

# milkround

## Candidate Compass Report 2019



In partnership with **universum**

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# Overview

Since 2012, Milkround has been sharing original insights into UK students and graduate jobseekers in order to help businesses and recruiters understand the work behaviours and preferences of today's younger generation as they begin their careers in their chosen professions.

Welcome to the latest Candidate Compass Report, which is set against a backdrop of changing workplace environments in terms of the wants and needs of candidates and, on a more macro level, great political and economic uncertainty.

At the time that we ran the survey for this report, negotiations to leave the European Union still continued to be very challenging, with deadlines having been extended to later in 2019. Yet despite this, as you will see within this report, graduates feel confident that they will find a way to break into their dream career. They should be; employers are recruiting more graduates, placement students and apprentices than ever before<sup>1</sup>.





The next wave of Gen-Z workers are driven to succeed in careers they are passionate about and are willing to make sacrifices to achieve their dream job. Graduates are anticipating and accepting realistic starting salaries in order to get on the career ladder and are having to complete more relevant placements to help stand out in a competitive market.

However, as our research shows, mental health and wellbeing has been another major focal point over the last year and continues to grow at pace as students become more aware of their need to balance work and home life in today's culture of 'always-on'. Businesses have responded with empathy, many rolling-out work policies which include greater work/lifestyle benefits such as working from home and more part-time roles.

Accounting giant EY has taken the lead, by supporting employees' mental health with their assistance programme, EY Assist, allowing employees to connect with counsellors. They have also launched a programme which sees senior leaders talking about their own struggles with mental health. This encourages other workers to open up and communicate, making it feel a safer and more secure environment.

Gen-Z workers are also actively choosing to join businesses which have already stepped-up to provide for a new 'woke' workforce. Encouraging a diverse

workforce remains challenging and is an issue which affects graduate confidence coming into the world of work – whether that's across gender, ethnicity, class or race. Firms need to work to encourage candidates from all backgrounds to feel confident that there is a place for them within their walls.

This year we have partnered with global employer branding agency, **Universum**. Since 1988, **Universum** have been supporting employers through delivering talent market insights, encouraging them to set organisational goals and objectives which ultimately helps them to be seen as leaders in their market. They also have a unique understanding of the global talent market, with over 1,000,000 students and professionals across the globe participating in their annual employer branding research. For this reason, **Universum** have supported Milkround to develop the survey and offer advice to employers throughout the report.



# Executive summary

## Summary

We have produced this report to give employers valuable insights to help shape recruitment and retention strategies that match a new generation of jobseekers and employees. As more of Generation-Z – those born between 1995 and 2012 – enter the workforce, we reveal their wants, needs and concerns and highlight what sets them apart.

We also shed light on the significant changes to graduate jobseekers' opinions that have taken place even over just the last year – with a particular focus on the increased concern for mental health, which can be both a barrier for candidates pursuing a career and a consideration for employers to accommodate.

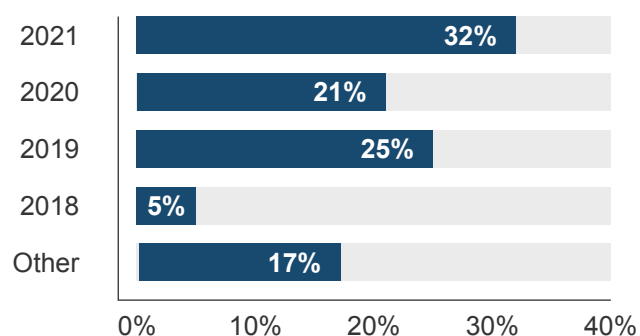
- ✓ Overall attitude to the job market and what they want from a career
- ✓ Barriers to pursuing their dream job and how employers can show they can overcome them
- ✓ What attracts them to an employer and what puts them off
- ✓ What they want after joining a company to make them productive and valued employees



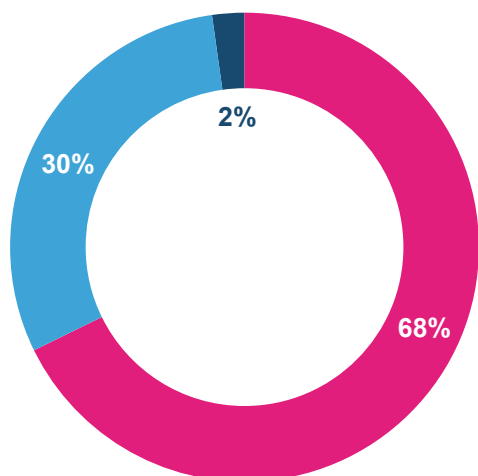
## Methodology and respondents

The Milkround Candidate Compass Report was conducted with a survey sample of 7,000 candidates between 29th April – 6th May 2019. We wanted their thoughts on every aspect of leaving student life and entering the workforce. Unless noted, all statistics mentioned in this report are from the Milkround Candidate Compass survey.

### Graduation year

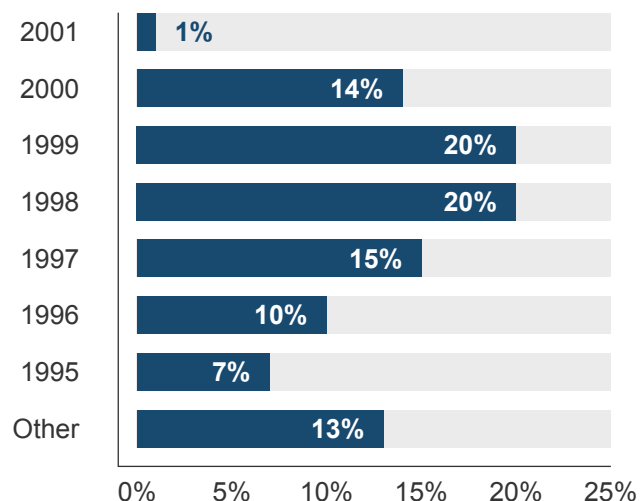


### Gender split

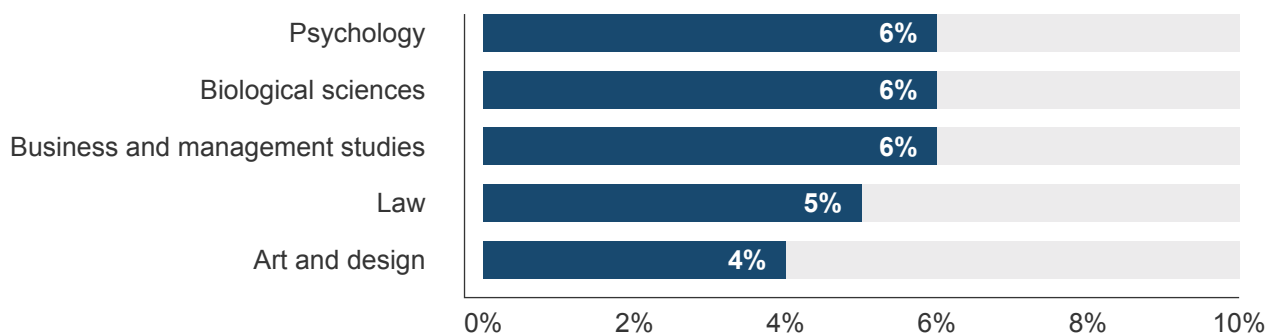


Males Females Prefer not to say

### Age split (year of birth)



### Most popular course subjects



# Key findings

## Salary expectations are dropping

**24%**

expect a starting salary of £20,000 or less

There is an acknowledgement that low starting salaries can be part of today's economic situation, and more acceptance that they may have to start low to get their foot in the door.

