



Global Coalition for
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

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for every child

Understanding the Mental Health Impact of Global Challenges on Gen Z

UNICEF PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH REPORT 2025

**WE ARE IN A TIME OF CRISIS
— FROM GEOPOLITICAL
CONFLICT TO CLIMATE
ANXIETY, MENTAL HEALTH
STRUGGLES TO ECONOMIC
UNCERTAINTY.**

**IT CAN FEEL AS THOUGH WE
ARE CAUGHT IN A
CONSTANT STORM OF
CHALLENGES, WITH LITTLE
CONTROL OVER THE
FORCES SHAPING OUR
WORLD.**

For many, especially young people, the weight of these overlapping crises is not abstract — it's deeply personal, showing up in their minds, their bodies, and their sense of hope for the future.

This study offers timely and vital insights into how young people perceive and experience the mental health impact of the world around them. It gives voice to a growing collective unease, but also to the resilience, creativity, and determination with which Gen Z are responding.

Understanding perception is the first step toward meaningful action. If we can listen more deeply — not just to the facts, but to the feelings — we can begin to design and scale solutions that are grounded in empathy and centered on human well-being.

Mental health must no longer be treated as a side effect of global disruption; it must be part of how we respond, recover, and reimagine our future.

We hope this study helps inspire a new urgency — and a shared responsibility — **to act.**

Dr Zeinab Hijazi

Mental Health Global Lead, UNICEF



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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

THE NEWS CONSUMPTION PARADOX

Gen Z are deeply engaged with the world's future. They want to have a role in shaping the future of their communities and countries. Despite an overwhelming news cycle, Gen Z actively **consume news more than any other type of content** – they feel a strong sense of accountability for shaping the future.

This constant engagement comes at a cost. **6 in 10 Gen Z report feeling overwhelmed** by news and events happening in their community, their country, and the world at large.

Overwhelm erodes well-being and empowerment. Gen Z who feel this sense of overwhelm are more likely to report lower well-being. Those with low well-being, in turn, feel a heightened sense of disempowerment. **By not supporting them, we are stripping Gen Z of their agency in contributing to making the world a better place for themselves and future generations.**

Gen Z consume news **MORE
THAN ANY OTHER
TYPE OF CONTENT**

6 in 10 Gen Z surveyed report **feeling overwhelmed by news and events**

Gen Z who feel overwhelm report **LOWER WELL-BEING
SCORES**

Gen Z with lower well-being scores hold **LOWER SENSES OF
EMPOWERMENT**

THE BATTLE AGAINST STIGMA IS NOT YET WON

Despite strong familiarity with the topic of mental health, the battle against stigma is not yet won. While Gen Z are well-versed in mental health discourse, negative perceptions around people speaking about their mental health are still very strong—and demand a nuanced and culturally-appropriate approach based on life stage.

Access to support and effective coping mechanisms remains a challenge. Only half of Gen Z feel knowledgeable about available mental health resources, and **the same proportion believe their coping mechanisms are effective.**

4 in 10 of Gen Z still feel **stigma** in schools & workplaces

52% Of Gen Z are **knowledgeable** about where to find resources and help to support their mental health and well-being

55% of Gen Z find the activities / actions they do to manage stress / anxiety / overwhelm **effective**

GEN Z WANTS TO BE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Gen Z demands **collective action**, and they want to be in the **driver's seat**. They recognize that addressing mental health challenges requires collaboration across generation, sectors and institutions - **and they want to be at the head of this table**.

1 in **3**

Gen Z want to themselves have a **leading role** in helping adolescents and young people **manage the impacts** of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events happening in their community, country, or the world.

74%

Of Gen Z think **schools** should have a role or a leading role

64%

Of Gen Z think **national government** should have a role or a leading role

60%

Of Gen Z think **employers** should have a role or a leading role

56%

Of Gen Z think **media** should have a role or a leading role



DETAILED FINDINGS

DESPITE THE DIFFICULT CLIMATE, GEN Z ARE KEEN TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD...

Gen Z around the world feel connected and engaged
at a local, national, and global level

53% feel **connected** to
their community.

58% believe they have a **responsibility**
towards their country.

58% **want to have a role** in the
future of the world.



