



CAMBRIDGE

Preparing learners to thrive in a changing world

The view from International Education

Ben Schmidt – Director, International Network

Elizabeth Cater – Director, Global Marketing

Monday 8 December 2025

What does it mean to thrive in a changing world?

We want to support students to face the future with agency and confidence





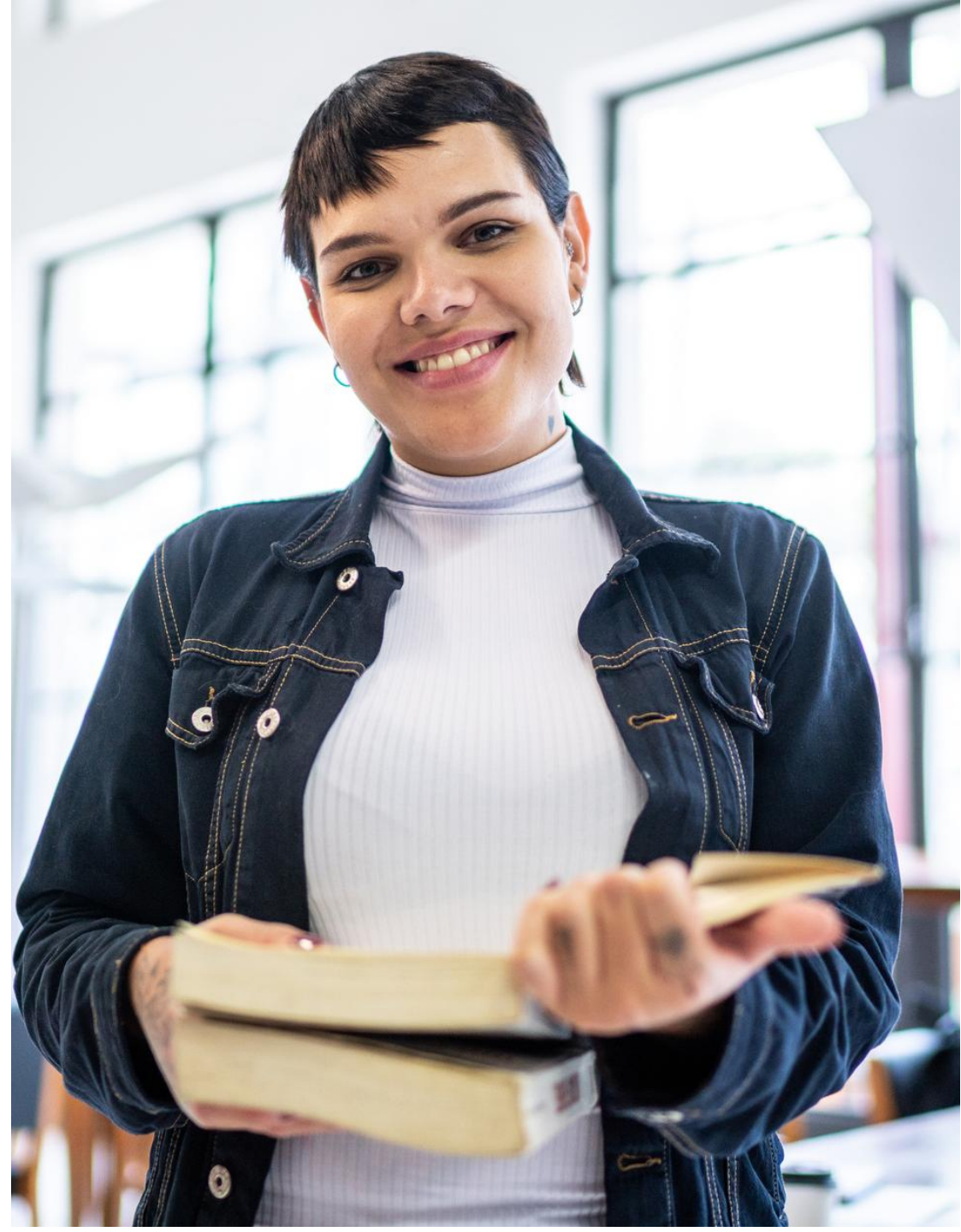
Listening to serve our schools

Only by understanding can we
better shape the pathways students
need to thrive.

A global conversation

We wanted to know how students – and their teachers – feel about:

- students' readiness for the future
- the skills and attributes they think are important
- the challenges they perceive in developing them.



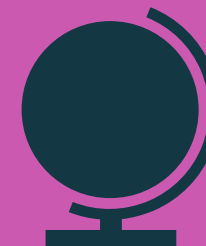
The response in numbers... going beyond the Cambridge community



Over 3 000 teachers
(who teach students aged
14-19 years)



Nearly 4 000 students
(aged 16-19 years)



Responses from
150 countries

... plus, around **50** experts consulted with us on the findings.

What did we learn?

Our key findings...

Students are more prepared for the future than they think they are.



1

Our key findings...

Subject knowledge is undervalued for students' long-term futures.



2

Our key findings...

Fear of judgement can be a barrier to students' interpersonal skills.



3

Our key findings...

Teachers and students agree self-management skills are vital, but difficult to teach and learn.



4

Our key findings...

Technology is a valuable tool, but it can distract from – as well as enhance – learning.



5

What we heard reveals a simple truth...



Great schools and great teachers are more important than ever.

A **purposeful curriculum** remains the foundation of **great education**.



