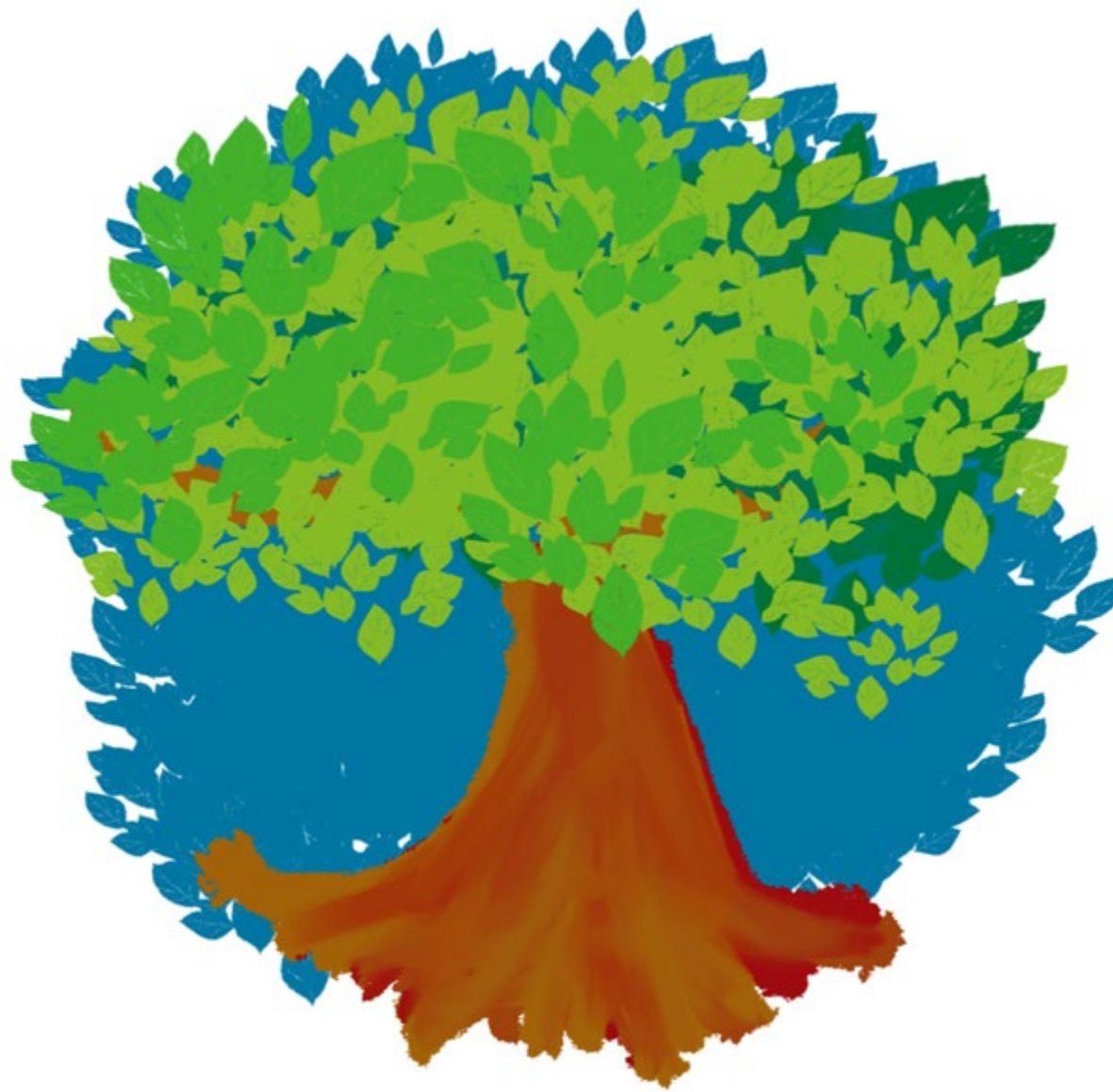


The great majority (92%) of our respondents would prefer to work in an organisation with a diverse workforce (in terms of age, gender and nationality). Once again, a higher proportion of women (94%) than of men (88%) report such an open attitude. While there is almost no difference in opinions between age groups in this area, it appears that the more professional experience our respondents have, the more likely they are to want to be part of an organisation with a diverse workforce.

**I would prefer to work in an organisation with a diverse workforce (in terms of age, gender, nationality, etc)**



The great majority (92%) of our respondents would prefer to work in an organisation with a diverse workforce (in terms of age, gender and nationality).



