

EDELMAN'S GEN Z LAB PRESENTS:

THE ARAB YOUTH OUTLOOK



A UNIQUE GENERATION THAT SIGNALS WHAT COMES NEXT

Arab Youth are the Middle East region's largest and most highly influential generation, coming of age amid sustained economic pressure, social constraint and geopolitical instability.

Their daily reality sits at the intersection of personal ambition and systemic limits.

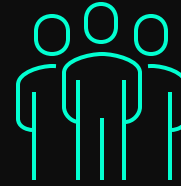
ARAB YOUTH TODAY

Arab Youth approach the future with pragmatic optimism – confident in their own capabilities, yet cautious about the systems shaping their lives.

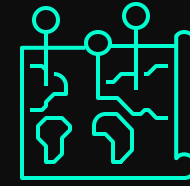
Coming of age amid economic pressure, social constraint, and geopolitical uncertainty, they deliberately invest in what they can influence: skills, wellbeing, technology, and a sense of identity grounded in tradition but fluent in the global world.

Yet many of the barriers shaping their futures remain structural, beyond individual reach. How this gap between youth capability and opportunity is addressed will shape the region’s economic resilience, social cohesion and long-term stability.

Edelman Gen Z Lab’s new study, *The Arab Youth Outlook*, establishes a clear picture of where this key demographic stands today, the conditions shaping their outlook, while offering actionable insights into opportunities for institutions and brands.



People aged
18 to 30



Across
10 countries



Representing
~ 70% of the Arab
World’s population



Representing
~ 85% of its
combined GDP

METHODOLOGY

Edelman Gen Z Lab commissioned a survey managed by Edelman Data & Intelligence (DXI) to provide insights on the current state of mind of Arab Youth, their relationship with institutions and key topics that impact their lives.

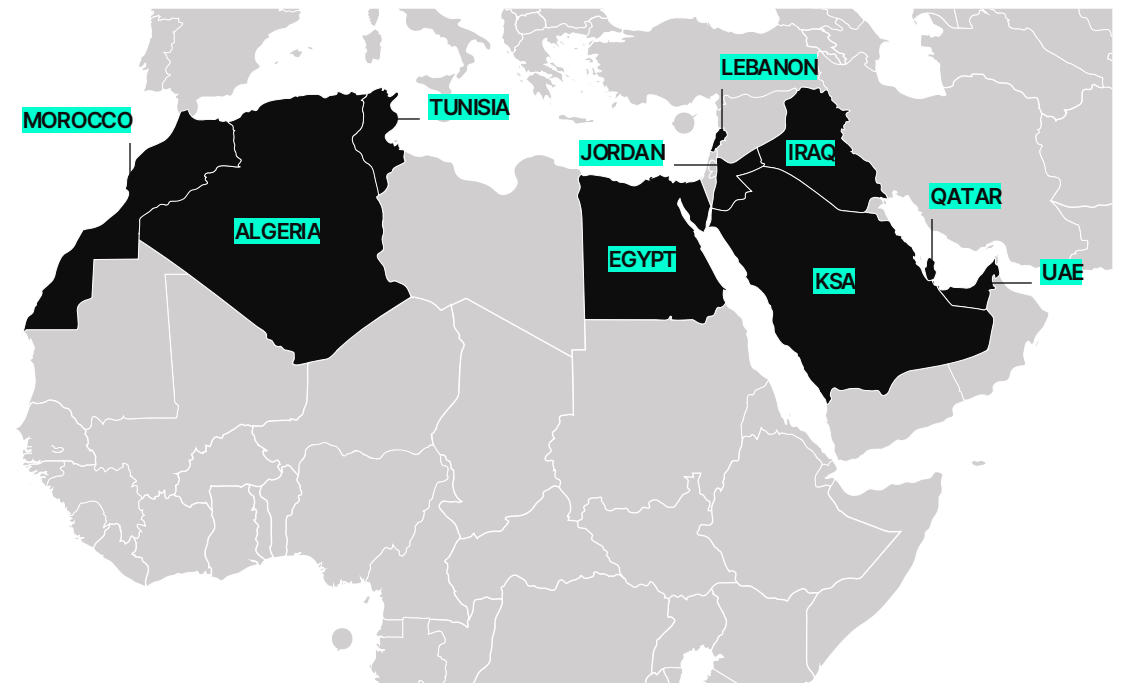
The survey was fielded in October 2025 in 10 countries that represent ~ 70% of the Arab World's population and ~ 85% of its combined GDP.

The survey was conducted online with a sample of 4,174 young people aged 18 to 30 representative of the population in each country at confidence level of 95% and margin of error of 5%.

