# A Global Survey 2023

## Enabling Youth-Led Positive Social Impact

Misk
مؤسسة محمد بن سلمان
Mohammed Bin Salman Foundation
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Global

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# Foreword

In an era of rapid global change, **NGOs play a crucial role in unleashing the potential of youth for social change**. By embracing and empowering young people, these organizations tap into a wellspring of innovation and commitment, driving transformative change on a global scale. We at the **Mohammed bin Salman Foundation "Misk" firmly believe that youth-led approaches can become hubs for creative solutions,** leveraging technology, sustainability advocacy, and mental health initiatives. Investing in education and skills development not only empowers individuals but also strengthens communities.

Misk reflects this commitment through our Global Youth Survey, **engaging 18,000 youth across 20 countries**. The survey reveals that youth are ready to **address global challenges, prioritizing mental health, employment barriers, and environmental sustainability**. Misk initiatives in Saudi Arabia like the Misk Global Forum, Youth Voice, and Ignited Voices amplify youth impact on these issues, enhancing their skills to drive global social agendas.

The 2023 Misk Global Forum, themed "The Big Now," emphasized the ability of youth to think big and act now. **Survey findings underscore the importance of the engagement between youth and senior leaders in dismantling barriers and accelerating social impact**. Leaders are urged to bridge the gap between current efforts and youth expectations.

While youth deem certain competencies vital for success, the survey emphasizes the significant role of governments as the principal agent of impact. The expectation remains that other institutions must intensify their contributions — **are we prepared to rise and exert our influence in the creation of opportunities for a ready youth?**

In closing, Misk Foundation is not just a supporter but an active partner in reshaping the world with youth. Together, we can create an environment where the next generation envisions and **builds a brighter future**.

**Bader Albadr — CEO**
**Mohammed bin Salman Foundation "Misk"**

# About Misk Foundation

Established in 2011 by HRH Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz, **Misk Foundation** is a non-profit **foundation committed to discovering, developing and empowering Saudi youth** through its high-impact programs that build leadership, skills, entrepreneurship, and community, and its wider subsidiary ecosystem, including Misk Art Institute, Mohammed Bin Salman Nonprofit City, Manga Productions, Misk Schools, and Ilmi Science Discovery and Innovation Center.

In addition to pursuing these goals by designing programs, Misk partners **with local and global organizations in diverse fields to jointly invest in human capital and capacity building of Saudi youth.** The foundation believes that its endeavors will support and enhance efforts to establish a knowledge-based society, which will in turn bring fulfillment and add value to Saudi Arabia.

You can find more information about **Misk** here

# Introduction

There is a burning desire among global youth to tackle many of the most pressing issues facing society today: **the Misk Foundation's latest survey found that 88% of youth feel a sense of duty to their chosen social causes**, which range from a rise in mental health disorders to finding steady work, to the ever-growing climate crisis.

While youth show strong motivation, optimism, and varying degrees of support, they encounter obstacles to achieving their full potential for driving positive social change. Furthermore, a disconnect often exists between global leaders and youth regarding their shared perspectives on how youth can actively contribute to creating positive social impact. While there are various ways to address this gap, greater dialogue between youth and leaders to bridge understanding is an important first step. That includes bringing the two groups together — in person — through forums, workshops, mentorship, and training programs.

In its commitment to fostering dialogue, the Misk Foundation conducted a survey in 2023 that builds on its Global Youth Index 2022, which evaluated the drivers of youth development and access to opportunity. This latest survey, which sought the opinions of 18,000 youth and 500 business leaders from 20 countries, forms the basis of a research paper which highlights the survey's key findings, and delves deeper into some of the most striking results with case studies and interviews with leaders around the world. Ultimately, the Misk Foundation seeks to gain a deeper understanding of youth's perspectives on creating positive social change, and their capacity to bring those aspirations to life, as well as to tap into the insights and experiences of leaders in supporting youth in their positive social impact endeavors.

Organized around three central pillars, the survey aims first to identify what causes matter most to today's global youth, how they feel about these causes and their motivation towards addressing these causes. Second, the survey measured the capacity of young people to implement positive social change. Lastly, it explored ways to make youth initiatives more impactful through networks and support from institutions like governments and the private sector. In parallel, leaders were also surveyed within a similar framework, to shed more light on how they can support youth - both in a formal capacity through their organizations or an informal capacity such as mentorship - to do more to help communities around the world to thrive.

The findings were clear. While youth are well-informed, socially engaged, keen to drive change, and optimistic about their potential to do so, leaders are more critical of youth - even if they maintain a surprisingly high level of optimism about social change in general, and are particularly confident about their own contribution.

At the same time, youth feel supported in bringing about social change by those closest to them, starting with their family. They also trust governments more than other organizations, and want more from the private sector. In terms of skills, they believe soft skills more than hard skills will be critical to make the world a better place. In contrast, leaders appear to value hard skills over soft skills; they also worry that youth lack needed soft skills.

Overall, a gap emerges where youth appear to be distrustful of leaders, while leaders see more shortfalls in youth than in themselves. The challenge now is to bridge that gap and identify the areas of support that enable youth.

**Misk Foundation hopes this research paper will help in contributing towards greater dialogue, engagement, and mutual understanding between youth and leaders, and provide insights concerning the actions that can drive youth-led positive social change.**

# Methodology

## Youth Survey

↘ Misk surveyed **18,000 participants** across **20 countries** (900 from each country) from October to November 2023.

↘ Participants were mostly **female (64%)**, while **34%** were **male**, and **2% preferred not to say**.

↘ Participants were split into two age categories: **18-24 (43%)** and **25-35 (57%).**

↘ The highest level of education completed was distributed as follows: **primary school (2%), high school (35%), vocational training (16%), bachelor's degree (37%), master's degree (9%)**, and **PhD (2%)**.

↘ Most participants **(64%)** reported **living in a city**, while **36% lived in towns or rural areas**.

↘ Of the **48%** of participants that **reported income**, **15%** said they **received a high income**, **35%** a **medium income**, and **50%** a **low income**.

## Leader Survey

↘ Misk surveyed **500 participants** across **20 countries** (25 from each country) from October to November 2023.

↘ Participants were mostly **male (83%)**, while **17%** were **female**.

↘ The leader's profile was **C-Level Executives** working in enterprises, large foundations (private sector) and advertisers that target young generations (**18 to 35 years**) within their communication.

↘ Leaders were selected across six sectors — **entrepreneurship, technology, media, gaming, sustainability and energy,** and **finance**.

↘ Participants surveyed fell into the following four age categories: **25-35 (6%), 36-45 (31%), 46-55 (57%)**, and **56 or older (6%)**.

↘ **Private sector leaders** represented **88%** of participants, followed by **government (8%)**, and **NGOs (4%)**.

↘ Most participants **(77%)** reported **living in a city**, while **23% lived in towns or rural areas**.

# Countries Surveyed



- ↘ **Age:** Countries with a variation in population demographics (e.g., some skewing old, some skewing younger).

- ↘ **Level of Affluence:** Countries with varied economic profiles, including advanced economies and emerging markets.

- ↘ **Pace of Economic Progress:** Both fast-growing and low-growth countries.

- ↘ **Governance Models:** Countries with different political systems.

- ↘ **Religious Diversity:** A variety of religious affiliations.

- ↘ **Technological Adoption:** Countries with varying levels of technological development.

- ↘ **Geography:** Countries were lastly selected to ideally represent a range of continents.

# Statistical Analyses

- ↘ All statistical analyses were conducted in the **general linear model framework for continuous outcomes** (or the generalized linear model framework for binary/ordinal outcomes).

- ↘ All models were run with **robust estimators** to account for any outliers or other violations of statistical assumptions.

- ↘ Group comparisons were conducted **using the expected marginal means method, with a false discovery rate (FDR) correction on all p-values to control for false positives in statistical testing.** A statistical significance threshold of .05 (the standard for scientific levels of confidence) was used to determine whether a comparison was statistically significant or not.

# Supplemental Research

- ↘ These survey findings were supplemented and given greater context through **additional desktop research**, included throughout the text.

# Key Findings

## a) Motivation: Youth's Concerns and Optimism About Social Change

To enhance youth-led positive social impact, it is imperative to first **understand what youth care about, how they feel about the causes they care about, and the influencing factors driving their empathy**. This paper aims to complement a growing body of research that recognizes that in order to empower youth to turn their ideas into actionable projects, their voices must first be heard.