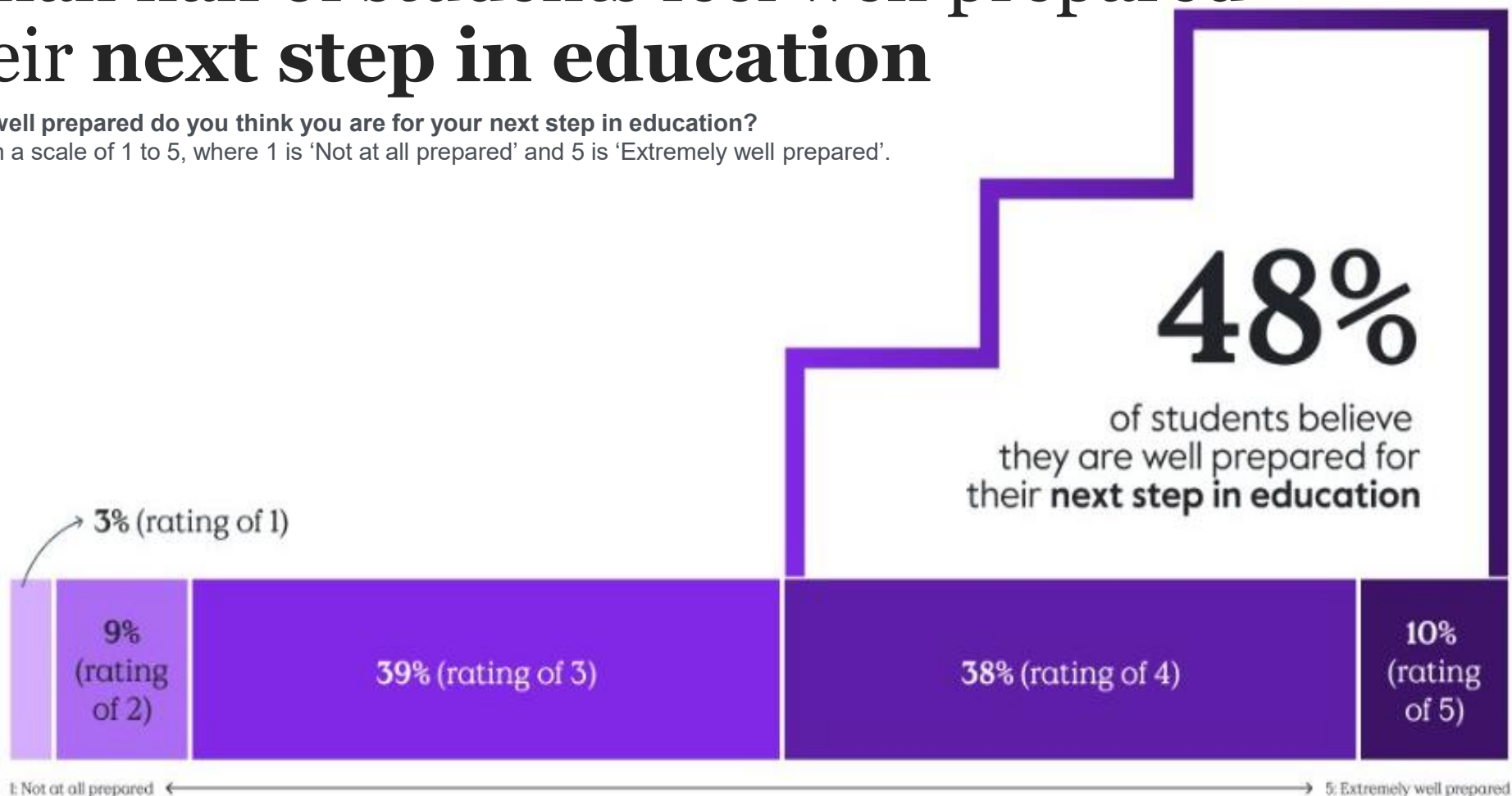
Our research

Students are better prepared for
the future than they think they are

Less than half of students feel well prepared for their **next step in education**

Question: How well prepared do you think you are for your next step in education?

Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Not at all prepared' and 5 is 'Extremely well prepared'.



Individual percentages are rounded, so displayed totals may differ from the exact sum.

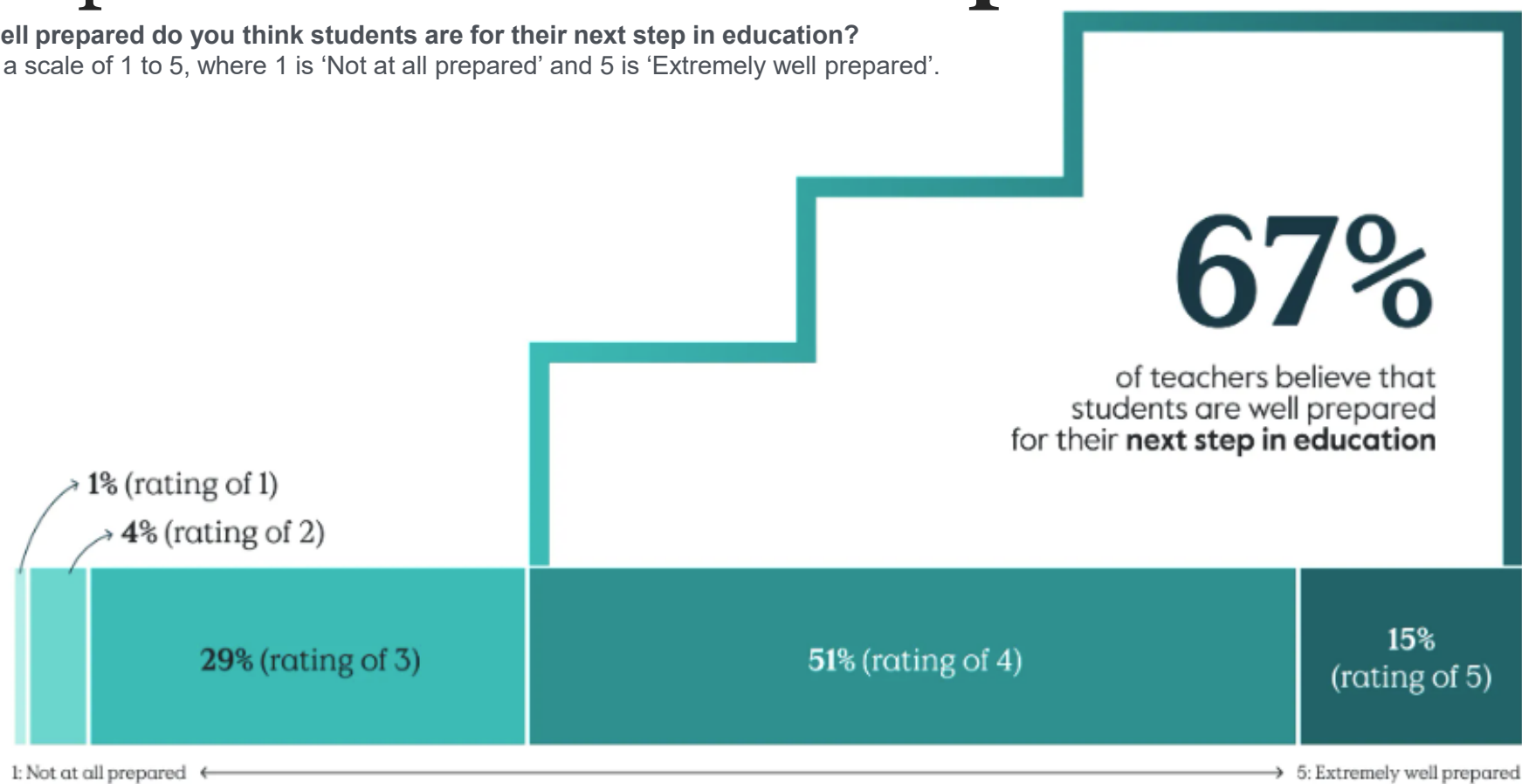
“ Studies-wise, I think my grasp of the subject is probably pretty good, but going into a new environment that’s where I feel less well prepared. ”

Student, Pakistan

Two-thirds of teachers feel their students are well prepared for their **next step in education**