To know more about Edelman Gen Z Lab, visit: [Edelman's Gen Z Lab | Edelman](#)

To know more about Edelman DXI, visit: <https://www.edelmandxi.com>

Surveyed Markets



KEY FINDINGS

FINANCIAL PRESSURE DEFINES AN ENTIRE GENERATION

Rising prices, job insecurity, and financial precarity are the most powerful forces shaping Arab Youth reality: 42% rank cost of living as their top concern, and 23% struggle with basic expenses. This is not a temporary inconvenience; it is a core generational experience.

INEQUALITY IS REINFORCED BY DIVIDES IN EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Opposing realities coexist: educated and employed youth feel significantly more financially prepared than the less educated and the unemployed. This divide is becoming a structural fault line, not just economic, but deeply social.

A CRISIS OF BELONGING UNDERMINES SELF-EXPRESSION

Identity is at the center of a silent struggle: 81% have felt judged or excluded, and 70% believe society does not accept difference. This is a generation claiming its right to authenticity, often in environments that reward conformity.

OPPORTUNITY EXISTS, BUT ACCESS DOES NOT

Arab Youth are skilled, ambitious, and globally aware. Yet 1 in 3 find it difficult to access jobs matching their skills, and mobility abroad remains restricted by cost, visas, and safety. They see a world full of opportunity but behind glass.

SELF-AGENCY IS THE NEW SOURCE OF POWER & RESILIENCE

Arab Youth express confidence in their abilities. They feel most in control where effort matters: learning, tech adoption, identity expression, and wellbeing. 68% believe they are equipped for emerging technologies, 61% believe they have the right skills for the world of work, and 44% feel in control of expressing their identity.

TECHNOLOGY IS A TRUSTED PATHWAY TO CONTROL

In a world where many forces feel uncontrollable, tech becomes the empowerment zone for Arab Youth. Almost half feel most in control when adapting to new technologies, seeing digital skills as currency for mobility, independence, and self-determination.

HEALTH IS AN ACT OF SELF-MASTERY, NOT NECESSITY

Despite mental and physical health ranking as a key concern, most youth feel capable of managing their wellbeing, indicating a growing emphasis on personal agency and the cultivation of internal resilience.

TRADITION AND INDIVIDUALITY ARE NO LONGER OPPOSITES

Arab Youth are crafting a hybrid cultural identity: rooted in tradition, yet individually expressive. While generational gaps are pronounced, this generation's reinterpretation of culture is neither rejection nor imitation; it is reinvention.

A HOPEFUL GENERATION HELD BACK BY SYSTEMIC INERTIA

Almost 8 in 10 of Arab Youth are optimistic about their personal future, but this optimism is contingent on institutions that support and understand them. They are not asking for idealism; they are asking for partnership and collaboration.

ARAB YOUTH WANT TO BE CO-AUTHORS OF THE FUTURE

Their demands to institutions are straightforward: jobs, stability, wellbeing, and a seat at the table. Eight in ten want to be included in decisions, not simply be acknowledged. Inclusion is not symbolic for them; it is the prerequisite for progress.

CHAPTER ONE

Z

THE REALITY CHECK: WHAT'S WEIGHING ON ARAB YOUTH TODAY?

Arab Youth face a complex mix of pressures, leaving many feeling unprepared for what lies ahead.

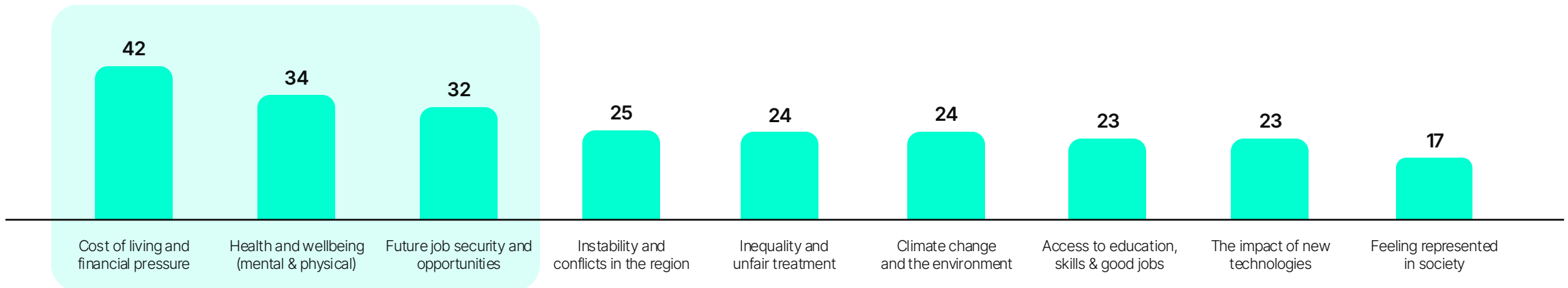
Like Gen Z globally, they have grown up in a pressure-cooker of rapid change and more cultural upheavals than any generation before them, all while constantly being flooded with information.

This has translated into persistent worries about their stability and security, reflecting a generation defined by ongoing uncertainty.

