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CAREERS & EMPLOYABILITY

What students want and
how employers can respond.



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WHAT WE DID: A PRE-APPLICANT SURVEY

- Online survey with students looking to start university in Sept 2026 and registered on UCAS Hub
- UK and International students aged 16-19
- Fieldwork 24 April -15 May 2025
- 1,692 responses



EMPLOYABILITY IS A CORE DECISION DRIVER

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Importance of future employability when deciding on:

A university

87%



A course to study

95%



Not at all important Not very important Neither / nor Quite important Very important

Q: Now thinking about universities... How important is future employability when deciding on the following? Base 1,687

BUT ROUTES INTO REAL-WORLD CAREERS ARE UNEVENLY UNDERSTOOD

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38%

I know what field, but I wouldn't say I have a plan

36%

I know what I want to be, and I have a clear plan on how to get there

21%

I know what subjects I'm interested in and I'm going to see where it takes me

4%

I'm still not sure

Q: How would you describe your future career plans? Base 1,687

FAMILIAR EMPLOYERS/PROFESSIONS DOMINATE EARLY CAREER IMAGINATION

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Q: If you could work for any company, which would it be? And why? (Open comment) Base 1174 who commented

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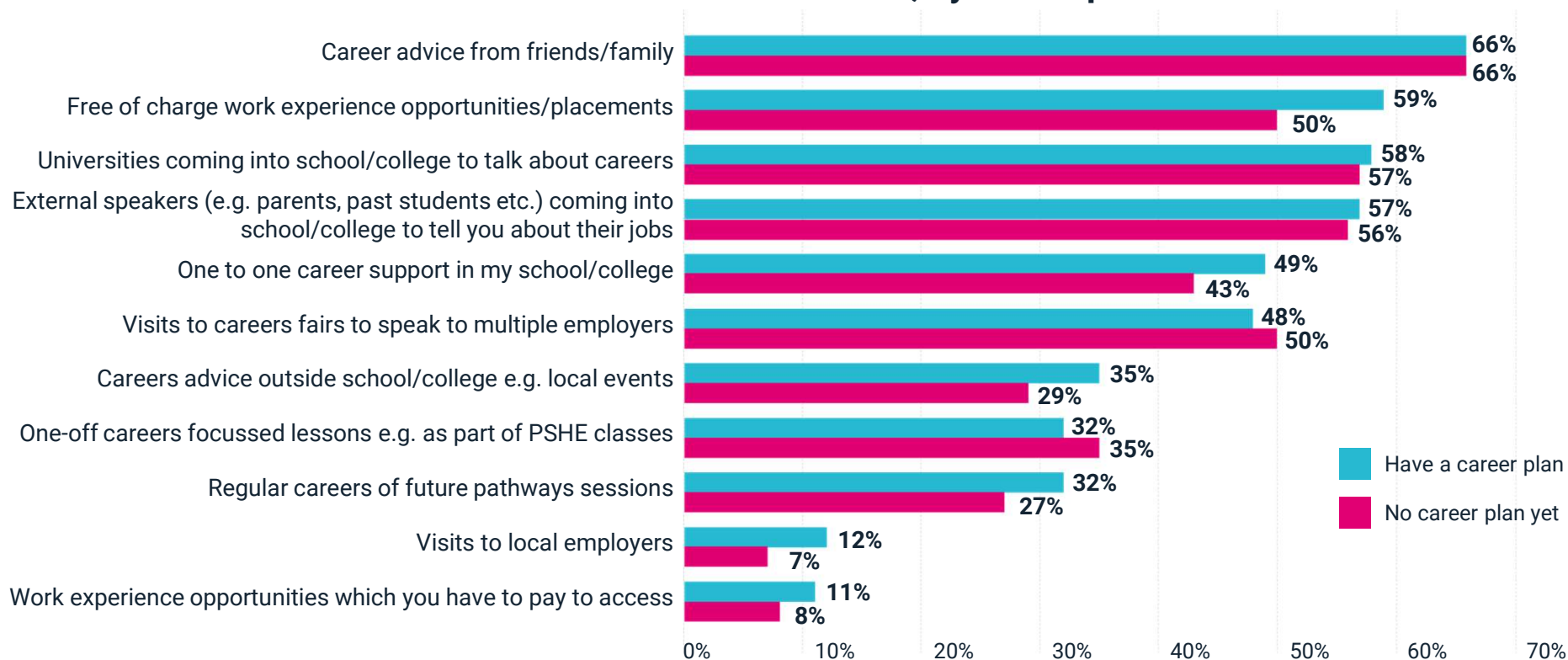
EMPLOYABILITY AND CAREER DISCOVERY



