



LinkedIn Opportunity Index 2020:

How people around the world feel about opportunity

Foreword

All of us aspire to get access to opportunities to do better in our lives. For some, it may be getting a job or improving their economic circumstances, while for others, work-life balance or health is more important. With the pace of technological change intensifying, there are also many who want to continue to learn new skills to stay relevant, or take on new entrepreneurial ventures. While our definitions of success may be different, there is a good chance that we can help one another to get there.

This is why we embarked on a study – LinkedIn Opportunity Index – to understand what people want, and what barriers are standing in their way. In its second year running now, we decided to expand the scope of the 2020 edition to include 22 markets worldwide, from 9 in the previous year. As a result, we engaged with over 30,000 respondents who shared with us their aspirations and concerns.

Uncovering “opportunity gaps” is only a first step. Ultimately, our hope is that over time, by continuing to engage with communities around the world, we can drive dialogues and action to help create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce.

When I had the chance to review the Index this time, there were two findings that I particularly identified with: the ability to pursue one’s passion was one of the most cited opportunities that people want, and that “age” ranked high on the list of barriers. I’d love to hear your thoughts about the report findings.

Roger Pua
Senior Director
LinkedIn

Key findings at a glance

- **Confidence is highest in developing economies and among younger generations.**

Developing economies like India, Indonesia, China, United Arab Emirates and the Philippines are more optimistic than developed economies like Japan, France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. A similar dichotomy is seen demographically, with Gen Z and Millennials expressing greater positivity about the future than Gen X and Boomers.

- **Age is a multi-faceted challenge for different generations, but they are united in embracing change.**

Regardless of their optimism levels, all generations cite age-related opportunity gaps among their top challenges. For 43% of Boomers, age is their biggest opportunity gap while 25% of Gen Z struggle with a lack of work experience, which is age-related as well. However, contrary to popular belief, people are not resistant to change, regardless of age. While working hard (81%) tops the list of what people perceive it takes to get ahead in life, a willingness to embrace change (80%) comes in a close second. People recognise that they have to work hard, adopt a growth mindset and embrace lifelong learning as the economic landscape and job market evolves.

- **Stronger, more diverse professional networks boost overall confidence, but few are actively networking.**

Those with stronger and more diverse professional networks are more likely to be optimistic about their opportunities than those without. Globally, 76% respondents believe that knowing the right people and having the right connections is key to getting ahead in life, yet only 22% are actively looking for networking and mentorship opportunities — likely because a majority of respondents (51%) believe that the lack of a network is a difficult challenge to overcome.

Perceptions of the world today



As the LinkedIn Opportunity Index is about how opportunity is perceived, context matters. The world as perceived by our respondents will inevitably influence how they feel about the future, from next steps in their career to next steps for their family. To understand this, we wanted to find out people's most pressing concerns, their definition of a "good" quality of life, and what they believe it takes to achieve success.

Climate change is the most pressing global concern

The environment sustains everything in the world around us and thus is directly linked to future opportunities, from individual well-being to economic growth. This is likely the reason why environmental issues (18%) is the leading global concern. This is true for most regions, particularly in Europe (21%), and for all generations, especially Gen Z (24%). The exceptions are in Mexico and Brazil, where safety and security takes the top spot (32% vs global average of 14%), and in the United Arab Emirates, where respondents worry about health the most (13%).

Good health is key to a good quality of life

Globally, our respondents share similar definitions of a good quality of life. While different regions and generations place more emphasis on different aspects, it all points to having good health, financial independence, and time to enjoy a balanced life shared between work and family.