MAKING A DECENT LIVING MATTERS THE MOST

Economic stability, health, and job security lead Arab Youth priorities – with rising living costs and declining access to employment opportunities shaping their long-term choices.

Percent who say each issue concerns them the most



Q14. Which of the following issues concerns you the most today? Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

FINANCIAL REALITY FEELS UNEVEN FOR ARAB YOUTH

While many Arab Youth feel financially secure day to day, only half feel confident they could withstand a major financial shock, revealing a clear divide beneath the surface.



Only **1 in 2**

find it **easy** to cover daily living expenses (54%)



Only **1 in 2**

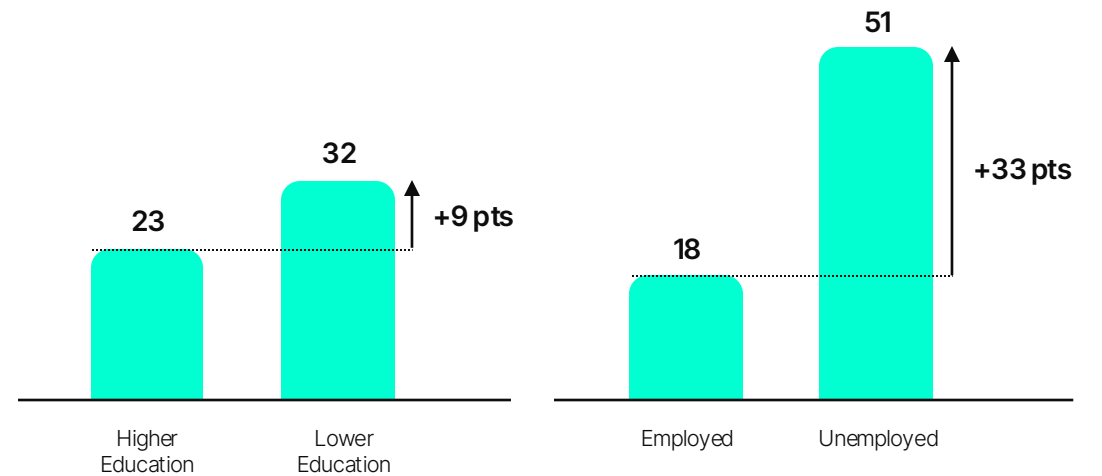
feel **prepared** to face a major financial challenge (55%)

Q21. How easy or difficult is it for you to cover your day-to-day living expenses (e.g., food, housing, transport, health care, education, bills...)? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, easy | codes 1-2, difficult. Q22. If you faced a major financial challenge (e.g., medical emergency, job loss, unexpected bills...), how prepared do you feel to manage it? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, prepared. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

EDUCATION AND WORK DRAW SHARP FINANCIAL DIVIDES

Education and employment status act as early gatekeepers to security. Differences in backgrounds fuels a divide in financial anxiety.

Percent who feel they are not prepared for any major financial challenge



Q22. If you faced a major financial challenge (e.g., medical emergency, job loss, unexpected bills...), how prepared do you feel to manage it? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, prepared. Base: All Respondents (n=4174), Lower than undergraduate (lower education n=1028), Undergraduate or higher (higher education n=3075), Unemployed (n=525), Employed (n=2612)

THE JOB-MATCH GAP COMPOUNDS INEQUALITY

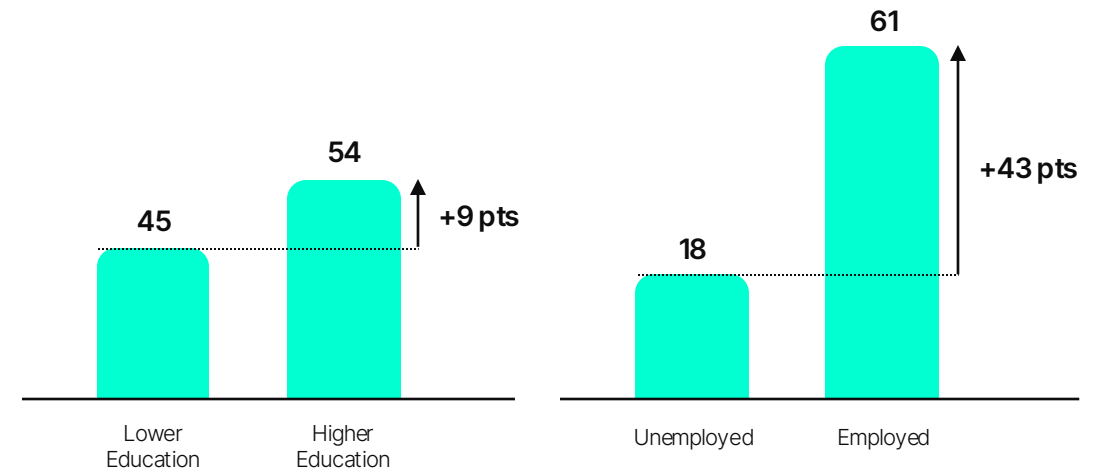
These divides extend beyond income to shaping access to opportunities. Even among educated and motivated Arab Youth, many struggle to secure jobs that match their skills – slowing early career progression.