### 1 Mental Health — Youth's Greatest Concern

Beyond the latest trends, or because of them, there are several global social challenges that youth care about; Misk asked youth about 10 pre-identified causes. A quarter of respondents prioritized mental health as the cause they are most passionate about. It is so important to youth that it was considered roughly twice as important as the next three most cited social passions — removing barriers to employment (13%), increasing environmental sustainability (13%) and combating bullying (12%).

> Youth ranked mental health as the social cause they are most passionate about, higher than environmental issues and bullying and harassment.

## Chart 1

### Top 5 Causes Youth Are Passionate About

**Youth are overwhelmingly committed to fostering mental health stability**

Mental Health Challenges & Stability
**25**%

Barriers to Employment
**13**%

Sustainability & Environmental Issues
**13**%

Bullying & Harassment
**12**%

Barriers to Education
**9**%

Resource Inequality
**8**%

Technology-Related Challenges
**8**%

Youth Underrepresentation
**5**%

Barriers to Creative Expression
**4**%
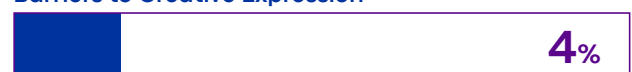
Forced Displacement
**3**%

Women are almost twice as interested in addressing mental health issues than men, while men are much more focused on addressing technology-related challenges, from the digital divide to data security concerns and AI. Older respondents and those with a higher socioeconomic status are more c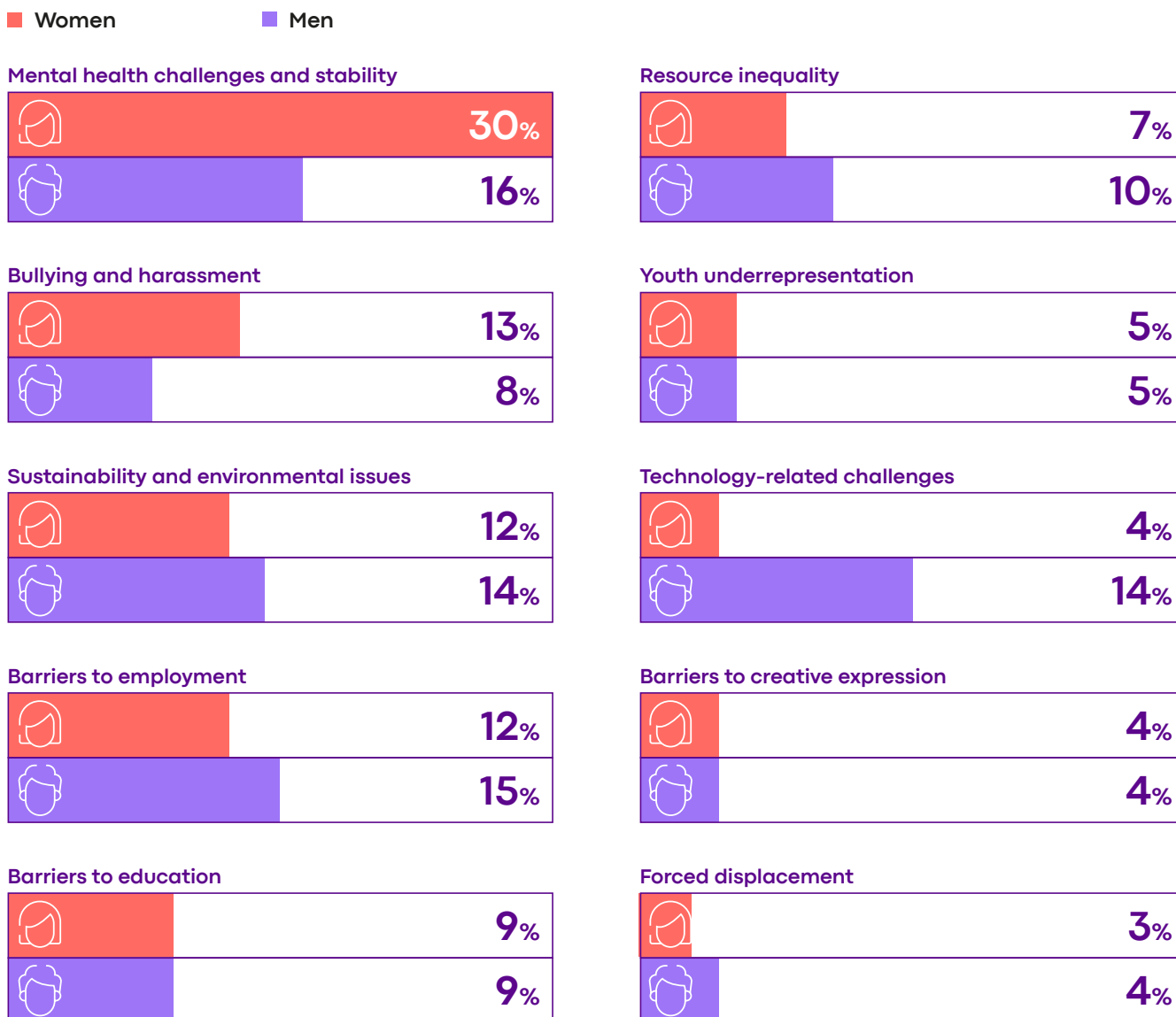oncerned about environmental issues, and those in developing countries — especially Africa — are more worried about barriers to employment.

The fact that mental health stands out so much should come as no surprise. The global statistics are alarming: one in seven 10 to 19-year-olds experience mental health conditions, **according to the WHO**. In the United States, **one in three young adults** aged 18-25 have experienced a mental illness. Worse, these conditions remain largely unrecognized and untreated, leading to problems like social exclusion, educational difficulties, and human rights violations.

## Chart 2
## Top Social Causes for Youth: Women vs. Men

Young women and men often rank their priority social causes differently

■ Women      ■ Men

**Mental health challenges and stability**

| Women | 30% |
| Men | 16% |

**Resource inequality**

| Women | 7% |
| Men | 10% |

**Bullying and harassment**

| Women | 13% |
| Men | 8% |

**Youth underrepresentation**

| Women | 5% |
| Men | 5% |

**Sustainability and environmental issues**

| Women | 12% |
| Men | 14% |

**Technology-related challenges**

| Women | 4% |
| Men | 14% |

**Barriers to employment**

| Women | 12% |
| Men | 15% |

**Barriers to creative expression**

| Women | 4% |
| Men | 4% |

**Barriers to education**

| Women | 9% |
| Men | 9% |

**Forced displacement**

| Women | 3% |
| Men | 4% |

## 2 Youth Are Rising to the Social Change Challenge

It is clear that youth harbor strong feelings about their chosen social causes. According to youth, commitment is primarily driven by the following emotions: a sense of purpose, motivation and hope. However, more generally, the emotions that predominate are: frustration, anxiety, and even anger - unfortunately, commitment is not as strong among youth feeling these emotions. Nevertheless, very few experience feelings of indifference (just 3%).

Although the passion among youth to drive social change is not a new phenomenon, the way they do so is being transformed by Gen Z — mainly because technology has given them a louder voice than ever before. This has meant that youth engagement in social causes has been gathering force over the past decade, especially in the Global South. Some **70% of Gen Z** say they participate in a social or political cause. Meanwhile, those engaging are getting younger and younger. Today, all youth need is a smartphone to be able to speak up.

In particular, youth involvement in social causes **has been affected by the rise of social media**, which is by far the most important way youth find out about how people feel about their chosen cause, according to the survey. Social media has not only raised awareness of local causes, but made global causes more visible too — especially to the young. That awareness tends to inspire conscientious youth to action.