Q4: Looking at the statements below, how much do you agree or disagree with each of them? *I feel connected to my community* (N "agree" = 2841, Total N = 5514)

Q8: Again thinking about your country, please use the scale provided to let us know how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. *I believe I have a responsibility towards the future of my country* (N "agree" = 3056, Total N = 5452)

Q10: Still thinking about the whole world, please use the scale provided to let us know how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. *I want to have a role in the future of the world* (N "agree" = 3024, Total N = 5418)

GEN Z CONSUME NEWS
MORE FREQUENTLY
THAN ANY OTHER TYPE
OF CONTENT

74% engage with **any form of news**,
at least once a week.

— vs. —

64% engage with **friends and
family's social media posts**
once a week or more.

61% engage with **social media posts
from people they follow** who
are not friends or family once a
week or more.

THIS CAUSES A DEEP SENSE OF OVERWHELM; YOUNG ADULTS AND GEN Z WOMEN ARE MOST AFFECTED

6 in 10 (60%)
feel overwhelmed
by news or events

67%

Specifically feel overwhelmed after exposure to news or events **in the world** – more than news in their country (60%) or their community (40%).

Young adults and women are most affected

67%

of **Adult Gen Z** feel overwhelmed, compared to:

54%

of **teen Gen Z**.

64%

of **women Gen Z** feel overwhelmed, compared to:

56%

of **men Gen Z**.

Certain countries stand out compared to others

82%

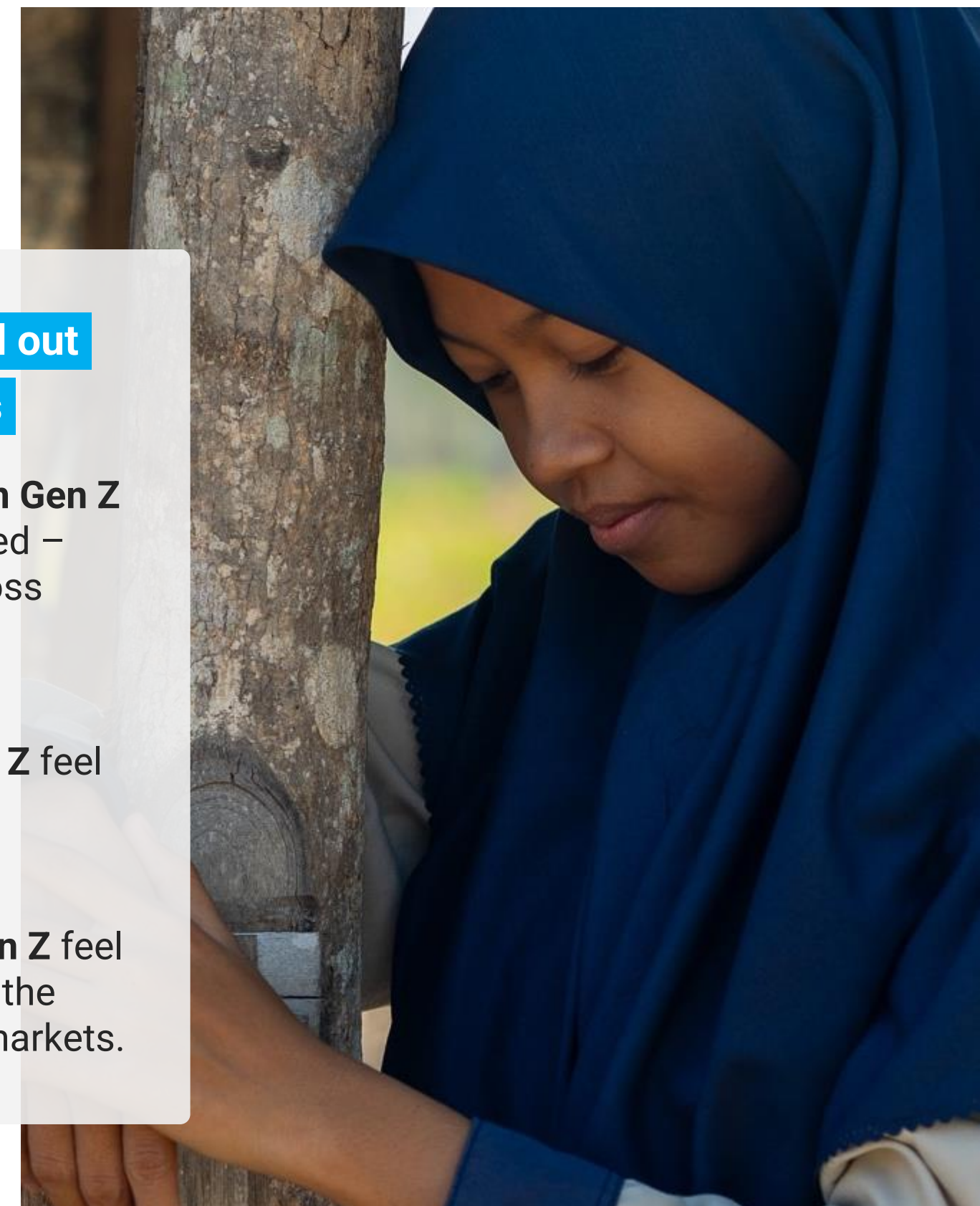
of **South African Gen Z** feel overwhelmed – the highest across markets.