1 in 2

say it's easy for them to find job opportunities that match their skills, interests, and career goals (51%)

Percent who say that finding job opportunities that match their skills is easy



Q24. How easy or difficult is it for you to find good job opportunities that match your skills, interests, and career goals? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, easy | codes 1-2, difficult. Base: All Respondents (n=4174), Lower than undergraduate (lower education n=1028), Undergraduate or higher (higher education n=3075), Unemployed (n=525), Employed (n=2612)

MANY QUESTION WHETHER THEY CAN GENUINELY EXPRESS WHO THEY ARE

Finances and job opportunities tell only part of the story: this generation wrestles with belonging and acceptance in societies where many still feel judged, excluded, or unheard. Belonging and acceptance remain missing pieces for many Arab Youth, who continue to seek spaces where they can truly be themselves.



81%

have felt **excluded** or
judged at least once



77%

state that young people sometimes **hide**
parts of themselves to avoid **judgment**



70%

find that **being different** is often
not accepted in our society

Q45. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, agree. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Across markets, Arab Youth describe a shared tension between aspiration and constraint and speak of the fight for dignity.

FINANCIAL AND LIVING STABILITY

"I just want to live with dignity and secure a modest future."

EMPLOYMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

"Companies don't want to hire beginners; they want people with experience right away."

FREEDOM AND SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS

"Society does not accept difference."

IDENTITY AND PURPOSE

"Feeling trapped between big dreams and a reality full of obstacles."

Q46. In your own words, what's the one thing you find most difficult about being a young person today, living in the Arab world? Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

CHAPTER TWO



BETWEEN PRESSURE AND POTENTIAL: NAVIGATING A WORLD BEYOND THEIR CONTROL

Arab Youth develop resilience as a response to pressure.

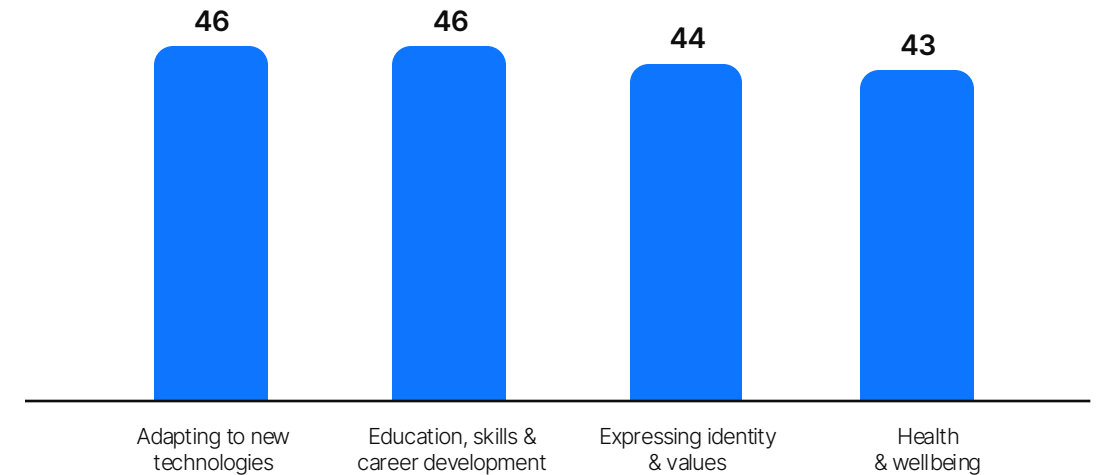
Faced with macro-level forces they cannot influence, Arab Youth direct their energy toward what remains within reach: their skills, their health, their use of technology, and their values. They create balance through what they can shape.

Their response is not withdrawal, it's agency in motion: creation, adaptation, and self-definition.

ARAB YOUTH FEEL MOST IN CONTROL WHEN THEY CAN ACT

Arab Youth gain autonomy in areas where they can take ownership – learning, adapting, and defining who they are.