Good health 49%

Highest in Europe (54%) and among Boomers (65%)

Financial independence 29%

Highest in Brazil and Mexico (37%) and among Boomers (37%)

A loving relationship 26%

Highest in North America (37%) and among Gen Z (28%)

Work-life balance 19%

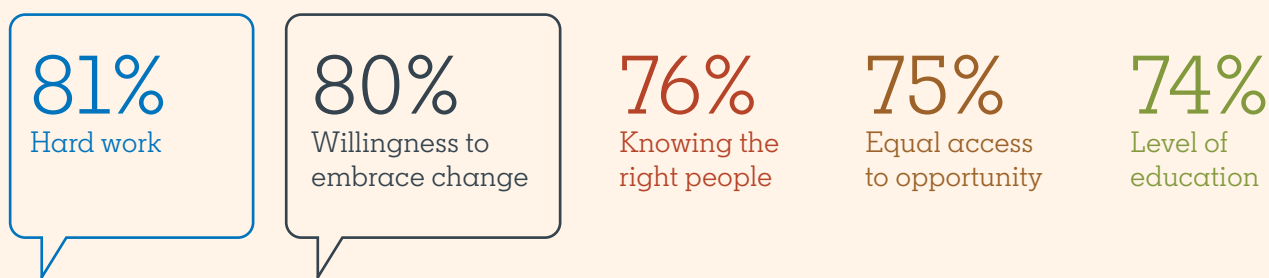
Highest in Asia Pacific (20%) and among Gen X (20%)

A stable job 19%

Highest in Brazil and Mexico (23%) and among Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X (each 20%)



Getting ahead in life takes hard work and an open mind



There appears to be a consensus across geographies and generations that success comes mainly from hard work (81%) and the willingness to embrace change (80%).

The latter comes as no surprise as technology has irrevocably altered the workplace in the past decade. LinkedIn data reveals that the most in-demand hard skill by companies globally this year is blockchain technology¹ and in 2019, it was cloud computing². There is a prevalence of fast-changing technology at work and this could be seen as setting a new pace of change for employees.

Willingness to embrace change to get ahead in life is strongly cited by all generations with Boomers (83%) and Gen X (81%) leading the way, followed by Millennials (78%) and Gen Z (76%). This suggests a hyper-awareness of the importance of keeping up with the times even amongst Boomers and Gen X, who have been traditionally known to be more resistant to change.

Knowing the right people makes a difference

Knowing the right people, or having the right connections, is also important to respondents, especially those in the United Arab Emirates, Brazil and Mexico, as well as Asia Pacific.

Within these regions, India places the greatest emphasis on professional networks at a global high of 88%. Networks are also most important to Gen X (78%) — potentially due to a majority of Gen X being mid-career. They understand that while qualifications and experience matter, that extra edge in a job search can come from knowing the right person or having the right connections.

United Arab Emirates:

83%



Brazil and Mexico:

82%



Asia Pacific:

79%

Knowing the right people
is important to getting
ahead in life

Global Average:

76%

North America:

75%

Europe:

71%

¹ The Most In-Demand Hard and Soft Skills of 2020, LinkedIn

² The Skills Companies Need Most in 2019, LinkedIn

How the world fared in the 2020 LinkedIn Opportunity Index



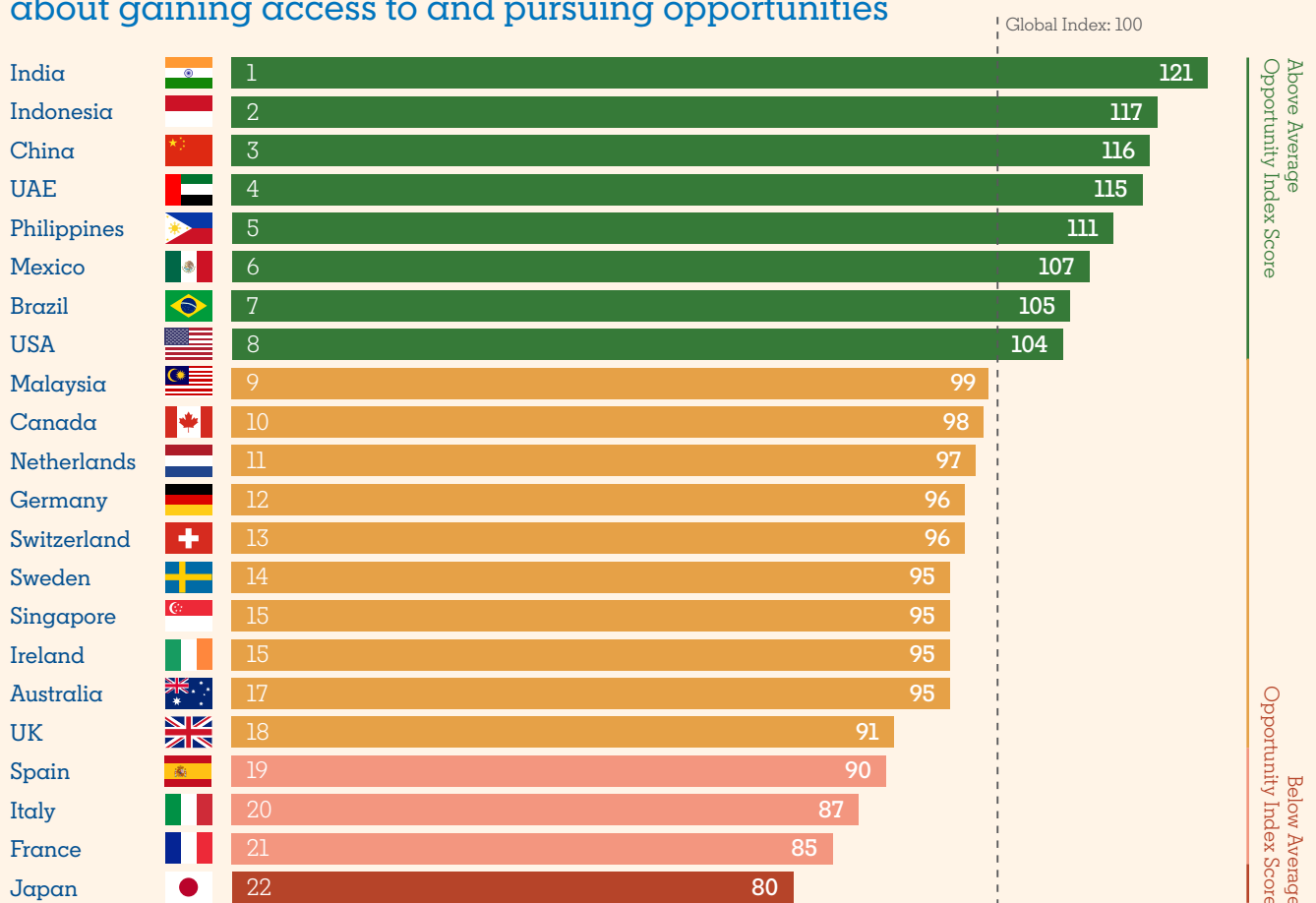
LinkedIn Opportunity Index is a composite measure that seeks to understand how people perceive opportunity and, more importantly, the gaps or barriers they believe are keeping them from reaching these opportunities. The Index uses 100 as a baseline score for confidence. A higher score represents greater confidence from respondents living in a specific market.

Globally, respondents living in developing economies within Asia Pacific, Mexico and Brazil, as well as the United Arab Emirates seem to be most confident about accessing the opportunities they want. Broadly speaking, this is consistent with our 2018 Asia Pacific Index findings where developing markets like Indonesia and India were more optimistic than more mature economies like Japan and Australia.

Among all the developed economies surveyed, the United States and Canada are the most confident in their search for opportunities. They are trailed by the nine European markets in this research, interspersed by Singapore and Australia, before Japan closes the Index with the lowest confidence level.

This juxtaposition between developing and more developed economies suggests that people in developed economies may believe that their market has reached saturation point or has plateaued in terms of actual economic growth. Of course, this must be understood in the socio-political context of each market, as macroeconomic factors would have a certain level of influence on respondents' confidence levels.