ACCESS TO CAREERS ADVICE IS HIGH – IMPACT VARIES

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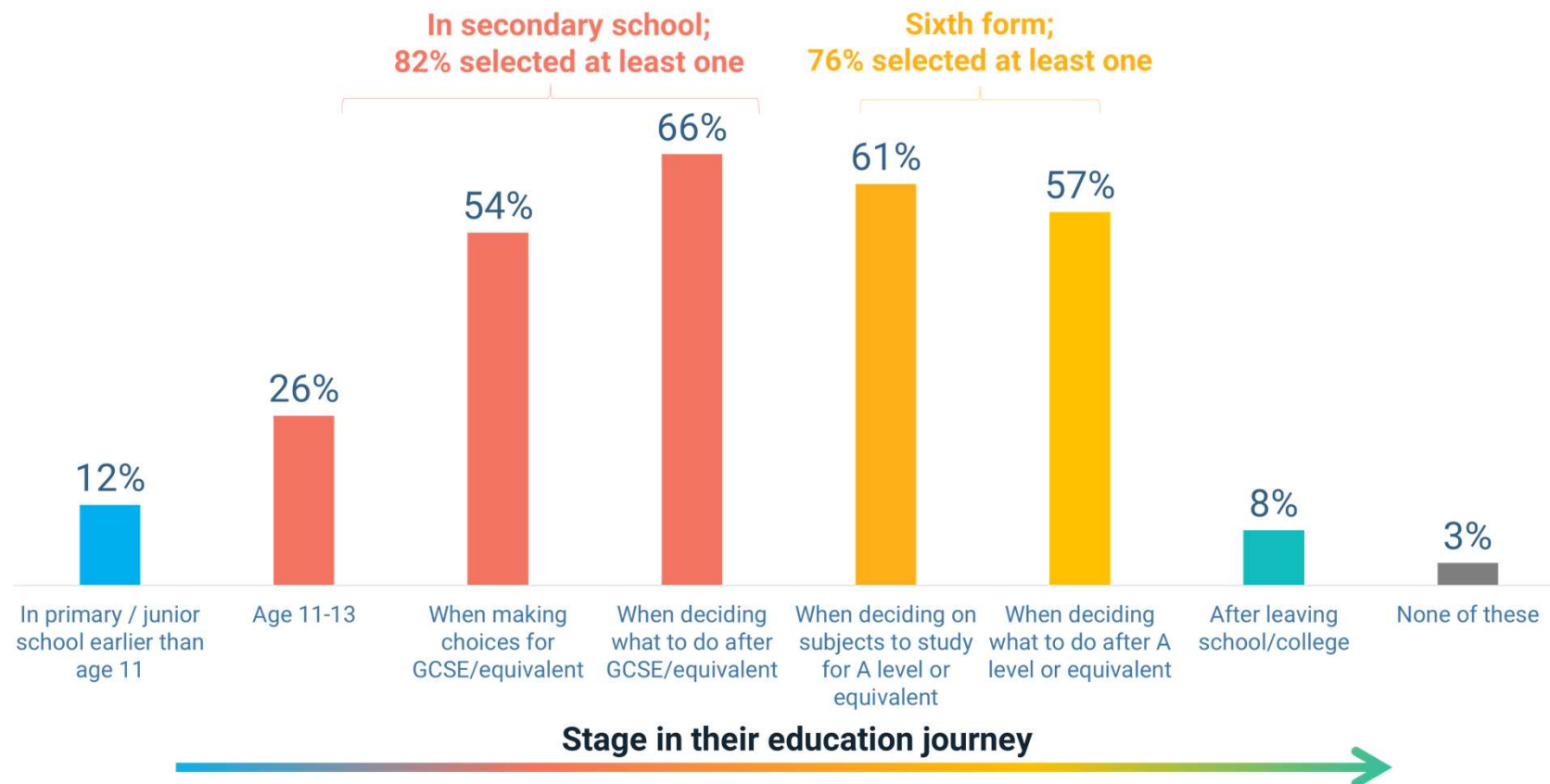
Sources of career advice received, by career plan