Percent who feel most in control across the following areas



Q13. In which areas of life do you feel you have the most control, and in which areas do you feel you have the least control? 3-point scale, code 3, most control Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

TECHNOLOGY IS A SPACE WHERE YOUTH FEEL **MOST IN COMMAND**

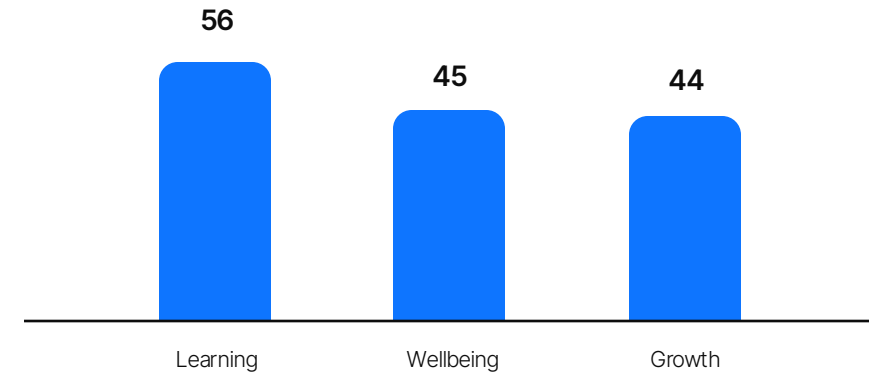
Their sense of control is particularly tangible with technology, a key space where effort turns into empowerment. It is a source of reassurance, enabling all other areas they can find control and growth.



1 in 2

state that among all issues, adapting to new technologies is where they have the **most control** (46%)

Percent who see technology as an enabler, driving...



Q13. In which areas of life do you feel you have the most control, and in which areas do you feel you have the least control? 3-point scale, code 3, most control. Q27. In which areas of your life has technology had a mostly positive or mostly negative impact? 3-point scale, code 3, mostly positive impact. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

CONFIDENCE THROUGH CAPABILITY: MOST FEEL EQUIPPED TO BUILD THEIR FUTURE

Arab Youth see education, training, and learning opportunities as the foundation of their personal agency. They can't influence job markets, but they believe they can control their skills and readiness to seize any opportunity.

Q28. How equipped do you think young people are to adapt to emerging technologies? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, equipped.

Q25. To what extent do you feel young people are equipped with the right skills, from education, training, or other learning opportunities, for the world of work? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, prepared. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

Percent who say they...



68%

feel equipped to **adapt to emerging technologies**



61%

see themselves as **equipped with the right skills**, from **education, training**, or other **learning opportunities**, for the world of work

HEALTH AND WELLBEING ARE A SOURCE OF SELF-MASTERY

Health and wellbeing (both mental and physical) is their second main concern, but most feel in control. With growing confidence comes another shift – one that reaches beyond individual wellbeing to identity itself.

Percent who say they...



62%

find it easy to take care of
their **health** and **wellbeing**



57%

think their health
needs are **prioritized**

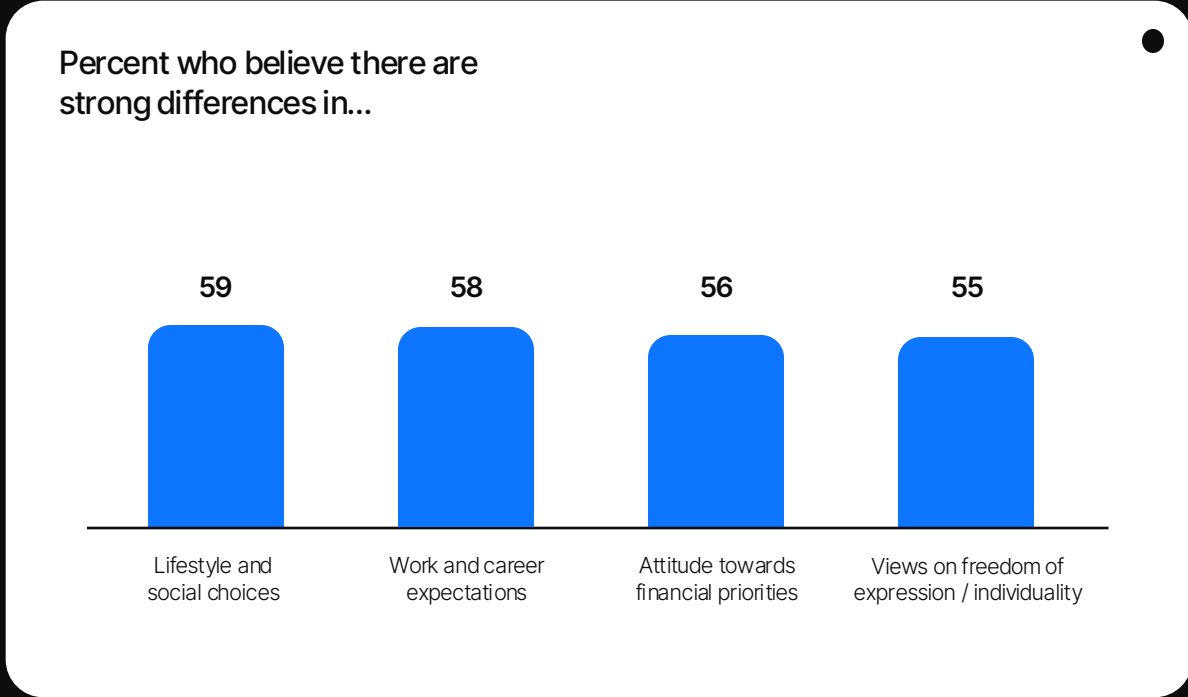
Q14. Which of the following issues concerns you the most today? Q36. In your daily life, how easy or difficult is it for you to take care of your health and wellbeing? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, easy. Q37. To what extent do you feel the health and wellbeing needs of youth are being prioritized in the Arab world? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, agree. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

GENERATIONAL EXPRESSION: SHAPING NEW LIFESTYLES

This generation is redefining what it means to belong, blending tradition with a renewed sense of individuality to create a new cultural identity.