# Rethinking traditional employment models

## Working and office arrangements

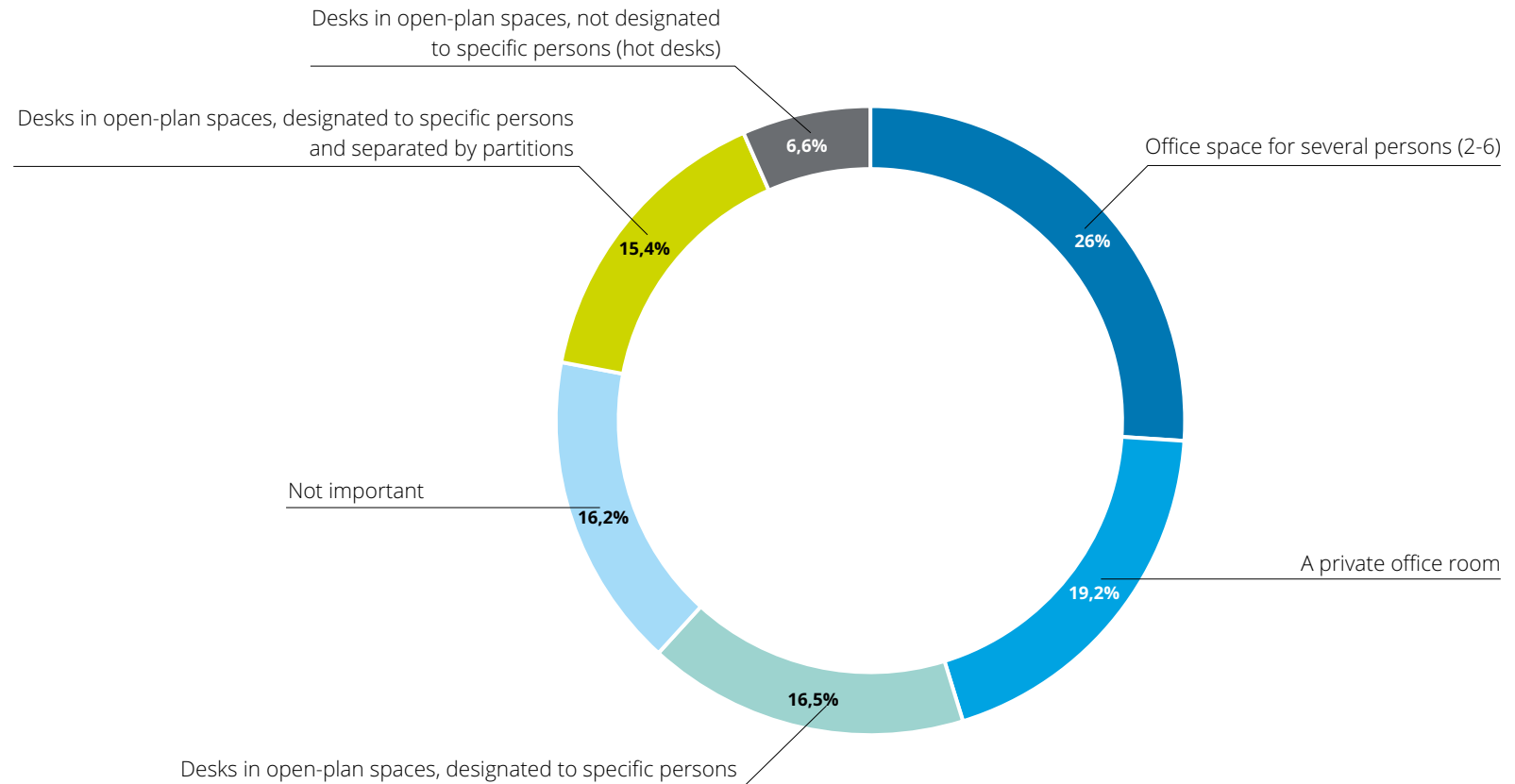
More than a quarter of our respondents would prefer to work in a space with between two and six individuals. The older our respondents are, the more likely they are to choose such an arrangement. Surprisingly, when compared with their older counterparts, 22% of those aged 18-22 would prefer to work alone in a private office. Such an arrangement was also the choice for 17% of their colleagues aged between 25 and 30. More people with relatively little experience (22%) also selected this option. Predictably, it was also first choice among those planning to hold managerial positions.

Having a personal desk in an open-plan space was the preferred choice for more than 16% of young people, with no particular differences between age or gender groups. Office arrangements are of no importance to less than 0.5% of young people.

Partitioned desks for specific people in an open space provide the preferred choice for slightly over 15% of all respondents. It is the best option for more females (close to 17%) than males (13%) and those aged 23 – 24 (17%).

Hot desking is the least chosen option (6.6%), with no particular difference in opinion between age groups. However, 9.4% of male respondents chose this option.