## Graduates are feeling unprepared for work

**Only 13%**

believe university has prepared them greatly with job function specific skills

**18%**

say their university prepared them to be confident in the workplace

Many graduates feel ill-prepared for work by university, so it is vital that they are given the right onboarding process as they begin their careers.

## Females lack confidence

**23%**

of men

cite a lack of confidence as a barrier to their dream career versus

**33%**

of women

Gendered differences are also evident in graduates' mental health with results showing men are more confident in pursuing their dream careers and have higher expectations of how their work should be rewarded.

## Is London losing its appeal?

**45%**

are prepared to consider taking a role outside London to avoid the added expense on a graduate salary

Many are more open to working outside London as a way to avoid the added burden of high living costs.

## Aspiring to succeed

**83%**

are confident they will succeed in breaking into their dream industry

Despite the challenging overall economic climate, graduate jobseekers are much more confident that they will get into their dream industry than they were last year.

## Mental health is a barrier

**30%**

think a lack of confidence will hold them back from their dream career

**44%**

feel they could not be open about their mental health with their employer

Mental health continues to emerge as a key barrier, along with attitudinal measures such as a lack of confidence. Many are also worried about revealing issues to employers, and when they do they expect to be treated with empathy and many want holistic benefits.

## Personal interests are prioritised above salary

**78%**

said their interests were the largest influence on their career path when it comes to their dream career

Priorities for what makes a dream career continue to change, trending towards a career that matches their personal interests vs. pure monetary gain. This ties with their desire for employers to match their values and the attraction of employers with a good reputation.

## Fear of elitism

**83%**

are concerned that Russell Group university graduates will be prioritised when applying for graduate roles

When it comes to barriers to pursuing their career, there are still concerns about elitism – missing out to candidates from Russell Group universities or whose background gives them more networking opportunities.





# Positivity in 2019

## Hopeful positivity

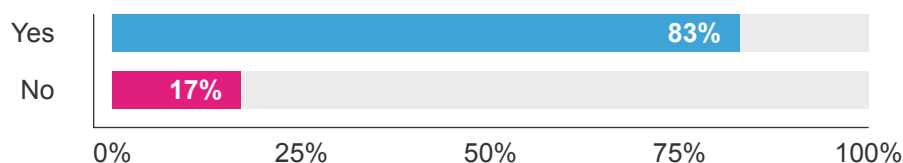
Despite a turbulent jobs market stemming from economic uncertainty, today's graduates and students show overwhelming positivity with **83%** of respondents confident they will succeed in breaking into their dream industry (vs **65%** in 2018).

In fact, despite the upheaval surrounding Brexit, **45%** of the Generation-Z respondents are positive about landing a graduate role upon finishing their studies, while only 1 in 5 (**19%**) are pessimistic about job prospects upon graduating. Half of graduates (**50%**) believe they will secure their first role within six months of completing their course and a quarter (**23%**) are confident they will be employed within three months.

Are today's graduates more hopeful than ever with greater belief in their capabilities and confidence that their hard work will pay off? Or have they merely adapted their dreams to fit the current economic situation?

According to the latest ISE data<sup>1</sup> which looks at graduate trends, there was a **7%** annual uplift of graduate employment in 2018 showing that, despite economic worries, graduate recruitment is continuing to rise.

Do you believe you will break into your dream career?



# Understanding graduates' mindsets

## Follow your passion

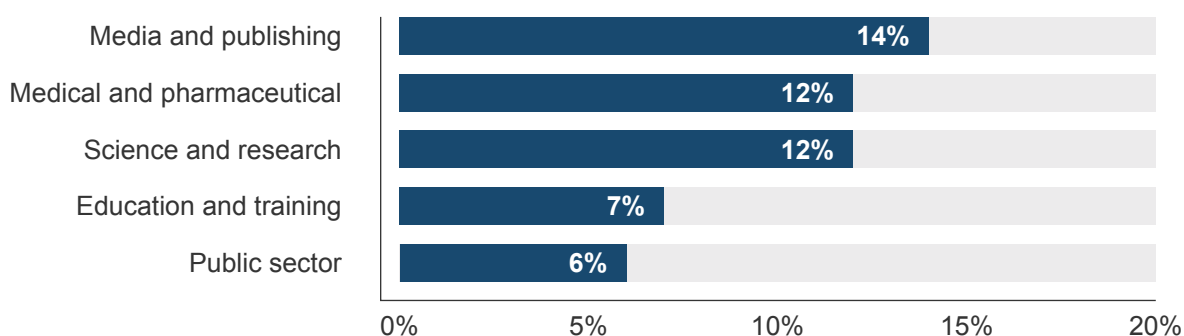
Expectations are increasingly high from new graduates when it comes to their view of what makes up their dream job. It is no longer enough to simply work and go into a career based on monetary earn, today's graduates want to follow their passion and work within a sector that both pays the bills and satisfies their interests.

In fact, **78%** of respondents said their interests were the biggest influence on their career path, up **6%** from 2018 and the largest single driving factor. This is followed by graduates choosing careers that reflect their values at **34%**. Interestingly, salary potential was

only cited as a factor by **25%** of candidates, showing that more than ever before monetary gain is being trumped by personal curiosities and enthusiasm.

So what are graduates' dream work sectors? It's interesting that the top scorer, media and publishing at **14%**, does not have a reputation as a high-earning one, but one that offers creative engagement. Only **2%** of respondents chose banking as a dream career, despite a reputation for salaries, bonuses and benefits – perhaps highlighting the fact that money is no longer the key decider.

## Top five: which sector do you hope to work in?



## Passion over pay

All of this is leading to a movement for passion over pay. While a quarter (**25%**) see salary potential as the biggest influence on choosing a career path, this is vastly down from **34%** in 2018, further showing the emphasis on values and interest over pay packet.