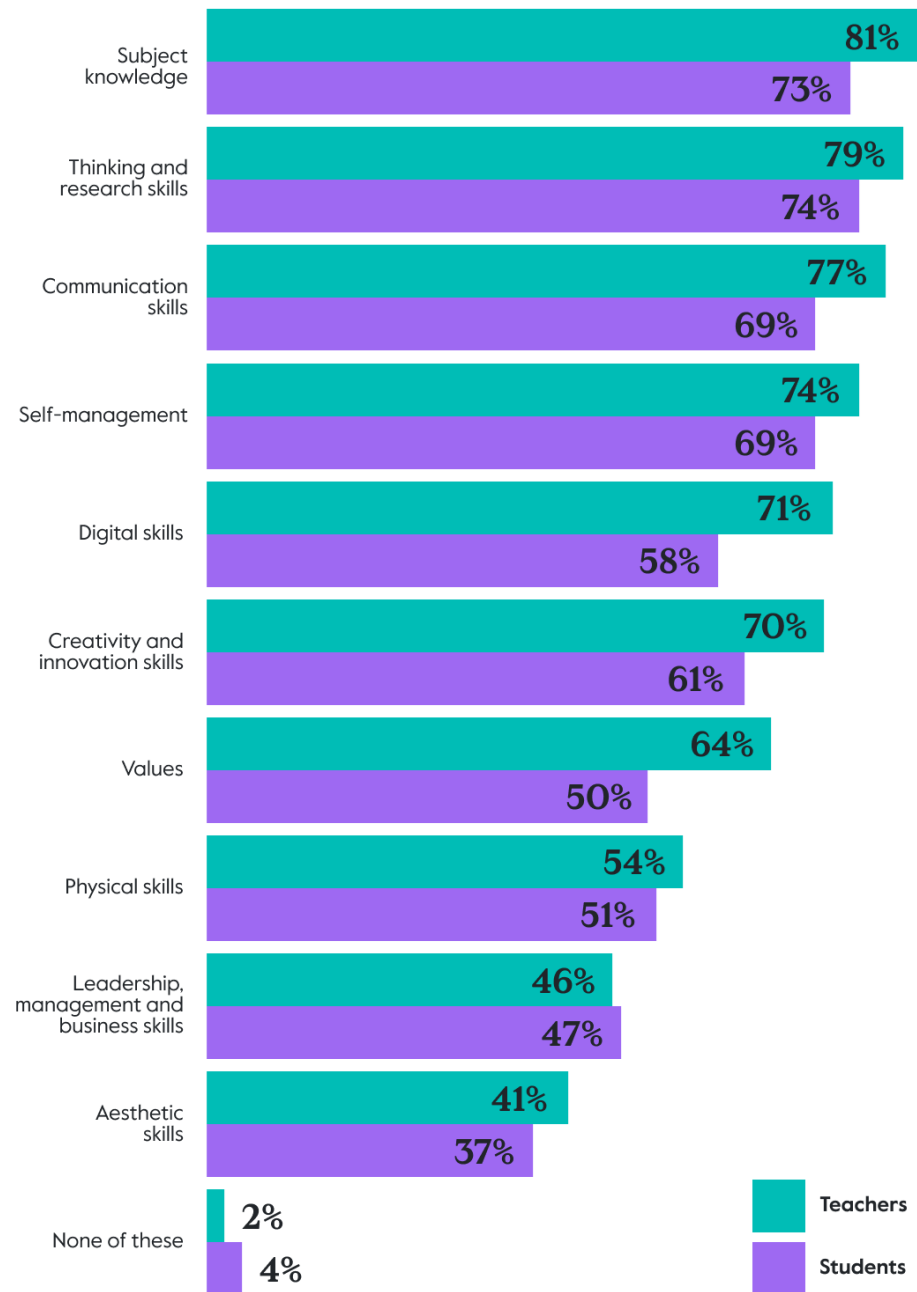
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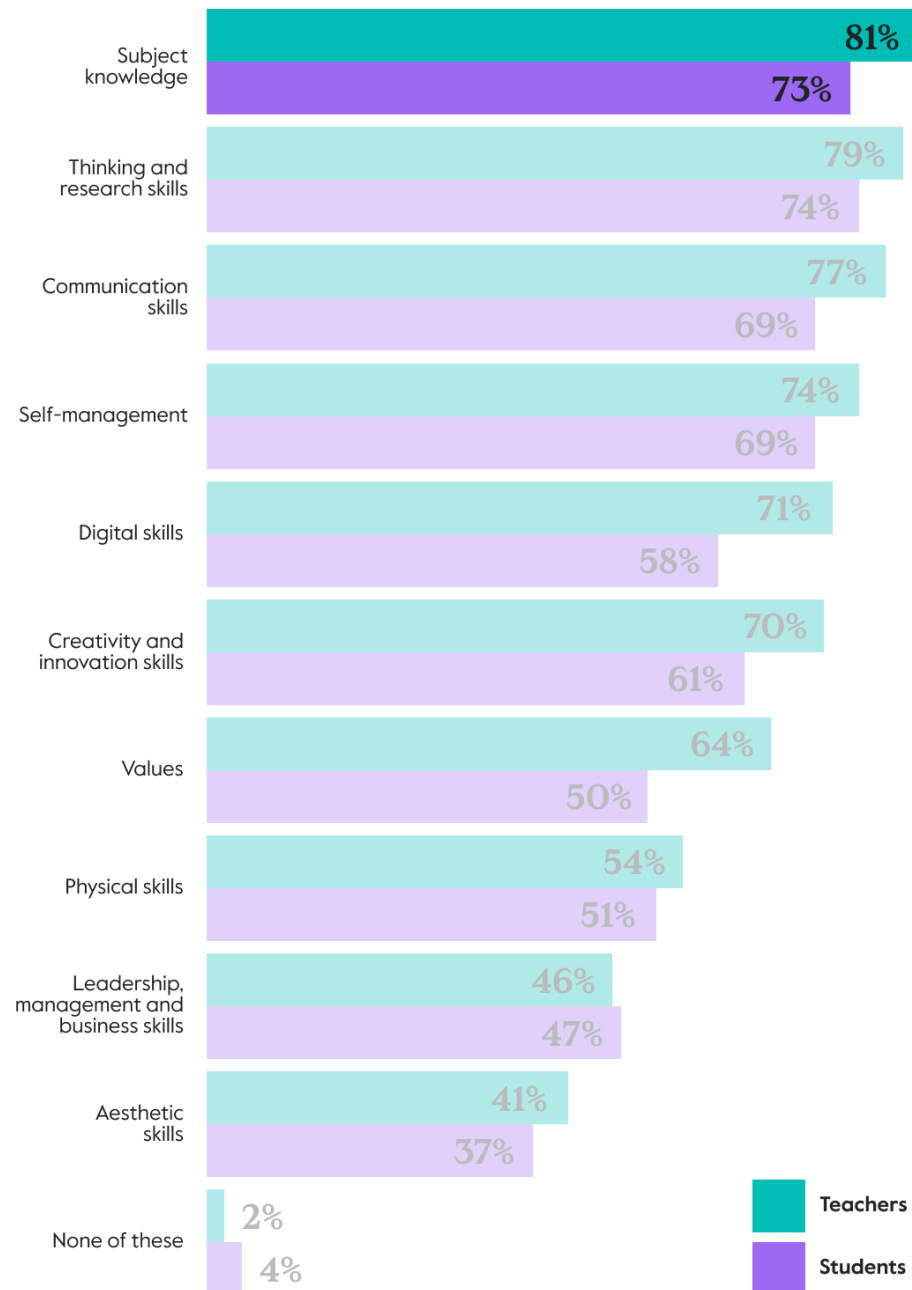


Individual percentages are rounded, so displayed totals may differ from the exact sum.