Q: Which if any, of the following have you had access to? Select all that apply. Have a career plan 608, No career plan 1076

WHEN IS CAREERS ADVICE RECEIVED

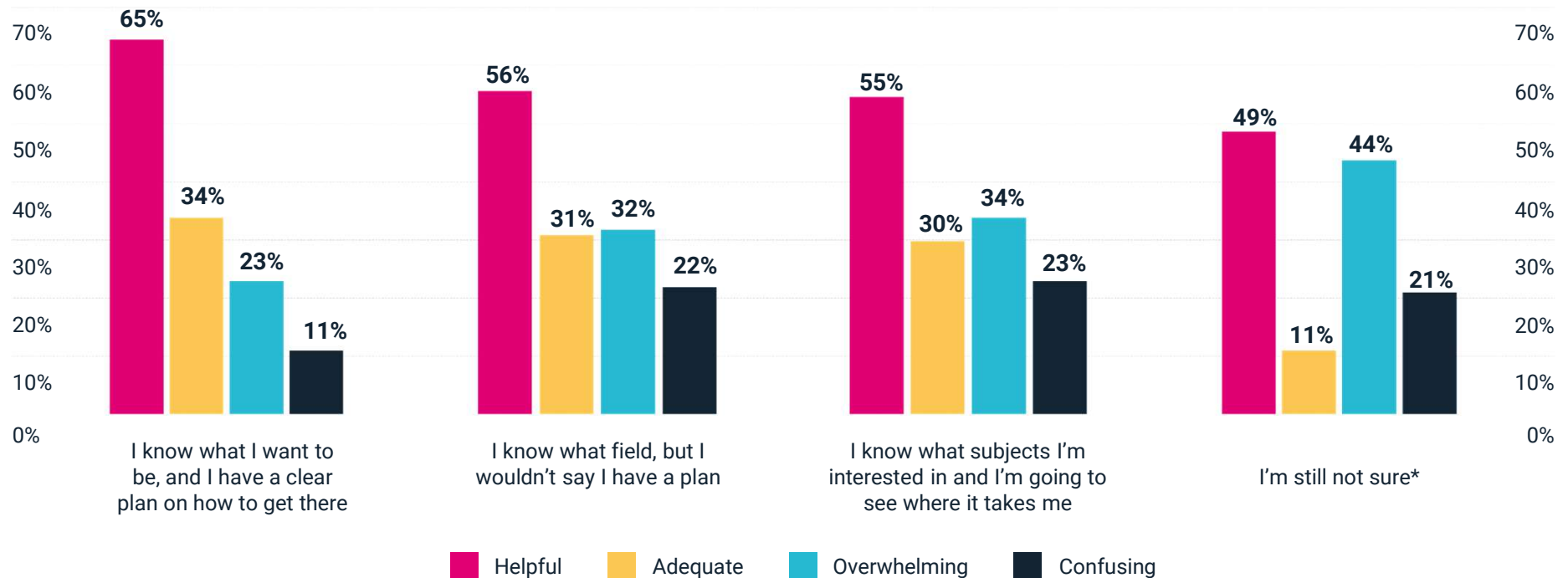
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Q: Which if any, of the following stages do you recall receiving information about careers? This could include formal careers advice tailored to you, visits to local employers or less formal sessions, for example adults (parents, past pupils etc.) coming into school talk about their jobs. Please select all that apply. Base 1,693

QUALITY OF CAREER ADVICE AND IMPACT ON CAREER PLANS UCAS

Keywords describing the career advice and support received so far, broken down by career-planning stage:



Q: Thinking about the career advice and support you have received so far, which of the following words would you use to describe your experience? *low base

WHERE EMPLOYERS CAN MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE UCAS

PRACTICAL HELP WITH CAREER DISCOVERY

58% wanted to be introduced to the careers they haven't yet considered

53% wanted talks from employers about potential roles

49% wanted opportunity to speak to employers one to one

47% wanted real stories and 'day in the life' examples

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK EXPERIENCE

64% wanted support to find work experience opportunities

50% are interested in virtual work experience opportunities

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- Young people want access to practical, relatable information – something that brings different careers to life and helps them understand what roles actually involve.
- Opportunities to gain work experience are very important – both real and virtual.