72%

of **Mexican Gen Z** feel overwhelmed.

40%

of **Japanese Gen Z** feel overwhelmed – the lowest across markets.



OVERWHELM FROM NEWS OR EVENTS IN OUR PERMACRISIS WORLD MEANS LOWER WELL-BEING

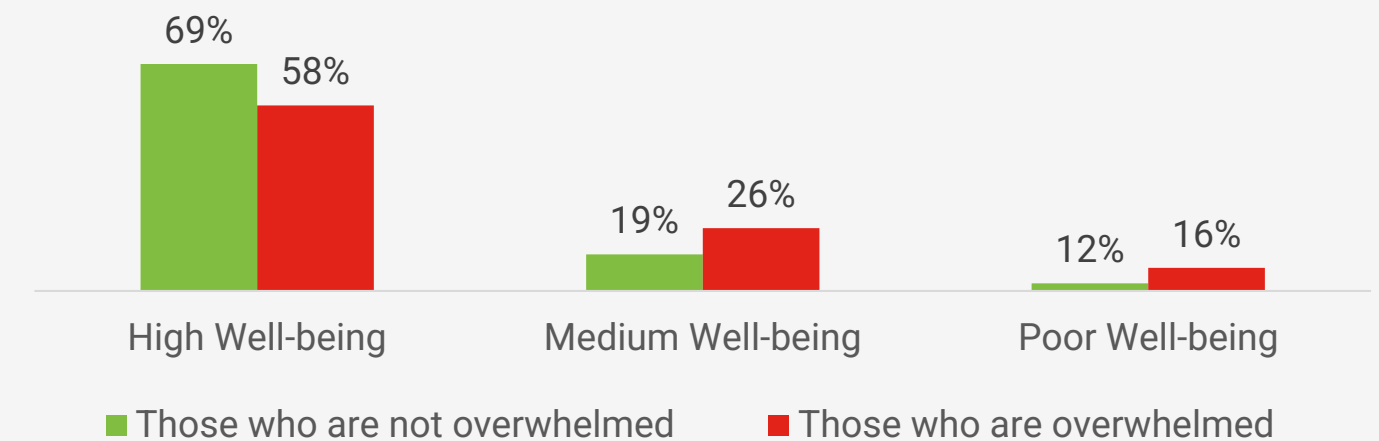
AND LOWER WELL-BEING MEANS LOW SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT

Overwhelm from the permacrisis is stripping Gen Z of their agency in contributing to making the world a better place for themselves and future generations.