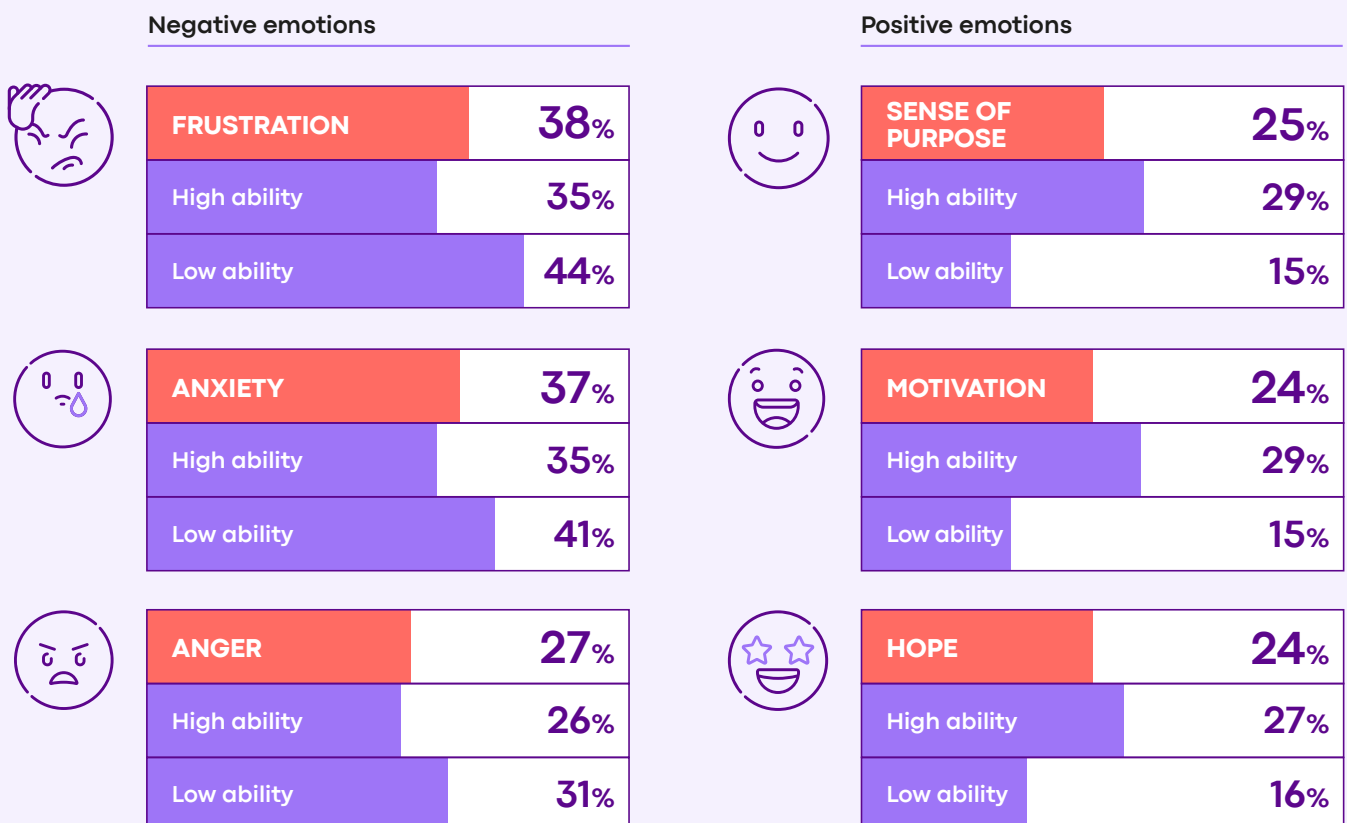**Who has the strongest sense of duty to fight for their social causes?**

**— Those exposed to role models during their childhood.**

**— Those with a higher socio-economic status.**

## Chart 3
## How Youth Feel About Their Social Causes

Youth with negative emotions around their causes feel they have a lower ability to drive change; youth with positive emotions feel a higher ability to drive change

### Negative emotions

| FRUSTRATION | 38% |
|---|---|
| High ability | 35% |
| Low ability | 44% |

| ANXIETY | 37% |
|---|---|
| High ability | 35% |
| Low ability | 41% |

| ANGER | 27% |
|---|---|
| High ability | 26% |
| Low ability | 31% |

### Positive emotions

| SENSE OF PURPOSE | 25% |
|---|---|
| High ability | 29% |
| Low ability | 15% |

| MOTIVATION | 24% |
|---|---|
| High ability | 29% |
| Low ability | 15% |

| HOPE | 24% |
|---|---|
| High ability | 27% |
| Low ability | 16% |

## 3 Optimism About Ability to Enact Social Change Can Vary

Even though youth report some negative feelings around the causes they are passionate about, when looking forward, more youth are broadly optimistic about their ability to create social change, providing a strong motivating impulse behind their activism. Most (68%) feel that they have a strong ability to achieve positive outcomes and are generally optimistic (77%) about the long-term impact of their actions.

This youthful optimism corresponds with research by the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** that has shown that the youth of today believe that the world is becoming a better place — especially those living in low-income countries. Despite very real concerns among youth about growing social anxiety or the climate crisis (as shown in this survey),

nearly three out of five young people believe that the world is in fact improving, according to **UNICEF**.

However, the Misk study found that optimism varied greatly from country to country. At one extreme, 89% of youth in China, 84% in Mexico and 83% in Nigeria believed that they were capable of making a difference. That contrasts sharply with just 34% in Japan, and 50% in France, the next lowest. Variances were less pronounced in terms of socio-economic status and gender, although men and those with higher incomes tended to be more optimistic.
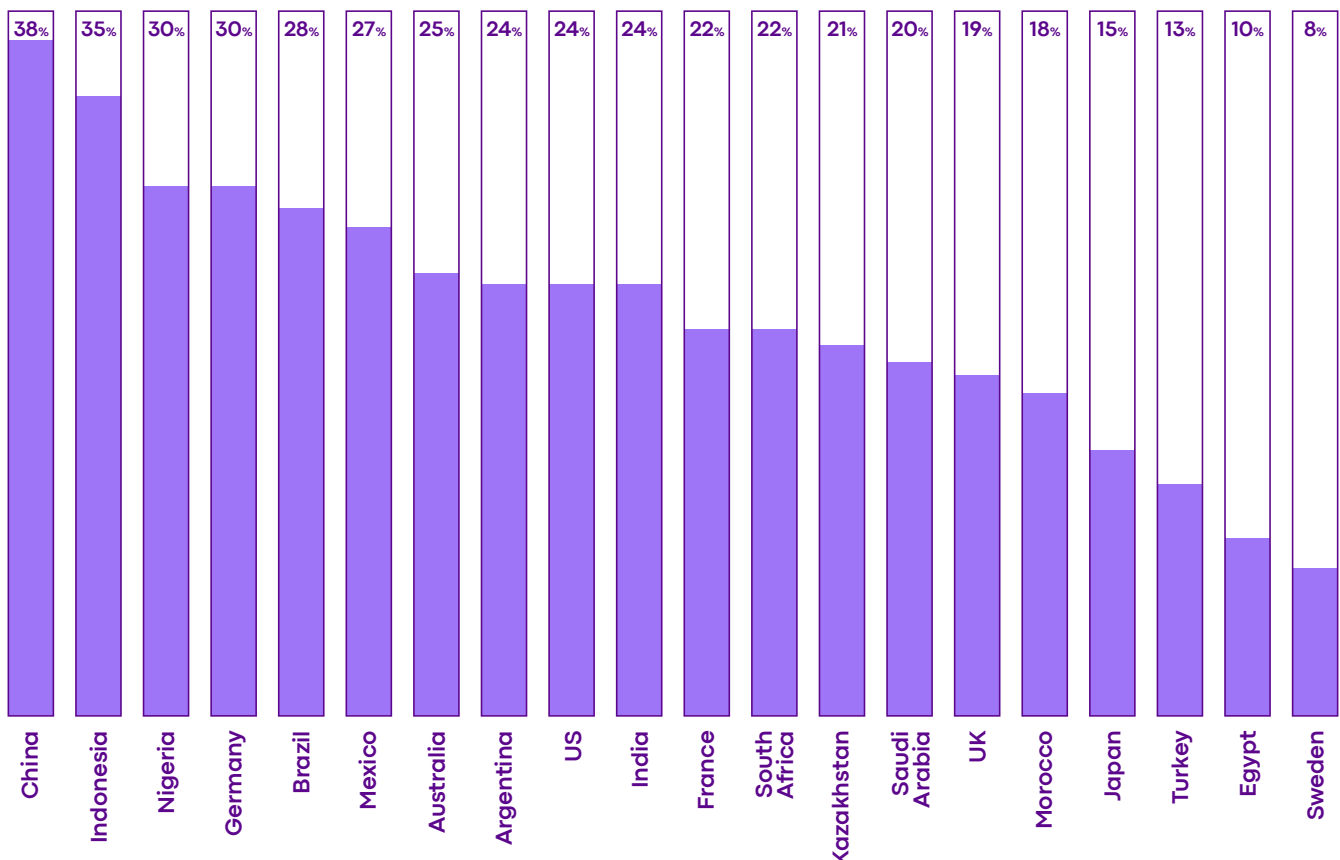
Leaders' opinions were slightly different, though. Overall, they were far more optimistic than youth, with an average of around 90% rating the capacity of youth to drive positive social change as high (either very high or quite high). But between countries there were interesting nuances.