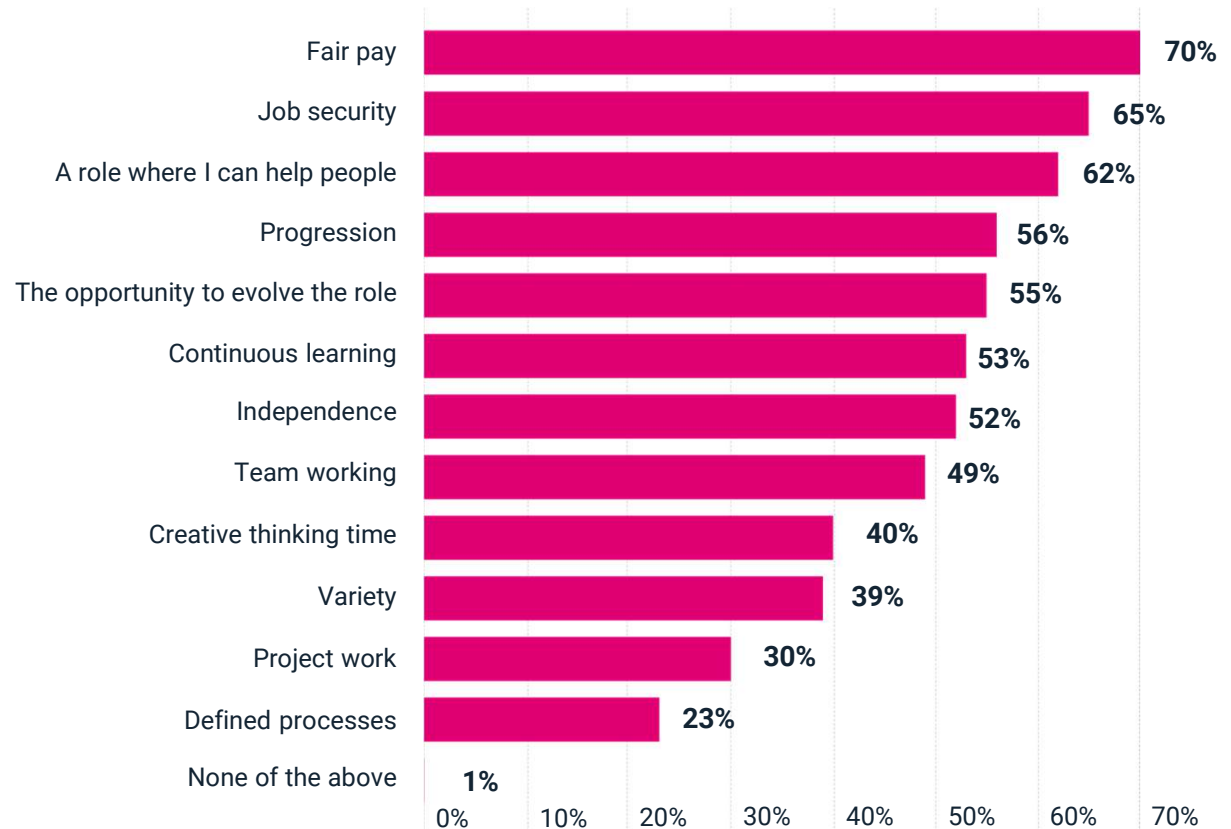
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**STUDENTS IMAGINE
WORKING LIFE – NOT
JUST JOB TITLES**



CAREER CONFIDENCE IS SHAPED BEFORE APPLICATION

Fair pay and job security were the most important aspects of a future role. Being able to help people was also key.