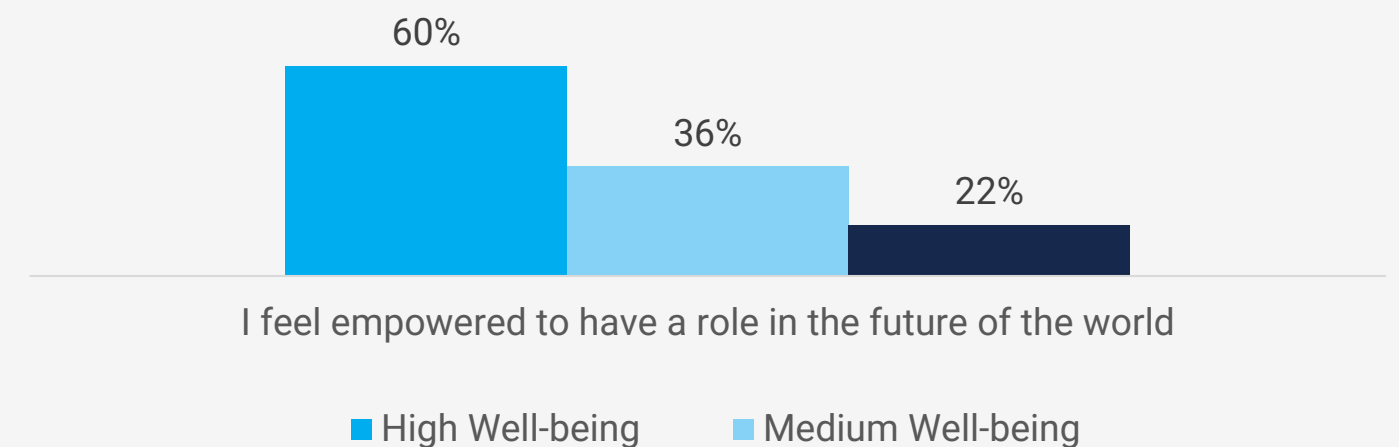
The more Gen Z are
overwhelmed, the
less well they feel

The less well Gen Z
feel, the less
empowered they are

WHO-5 Well-being Index Scores of Gen Z



Score on the WHO-5 Well-being index:



TEEN GEN Z EXPERIENCE AN EMOTIONAL PARADOX: HIGH FEELINGS OF HOPEFULNESS COUPLED WITH HIGH ANXIETY AND UNCERTAINTY

Across the countries we surveyed, Teen Gen Z report **higher feelings of connectedness and hope** than Young Adult Gen Z

71% feel **accepted** by their country (vs 58% adult Gen Z)

67% want to have a role in the **future** of their country (vs 54% young adults)

57% feel **empowered** to have a role in the future of their country (vs 46% young adults)

60% are **hopeful** about the future of their country (vs 50% young adults)



But at the same time, **substantial numbers also feel anxiety** for the future of their countries, often at similar levels to young adult Gen Z

56% feel **worried** about the future of their country (vs 57% young adults)

45% feel **uncertain** about the future of their country (vs 49% young adults)

Q7: Still thinking about your country, looking at the statements below, how much do you agree or disagree with each of them? (Global – Teen Gen Z: N = 2767, Adult Gen Z = 2722)

Q8: Again thinking about your country, please use the scale provided to let us know how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Global – Teen Gen Z: N = 2750, Adult Gen Z = 2702)

THIS PARADOX IS ESPECIALLY PRONOUNCED IN MEXICO, WHERE HOPEFULNESS AND ANXIETY RUN EQUALLY HIGH

In Mexico, teens feel **deeply invested**
and **hopeful**

78% feel accepted by their
country (vs 64% young adults)

78% want to have a role in the
future of their country
(vs 60% young adults)

73% feel empowered to have a role
in the future of their country
(vs 53% young adults)

74% are hopeful about the
future of their country
(vs 61% young adults)



But also face **conflicting emotions** about the
future of their country, often more than
Mexican young adults.

80% feel worried about the
future of their country
(vs 66% Mexican young adults)

69% feel **uncertain** about the
future of their country
(vs 61% Mexican young adults)

Q7: Still thinking about your country, looking at the statements below, how much do you agree or disagree with each of them? (Mexico – Teen Gen Z: N = 398, Adult Gen Z N = 395)

Q8: Again thinking about your country, please use the scale provided to let us know how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Mexico – Teen Gen Z: N = 390, Adult Gen Z N = 391)

DESPITE HIGH FAMILIARITY WITH MENTAL HEALTH, STIGMA PERSISTS...

66% Across countries surveyed are **familiar with mental health** as a topic.

4 in 10 (41% av. across schools and employers)

Gen Z around the world believe there is a stigma in schools & places of employment.