Almost **6 in 10** find there is a **strong difference** between youth and older generations.



Q39. In your daily life, how strong are the differences between your generation and older generations in each of the following areas? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, difference. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

BUT MANY ARE STILL ROOTED IN TRADITION

Common ground remains; a sizeable group see no divergence with previous generations. While Arab Youth look to create a future in their own image, they value their traditions and what shaped them.

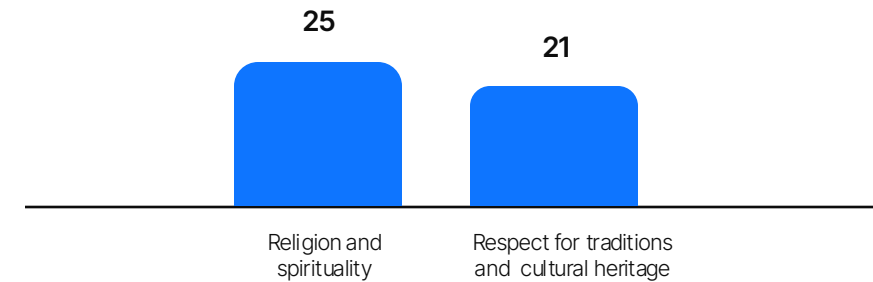


More than

1 in 4

see **no difference** between youth and older generations.

Percent who believe there are no differences in...



Q39. In your daily life, how strong are the differences between your generation and older generations in each of the following areas? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, difference. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

CHAPTER THREE

Z

ASPIRATIONS MEET LIMITS: ARAB YOUTH CAN SEE THE WORLD, BUT NOT ALWAYS REACH IT

They live in a world that is connected but constrained - within reach, yet just beyond grasp.

Arab Youth have learned to turn pressure into progress. But not all limits can be reshaped from within.

Despite being more connected, skilled and globally minded than ever, mobility remains a big challenge. Economic limitations, visa restrictions, and ongoing regional conflicts keep opportunity elusive. Their story is not one of a lack of ambition, but potential trapped by circumstance.

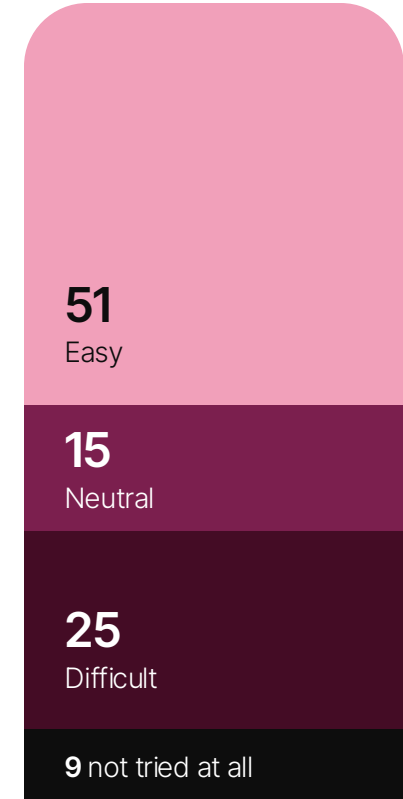
MOBILITY, THE INVISIBLE WALL

In addition to the job-match gap impacting Arab Youth, there is a similar divide in their ability to access opportunities beyond borders.

Percent who say that travelling to visit, study, work or live in another country is:

Only 1 in 2 find it easy to access opportunities beyond borders

1 in 10 stating they have not tried at all



Q30. If you have tried to visit, study, work, or live in another country, how easy or difficult was it to obtain the necessary arrangements (e.g., visas, permits, housing, or financial support)? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, easy | codes 1-2, difficult. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

ARAB YOUTH ARE READY TO MOVE

But financial barriers, visa restrictions, and safety keep their world smaller than their ambitions.