Developing markets are generally more confident about gaining access to and pursuing opportunities



Asia Pacific is a diverse region with diverse results

Asia Pacific leads and lags in the global ranking with India and Indonesia leading the pack and Australia and Japan rounding off the bottom. For top-ranked India, respondents are less optimistic about the availability of in-market opportunities but are extremely confident of accessing the opportunities available to them and achieving success. This places India just ahead of Indonesia where respondents are lukewarm about the economic outlook but similarly confident of their ability to seek out, and succeed with, the right opportunities.

Overall Opportunity Index Rankings (out of 22 markets)

1	India
2	Indonesia
3	China
5	Philippines
9	Malaysia
15	Singapore
17	Australia
22	Japan

Filipinos' positive outlook on life and the economy is an affirmation of how resilient we are as a people. It is in our culture to consciously choose optimism to surpass adversities. One concrete example is how we view effects of disasters - we see it as a "period of resilience" and less of a social accountability. The same mindset is manifested in our views on looking for a job, on ensuring our financial stability, and even on our quality of education.

- **Ireneo Jr. Demecais**,
President and Co-Founder,
YGOAL and Country Director,
Asean Youth Community (AYC)

Asia Pacific's perceptions around opportunity, life and economy

Rankings of all individual components of Opportunity Index (out of 22 markets)

	Life & Economy			Opportunity			
	Outlook on economy over next 12 months	Outlook on personal financial situation over next 12 months	Quality of life (happiness)	Quality of life (compared to parents)	Availability of in-market opportunities	Assessment on accessibility of opportunity next 12 months	Confidence in achieving success
India	2	3	1	1	6	1	1
Indonesia	6	1	2	3	2	2	2
China	1	6	4	2	1	4	5
Philippines	4	4	4	6	11	5	3
Malaysia	8	8	19	9	15	9	11
Singapore	12	13	18	8	17	14	18
Australia	15	16	10	19	13	12	13
Japan	21	22	22	22	19	22	22

Europe is happy but sentiments are tempered by weak economic outlook

All nine European markets surveyed are less confident about accessing and pursuing opportunities. In contrast to Asia Pacific, where the aggregate Index score difference between India in first place (121) and Japan in last place (80) is significant, Europe comes across as more uniform in its outlook. There is only a marginal difference between Europe's most confident market (Netherlands with an Index score of 97) and its least confident (France with an Index score of 85). Across Europe, economic outlook is perceptibly weak across all markets. However, there are pockets of optimism, particularly in the Netherlands, Ireland and Spain in terms of overall happiness levels, and in Germany and Switzerland in terms of perceived availability of opportunities.

Overall Opportunity Index Rankings (out of 22 markets)

11	Netherlands
12	Germany
13	Switzerland
14	Sweden
15	Ireland
18	UK
19	Spain
20	Italy
21	France

Europe's perceptions around opportunity, life and economy

Rankings of all individual components of Opportunity Index (out of 22 markets)

	Life & Economy			Opportunity			
	Outlook on economy over next 12 months	Outlook on personal financial situation over next 12 month	Quality of life (happiness)	Quality of life (compared to parents)	Availability of in-market opportunities	Assessment on accessibility of opportunity next 12 months	Confidence in achieving success
Netherlands	11	19	6	10	10	17	12
Germany	16	15	13	12	9	16	16
Switzerland	13	14	17	17	7	10	17
Sweden	19	10	14	14	11	14	15
Ireland	18	18	9	11	15	13	9
UK	22	20	14	18	14	18	13
Spain	17	12	8	16	21	19	19
Italy	14	17	20	20	22	20	21
France	20	20	21	21	20	21	20

North America leans towards cautious optimism

The United States and Canada appear to display cautious optimism. For both North American countries, the measure of opportunity that they are most and least confident about are the same: both believe that in-market opportunities are available, but feel that their quality of life has dropped in comparison to their parents'. The latter is not unusual in developed economies. We see similar sentiments from respondents in Italy, France and Japan while respondents from developing economies like Indonesia and India tend to feel that their current living standards are appreciably better than previous generations.