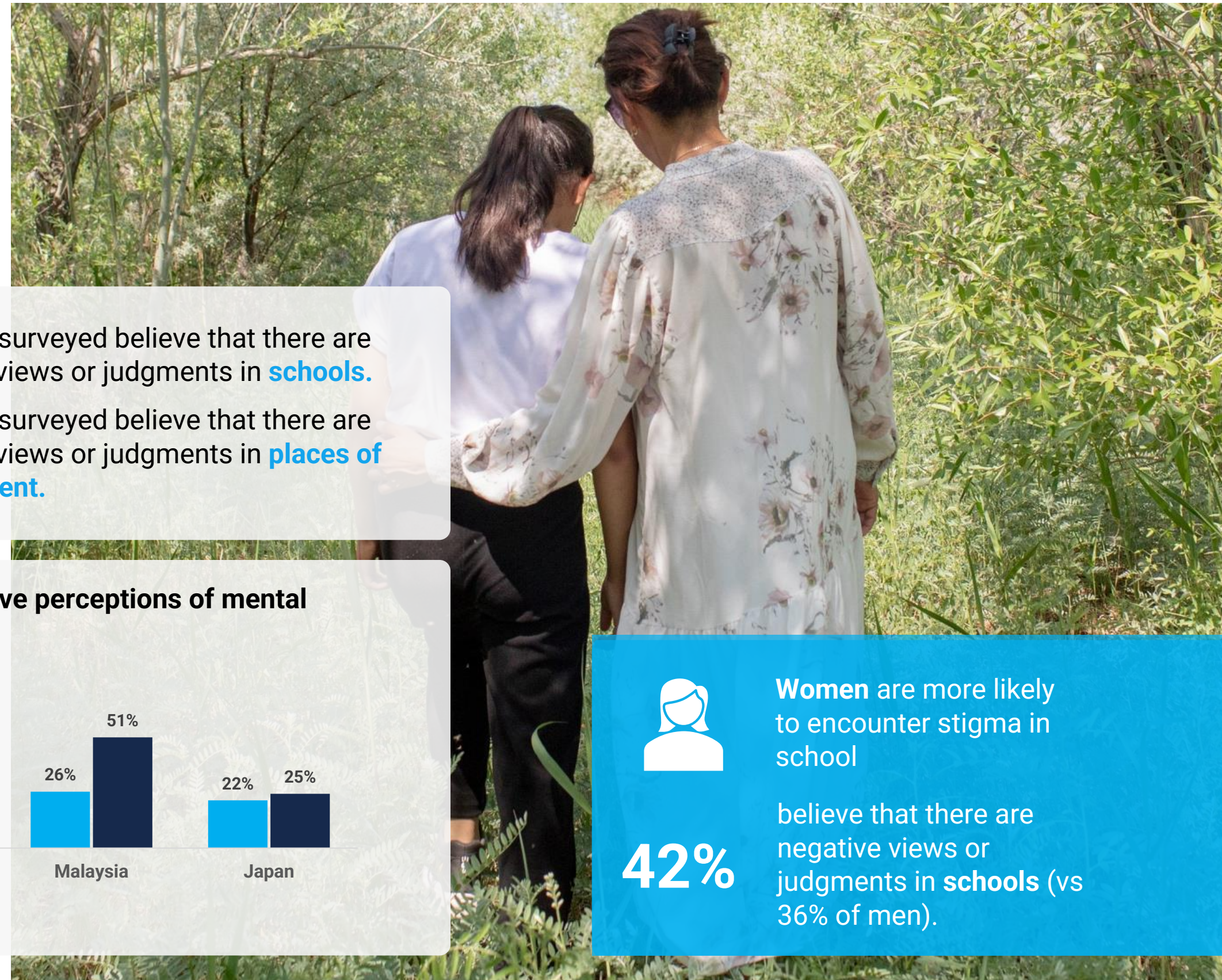
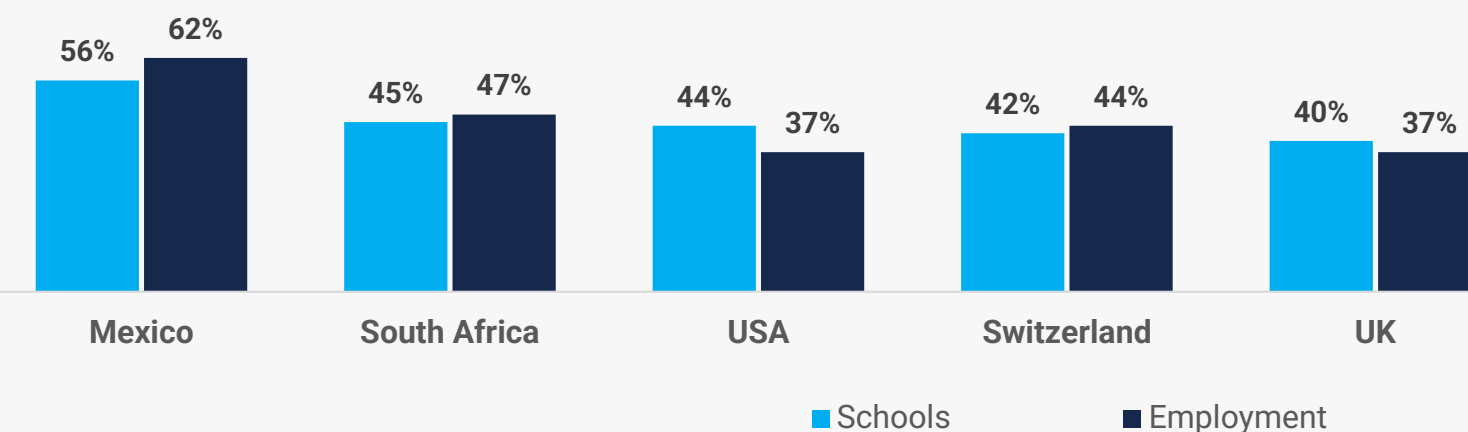
39%