## Preferred office space arrangements

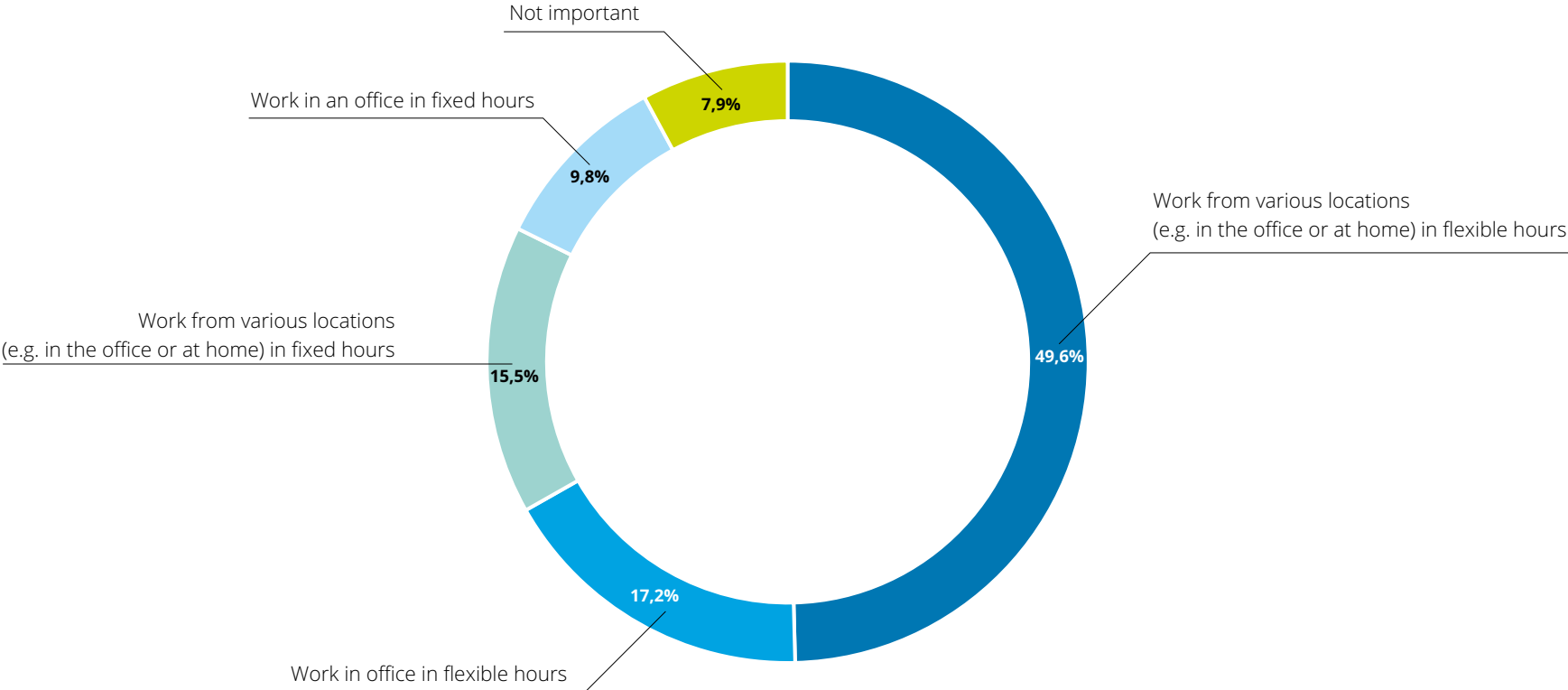


Working from various locations (such as in the office or at home) in flexible hours is the preferred choice for half of our young respondents. It was the first choice for 54% of older respondents (between 25 and 30), but was somewhat less popular among the youngest age group. That said, at 49.6% overall it has grown significantly in popularity in the majority of surveyed countries since the 2018 report (42.6%). Companies that attempt to impose a straightjacket of eight+ hours in the office every day may simply not be of interest to a very large proportion of the available young talent. Less than 10% actively wish to work in an office for fixed hours (see below), so employers should consider standardising solutions that meet the needs of their business, their customers and their employees.

Working in an office with flexible hours was the respondents' second choice (17.2%), with a higher proportion of men and members of our youngest group selecting this option.

Fixed working hours at different locations was chosen by 15.5%, while the place and time of work is not important for 8%.