Although **42%** expect their starting salary to be between £20,000 - £25,000, **24%** (the second largest percentage) expect a starting salary of £20,000 or less.

So perhaps there is much less of a barrier when it comes to starting salaries because candidates are more realistic about making compromises in order to get to follow their passion. One in seven (**14%**) see a low starting salary as a personal barrier to getting into their dream career – a figure drastically lower than the **22%** who did in 2018. This suggests graduates are willing to make financial sacrifices in order to get a foot on the ladder in their dream career, with the hope it will pay off.

# What are their fears?

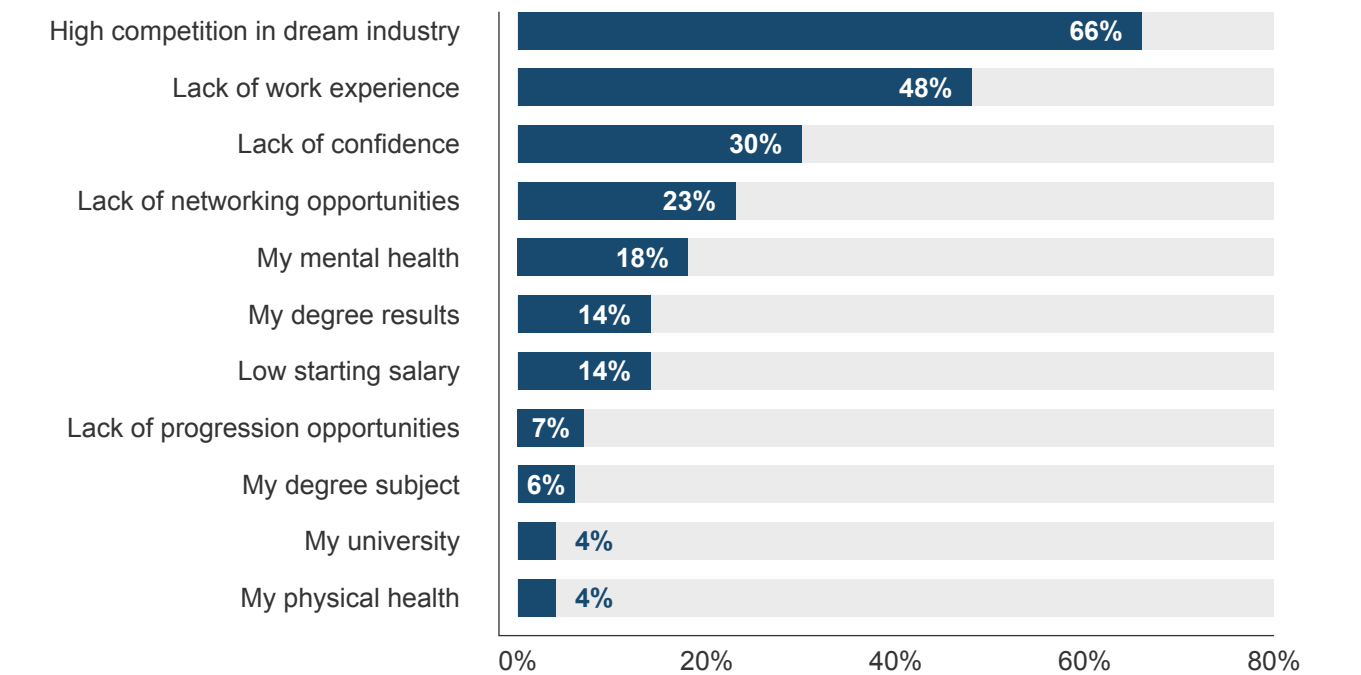
It's great that graduates are feeling positive about finding their way into their dream career, but what are the blots on the horizon that are causing them to pause?

## Tough competition

66% of respondents, up from 55% in 2018, cited competition from those having completed more work experience and been exposed to more networking opportunities as their greatest concern when it comes to future career prospects. Half (48%) also cited a concern as having less experience than other candidates. Extracurricular activities clearly go a long way in making graduates feel confident about their value to companies, but also shows they are realists; they know that to get into their dream role they need to excel.

“ I feel like employers only look at the kind of university you attend sometimes, it doesn't matter about the degree level you are graduating with, and that worries me about my future. ”

## What personal barriers could hold you back from going after your dream career?



## Fear of elitism

A third (32%) are concerned that candidates who graduated from prestigious universities will be prioritised when applying for graduate roles – a figure that jumps to 83% when it comes to graduates concerned around competing with those who attended Russell Group universities.

“

...due to not attending a Russell Group university, I feel like I am already disadvantaged in future job applications.

”

“

I am confident in my own ability, but I do worry that attending a less prestigious university will have a negative effect on my dream career. Especially in London.

”







## Workplace pressures

### Job ghosting

A new trend in role negotiation is 'job ghosting', which sees a candidate (or on occasion, employer) going off the radar following interview conversations or even, in some cases, following acceptance of a role. **19%** of respondents have done something along these lines, whether that's not responding during the interview process or once the job offer has been accepted. In fact, **12%** claim to have not responded to an employer after receiving a job offer.

It is important for businesses to continue momentum and conversation during often protracted notice periods to ensure new starters are comfortable and up to speed ahead of starting their new role. Companies often start the on-boarding process before the candidate officially starts and this can include meeting new teams in an informal environment, on-boarding with processes and locking in upcoming events or training. It maintains channels of communication and ensures new starters know their new company is excited about them coming on board, plus allows any questions to be resolved.

Next we looked into the pressures of conforming to social culture and what students and graduates perceive as 'fitting in with company culture'. In an everchanging world, it's no surprise that **50%** of respondents stated they feel concerned about making friends in the workplace, with three quarters of those identifying as females, again showing the stark contrast between male and female career confidence.

**58%** also went on to say that they feel there is a work culture pressure to socialise when joining a company, of which **71%** were female. This could suggest that people joining the workplace feel forced into situations they may not feel comfortable with to enable them to 'fit in' better. We would always suggest giving different options to socialise, to fit all needs, and to encourage employees to meet like-minded people across the business.

Lastly, we asked respondents what they perceive as fitting in with company culture, with over **60%** of respondents saying that having a similar outlook and chemistry with like-minded people is most important. One in five cited coming from a similar background, highlighting the diversity in the workplace topic, and a quarter pointed out that being of similar age was an important part of fitting in with company culture. To encourage a diverse workforce, it's important to be transparent and open about company culture and what steps you take to welcoming and integrating graduate employees.