Of Gen Z surveyed believe that there are negative views or judgments in **schools**.

43%

Of Gen Z surveyed believe that there are negative views or judgments in **places of employment**.

Looking across countries, a significant number of Gen Z report negative perceptions of mental health in school and work



Women are more likely to encounter stigma in school

42%

believe that there are negative views or judgments in **schools** (vs 36% of men).

PROPER SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH AMONG GEN Z IS KEY, AS A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE NEED HELP

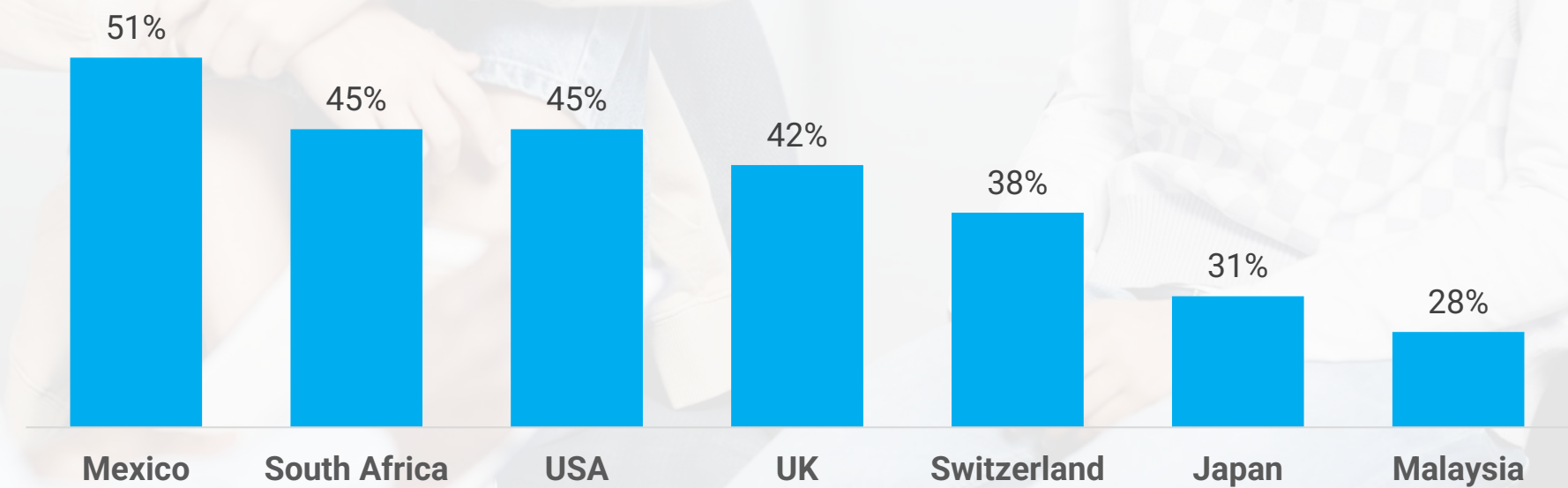
4 in 10 (40%)

Gen Z felt they needed help
with their mental health

Increasing to
45% across all
women Gen Z.