**In general, leaders (90%) were more optimistic than youth (68%) about the ability of youth to enact change.**

For example, Nigerian leaders, like their youth, remained very positive, with the highest proportion of leaders rating youth's capacity to drive change as "very high" (56%). But Japanese leaders — in strong contrast with Japanese youth — were extremely positive, with 100% of them rating their youth's ability to drive change positively ("very high" and "quite high" combined). The least enthusiastic leaders were from the UK, with just 72% rating youth's ability to drive change positively.

## Chart 4
## Youth's Mood Around Causes Varies by Region

**Youth in Asia and the Americas are generally more hopeful than those in Europe**



| China | Indonesia | Nigeria | Germany | Brazil | Mexico | Australia | Argentina | US | India | France | South Africa | Kazakhstan | Saudi Arabia | UK | Morocco | Japan | Turkey | Egypt | Sweden |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38% | 35% | 30% | 30% | 28% | 27% | 25% | 24% | 24% | 24% | 22% | 22% | 21% | 20% | 19% | 18% | 15% | 13% | 10% | 8% |

# b) Disconnect: Encouraging Youth-Leader Dialogue

For social impact to be sustainable, youth cannot drive change in isolation. Therefore, in order to fully understand how youth can promote positive social impact, **it is necessary to examine the dynamic between youth and leaders, especially the influence that leaders have on youth**. Leaders' influence in the areas of job creation, organizational support and expertise was evident throughout the research findings.

One of the most striking findings to emerge from the survey was the difference in opinions between youth and leaders on a range of issues, from their overall optimism to the skills and mindsets that contribute to driving social change. These results highlight a greater need for dialogue between the two groups, which the survey aims to promote.

## 1 Leaders Overly Optimistic About How Much Youth Trust Them

Similar to other findings from this study, leaders are excessively optimistic about how much they are trusted by youth. Leaders believe that 99% of young people trust their organizations to enable them to drive change.

But in marked contrast, youth highlight a lack of trust in the integrity of institutions as one of their top concerns when it comes to getting support in order to drive change, second only to the lack of effectiveness of institutions in general.

Similarly, there is a significant gap between the degree to which youth trust corporate leaders can lower barriers to create positive social impact, compared to how leaders say they enable youth to do so. For example, less than a third (29%) of youth say they trust leaders to lower barriers to capacity building, while half (50%) of leaders say they enable youth to do this.

Overall, leaders are surprisingly optimistic. Their confidence in the ability of youth to make a difference is also extremely high, at 96%. Nearly as many leaders rate youth's

**96% of leaders think that their organization is able to make a positive impact on youth's efforts to promote change.**

ability to enact social change highly (either quite or very high). Meanwhile, 96% of leaders also think that their organization is able to make a positive impact on youth's efforts to promote change.
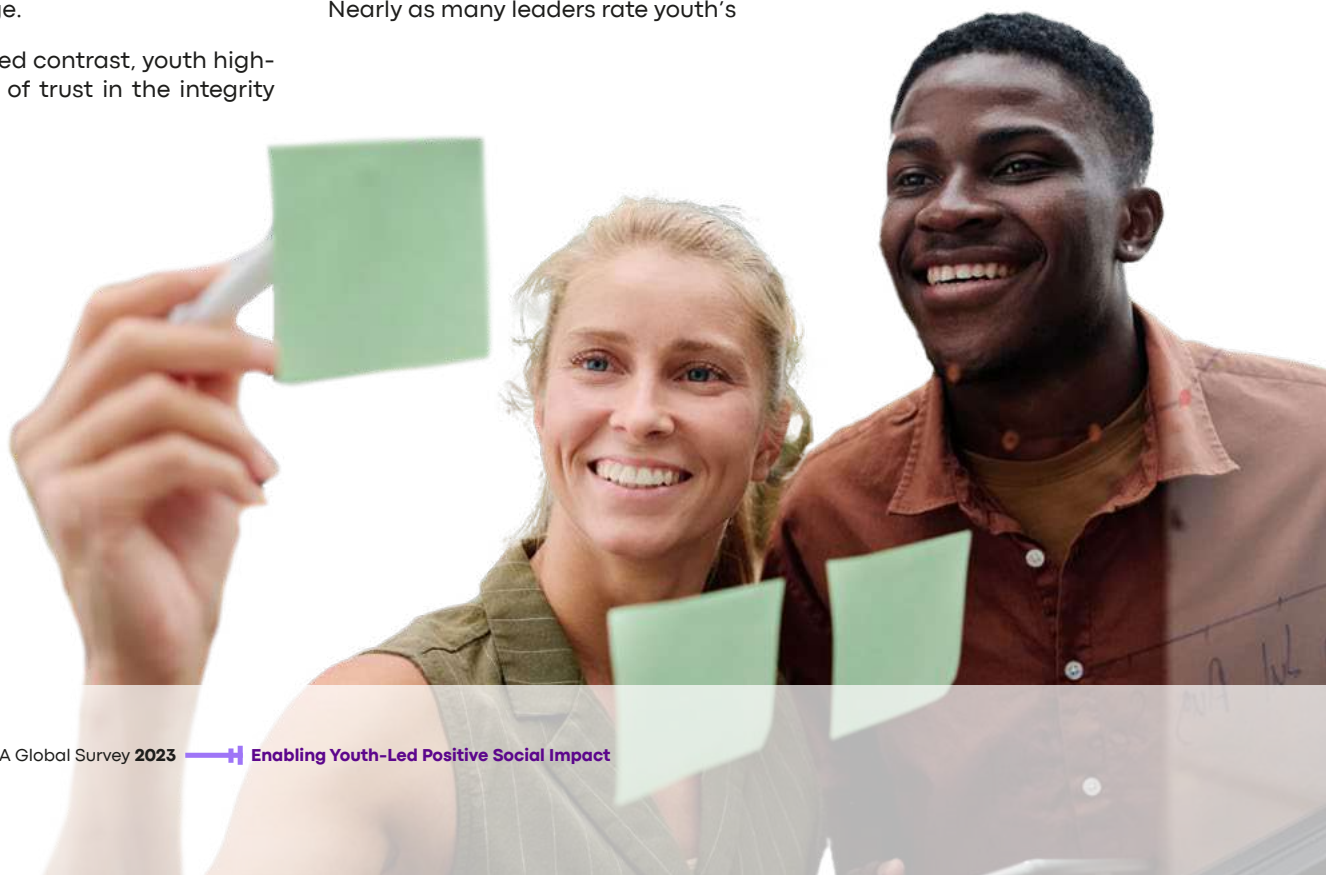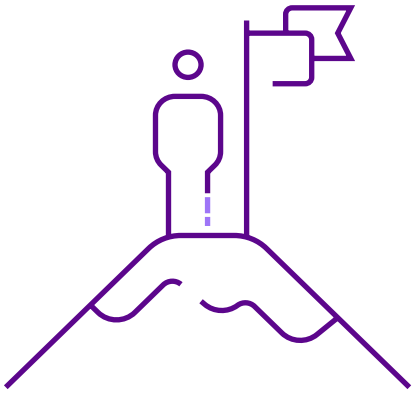
**2 Youth and Leaders Disagree Over What Skills are Needed for Social Chang**

When youth were asked which skills associated with creating change most applied to them, most reported problem-solving (51%), closely followed by the soft skill emotional intelligence (46%).