Subject knowledge over the long-term is undervalued

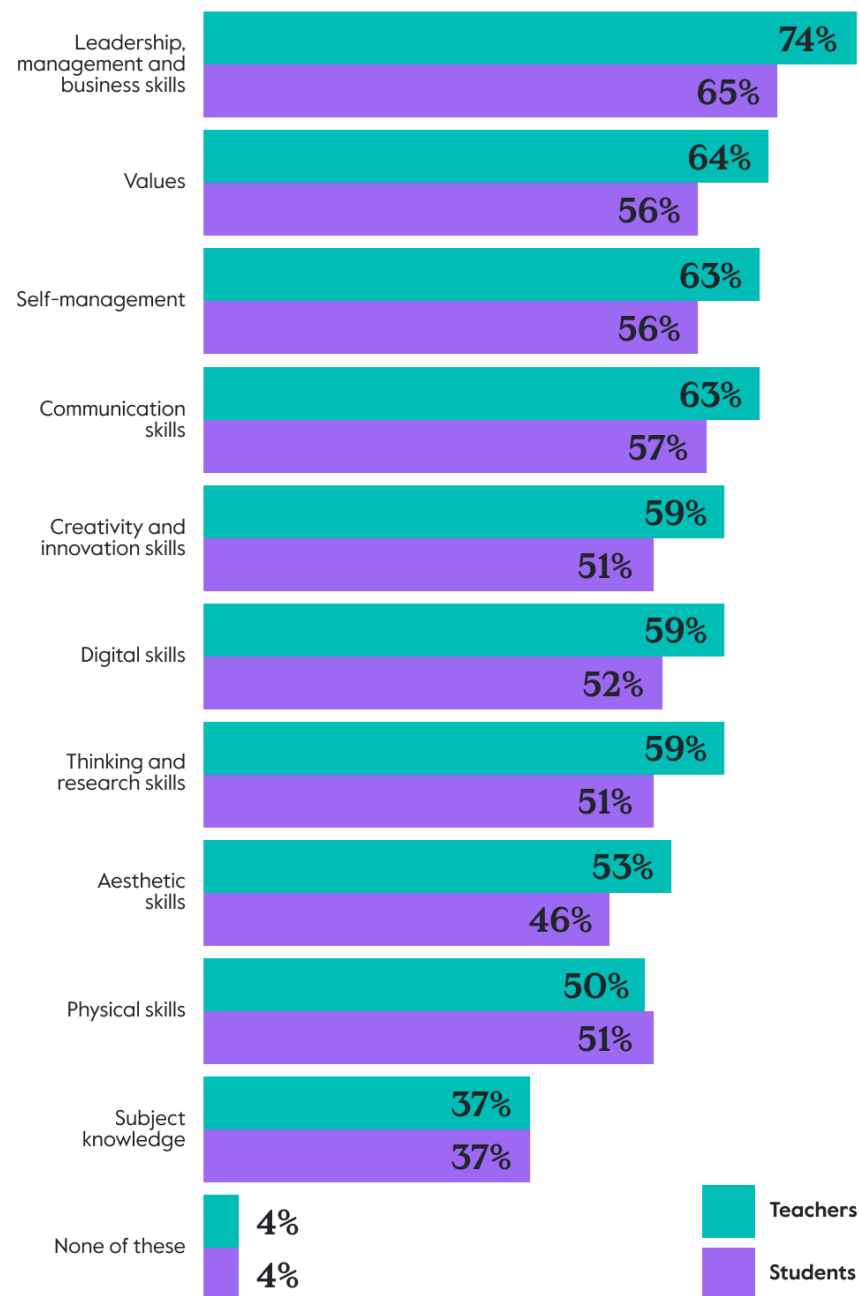


Question: Which of the following, if any, do you view as important to learn to be ready for your next step in education? Please select all that apply

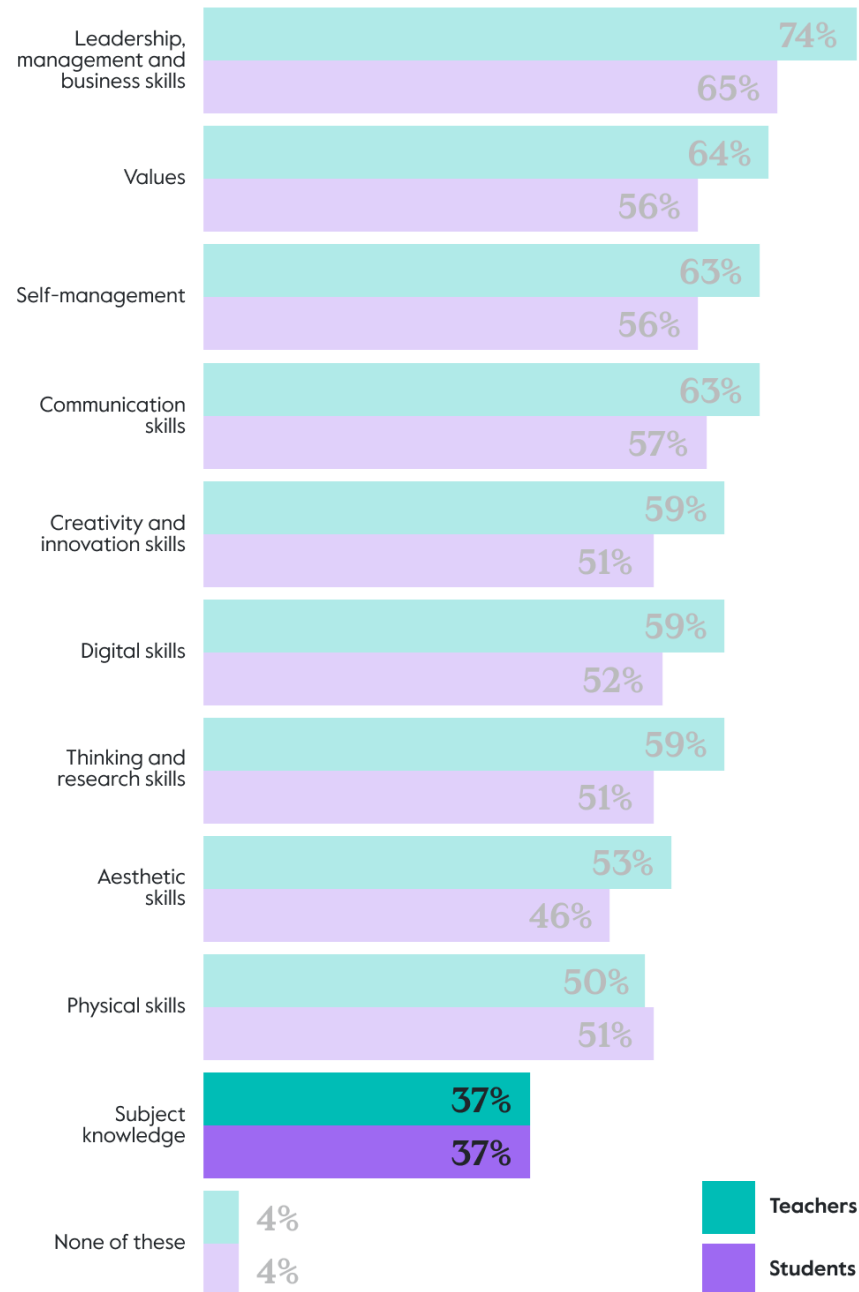


Students and teachers agree that subject knowledge is critical for students' **next step in education**