Overall Opportunity Index Rankings (out of 22 markets)

8 US
10 Canada

North America's perceptions around opportunity, life and economy

Rankings of all individual components of Opportunity Index (out of 22 markets)

	Life & Economy			Opportunity			
	Outlook on economy over next 12 months	Outlook on personal financial situation over next 12 month	Quality of life (happiness)	Quality of life (compared to parents)	Availability of in-market opportunities	Assessment on accessibility of opportunity next 12 months	Confidence in achieving success
US	10	9	7	13	3	8	6
Canada	9	10	11	15	8	10	10

Mexico and Brazil are confident but not necessarily happy

With aggregate scores above the baseline, respondents in Mexico and Brazil are relatively confident about their prospects and are positive about opportunities. While these developing economies have suffered weak growth in recent years, respondents may believe that recovery is in the cards as they express optimism about the economic outlook. However, happiness levels are comparatively low, which may be related to their top concern of safety and security at home.

Overall
Opportunity
Index Rankings
(out of 22 markets)

6 Mexico
7 Brazil

Mexico and Brazil's perceptions around opportunity, life and economy

Rankings of all individual components of Opportunity Index (out of 22 markets)

	Life & Economy			Opportunity			
	Outlook on economy over next 12 months	Outlook on personal financial situation over next 12 month	Quality of life (happiness)	Quality of life (compared to parents)	Availability of in-market opportunities	Assessment on accessibility of opportunity next 12 months	Confidence in achieving success
Mexico	7	5	12	7	4	6	8
Brazil	5	1	16	5	18	7	7

Macroeconomic confidence runs high in the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) performed well on the Index, coming in only behind India, Indonesia and China. Its high position on the Index stems primarily from strong positive economic outlook (third highest globally) but this macroeconomic optimism does not immediately extend to personal finances. Of the seven measures of opportunity, respondents in the UAE were least confident about their personal finances in the next 12 months, perhaps suggesting that they believe it will take time for an economic uptick to trickle down to the individual.

Overall
Opportunity
Index Rankings
(out of 22 markets)

4 UAE

United Arab Emirates' perceptions around opportunity, life and economy

Rankings of all individual components of Opportunity Index (out of 22 markets)

	Life & Economy			Opportunity			
	Outlook on economy over next 12 months	Outlook on personal financial situation over next 12 month	Quality of life (happiness)	Quality of life (compared to parents)	Availability of in-market opportunities	Assessment on accessibility of opportunity next 12 months	Confidence in achieving success
UAE	3	7	3	4	5	3	4

Which opportunities matter to whom?



Opportunities are a means to an end; they make it possible for people to achieve something. Building on our understanding of what respondents believe a good quality of life to be, what they think they need to get ahead in life, and their overall confidence levels, we invited them to define the opportunities that they are looking for. We categorised opportunities into five broad categories and this is what we found.

Job-related opportunities

87%

E.g., getting a job with good work-life balance, one with job security, or being able to pursue passions or utilise skills

Social opportunities

59%

E.g., spending quality time with friends and family, keeping mind and body active, living a better life than previous generations

Learning opportunities

29%

E.g., learning a new skill or technology, accessing quality education or finding an internship

Networking opportunities

22%

E.g., building a professional network, mentoring others, or being mentored

Entrepreneurship opportunities

18%

E.g., starting a business or finding a business partner or investor

While it is unsurprising that job-related opportunities (87%) took the top spot, it is noteworthy that it leads by a significant margin (social opportunities came in a far second at 59%). Within the category of job-related opportunities, respondents said that they wanted a job with good work-life balance (40%) and that allows them to do what they love (40%). Job security was ranked third (38%). These results tie in with our earlier findings that while respondents believe that hard work is key to getting ahead in life, they also value good health and loving relationships.



The top job-related opportunities are...