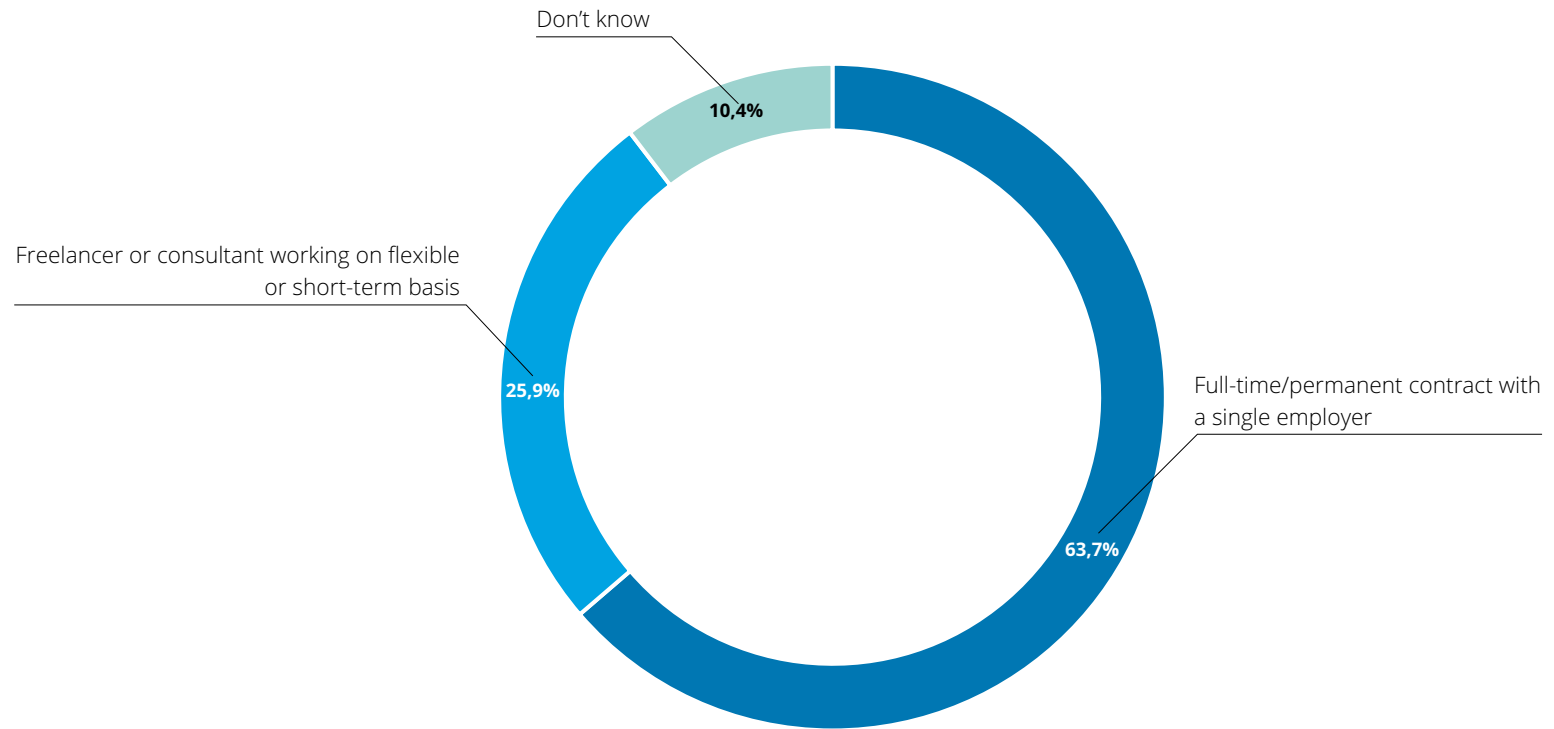
**Preferred working arrangement**



When asked about their preferred working model (with an assumption that it would guarantee the same amount of money) young people tell us that while they might be looking for more freedom and independence, they also value stability. Almost two-thirds (64%) of our respondents confirm that a full-time/permanent contract with a single employer is what they are looking for in their professional life. This is not reflected to the same extent in the responses we received from those aged between 18 and 22 (59%), but it certainly is the case for their older colleagues: 68% aged between 23 and 24, and 69% of those between 25 and 30, shared this view.

One in four respondents would like to be a freelancer or consultant working on a flexible or short-term basis. This arrangement is a preferred option for 30% of males and of those who do not indicate their gender, and for 24% of females. Slightly over 10% of young people do not yet know which option to choose.

**Preferred employment options**



### Hybrid or fully remote?

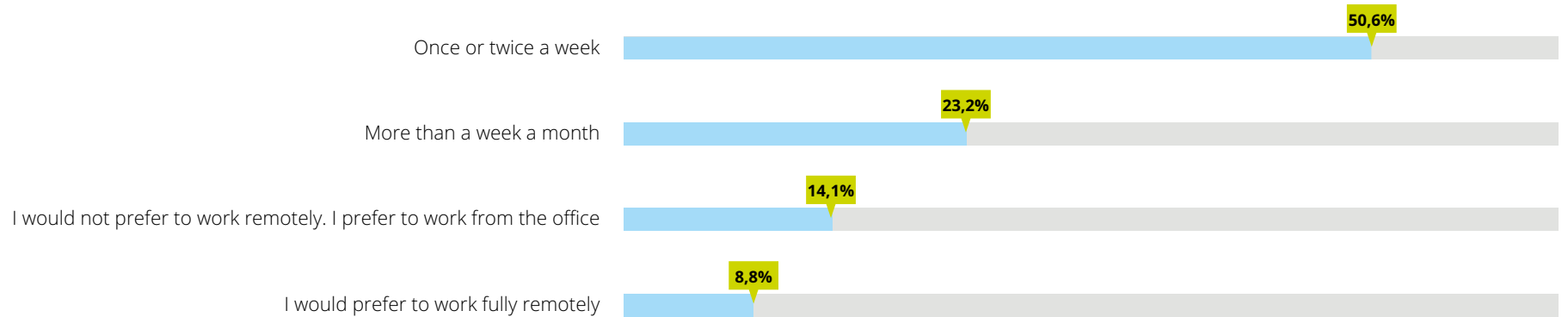
More than 50% of young people would like to be able to work remotely, but only once or twice a week; almost a quarter would like to have more than a week away from the office each month. While only 9% would choose to work fully remotely, just 14% want only to work at the offices, entirely rejecting the idea of remote working. Working remotely full time is more popular among men and those older respondents aged 25 – 30.