In contrast, business leaders listed strategic and critical thinking (35%) and technology literacy (33%) most highly when asked what skills they felt youth needed to bring about positive social impact. Interestingly, leaders see emotional intelligence and the ability to solve problems as among the principal skills that are most lacking among young people. In other words, what youth think

**Youth and leaders emphasize different skills needed to foster social change.**
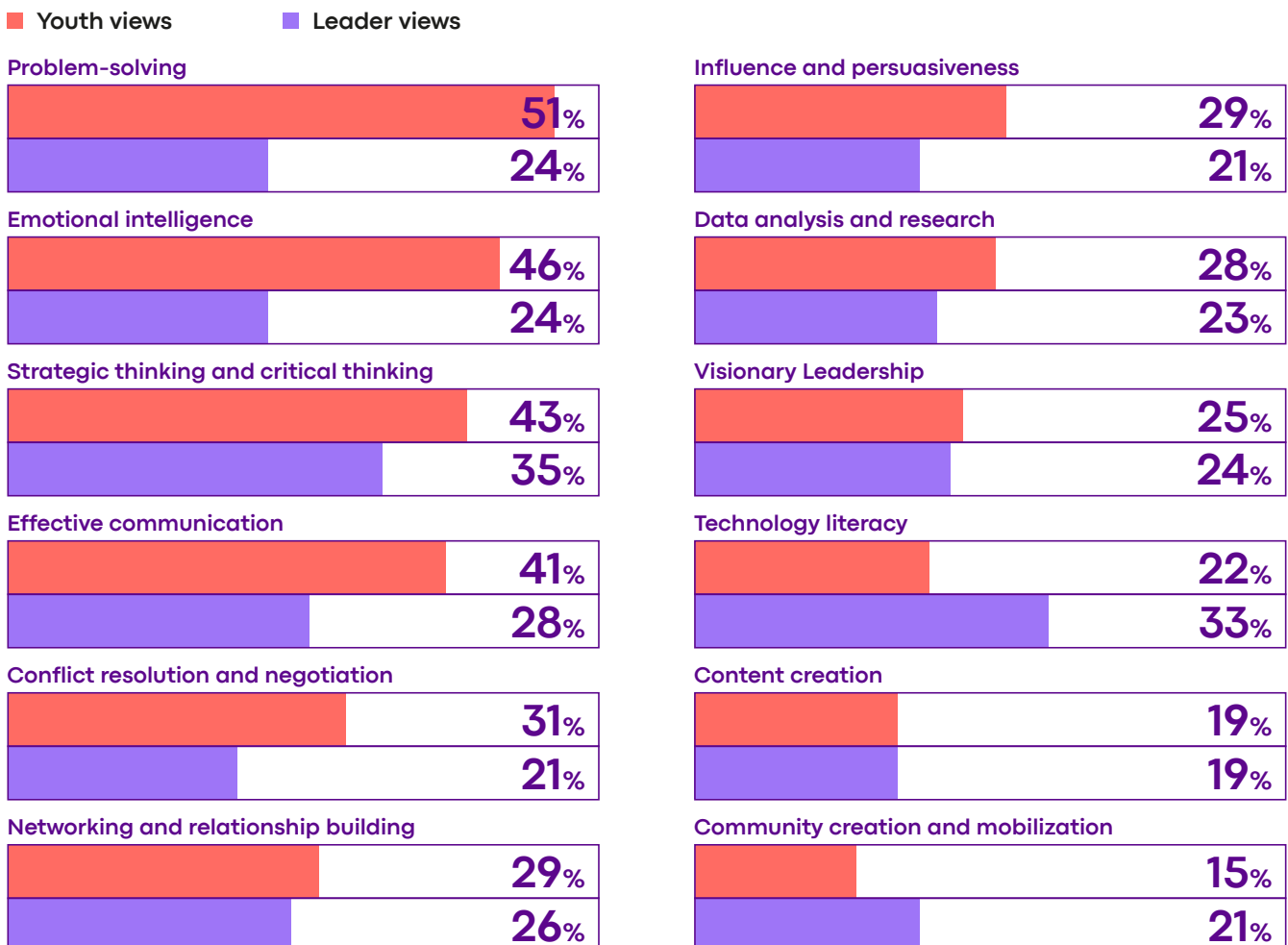
they most possess is precisely what leaders say they most lack.

What is clear is that if attempts to drive social change are to be successful, capacity building is a crucial part of the puzzle. The **United Nations Population Fund** underlines self-awareness as a prerequisite for implementing a youth social change initiative, as well as working with others and planning appropriately.

## Chart 5
## Top Skills for Creating Social Impact: Leader and Youth Views

Youth and leaders highlight different skills to bring about social change

- Youth views
- Leader views

**Problem-solving**
- 51%
- 24%

**Emotional intelligence**
- 46%
- 24%

**Strategic thinking and critical thinking**
- 43%
- 35%

**Effective communication**
- 41%
- 28%

**Conflict resolution and negotiation**
- 31%
- 21%

**Networking and relationship building**
- 29%
- 26%

**Influence and persuasiveness**
- 29%
- 21%

**Data analysis and research**
- 28%
- 23%

**Visionary Leadership**
- 25%
- 24%

**Technology literacy**
- 22%
- 33%

**Content creation**
- 19%
- 19%

**Community creation and mobilization**
- 15%
- 21%

### 3 Mindsets: Leaders Say Youth Lack Discipline and Focus the Most

Leaders report that discipline and focus are the mindsets that are most important for youth to bring about social change. However, it is precisely those two mindsets that leaders say youth most lack.

There are widespread concerns that this lack of discipline and focus may be related to the rise of social media. A recent study of the general public in the UK by **King's College London** showed that 66% believe that youth's attention spans have deteriorated in recent years, while 47% say that deep thinking has become a thing of the past. More than half of UK adults blame tech companies and social media for this, and urge governments to step in.

In contrast, the mindsets of youth that generate least concern among leaders are curiosity and proactivity. Indeed, 55% of leaders confessed that youth were actually more curious than them, while 43% said they were more proactive. The abundance of curiosity and energy in youth may be one of their greatest assets, but it is not clear that this can counterbalance their lack of discipline and focus.
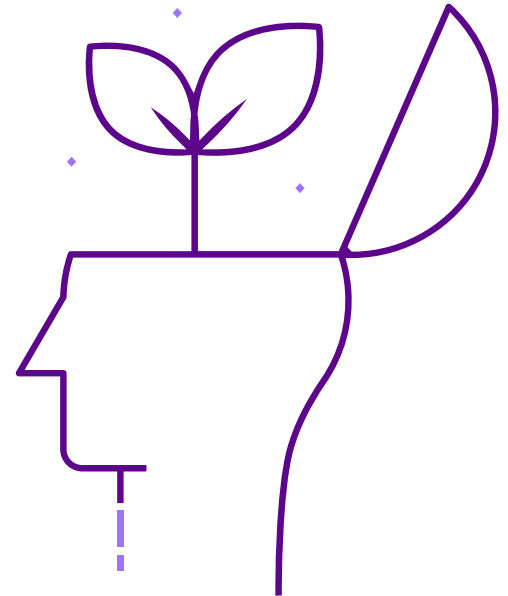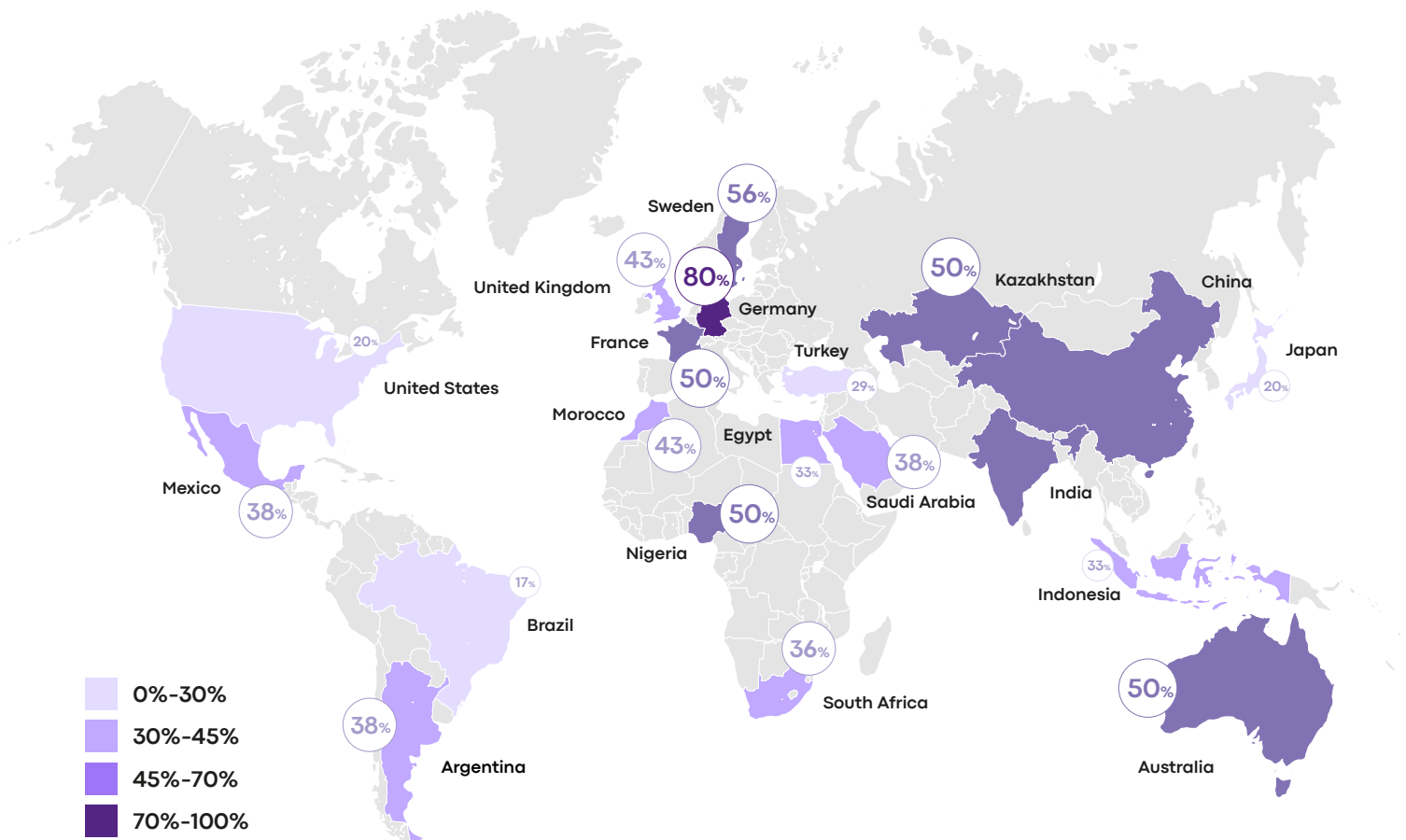
### Chart 6
## Global Leaders Believe Discipline Is the Top Youth Mindset Needed to Create Positive Social Impact