## Optimising social mobility in the workforce

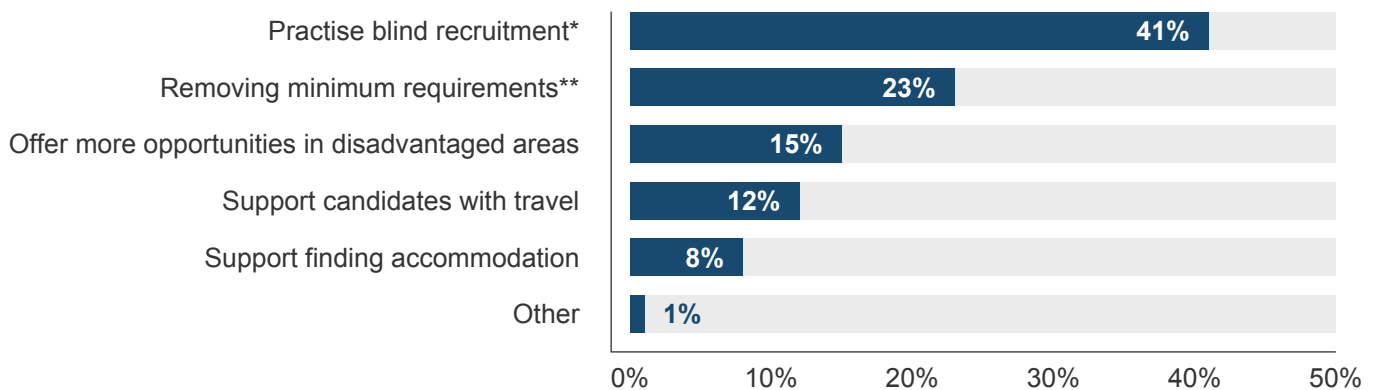
While universities themselves are working with the government to increase social mobility amongst students, it is an ongoing challenge that can be disparaging to graduates entering the workforce. **8%** of respondents are concerned they will not get the chances they deserve because of their background. However, it appears positive change is happening on that front in terms of university intake. Of those who answered the question, **42%** of those who identify as an ethnic minority and are currently at university say their parents did not go to university themselves showing, in education terms, there is the smattering of an upward trend.

Whether elitism in terms of ethnicity or educational background is unfounded or not, it is down to the individual firm – certainly, all companies should aim to have diversity as a key part of their hiring strategy – but how can companies do their best to avoid these accusations? A substantial **41%** of students felt that businesses need to practise blind recruitment in order to show they are aiming to attract a more diverse workforce.

“ I’m worried about the systematic obstacles in place if blind applications do not become the norm during recruitment processes. ”

“ I hope that in the future I will be able to work in a place with people of similar interests and people that are accepting of others with different backgrounds. ”

What could employers do to show they are attracting a diverse workforce?



\*e.g. CVs without identifying information, like name, age, gender, address

\*\*e.g. Russell Group Degree, 2.1 Degree, etc.

## Top tips: what can businesses do to attract and retain a diverse graduate workforce?

- 1** Remove certain criteria from the job description. If a certain degree level isn't required to do a job, then don't include it!
- 2** Understand your current application and interview structure and research other processes. Is there something you could do differently, such as blind recruitment?
- 3** Nurture diversity at ALL levels, not just when hiring. New employees need to look up to and respect the leadership.
- 4** Allow minority groups to have a voice. Our wider parent company, Axel Springer, has launched a Youth Council, which gives younger employees across the business the opportunity to challenge the leadership team.
- 5** Consider reverse mentoring – pair managers with younger employees across the company so that they can learn from each other. This could open up many opportunities!

Case study:

## Highlight on Rare Recruitment

rare

DIVERSITY  
RECRUITMENT  
EXCELLENCE

Diverse candidates are overrepresented within lower socioeconomic groups, who are in turn underrepresented at prestigious graduate employers. If an organisation is serious about building a diverse workforce, its recruiters need to be proactive, consistent, strategic and focused. They need to apply a level of rigour to their decision-making which is equal to any other important business decision.

There are four critical steps to hiring diverse candidates: measurement, pipelining, contextualisation and inclusion.

Rare has developed cutting-edge software tools that specifically address the third step – contextualisation – and allow employers to capture and use meaningful data to identify candidates with potential, not just polish. They do this through:

1

### Contextual Recruitment System (CRS)

This pioneering software contextualises candidates' academic, socioeconomic and personal data, hardwiring social mobility metrics into companies' existing graduate recruitment databases. It allows firms to see, at a glance, not just the achievements of candidates, but the context in which those achievements were gained.

2

### Vantage

An online attraction tool for legal careers. Employers can search a database of candidates using multiple search parameters and proven social mobility metrics.

Employers using Rare's software have seen an increase of **50%** in the number of people from disadvantaged backgrounds that they hire. The CRS is now used by **87%** of the UK's top law firms, and has boosted the number of trainees hired from underrepresented backgrounds by **61%** at six firms in three years.

Given that top candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to do less well at A level and then outperform their peers in later life, contextual recruitment is just as much of a business case as it is a moral one.

**Raph Mokades**

Managing Director, Rare Recruitment

[www.rarerecruitment.co.uk](http://www.rarerecruitment.co.uk)



# A developing fear: mental health

## Mental health fears rising in Generation-Z

Improving employee wellbeing and having visible policies around accommodating mental health issues are vital for employers taking on the next generation of workers. A third (34%) of respondents reported experiencing mental health issues – up on the UK's average of one in four (according to the NHS<sup>ii</sup>). Concerningly, one in five (18%) see their mental health issues as a personal barrier to achieving their dream career.

“ More needs to be done on how to deal with mental health issues in the workplace – and not just depression. Social anxiety, general anxiety, etc. are just as important. ”

“ I worry that my mental health issues will make it impossible for me to apply for, get and manage a job. ”

## Creating support in the workplace

It is up to employers to show inclusivity, sensitivity and offer practical support to budding employees, showing that mental health issues needn't be detrimental to securing employment.

Of course, mental health includes several facets, anxiety being a key contributor to this wider problem. For example, 30% of graduates cite a lack of confidence as a barrier to their dream career, 16% of respondents voiced concerns they won't fit into an office culture and half (50%) are concerned about making friends in the workplace.

Despite ground being made in raising awareness and acceptance of mental health – particularly within the media sector – 44% still feel they could not be open about their mental health with their employer.

## Imposter phenomenon

This phrase is increasingly heard, especially when it comes to women and their belief in not being worthy for a role or able to excel within it. Last year, Milkround research revealed women entering the workforce suffer from imposter phenomenon, with lower salary expectations than men and a lack of confidence, which could be costing them their dream job and affecting their career opportunities.