Our respondents most fear loneliness and lack of human interaction when thinking about remote working (56%). This is regardless of gender and age, with the only exception of the youngest students, who are more worried about potential interruptions at home, such as family duties.

Talking of family and home duties, this was the second potential challenge that worried by our respondents when working from home, with 55% of female and 49.6% of male respondents seeing this as a potential obstacle. The older our respondents are, however, the less challenge they see in combining their family duties with home working (47% of respondents between 25 and 30 years of age do so, compared with 56% of their counterparts aged 22 or under).

Time management would be an issue for 45% of respondents, particularly those the youngest group, almost half of whom (49%) see that as problematic. This contrasts with almost 40% of those aged between 25 and 30 and 41% of those with longer experience who are less concerned about their ability to properly manage their time

### How often would you prefer to work remotely?



When asked about their preferred working model (with an assumption that it would guarantee the same amount of money) young people tell us that while they might be looking for more freedom and independence, they also value stability.

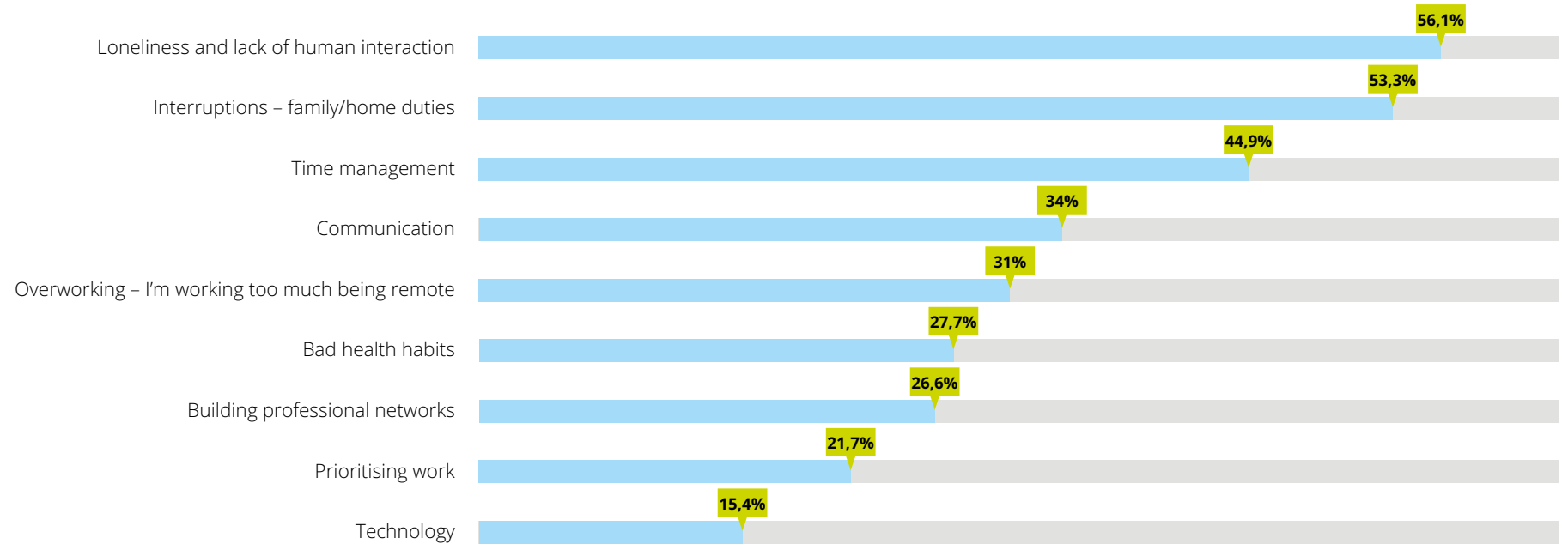
at work. Prioritising work while away from the office would be a challenge for more than 20%, with men (at 23.3%) and the youngest respondents (22.5%) slightly overstating this challenge. Nearly a third (31%) are concerned about being overworked when working at home. This is a particular concern for women (32.5%), for those aged 25 and over, and for respondents with more extensive experience (both at almost 36%).