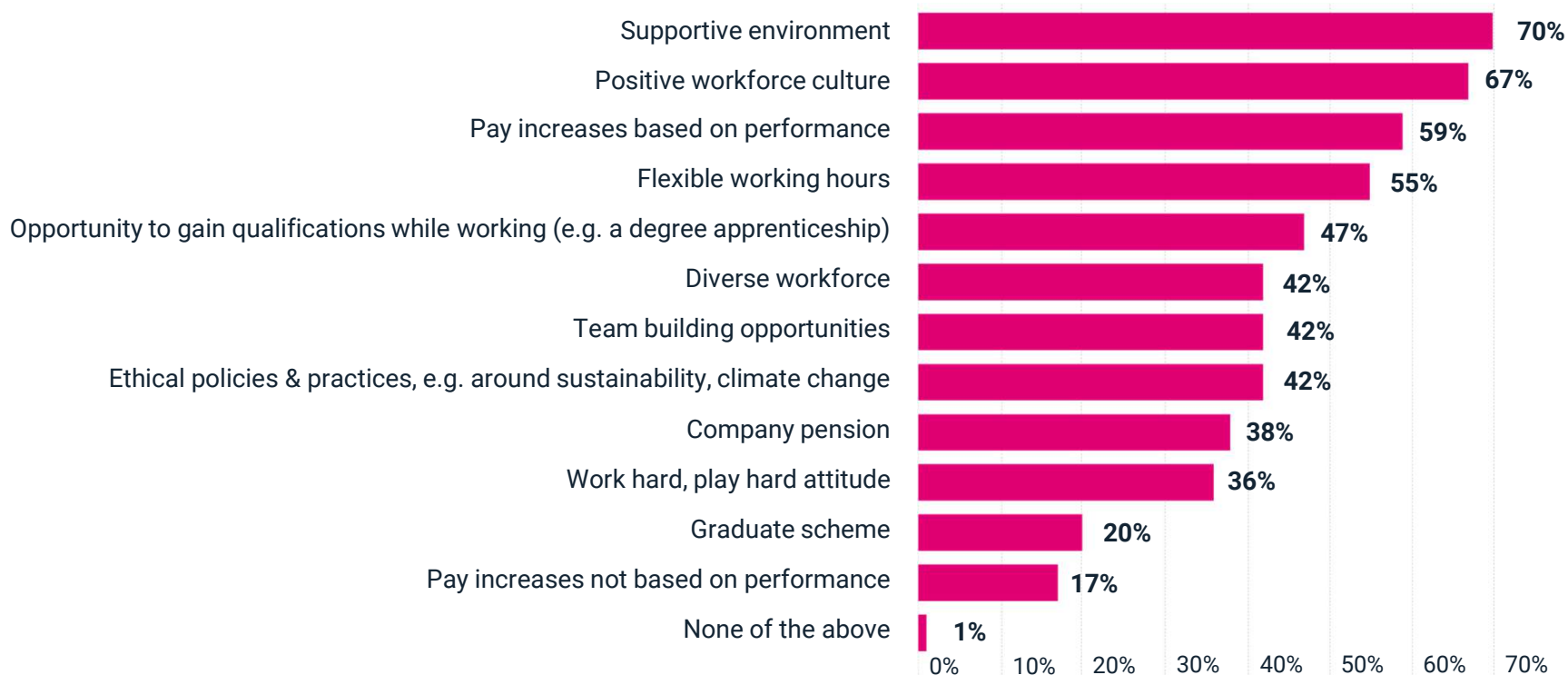


Q: Thinking about a future role, which, if any, of the following are important to you? Please select all that apply. Base 1,693

SECURITY, CULTURE AND PROGRESSION MATTER EARLY

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Important attributes of a future company to work for

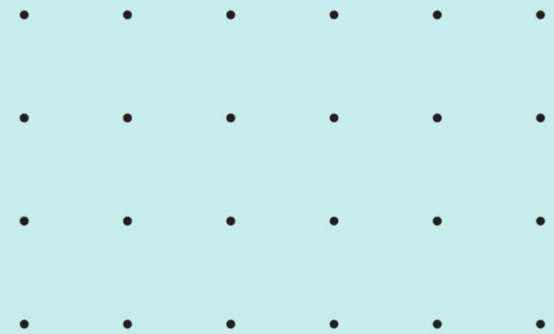


Q: Thinking about the type of company you'd like to work for in the future, which, if any, of the following are important? Please select all that apply. Base 1,668

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

Show up before career plans are fully formed and help their career discovery and decision-making:

- Educate students about careers they didn't know you offered.
- Offer practical help with career discovery and opportunities for work experience.
- Demonstrate your culture early and consistently.
- Forge partnerships with schools and higher education providers.



Companies that engage early, shape aspirations and build trust, become employers of choice, translating directly into a stronger, higher-quality future talent pipeline.

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**THANK
YOU**