By geography	Good work-life balance	Doing what I love	Job security
Asia Pacific	✓		
Europe		✓	
North America		✓	
Brazil and Mexico			✓
United Arab Emirates	✓		
By generation			
Boomers		✓	
Gen X*	✓		✓
Millennials	✓		
Gen Z		✓	

* For Gen X respondents, good work-life balance is tied with job security

Social time is of the essence

Among social opportunities, what respondents want most is to spend quality time with friends and family. This is ranked first across all the surveyed regions but is particularly important in North America (40%) vs. a global average of 36%.

These figures underscore the importance of flexible work arrangements, as it matters to both younger and older workers. Some older workers may need to take care of older or ailing family members while others may desire to spend time with grandchildren, travel or enjoy their remaining years with their spouses, after spending many years working. The desire for part-time work arrangements has also been cited by older workers in other research conducted in Singapore.

- **Helen Ko,**

Senior Lecturer at Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS)

Networking opportunities are not actively sought after

76% But only **22%**
 agree that knowing the right people is key to getting ahead in life
 are actively looking for networking and mentorship opportunities

This may be because people expect networks to form naturally over time, they don't feel confident networking, or they don't have access to the connections they need to get the opportunities they want.

In Europe, there is equal interest in both types of networking opportunities — building their own professional network and helping others gain opportunities. Over in Asia Pacific, respondents expressed greater interest in building their own networks while those in United Arab Emirates, Brazil and Mexico, as well as North America indicated a keenness to help others gain access to opportunity.

Where are the opportunity gaps and how can we close them?



With a clearer picture of the opportunities that are being sought, we now look at the perceived opportunity gaps — what do respondents feel are holding them back from accessing and succeeding at these opportunities? Just as importantly, we explore whether these gaps can be narrowed, and how.

—
Opportunity gaps are categorised into macro gaps (outside one's control, such as job market conditions) and micro gaps (within one's control, like lack of time and confidence levels).

Globally, respondents feel most held back by their own financial status (24%). A lack of financial resources is usually a function of having insufficient funds and/or having too many family commitments to pay for and mostly manifests itself as an opportunity gap when trying to set up a business or trying to access a quality education. It is also a significant gap when people are searching for ways to have a life better than their parents or spend more time with family and friends but can't because making ends meet has to be a priority.

— Age has different ways of holding people back

Respondents believe that their age negatively impacts their pursuit of job-related opportunities such as being able to secure a more stable job, being able to change to a new career path and when aiming to find a job that treats them equally. This is most relevant to Boomers (43%), followed by Gen X (27%). Related to age is the lack of work experience as an opportunity gap. It is the number 1 opportunity gap facing Gen Z (25%) as they feel that it affects job security, prevents them from pursuing their passions, and impedes them from finding a job that treats them as an equal. This is true, albeit to a smaller extent, for Millennials (16%) as well.

My financial status 24%

Difficult job market 21%

My age 21%

Lack of time 17%

Lack of confidence 14%

Age continues to be one of the main opportunity gaps. This is something real as labour market statistics also suggests mature workers, especially mature PMEs, are most vulnerable whether in the area of retrenchment or when re-entering the workforce after job loss/unemployment. It is crucial for both businesses and mature PMEs to take concerted and continuous efforts to stay ready (with new skills), relevant (to new jobs) and resilient (to cyclical forces) amidst the changing nature of work, workforce and workplaces.

— **Patrick Tay,**
Assistant Secretary-General,
National Trades Union Congress (NTUC)

Making the most of a multi-generational workforce

Given that businesses these days are faced with the seemingly momentous task of managing four generations of employees, we hope to raise awareness of the complementary nature of the skills that different generations possess to make it easier for businesses to support and offer programmes that encourage the cross-pollination of skills.

One such example are bi-directional mentoring programmes that can help younger employees build experience while allowing senior ones to feel more valued at work.

Fears of being too young or being too old hold people back from contributing fully in the workplace. If individuals can overcome their 'confidence gremlins' and understand the unique value of their contribution, we can build strengths-based workforces that create significant competitive advantage.

- **Helen Tupper**,
CEO of Amazing If and author
of The Squiggly Career

The most important thing to understand is that regardless of age, everyone has something valuable to offer.