A third of respondents would find challenging the inability to communicate properly with coworkers while working remotely, with 37% of men indicating this as a potential issue. Another area which may be challenging is the ability to build a professional network of contacts. This would be an issue for 26.6% of our respondents, with almost 30% of men and 29% of the oldest respondents saying they would find it testing.

It should be noted that even though our respondents are young people who are just entering the labour market, they are aware of the potential bad habits that remote working may cause. More than a quarter (28%) said it would be a challenge for them to avoid negative health behaviours. Not surprisingly, those who are older and have more experience also have more concerns about their habits than younger, less experienced colleagues.

Just 15% of respondents said that technology would be a challenge if they had to work remotely – there were no differences of opinion between representatives of different gender or age groups.

### What would be the biggest challenges while working remotely?



# Sources of insight about employers

## Social media remain most popular among young people

Social media sites are the two top sources where young people look for information and insights about potential employers and jobs. LinkedIn is the first choice for 27%, and is a more common tool for men (31% chose it as their first choice) than for women (25%). LinkedIn is also the first choice for respondents above 25 years of age (36.5%), those with more experience (34%), those who wish to work for a third party-owned entity (30%) and those aspiring to become managers (30.5%).

Facebook is the primary source of information for 20% of those surveyed, being equally popular among female and male respondents. It is also slightly more popular among less experienced and younger respondents of up to 22 years of age (by 2 p.p.).

Instagram is clearly very popular among young people, but certainly it is not the preferred source of information about job opportunities. It is first choice for just 3%, the second choice for 7% and third for slightly over 2% of respondents.

Company websites are the first choice for almost 16% of the sample, with the younger respondents with relatively little experience dominating this group. Websites topped the ranking, however, as both the second and third-best sources of information about employers and jobs.

Job ad portals and job boards are popular (as the first choice) for between 12% and 13% of respondents.

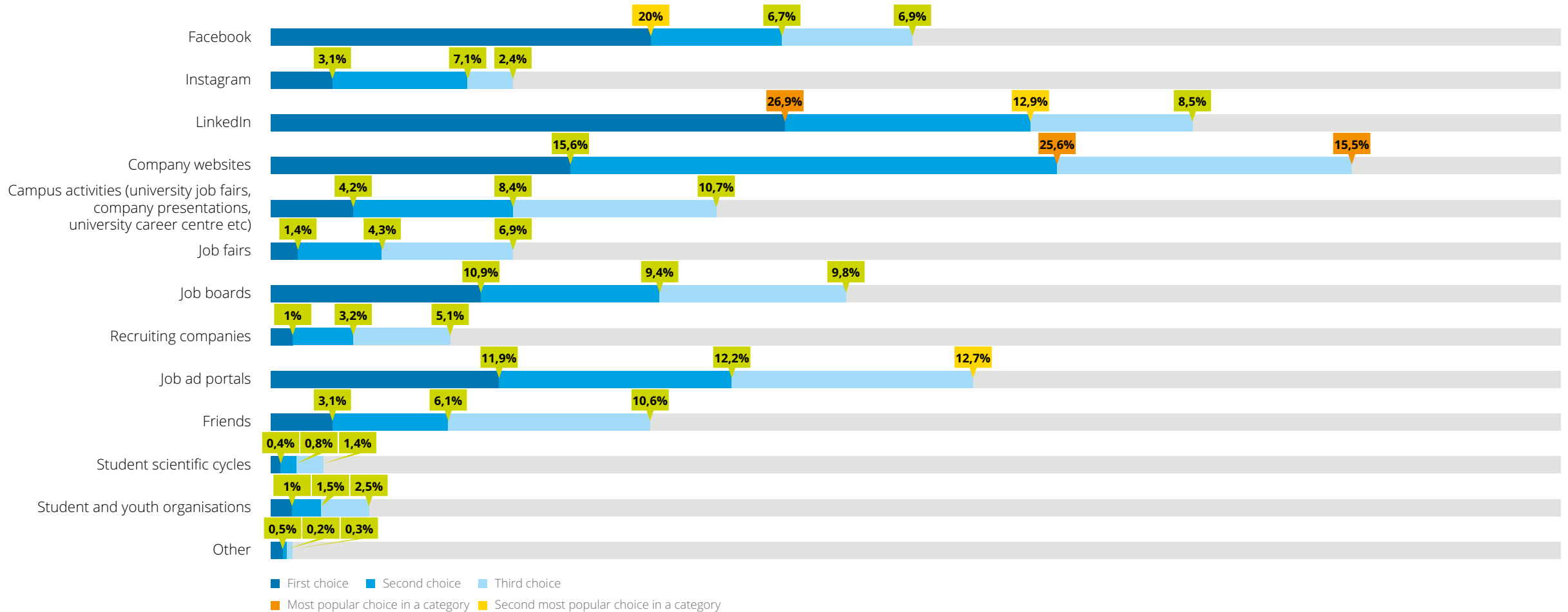
The fact that on-campus activities, such as university job fairs, company presentations and university career centres, were picked as the primary source of insight by only 4.2% of respondents appears surprising, especially since only 8.4% made them their second pick and 10.7% their third choice. We have to remember, however, that the survey was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, when universities were conducting online classes.