## Top tips: how can companies help to address imposter phenomenon?

1

### **Recognise it's normal**

Experiencing imposter phenomenon can feel incredibly isolating, because by its very nature it is something which makes workers feel as though they don't belong. It's important to remember it's both common and normal, while working to bolster confidence and morale where possible.

2

### **Address the gender gap in workplace confidence**

Studies<sup>iii</sup> show that men tend to believe they can do jobs for which they are underqualified whereas women are more likely to believe they aren't right for a role, even if they are overqualified. Firms should work to create equal opportunities for people of all genders and encourage those who may be experiencing imposter phenomenon to go for promotions.

3

### **Challenge structurally created beliefs**

We still live in an environment which is shaking off the idea that the prototype for a powerful person is white, male and middle aged. Firms should do what they can to offer and encourage opportunities across gender, age, ethnicity and race.

4

### **Create an environment of communication**

Generally, women fear social rejection more than men which needs to be addressed in the workplace. Sometimes this results in working for free or out of hours, never using the word 'no' and letting other people take credit for their work. Encourage an environment where communication is open, so no one gets barricaded into this kind of corner. Otherwise graduates might feel underpaid, undervalued and exhausted.

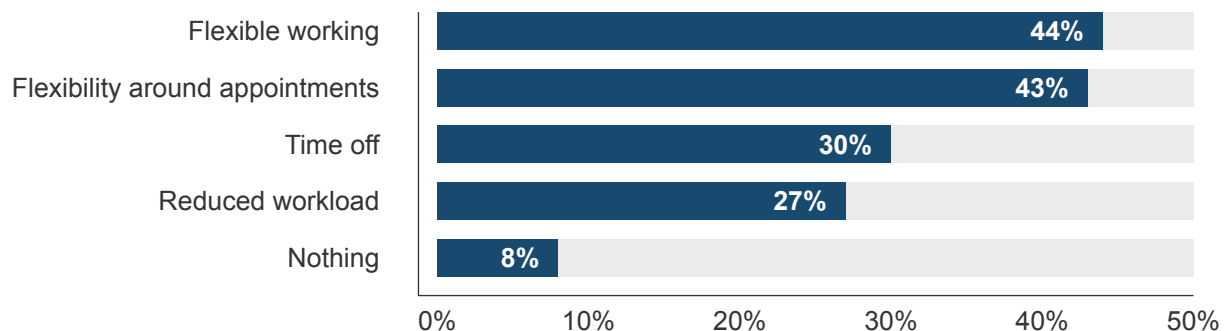


## Employee expectations

For those who do feel able to share a mental health issue, they have clear expectations of their employer:

Top five: what do graduates expect in response to raising mental health issues?

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Looking after employees' mental health is becoming an increasing priority with companies being held to account and expected to have robust policies in place.

If firms can take time to create and implement a support policy around such issues, then future generations can only feel more secure and therefore confident in the workplace.

## Top tips: Milkround asked their HR department to provide some top tips for supporting employees with their mental health in the workplace

1

### **Don't address mental health as a 'problem'**

Avoid the term 'mental health problem', addressing it correctly will be incredibly important to new graduate employees and will encourage them to be more open. We suggest 'mental health issue' or 'mental ill health'. We also advise treating mental health the same way you would treat physical health, so if an employee is struggling, you are empathetic and encourage them to talk or take some time off.

2

### **Get to know your employees**

As a manager you are in the best position to notice if there are certain changes within a team member's behaviour or mood that could indicate there is a mental health concern. Ensure you keep communication channels open, not just by having your regular 1-2-1s but make sure your team know that they can approach you and talk about mental health or anything they are worried about.

3

### **Listen to people and ask open ended questions**

This allows for people to tell you as little or as much as they want without feeling pressured. Often sharing concerns can help in finding a solution to feeling better.

4

### **Workplace culture is really important**

Develop a work environment where everyone is treated with respect, feeling valued by others is really important. It is also good to keep an eye on workload, identifying when work is piling up early on helps reduce the feeling of being stressed and being unable to cope.



# A desire for a holistic workplace

As a new generation of workforce who are pragmatic about their approach to mental health, it comes as no surprise that new graduates are looking for firms who have empathy at the forefront of their management style.

## A holistic workplace means more productivity

The Gen-Z workforce expect employers to accommodate flexible working, with **62%** feeling that flexible working will encourage productivity, while over a quarter (**27%**) feel that if they were able to work from home it would improve their output.

Modern technology has enabled remote and flexible working like no other generation previously. Whilst the 'always on' mentality can be detrimental and leave employees unable to switch off, the benefits are invaluable, allowing employees to work on flexible schedules and achieve a work-life balance, all whilst delivering against deadlines. Organisations can

easily adapt to these methods due to technological advances and without a cost to productivity and delivery.

Could it be that a flexible working firm that values employees and has a progressive view of their workforce is more attractive for candidates than a high-paying corporate organisation with a ruthless reputation? It is important for businesses to realise that adapting to more holistic methods doesn't mean less professionalism or slacking, in fact the added trust and flexibility is usually met with increased output and business success.



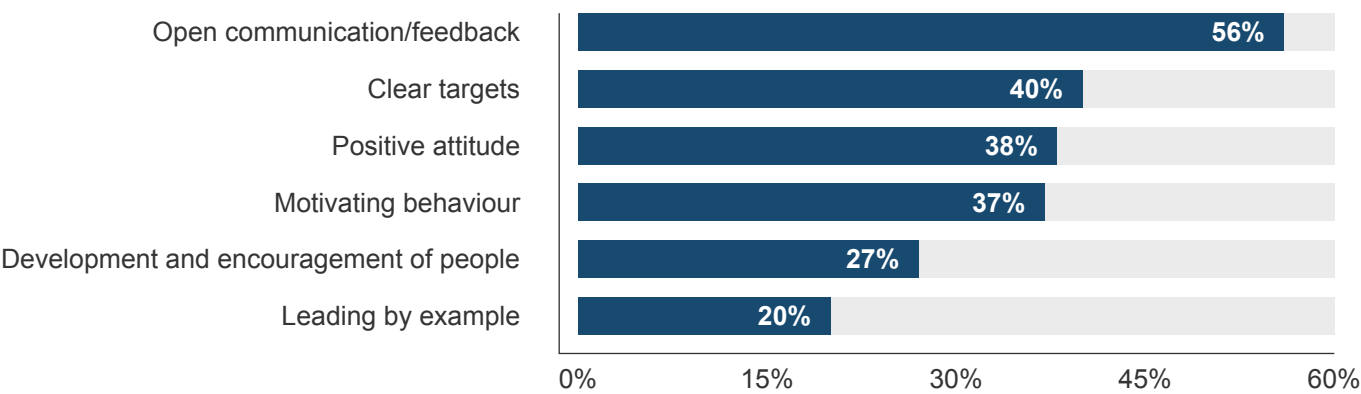
# Leading the way: EQ over IQ

As part of this consciously awake workforce, when it comes to strong and valued leaders, emotional intelligence (EQ) is valued more highly than IQ. Over half (**56%**) of graduates want open communication and feedback from their leaders. They also want approachable senior figures, with **38%** noting the importance of a positive attitude, while **37%** want a leader who demonstrates motivational behaviour. Importantly, one in five (**20%**)

want a boss who leads by example, and **68%** said a great manager would encourage their productivity.