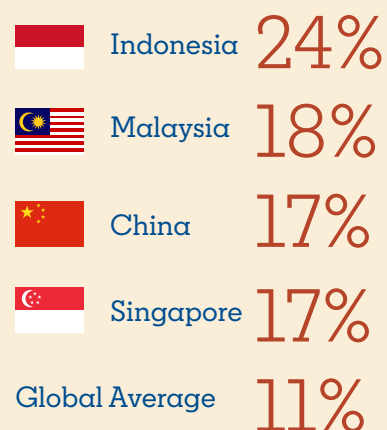
- **Jack Bloomfield**,
CEO, Founder,
Bloomfield Group

The significance of professional networks is generally overlooked

We find respondents' attitudes towards professional networks interesting. To recap, 76% of our respondents believe knowing the right people is key to getting ahead but only 22% are actively seeking networking opportunities. This may stem from the fact that most respondents do not regard the lack of networks as a major obstacle in their pursuit of opportunities due to other more pressing gaps being faced such as a lack of financial resources.

The sole exception is in Asia Pacific, where the lack of networks counts among the region's top five opportunity gaps (16% vs global average of 11%) – mainly driven by Indonesia (24%) and Malaysia (18%), followed by China and Singapore (both at 17%).

The lack of networks troubles Asia Pacific



Yet our data shows that respondents with stronger and more diverse networks face fewer opportunity gaps

As part of this survey, we assessed the strength of our respondents' professional networks and rated them as weak, moderate or strong. This was calculated based on the diversity of the people they know and can contact if needed. When we mapped network strength to opportunity gaps, we found that respondents with strong networks believe there are fewer opportunity gaps standing in their way.

Interestingly, when respondents cited lack of networks as an opportunity gap it was mainly in the context of aspiring to be in a job that fully utilises their skills or in a job that was closely aligned with their passions. This highlights once again that having a network of the right kinds of people can open doors to opportunities that can allow people to reach their fullest potential as opposed to only being exposed to opportunities to do work that one may not necessarily be passionate about.

At the same time, respondents acknowledged the lack of networks as being quite challenging to overcome citing primarily a lack of guidance and motivation to take action.

People with stronger networks believe they face fewer opportunity gaps

Average number of opportunity gaps cited

2.56

Weak
Network

2.44

Strong
Network

The 5 places in the world where people find it hardest to overcome the lack of professional networks



From networks to opportunity, we can all make a difference

At LinkedIn, we refer to the advantage that some people have in accessing the opportunities they want based on who they know as the “network gap”. We believe that a strong and diverse professional network has the power to open new doors for people.

We hope to involve businesses, professional communities, and individuals who do have strong networks to raise awareness of the network gap and facilitate new networking opportunities for people at all levels. If we work together, we can make it easier for every member of the workforce to build a strong and diverse professional network, and ultimately expand access to opportunity for everyone.

About the Index

Our approach

- Quantitative 20-minute online survey fielded by an independent market research firm commissioned by LinkedIn
- Data collection conducted between September and October 2019
- 22 markets globally
 - Asia Pacific: Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore
 - Europe: France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom
 - Latin America: Brazil, Mexico
 - Middle East: United Arab Emirates
 - North America: United States of America, Canada
- Over 30,000 respondents, aged 18 to 65, across various life stages and household income groups
 - Boomers: Born 1946 – 1964
 - Gen X: Born 1965 – 1980
 - Millennials: Born 1981 – 1996
 - Gen Z: Born 1997 and later

Our 7 measures of opportunity

Perception on socio-economic and lifestyle factors

- Outlook on economy over next 12 months
- Outlook on personal financial situation over next 12 months
- Quality of life (happiness)
- Quality of life (compared to parents)

Perception on opportunity

- Availability of in-market opportunities
- Assessment on accessibility of opportunity
- Confidence in achieving success

Aggregate score

The Index uses “100” as a baseline score for confidence. A higher score represents greater confidence from respondents living in a specific market.

Research conducted by GfK

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