Question: Which of the following, if any, do you view as important to learn to be ready for your next step in education? Please select all that apply

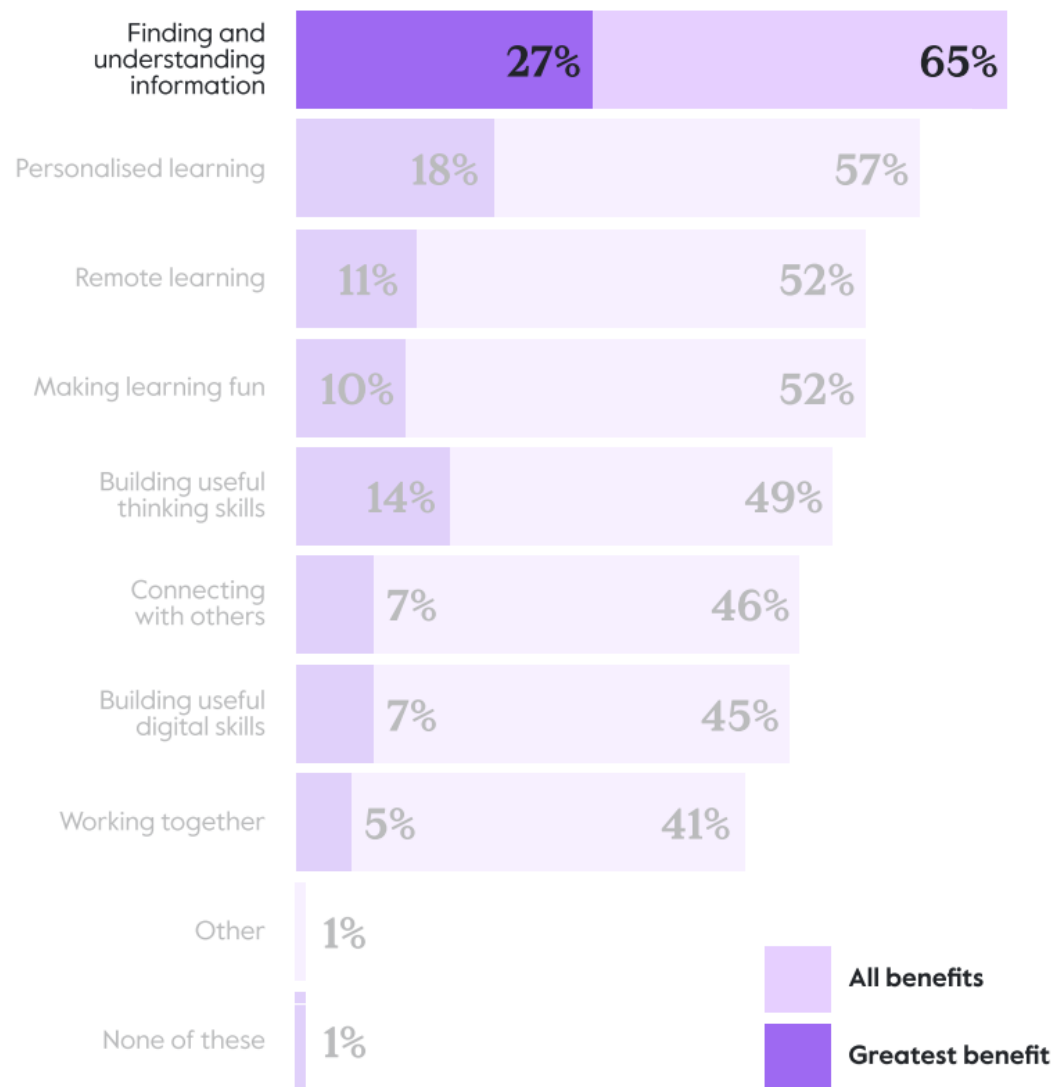


Question: Which of the following, if any, do you view as important to learn to be ready for your future after finishing education? Please select all that apply



But are less likely to see it as important for students' **future after finishing education**

Question: Which of the following, if any, do you view as important to learn to be ready for your future after finishing education? Please select all that apply



Students recognise that technology is a very powerful tool to **find and understand information**

Question: Which of the following, if any, do you view as benefits of technology in preparing you for the future?

Learners were first asked to select all that apply and as a follow-up which of the options they selected is the greatest benefit.

“As AI gets more popular and more widely available the need to memorise subject knowledge becomes less important as we can find and implement subject knowledge easily with the help of AI.”

Student, India

Teachers say students' fear of judgement
hinders development of interpersonal skills

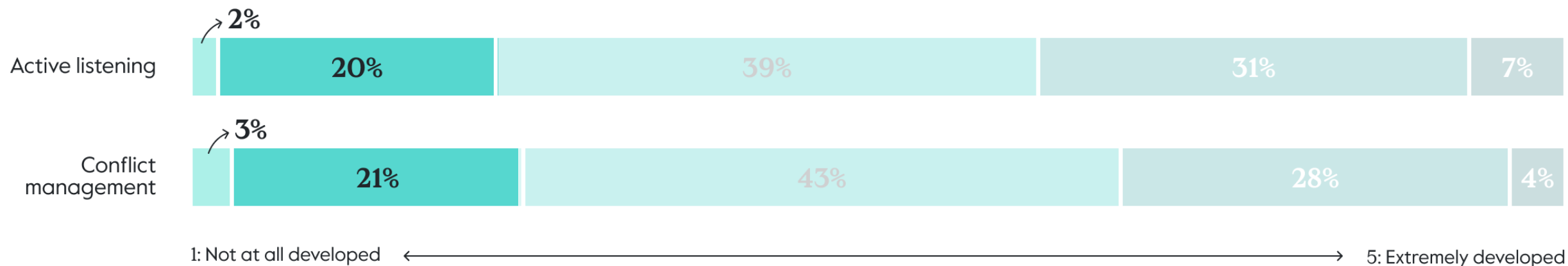
Teachers see their students' collaboration skills as well developed



Question: To what extent are the following elements of social and interpersonal skills developed among your students? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Not at all developed' and 5 is 'Extremely developed'.

This slide shows how well-developed teachers consider their students' collaboration skills to be.

But around a quarter of teachers report their students' active listening and conflict management skills are not well developed



Question: To what extent are the following elements of social and interpersonal skills developed among your students? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'Not at all developed' and 5 is 'Extremely developed'.

This slide shows how well developed teachers consider their students' active listening and conflict management skills to be.

What students value most about developing social and interpersonal skills is...

**Understanding
the perspectives
of others**

(25%)

**Feeling supported
and included**

(16%)

**Feeling
confident**

(12%)

Question: Which of the following do you think is the greatest benefit to encouraging you to develop your social and interpersonal skills? Please select one option.
The slide shows the top 3 options most selected as greatest benefit.