Compare this with respondents who want a leader with a more IQ-led skillset. A mere **5%** of respondents value a methodical approach in a leader and only **5%** want one who has all the answers. Soft skills and emotional intelligence are a key part of the working atmosphere desired by graduates.

## Which of the following aspects do you expect from a leader at your current workplace?







## Let's talk

Open channels of communication are key, with **40%** of respondents citing the importance of clearly communicated targets. New graduates and students want to succeed and flourish in a role and over a quarter (**27%**) want senior figures who present nurturing behaviour, encouraging and developing their staff to grow.

## Peer to peer mentoring

A third (**33%**) said being assigned a peer mentor would be beneficial to support their professional development. A mentor new to the business or recent graduate is much preferable to a senior manager, of which only **17%** of respondents state they would want as a mentor for their professional development. In fact, respondents cited the importance of being part of a great team (**78%**) to encourage productivity.

## Learning doesn't stop

Our respondents were asked what an employer could do to improve productivity in the workplace. Six in ten (**61%**) of students and graduates said training and mentorship would be the top factor in maximising their productivity – an increase of more than double from **28%** in 2018, showing the need to value and invest in new starters as they begin their careers.

## Flexible to a point

For all their talk of flexible working, it's worth noting that hot desking is out of favour, with only **4%** of graduate respondents citing any productivity increase in their work through its implementation.

If a candidate can work remotely and show that they are completing tasks, then why is this still such a taboo subject that employees feel awkward requesting? Such initiatives allow employees to manage their own workloads and schedules. Without showing willingness to modernise and show trust in employees to deliver, businesses risk missing out on or losing valuable workers.

## Top tips: what training and development should look like for graduates

- 1 Set monthly goals, these can be small objectives that feed into wider annual objectives which should be realistic and achievable.
- 2 Having someone to learn from who is not your direct manager can support development and allow for more open conversations, for this reason we would encourage mentoring schemes.
- 3 In-house training, everything from honest conversations, body language or presentation skills, will help to support and upskill your workforce. This is also all inclusive and allows all employees to take part.
- 4 Finally, we believe that graduates should also be partly responsible for their own development, so giving time to do individual study will allow them to become more independent in the workplace.



# Big lights, big city

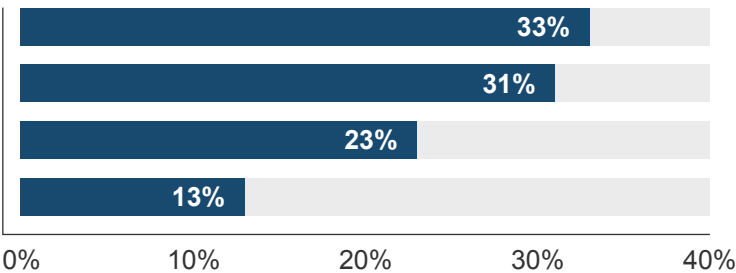
Whilst a career in the capital isn't for everyone, a move to London or other large cities such as Manchester or Bristol generally offers increased graduate opportunities.

In terms of the capital however, there is a current trend for graduates to turn their back on working

in London, with **33%** having no intention of living or working in London due to the high cost of living. Despite **79%** believing there are more career opportunities in London, nearly half (**45%**) are prepared to consider taking a role outside of the city to avoid the added expense on a graduate salary.

## Does the perceived high cost of living/working in London impact your career choice?

- No, I have no intention of working in London
- Yes, but I still decided to try to get a job in London
- Yes, I decided to get a job outside of London
- No, I want to live and work in London