**But the percentage of leaders who value discipline highly varies widely by country**



Sweden 56%
United Kingdom 43%
Germany 80%
France 50%
Turkey 29%
Kazakhstan 50%
China
Japan 20%
United States 20%
Morocco 43%
Egypt 33%
Saudi Arabia 38%
India
Mexico 38%
Nigeria 50%
Indonesia 33%
Brazil 17%
South Africa 36%
Australia 50%
Argentina 38%

Legend:
- 0%-30%
- 30%-45%
- 45%-70%
- 70%-100%

# c) Support: Enablers That Empower Youth to Drive Social Change

Beyond motivation, Misk wanted to understand how youth are able to create social change. **What are the key drivers that empower them to make a difference in the world? What are the key gaps between their motivation and ability to make change?** Misk ultimately identified five key enablers that empower youth to create social change.

## 1 Institutional Support

Youth seek support from a range of institutions, but more than a third rate governments most highly in terms of achieving the greatest positive social impact. Academic institutions are considered to be the next most effective, and international institutions the least effective.

Opinions on the effectiveness of governments varied significantly from country to country. In the UK, 45% of youth say governments have the biggest impact on their social causes, followed by Brazil (43%), while just 22% feel this way in Japan.

Governments were found to have the strongest impact when addressing resource inequality and environmental issues, as well as removing barriers to education and employment. They were deemed least helpful with barriers to creative expression and technology-related challenges.

Mostly, the more educated the respondent, the more they think

> **Leaders report that they enable youth to create positive social impact most by providing access to information and expertise.**

governments can have an impact. Meanwhile, those with high incomes were 50% more likely to say NGOs and the private sector had the biggest impact, while they were 50% less likely to rate international organizations highly. There was mutual appreciation between those working in the public sector and NGOs, with each ranking the other more highly than all other employment groups.

Regardless of the type of institution, when any organization supports their young employees in driving social change, youth are far more likely to be able to be successful. Almost two-thirds of youth reported that their employer provided one of several types of support for their social causes, including access to their organization's expertise or connections, having formal policies supporting their cause, and allowing time off or the use of office space to support it.

However, that leaves just over a third who say their organization is doing little or nothing to support them in advocating for social change. In certain countries, youth receive remarkably little support from their employers. In Japan, 60% of youth say their organization doesn't support them; in France, it's about 57%.

When their employers do empower them to enact social change, they do so mostly in more passive ways: by sharing information and expertise (64%). Somewhat fewer leaders (49%) feel that they enable youth to drive social change by providing access to jobs.

**Chart 7**
## Which Institutions Support Social Change Most, According to Youth

**Governments help most, international organizations least**



- Governments
- Academic institutions
- NGOs
- Private sector
- International organizations
- None of the above
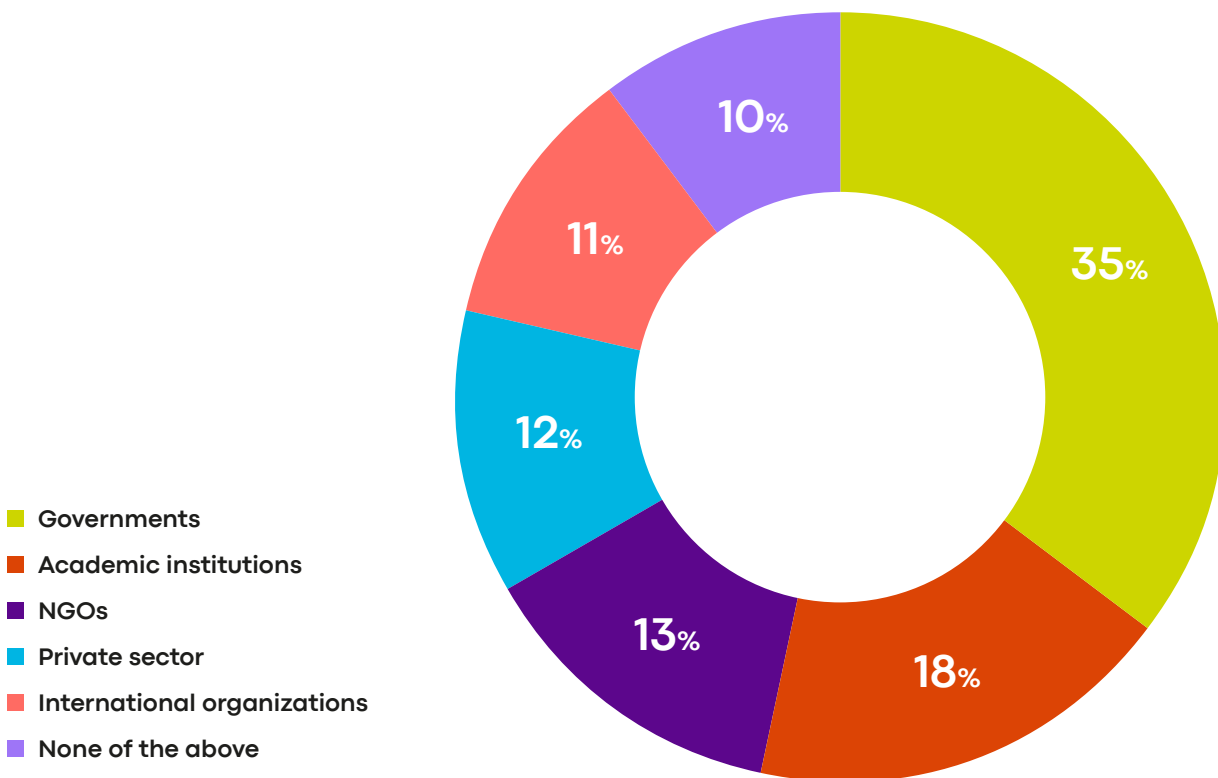
## 2 Role Models

Youth who were exposed to a role model — from a family or community member to a sporting or entertainment icon that set a good example by actively addressing social issues during their childhood — are 46% more likely to believe they can drive positive social change themselves.