Surprisingly, friends, recruiting companies and students/youth organisations were at the bottom of the rankings for first, second or third choice (with one minor exception) as sources of information about jobs and employers. Friends were chosen in third place by slightly more than 10%, which is still better than job boards, job fairs, LinkedIn and Facebook.

Instagram is clearly very popular among young people, but certainly it is not the preferred source of information about job opportunities.



How do you gather information about employers and jobs?



### Face-to-face interview is the preferred way to interact with potential employers

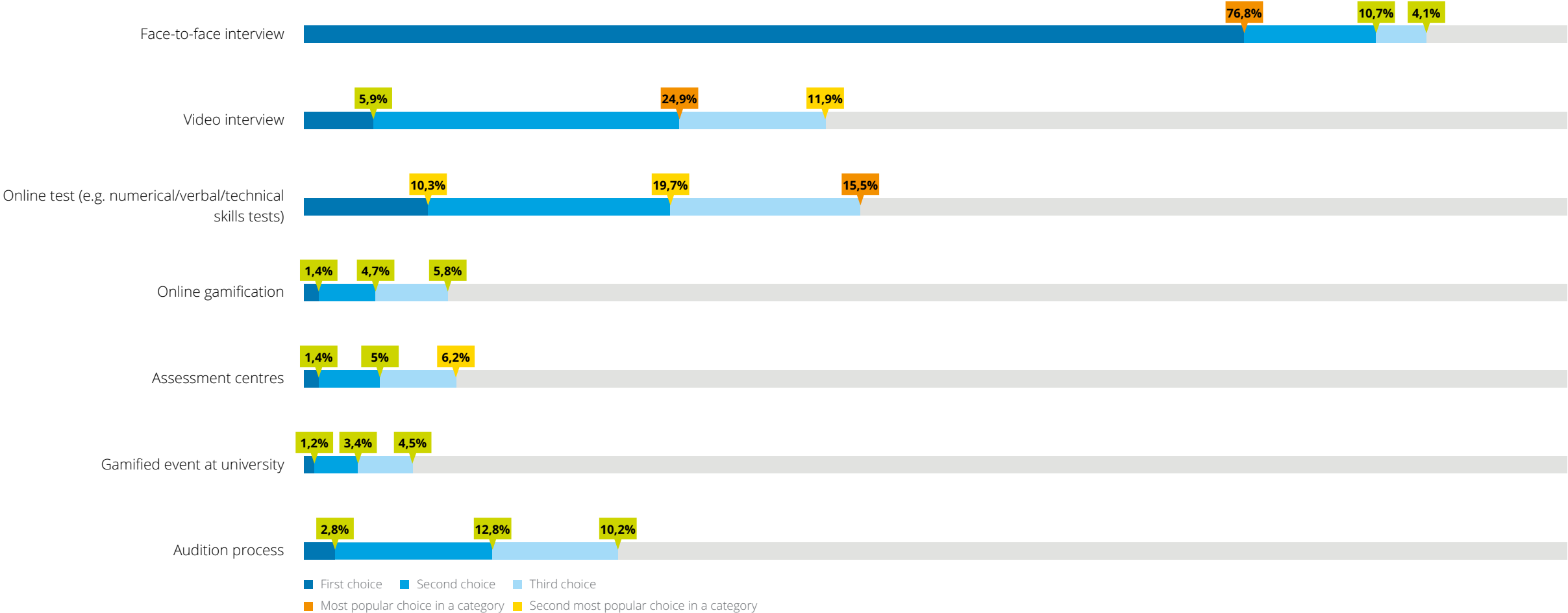
When applying for a job, the face-to-face interview is the preferred method of connecting with a potential employer among almost 77% of the young people we surveyed. The interview is slightly more popular among men (79%) and people with managerial ambitions (79.4%). Online tests for numerical/verbal/technical skills were picked as the most attractive way to apply for a job by 10.3% of respondents. This was particularly popular among those with less experience and those who would prefer to become experts in their fields rather than be managers.

Video interviews were chosen by 6% of our respondents, making this the third most selected way of getting in touch with employers. However, when analysing those methods chosen in second place, video interviews topped the ranking with 25% of votes. This was followed by online tests at almost 20%. Online tests topped the list of the third-most favoured methods, with more than 15%. It is not too much to say, therefore, that our respondents prefer direct one-to-one contacts, even when held online, to regular online testing or gamification.

Audition processes and assessment centres also ranked also very low, with 2.8% and 1.4% of respondents respectively choosing them as their preferred method of connecting with a potential employer. Gamified events at universities did not get much recognition either (to say the least). Again, we have to bear in mind that the research was conducted in a time of unprecedented turmoil, when the pandemic meant that physical contact was reduced to a minimum.