9 in 10

faced some form of challenges **limiting** their **ability** to **travel, study** or **work abroad**

TOP REASONS LIMITING ARAB YOUTH ABILITY TO TRAVEL, STUDY OR WORK ABROAD

#1

Financial costs

#2

Safety

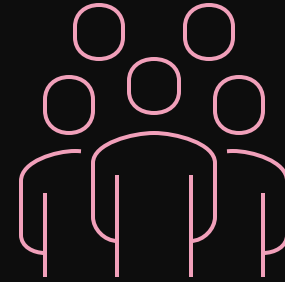
#3

Visa and immigration restrictions

Q31. In the past two years, what has limited your ability to travel, study, or work abroad the most? Base: All Respondents (n = 4174)

SAFETY RISKS MAY ALSO STEM FROM GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS

Regional and global instability additionally constrain movement and access.



9 in 10

are affected by regional
or global conflicts (88%)

Q31. In the past two years, what has limited your ability to travel, study, or work abroad the most? Base: All Respondents (n = 4174)

CHAPTER FOUR



HOPE CALLS FOR ACTION: YOUTH BELIEVE IN THE FUTURE, BUT LOOK TO INSTITUTIONS TO MATCH THEIR RESOLVE

Despite financial pressure, instability, and limited mobility, Arab Youth are hopeful about the future.

Yet optimism alone cannot sustain progress. Many Arab Youth feel they have done what they can from within; they now look outward to institutions to open the doors they cannot unlock alone.

Across markets, this cohort want to see institutions share their momentum and act with the same urgency, adaptability, and purpose they have shown themselves.

THE EMPATHY GAP: WHERE INSTITUTIONS FALL SHORT

Amid their journey, Arab Youth see institutions as well-intentioned, yet distant.



8 in 10

feel young people are **held back by systems** that do not support their ambitions (76%)



Only 6 out of 10

find **institutions supportive** (58%) and **believe they understand youth needs** (56%)

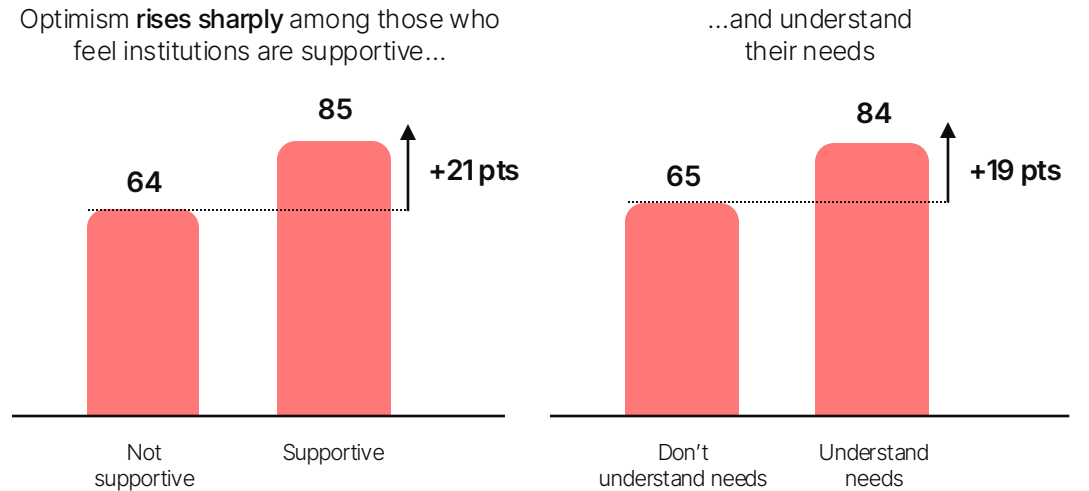
Q15. In your daily life, how supportive are institutions (such as government, business, NGOs, and media) when it comes to issues that affect you and your generation? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, support. Q16. To what extent do you feel institutions understand the needs of your generation? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, understand. Q45. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, agree. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

OPTIMISM ENDURES, BUT HAS LIMITS

Arab Youth remain hopeful, but their hope is not unconditional.

3 in 4 are optimistic about their future (75%)

Percent who feel optimistic based on perceived institutions' support and understanding of their needs:



Q12. When you think about your future, how would you describe your outlook? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, optimistic. Q15. In your daily life, how supportive are institutions (such as government, business, NGOs, and media) when it comes to issues that affect you and your generation? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, supportive. Q16. To what extent do you feel institutions understand the needs of your generation? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, agree. Base: All Respondents (n=4174), Those who feel supported by institutions (2414), Those who don't feel supported (920), Those who feel institutions understand their needs (2345), Those who feel institutions don't understand their needs (1006)

INSTITUTIONS MUST PROVIDE **STABILITY**

Arab Youth seek institutional action on what matters most: jobs, stability, and wellbeing.