Misk's research found that being exposed to a change role model at a young age had a very positive impact in several areas. Youth with higher incomes and more education were more likely to have had social change role models during their childhood. Those who have been exposed to role models also feel a stronger sense of duty, and are more active in building their skills and in addressing a social cause.

Youth in Asia and North America were most exposed to social change role models, with 56% reporting they had role models — especially from their close family and communities — compared to just 43% in Europe. In Asia, however, there was a wide variance: 84% of youth in China were exposed to social change role models (more than any other country), compared to just 22% in Japan.

With regard to role models in communities specifically, again China stands out. Community role models have such an impact in China that youth were almost twice as likely to have one than any other country: 43% of youth in China had role models in their community, followed by 22% in the US and Nigeria (Egypt, Japan and Morocco came last with just 8%).
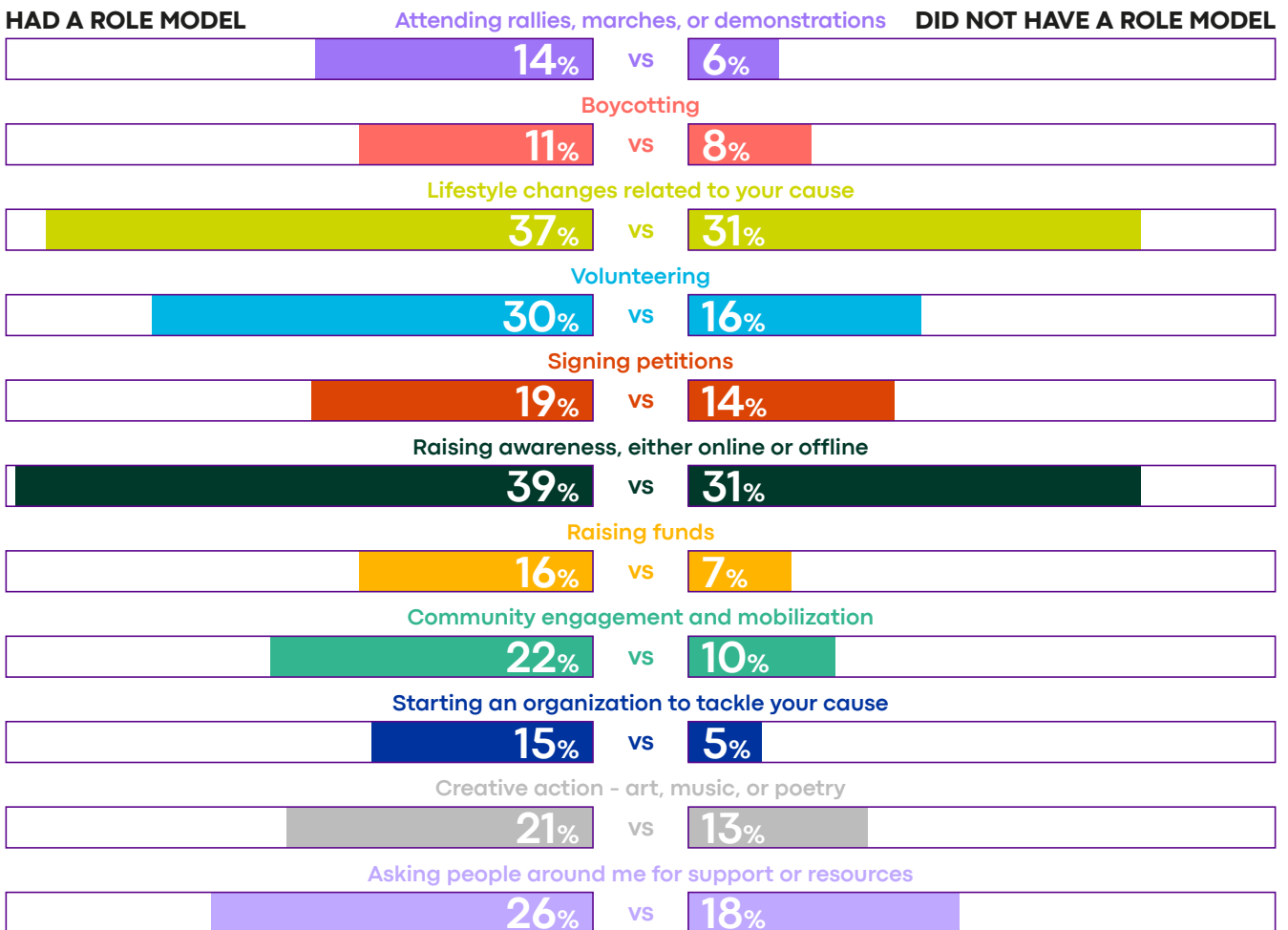
**Youth exposed to a social change role model during childhood are 46% more likely to believe they can drive positive social change themselves.**

The most prevalent type of role model was parents or siblings (reported by 21%), followed by teachers or mentors (20%); the least prevalent was sports, music or other idols (12%).

## Chart 8
## How Role Models Influence Youth Efforts to Drive Social Change

**Early exposure to role models who were active in addressing social issues increases youth's social change efforts**

| HAD A ROLE MODEL | | DID NOT HAVE A ROLE MODEL |
|---|---|---|
| **Attending rallies, marches, or demonstrations** | | |
| 14% | vs | 6% |
| **Boycotting** | | |
| 11% | vs | 8% |
| **Lifestyle changes related to your cause** | | |
| 37% | vs | 31% |
| **Volunteering** | | |
| 30% | vs | 16% |
| **Signing petitions** | | |
| 19% | vs | 14% |
| **Raising awareness, either online or offline** | | |
| 39% | vs | 31% |
| **Raising funds** | | |
| 16% | vs | 7% |
| **Community engagement and mobilization** | | |
| 22% | vs | 10% |
| **Starting an organization to tackle your cause** | | |
| 15% | vs | 5% |
| **Creative action - art, music, or poetry** | | |
| 21% | vs | 13% |
| **Asking people around me for support or resources** | | |
| 26% | vs | 18% |

## 3 Strong Networks

The importance of family to youth wanting to create social impact cannot be overstated, both in terms of motivation and providing real support that enables them to actually engage effectively with their chosen causes.

Family is the group that young people feel most connected to, followed by friends; religion and ethnicity pale in comparison. It is also what motivates them most powerfully to fight for social change, given the strong sense of duty that youth feel towards those closest to them.

When it actually comes to engaging with the causes they feel most passionate about, once again, youth find the most support and the most effective resources from within their family and their close friends, with 25% saying this is their strongest network. Next most important are online communities (like TikTok, Reddit or LinkedIn), at 17%, while the weakest networks are community groups (9%) and cause-specific organizations (6%).

Youth say that their primary networking obstacle is identifying the right people to help with advancing their social cause. To expand their networks, youth mostly use online platforms (42%). This trend is especially evident in Africa, where 52% grow networks online, compared to 34% in Europe. While fewer resort to AI to grow networks (AI helps to make better and faster decisions, and processes can be automated), it is noteworthy that 25% of youth from Asia adopt this strategy, a figure significantly higher than 9% from Europe.