“Communicating with teammates and problem solving a lot of times in school just feels like **making people happy** rather than being able to communicate your ideas because there are **social stakes** in school. ”

Student, United States

Teachers believe **emotional and digital barriers** get in the way

Student fear of judgement

(25%)

Student social anxiety

(17%)

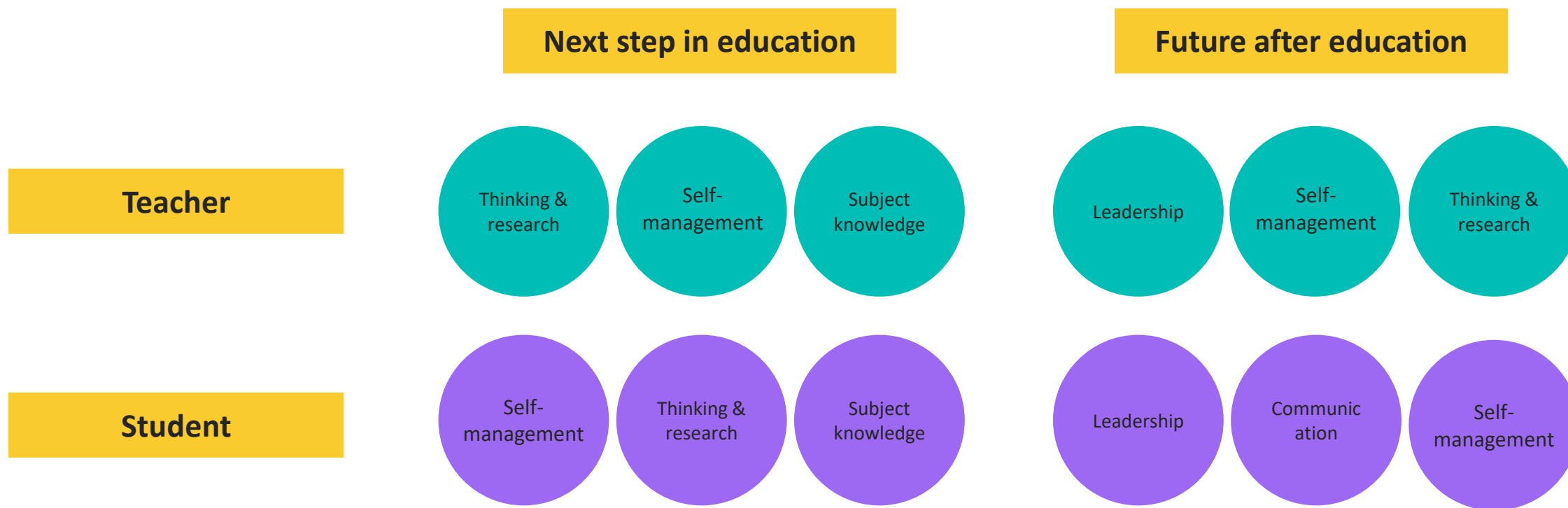
Students' use of digital forms of communication

(14%)

Question: And which of the following do you think is the biggest challenge to helping students to develop social and interpersonal skills when at school? N.B. Teachers were first invited to select all that apply, and as a follow-up question, they were asked to elect the biggest challenge. The slide shows the top 3 options most selected as greatest challenge.

Students and teachers agree self-management is vital
for the future, but find it difficult to teach and learn

Students and teachers agree self-management is vital for the future...



Question: Which of the following do you think is the most important [for students] to learn to be ready for...next step in education/future after education? Please select one option.

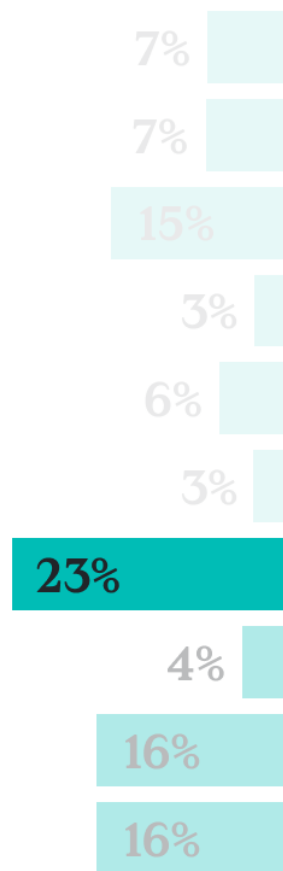
Students and teachers agree self-management is vital for the future...



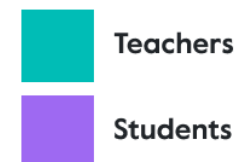
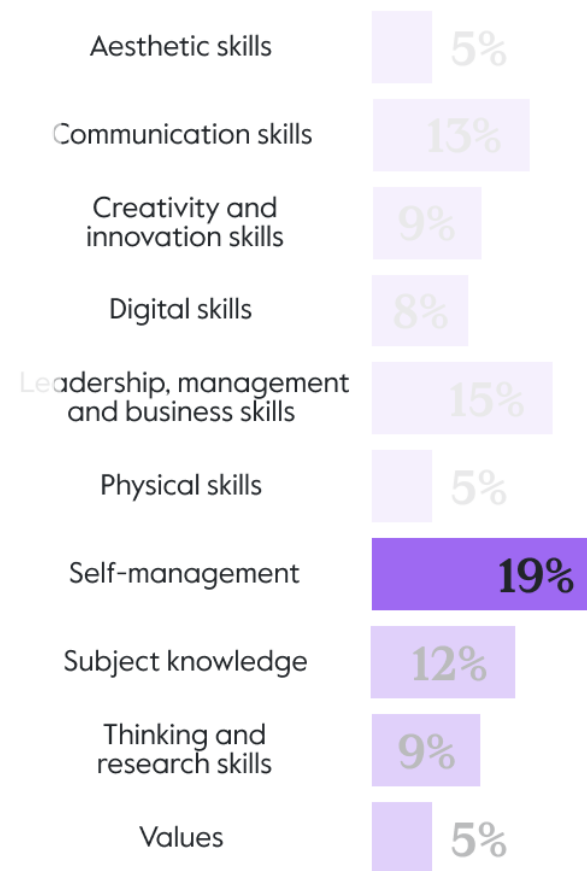
Question: Which of the following do you think is the most important [for students] to learn to be ready for...next step in education/future after education? Please select one option.

..but find it difficult to teach and to learn

Difficult to **teach**



Difficult to **learn**



Question for teachers: What do you think are the most difficult to teach students? Please select up to 3 responses, with 1 being the greatest challenge.