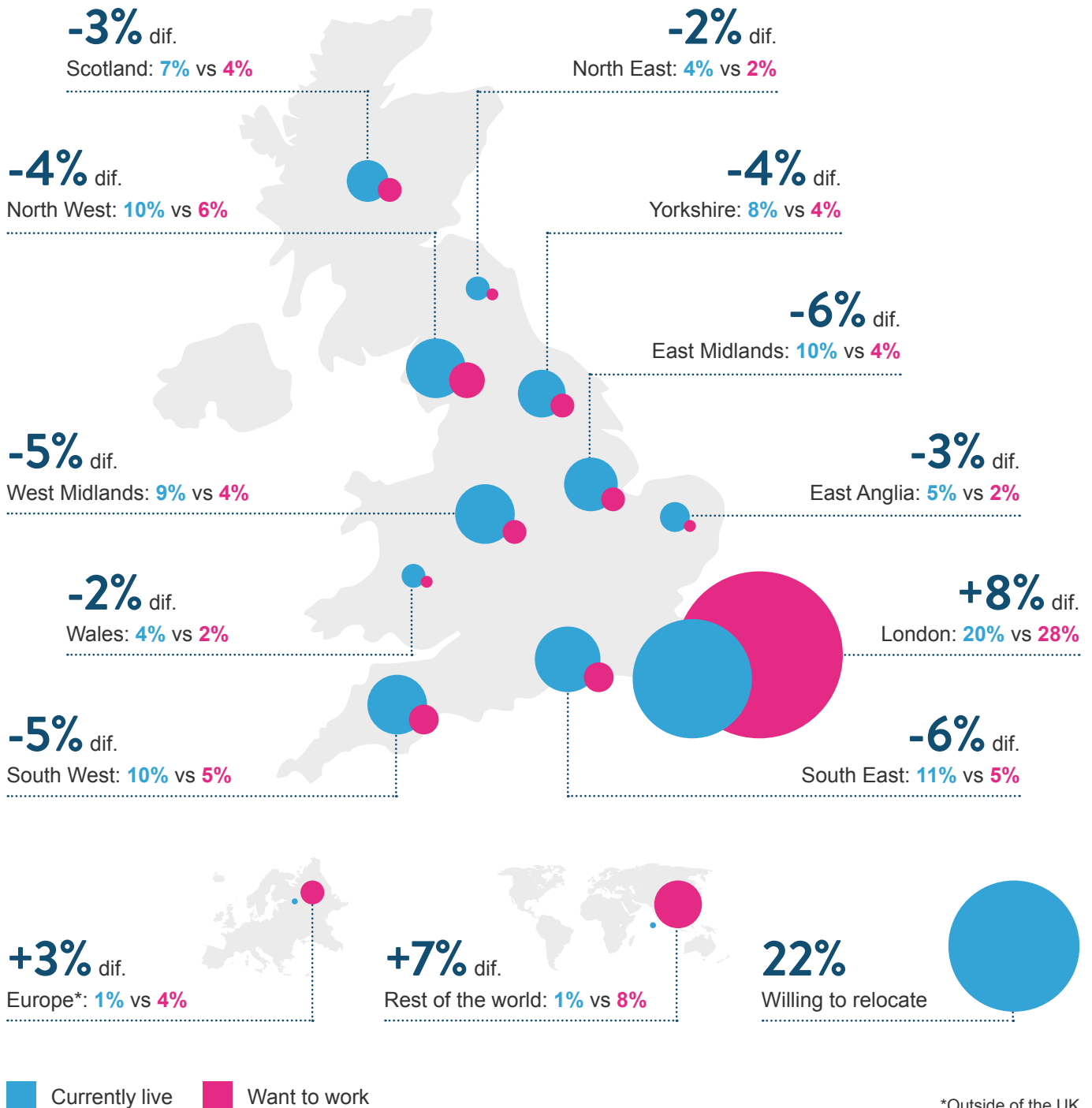


## Graduates are on the move

Here we can see where respondents stated where they currently live versus where they want to work. Whilst London is still seen as a desirable place to work, students and graduates are also willing to

relocate if it means getting the right job. Regions like the North West and Midlands are becoming more popular destinations.

### Regions where students and graduates currently live versus want to work



## Supporting interviewees

To counter the issue of high expenses when attending a job interview, recruiters and companies could consider assisting candidates with the cost of

attending interviews as a quarter (24%) of graduates and students find the costs of attending interviews in London a struggle.





## Case study:

**Totaljobs**

## Totaljobs: the rise of the Northern Pound

Milkround's sister company Totaljobs recently partnered with The Professor of Economics at Lancaster University to study the impact that cost of living has. When comparing those in London, and the rest of the UK, the research found that whilst salaries may be lower, disposable income goes a lot further outside of London. According to the 2019 research, for every £1 spent in London it is equivalent to £1.17 in the North, showing money goes 17% further. Graduates would be smart to look beyond London's walls. In fact, 53% of those currently in London would relocate to a new city and accept a lower salary if it meant a better quality of life, suggesting Londoners are increasingly aware of the opportunities other cities offer.

Though salaries may not top those in the capital, the research reveals a significant difference in quality of living because the money in northerners' pockets goes further. This is even true of essential outgoings such as rent costs, with those in Manchester paying half the total household rent of those in London (£496 vs. £1,053).

### How London and the North compare:

---

	London	The North
Commute cost (per month)	<b>£101.42</b>	<b>£58.77</b>
Commute time (per day)	<b>43 mins</b>	<b>28 mins</b>
Rent (per month)	<b>£1,053</b>	<b>£533</b>

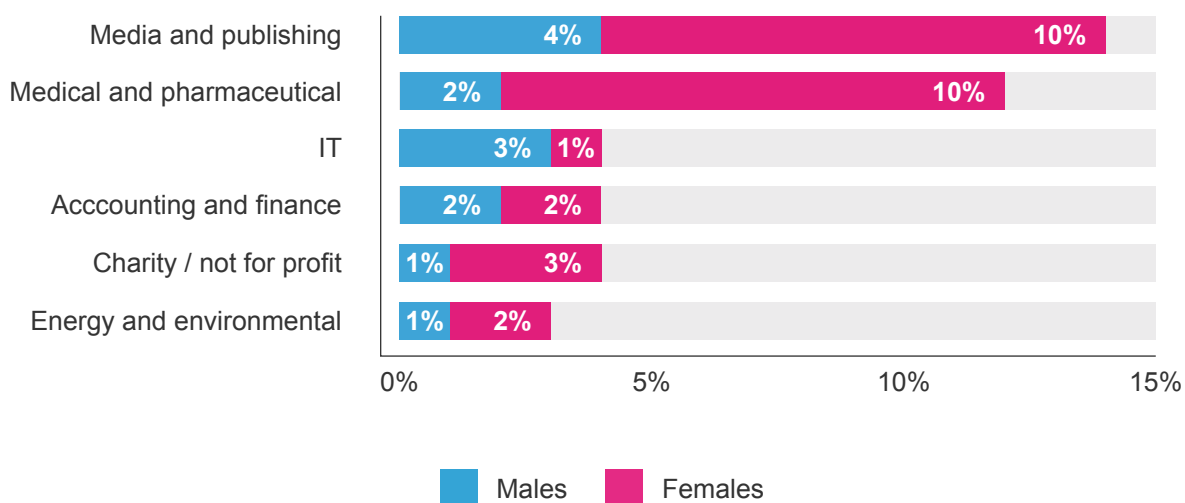


## Gender differences

Across sectors, the survey identified various gendered trends, with a number of career paths being more popular with women. These include the charity sector (**3%** of women would like to work in the sector versus **1%** of men questioned), media and publishing (**10%** of women versus **4%** of men) or pharmaceuticals (**10%** of women versus **2%** of men).

Notably, male graduates wanting to break into the IT sector outweigh their female counterparts by **3:1**, mirroring a nationwide issue of women being significantly underrepresented in what has been a traditionally male sector.