It is not too much to say, therefore, that our respondents prefer direct one-to-one contacts, even when held online, to regular online testing or gamification.

When preparing for applying for a job or an internship, what type of selection method do you like most?



# The four types of respondent

## Diversity is the key to success

We have already presented the four personality types that make up our sample: the 'Fast Trackers', 'Eager Beavers', 'All Rounders' and 'By-Standers'.

For employers, each personality type has its strengths and weaknesses. While the Fast Trackers are known to be hard workers, there is a risk that they may put personal success ahead of organisational success. The All Rounders lean toward seeing every side of an argument and are your go-to employees for team spirit and empathy, but they have a tendency to create an environment of indecision. And while the By-Standers may provide a variety of different viewpoints, they can lack a commitment to your organisation's best interests. Whatever the case may be, the key to success sits in diversity.

Just as organisations need the right mix of gender, age, experience and background to perform at their best, so they also need to have a variety of personalities. Too many Fast Trackers may lead to a clashing of perspectives. If you have too many All Rounders, you may be looking at a 'soft' organisation in the long term. And too many Eager Beavers may stifle creativity, imagination and that innovative edge that organisations need to set themselves apart in today's global and ever-evolving marketplace.

## All Rounders

- They are less likely to move abroad to pursue a career
- They value happy family, good health, respect for other people and friends
- More than 80% believe that work is a duty to society
- They do not subscribe to the idea that work is the core source of human satisfaction (only 17% agrees with this)
- Only 14% of All Rounders say their lives are primarily focused around work
- A significant proportion (50%) wish to be an expert in their fields, not necessarily holding a managerial position
- Compared with other groups, they are less likely to believe that businesses around the world focus on their own agenda rather than considering the needs of wider society.

## Fast trackers

- They evaluate their own skills and abilities higher than other groups
- More frequently than their colleagues, they believe it will not take them more than one month to find a good job
- LinkedIn is their preferred source of gaining information about jobs and employers
- They value good health, the freedom to voice their opinions and a life full of adventures and experience
- Hardly 30% believe that work is a duty to society
- Work without opportunities for career advancement (97%) makes no sense to them
- They are far more likely (80%) than the other groups to believe their friends and colleagues perceive them as leaders
- At work, they are more likely to commit 100% of their potential to it; they would also prefer to work for large international corporations and aim to reach key managerial positions
- Insufficient opportunities for professional development and insufficient appreciation of their work are the main reasons why they leave an employer
- What motivates them at work is developing and expanding their expert knowledge
- They are more confident than other groups that their efforts related to work will help them achieve career success.

### By-standers

- They are more sceptical than other groups about how well their university, college or professional school prepared them for future professional duties
- Facebook is their preferred source of gaining information about jobs and employers
- The salary offer is the most important factor for them when choosing a potential employer (chosen by close to 49%); career development plans and opportunities (24%) are least important.
- They value good health (81%), well-being and affluence (41%) and peace
- They are far more likely than other groups to see work just as a way to make money (72%) and to tell us that an attractive salary (34%) helps them decide which employee to choose
- When compared with other groups, the largest proportion of them (almost 40%) believe that work is basically an unpleasant duty; a majority (61%) would not work if they did not need money
- Almost half say that they do not have experience compatible with their studies
- They wish (63%) that work left more free time for other activities and rest; they do not want work to get in the way of other things in life (69%)

- What motivates them at work (52%) are professional benefits (promotion, raise, bonus) and the opportunity to learn something new and acquire new knowledge and experience (64%)
- They are far less likely than the other groups to believe their friends and colleagues perceive them as leaders
- More than the other groups in our sample, they say they are not planning to have further education after graduation
- They are far more likely (one in three) to say it is hard to find a common language with colleagues who have been working for longer
- More than half of them would rather work from various locations in flexible hours, and they are more willing than other to work remotely all the time.

### Eager Beavers

- More than half believe that their university, college or professional school prepared them well or very well for their future professional duties
- When choosing a potential employer, the salary offer is the less important (25%) than for their counterparts in other groups
- They are more likely to value having a happy family and leading an honest life, as well as professional life and education
- Almost all of them (92%) believe that work offers opportunities to fully develop human potential

- More than half confirm that their lives are primarily focused around work
- More than 90% oppose the idea that work is merely a way to make money
- For two thirds, work is the core source of human satisfaction; for almost all of them, it key to social advancement and affluence
- They are more likely than others (54%) to feel satisfaction after a day of intensive work
- They believe (86%) that work is fundamental for having contact with other people, and the great majority (90%) would work even if they had enough money
- They like to be kept busy at work and actively look for things to do
- The potential for acquiring and developing new skills is the most important factor for more than half of them when choosing a job
- They confirm more than members of other groups that work has always been an important value for their families.

Just as organisations need the right mix of gender, age, experience and background to perform at their best, so they also need to have a variety of personalities.

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