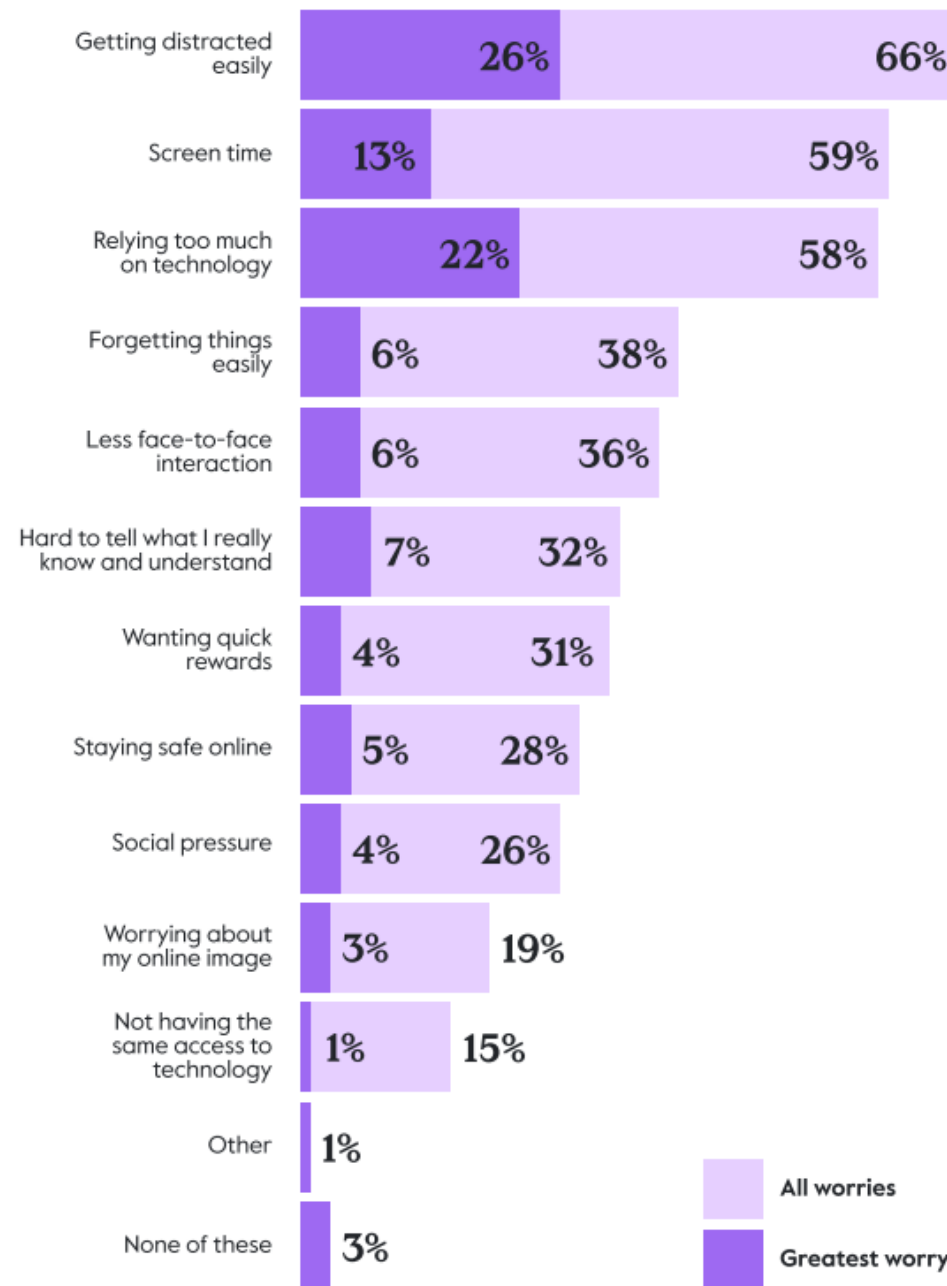
Question for students: What do you think are the most difficult to learn? Please select up to 3 responses, with 1 being the greatest challenge.

Self-management skills can help students manage their thoughts and behaviours.

Students are concerned about getting distracted easily and relying too much on technology.

Question for students: Thinking about your use of technology, what worries do you have, if any, about how this might affect your future?

Learners were first asked to select all that apply and as a follow-up which of the options they selected is their greatest worry.

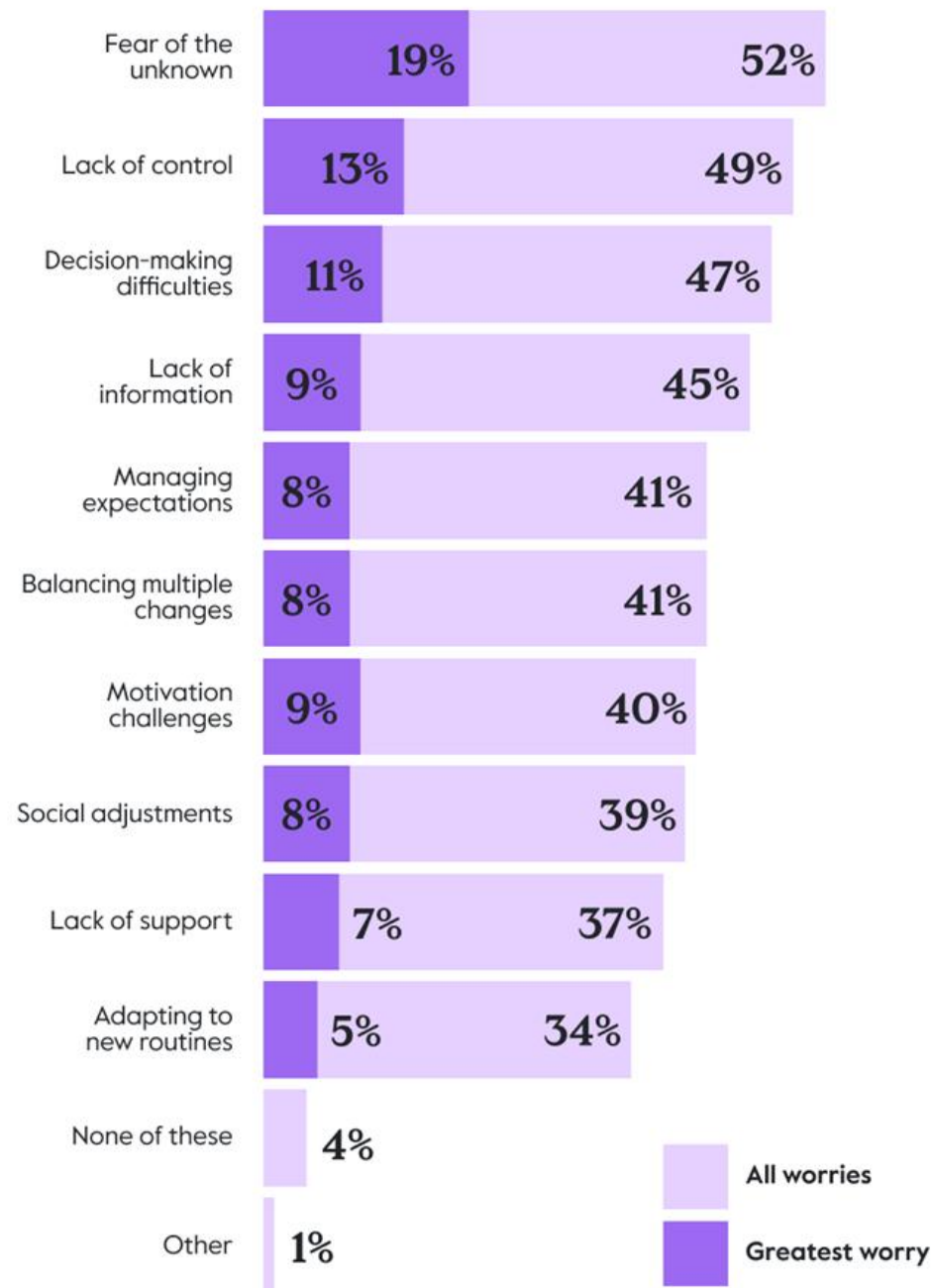


Self-management skills can help students **manage uncertainty** and a **perceived lack of agency**.