### Gender differences: what careers do students want?



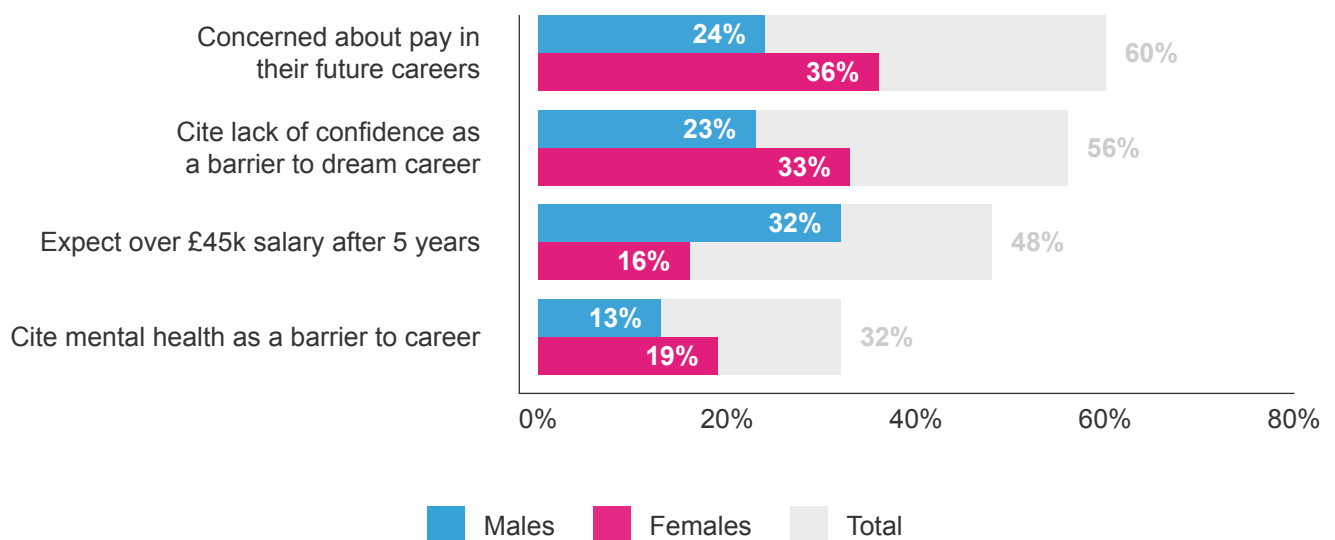


## Pay gap persistence: women still grappling with wage inequality

Gender pay gap reporting is now in its second year and many business leadership teams remain focused on building more diverse and inclusive workforces, taking note from recent findings which revealed how diversity results in greater profitability and business value.

While progress is being made, it's no surprise that the wider issue has had an impact on how female graduates perceive their opportunities. Hopefully the advent of pay gap reporting will mean that the discrepancy between male and female wages will abate. Change can't come soon enough to ensure female graduates feel optimistic for their future careers.

### Male versus female career expectations



Men have higher expectations for their future salary. **32%** of males would expect over £45,000 a year salary after five years. Unfortunately, only **16%** of females would expect the same amount. Unsurprisingly with their lower salary expectations, more women than men are concerned about pay in their future careers (**36%** vs **24%**).

Men are more confident than women in terms of breaking into their dream career – only **23%** of men cite a lack of confidence as a barrier versus **33%** of women.



Mental health is also a more prevalent barrier for women – **19%** place this as a barrier versus only **13%** of men.

# How prepared do they feel?

## Workplace ready?

Despite universities providing quality degrees and in-depth education, today's graduates are leaving higher education feeling ill-equipped to enter the workforce. Some graduates feel universities are failing to provide them with applicable skills, meaning they're set to enter the workforce feeling less confident and prepared than desired.

Just **13%** of respondents believe university has prepared them greatly with job function specific skills. With just **18%** saying their university gave them skills to be confident in the workplace, results show Gen-Z are calling out for guidance around work life skills.

Only **18%** feel they learnt what they needed for their first job while at university. Furthermore, half (**50%**) of graduates who believe that their university prepared them to an extent for the workplace still feel there were gaps in their education which would have been useful in their first job role.

Interestingly, just over half (**53%**) believe they should be responsible for preparing themselves for the workplace whilst **29%** believe it should be down to their university.

## Taking the initiative

In order to get ahead in preparation for the workplace and stand out to future employers, a third (**33%**) have felt the need to undertake unpaid internships in the last 12 months and **61%** have had a part time job to gain relevant experience.

Given that graduates generally feel unprepared, it comes as no surprise that **44%** see learning and development opportunities as something that attracts them most to a particular company. Whilst we understand it isn't an employer's sole responsibility to be slimming the skills gap, there are some things which will benefit graduates and new starters when integrating into the world of work. We suggest opportunities such as internal training and assigning mentors.





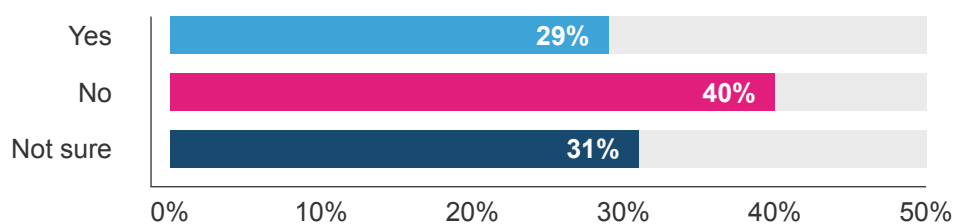
## Making it work: the 'side hustle'

An increasing number of students and graduates are taking on a second earning project, be that for creative (as **49%** suggested) or financial need (**66%**), called the 'side hustle'. Graduates are no exception, in fact **29%** of them said they plan on having or

already have a 'side hustle' alongside their main job. **23%** of those who do, make £1,000 - £5,000 from this per year; perhaps a sign of the entrepreneurial spirit of this year's graduates.

### Do you have a 'side hustle'?

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# In closing

As we have seen from this latest Milkround Candidate Compass Report, despite entering an increasingly competitive jobs market in the midst of Brexit, graduates are not letting this deter them from setting their sights on a dream career. In fact, they are more motivated than ever with ambitions remaining high, grafting harder and putting in more work experience to stand out from fellow graduates in order to follow their passion over the pay packet.

Importantly, mental health was a resounding focal point from respondents, showing that businesses need to sit up and listen. With mental health issues prevalent in the media and becoming increasingly discussed, a new generation of workers is increasingly transparent in sharing mental health issues and, in turn, expects that companies be able to accommodate their needs.

In the same vein, EQ is trumping IQ, with graduates expecting a workplace that has a holistic approach, with supportive, communicative leaders that they can look up to. Moreover, graduates want firms that can

show diversity, whether that is across class, race, location or gender, who hire without bias. They want employers who are willing to invest in them, from training to any further support needed to meet their needs and ensure they can succeed in the workplace.

Whilst willing to complete additional work experience and go the extra mile to stand out, students and graduates want more support in preparing them for the world of work. Although most graduates concede the onus lies with them to become workplace ready, an increasing number say they would benefit from their universities providing the right guidance and opportunities ahead of securing that all important step on the ladder.

Either way, the future is bright, with this year's graduates channelling previously unseen positivity and confidence in their efforts to secure their dream job – turbulent market or not.

**Fiona Rigby**

Head of Marketing, Milkround

i ISE (Institute of Student Employers) Annual Student Recruitment Survey 2018

ii McManus, S., Meltzer, H., Brugha, T. S., Bebbington, P. E., & Jenkins, R. (2009). Adult psychiatric morbidity in England, 2007: results of a household survey. The NHS Information Centre for health and social care

iii <https://www.forbes.com/sites/karenhigginbottom/2018/07/29/two-thirds-of-women-in-uk-suffer-from-imposter-syndrome-at-work/#77de0cbb6ccf>

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