8 in 10

Say it's **hard** for young people to **plan for the future without stability** (83%)

Q17. What do you think young people in the Arab world most need from institutions (such as government, business, NGOs, and media) to feel supported in their daily lives? Q45. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, agree. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

WHAT ARAB YOUTH NEED MOST FROM INSTITUTIONS

#1

Job opportunities

#2

Financial stability for young people

#3

Mental health and wellbeing support

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT IS A CRITICAL LEVER

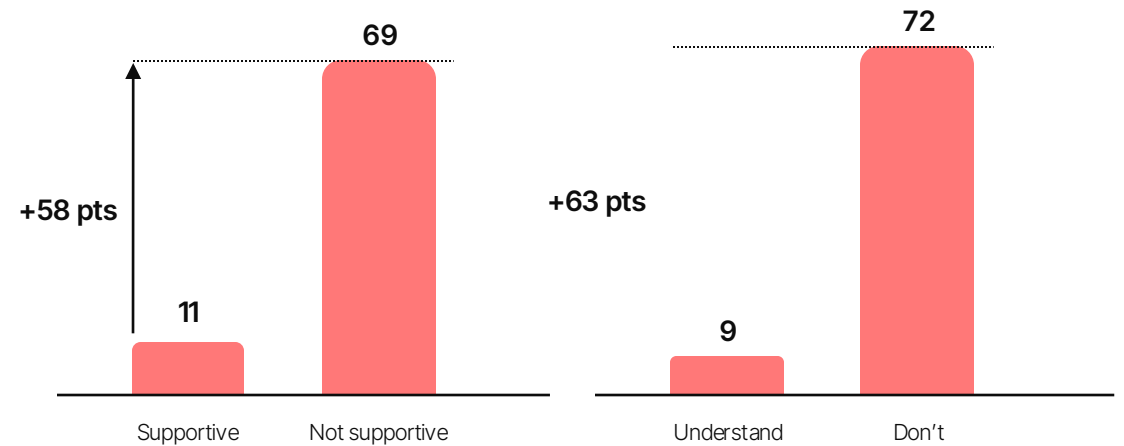
It can shape Arab Youth's path to employment.



1 in 3

find it **difficult to find good job opportunities** that match your skills, interests, and career goals (29%)

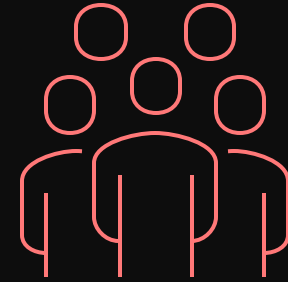
Percent who find it difficult to find good job opportunities based on perceived institutions' support and understanding of their needs:



Q24. How easy or difficult is it for you to find good job opportunities that match your skills, interests, and career goals? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, difficult. Q15. In your daily life, how supportive are institutions (such as government, business, NGOs, and media) when it comes to issues that affect you and your generation? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, supportive. Q16. To what extent do you feel institutions understand the needs of your generation? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, agree. Base: All Respondents (n=4174), Those who feel supported by institutions (2414), Those who don't feel supported (920), Those who feel institutions understand their needs (2345), Those who feel institutions don't understand their needs (1006)

ARAB YOUTH ALSO WANT **A SEAT AT THE TABLE**

Not just to be heard, but to help shape a better future.



8 in 10

want to be **included** in **decisions**
that **shape** the **future (83%)**

Q45. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, agree. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND ACCEPTANCE: THE EXPECTATIONS BEHIND THE CALL FOR FAIRNESS IN OPPORTUNITY AND REAL CHANGE

For Arab Youth, fairness is not aspirational; it is a prerequisite and the foundation upon which equality, acceptance, and real opportunity should be built.



82%

believe everyone deserves **equal opportunity**, no matter where they come from



80%

want to **succeed** while staying **true to who they are**



78%

believe that there is a need for **more action**, not just words, **on social justice**

Q45. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements? 5-point scale, codes 4-5, agree. Base: All Respondents (n=4174)

CHAPTER FIVE

Z

THE MOMENT OF PROOF

While optimism remains, Arab Youth have adapted to pressure by investing in themselves and narrowing where they place belief.

For brands and institutions, relevance and engagement now hinge on whether they can address lived realities and deliver tangible value.

REACHING AND CONNECTING WITH ARAB YOUTH TODAY



REDUCE STRUCTURAL FRICTION

Arab Youth are already doing the work – learning, adapting, and pushing forward. Institutions and brands stay relevant when they reduce everyday friction and barriers, making progress feel possible.



TURN CAPABILITY INTO OPPORTUNITY

Capability is not the gap. Access is. Youth lean towards players that actively open pathways to real opportunities, especially employment, income security, and cross-border mobility.



COMMIT CLEARLY, DELIVER CONSISTENTLY

In high stakes areas like work, income, and wellbeing, Arab Youth respond to clear commitments, visible outcomes and consistency, not broad promises or constant messaging.



RESPECT ROOTS, ENABLE INDIVIDUALITY

Identity is both traditional and globally fluent. Credibility grows when institutions and brands reflect that dual reality – honouring heritage while creating space for difference and self expression.

THANK YOU!

Interested in learning more?
Drop us a line at GenZLab@Edelman.com