Students' most common worries about change include **fear of the unknown** and **lack of control**.

Question for students: Do any of the following worry you about change?

Learners were first asked to select all that apply and as a follow-up which of the options they selected is their greatest worry.



Panel discussion

Introducing our Cambridge experts



Paul Ellis
Head of Thought Leadership



Suzi Haigh
Education Manager



Irenka Suto
Head of Secondary Curriculum

Next steps

Read more in the full report

Navigating the future:

Preparing learners to thrive in a changing world



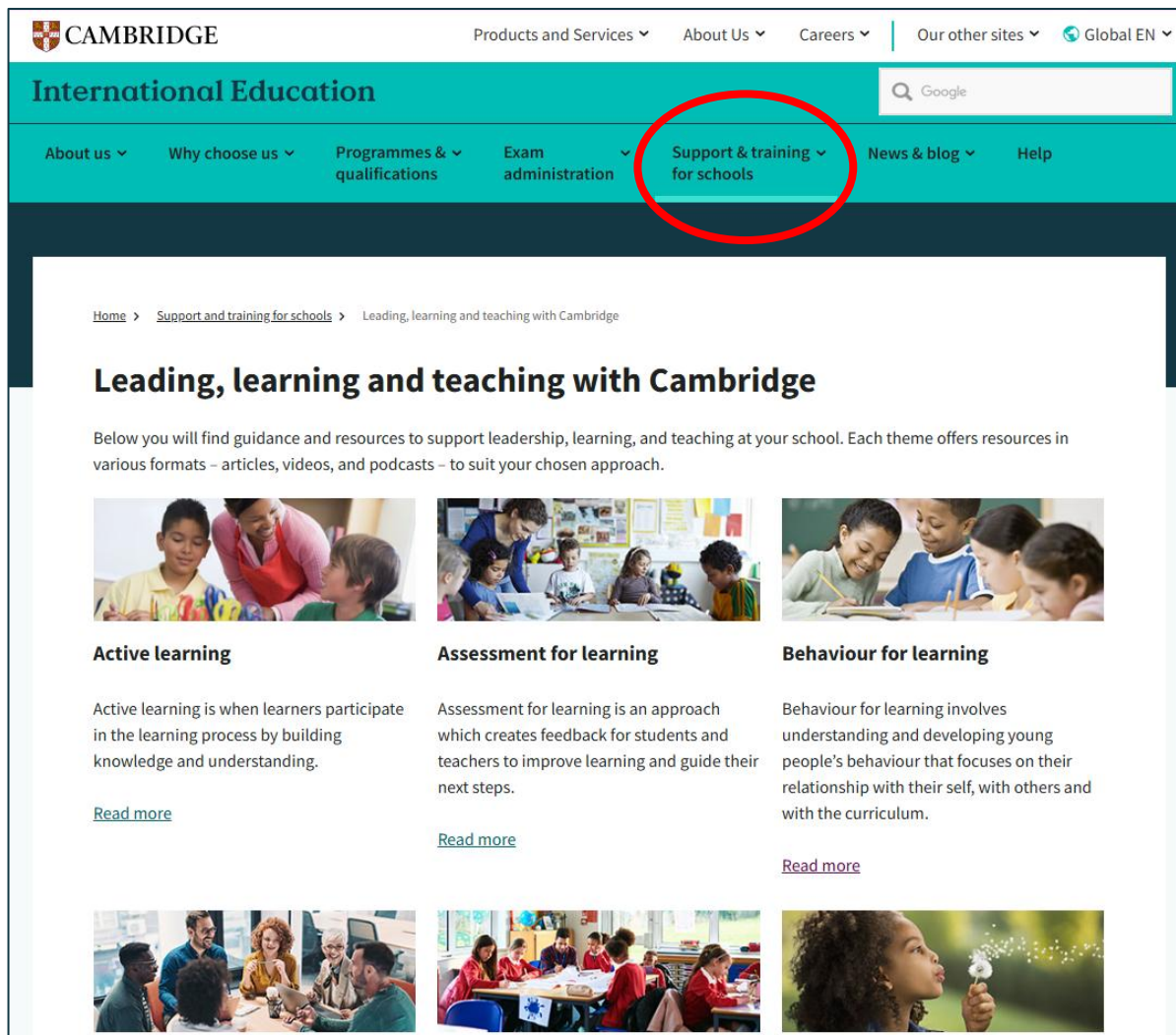
A major new report from the International Education group at Cambridge University Press & Assessment ([Cambridge](#)) captures the voices of nearly 7,000 teachers and students across 150 countries, offering a unique view of how students experience education today and what they think is important for a future being shaped rapidly by technological advance, climate pressures, and shifting global dynamics.

Throughout this report, we share findings, analysis and recommendations to help you take action as well as listing available resources. You can navigate from section to section, or you can use the links below to navigate straight to the chapters you are most interested in.



cambridge.org/future-ready-learners

Looking for support to act on these findings?




The screenshot shows the Cambridge International Education website. The top navigation bar includes links for Products and Services, About Us, Careers, Our other sites, and Global EN. Below this is a teal header with the Cambridge logo and a search bar. A secondary navigation bar lists various categories, with 'Support & training for schools' highlighted by a red circle. The main content area is titled 'Leading, learning and teaching with Cambridge' and provides an overview of resources for leadership, learning, and teaching. It features three columns of content, each with a title, a brief description, and a 'Read more' link. The first column is 'Active learning', the second is 'Assessment for learning', and the third is 'Behaviour for learning'. Each column includes a representative image of students and teachers.

Home > [Support and training for schools](#) > Leading, learning and teaching with Cambridge

Leading, learning and teaching with Cambridge


Below you will find guidance and resources to support leadership, learning, and teaching at your school. Each theme offers resources in various formats – articles, videos, and podcasts – to suit your chosen approach.



Active learning

Active learning is when learners participate in the learning process by building knowledge and understanding.


[Read more](#)



Assessment for learning

Assessment for learning is an approach which creates feedback for students and teachers to improve learning and guide their next steps.




[Read more](#)

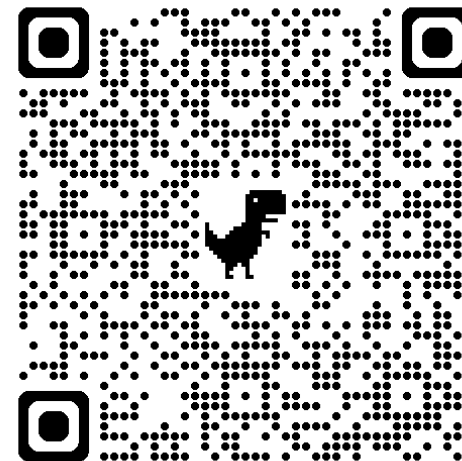


Behaviour for learning

Behaviour for learning involves understanding and developing young people's behaviour that focuses on their relationship with their self, with others and with the curriculum.

[Read more](#)





Thank you!