These findings are supported by a large body of research which shows the importance of the family for the development and empowerment of younger generations, as a source of both emotional and practical support.
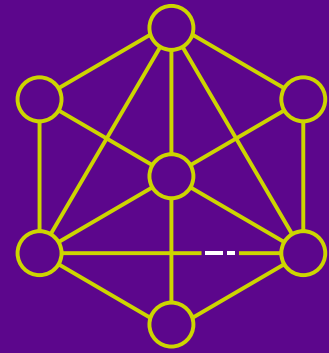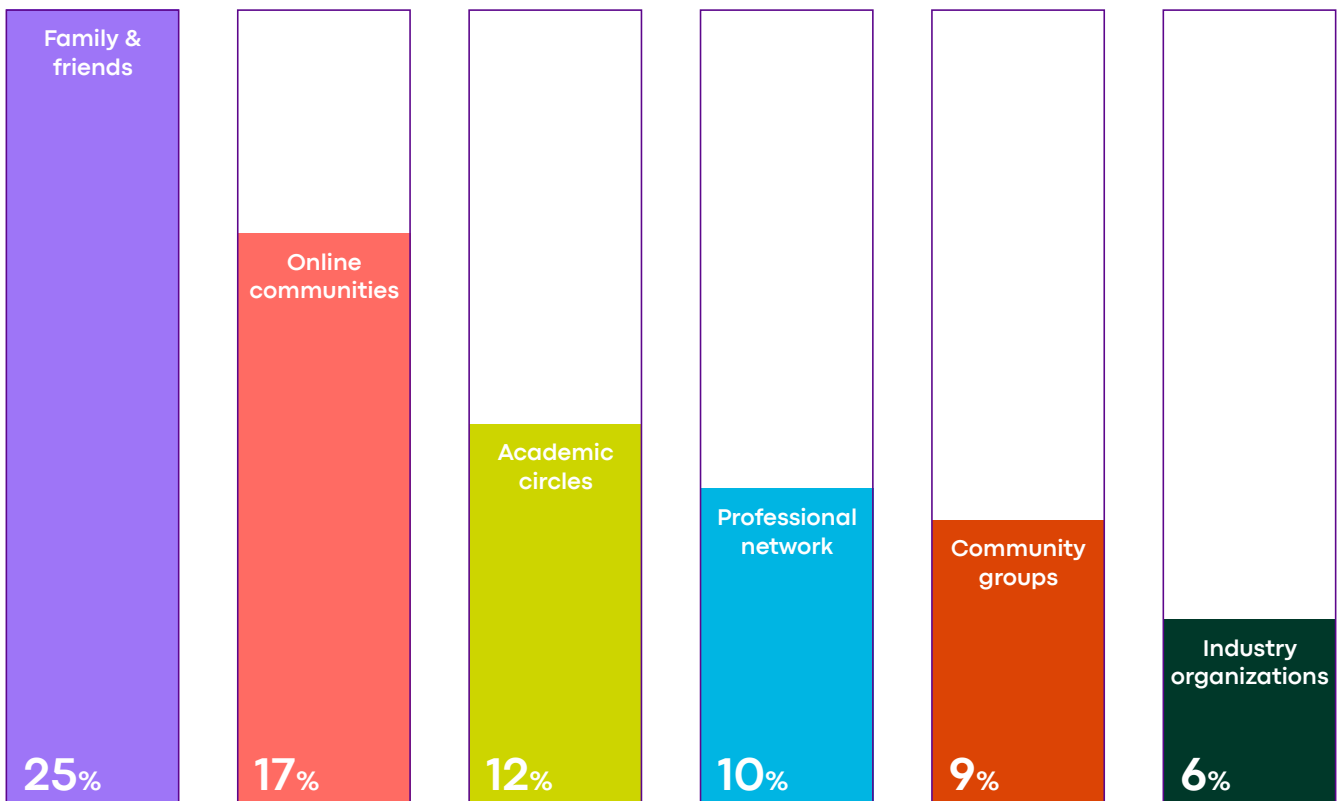
**Youth report their family and friends as the network that most supports them to drive social change.**

## Chart 9
## Which Networks Help Most to Drive Social Change

**Family have the biggest impact, followed by online communities**

| Family & friends | Online communities | Academic circles | Professional network | Community groups | Industry organizations |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25% | 17% | 12% | 10% | 9% | 6% |

## 4 Skills and Mindsets

Positive social change cannot thrive if youth do not have the right skills and mindsets. Out of a range of skills needed to create social change, youth report that they most possess problem-solving (51%), emotional intelligence (46%), and strategic and critical thinking (43%). Women rate themselves most highly in emotional intelligence (50% vs. 37% of men), while men rate themselves more highly in technology skills (30% vs. 18% of women), and data analysis and research (32% vs. 26% of women).

Showing proactive action, some 83% of youth say they are building skills to tackle the social cause they care about most. The most favored methods (by 42%) are either to read the relevant literature or watch educational videos. Learning from a mentor was the next most cited method, by 23% of respondents.

In terms of mindsets associated with creating social change, youth report that they are most: curious (41%), collaborative (36%), and disciplined (34%). However, leaders believe that the most important mindset for youth — and also the most lacking — was discipline. Nevertheless, leaders overwhelmingly believe that the capacity of young people to bring about social change is high.

Organizations can play an important role in helping employees to enhance their skills. In terms of providing opportunities to young people to develop skills, 61% of leaders' organizations have youth internship programs — considerably more in North America than in Europe (leaders from the US report about three times more internship programs

than Sweden). NGOs offer the most internship programs, at 71%, compared to just 53% of governments. Meanwhile 64% of leaders' organizations have dedicated training and development programs for young employees, most of all in the Middle East.

> **Top skills reported by youth to create social change are problem-solving (51%) and emotional intelligence (46%), while the top two mindsets are curiosity (41%) and collaboration (36%).**

## Chart 10
## How Youth Build Skills

**Most prefer more passive methods like reading and watching videos**

**Watching videos**
**42**%

**Reading**
**42**%

**Learning through mentor**
**23**%

**Learning through activity**
**23**%

**Online classes**
**21**%

**Leveraging AI**
**18**%

**In-person classes**
**17**%

## 5 Technology Platforms

Social media plays a fundamental role for youth aiming to create a positive social impact. Not only is it the principal source relied on by youth for finding out about the issues that they care about most, but they believe they can best build the skills they need to create social change through watching videos and reading about those issues.

Youth also highly value online communities as a resource for creating sustainable change. Given that the Internet allows fast and cost-effective access to large groups of people, it is youth's preferred method for growing their networks — and the higher their education, the more likely they are to do so. Overall, 38% of youth rate online communities as a source of support for driving change — more in North America, but fewer in the Middle East. Nationally, Chinese youth are the most

enthusiastic about leveraging online communities, with 54% doing so. At the other extreme, just 14% do so in Japan.

One caveat: despite youth's reliance on technology for driving positive social impact, just 35% of youth use AI to promote social change, while almost half don't at all. This corresponds with the low ranking of technology literacy in the skills that youth identified as most applicable to them. It also contrasts with broader use of AI among youth, with **a recent UN survey** reporting that 80% of youth (aged 10-24) say they interact with AI multiple times a day, while 93% have a positive perception of AI.

Misk's research showed that those more likely to use AI tend to be male, with a better education and a higher income, and exposed to social change in their childhood. The use of AI is most prevalent in Asia (47%)

**One out of three global youth are utilizing AI to support social change; the highest users are in Asia (47%), the least are in Europe (21%).**

followed by Latin America (especially China and Mexico, respectively), where they are roughly twice as likely to use the technology as Europeans (21%). Almost a quarter of participants still don't know if they will use AI to address their cause, and women are less likely to use AI in the future, reflecting their lower interest in technology than men.

## Chart 11
## Where AI is Most Used

Asia and Latin America use AI more than other regions

| ASIA | 47% |
|---|---|
| China | 87% |
| Indonesia | 46% |
| Kazakhstan | 43% |
| India | 40% |
| Japan | 12% |

| LATIN AMERICA | 44% |
|---|---|
| Mexico | 66% |
| Argentina | 33% |
| Brazil | 31% |

| AFRICA | 37% |
|---|---|
| Nigeria | 54% |
| South Africa | 42% |
| Morocco | 31% |
| Egypt | 21% |

| MIDDLE EAST | 31% |
|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | 31% |

| US AND AUSTRALIA | 25% |
|---|---|
| US | 28% |
| Australia | 23% |

| EUROPE | 21% |
|---|---|
| Turkey | 29% |
| Sweden | 22% |
| Germany | 20% |
| UK | 18% |
| France | 17% |

# Continuing the Conversation

These key findings on the gap between youth aspirations to create social change and their ability to do so **will be explored in more detail in a subsequent report coming later this year**. To be notified of the report's release, click here

Richly illustrated with charts and graphs highlighting results from the survey, the report will look more deeply at the motivations behind youth engagement with social causes, and how their initiatives can be more effective. The report will feature a diverse series of case studies and profiles focusing on particularly successful people and programs advancing a range of social causes.

It will also offer a more detailed analysis of the differences in opinion across different groupings — from age, gender and socio-economic status to their preferred causes or countries of origin — cross-referencing the wealth of data from the survey to gain a deeper understanding of the issues at stake.

In addition, a comprehensive series of recommendations will aim to

benefit a wide variety of audiences, including youth, policymakers, academic institutions, the private sector, and non-profit organizations.

By examining the contrasting opinions between youth and leaders through this original research, the report aims to create the conditions for bringing the two groups together and kickstart a dialogue that will lead to more profound social impact.