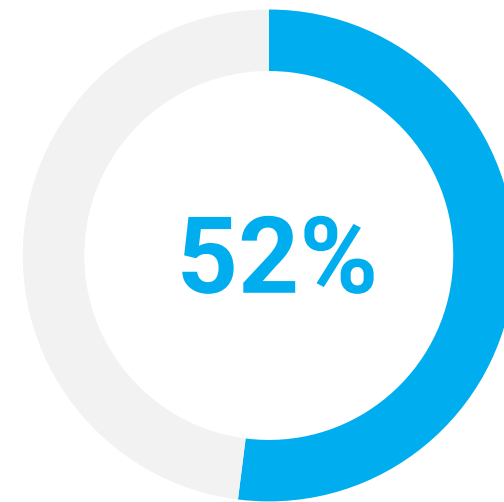
And to **52%**
across all **young
adult Gen Z.**

Across countries surveyed, Mexico has the highest number of
Gen Z who say they need help with their mental health

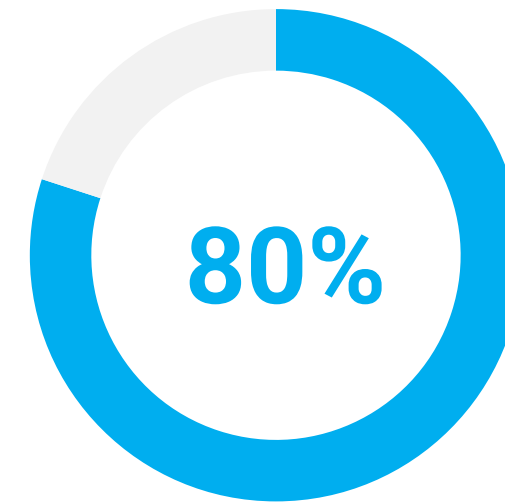


YOUNG ADULTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO NEED HELP...

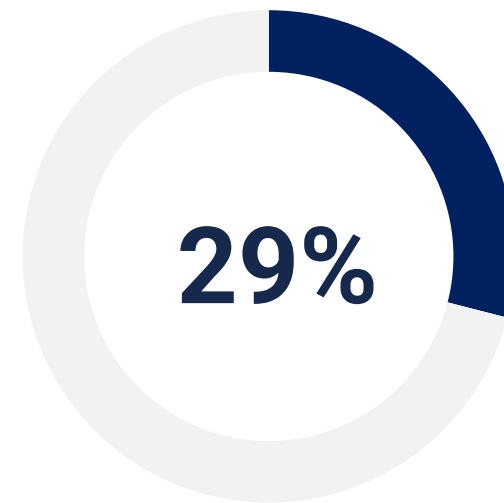
...THEY ARE ALSO LESS LIKELY TO SEEK IT



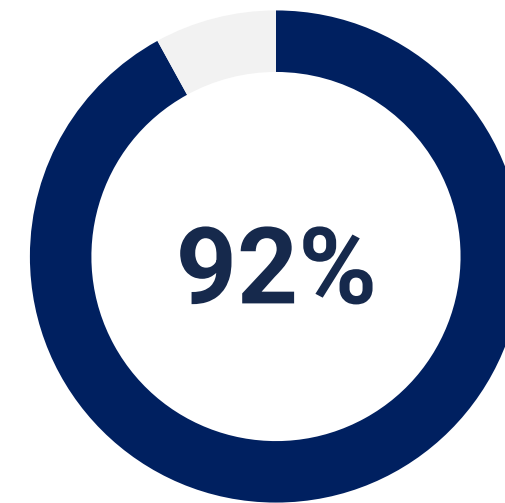
of **Adults** have felt they
needed help with their
mental health.



of **Adults** who needed help
with their mental health have
sought help before.



of **Teens** have felt they
needed help with their
mental health.



of **Teens** who needed help
with their mental health have
sought help before.



**Women Gen Z are
significantly more likely to
seek professional help
(44% vs 34% for men).**



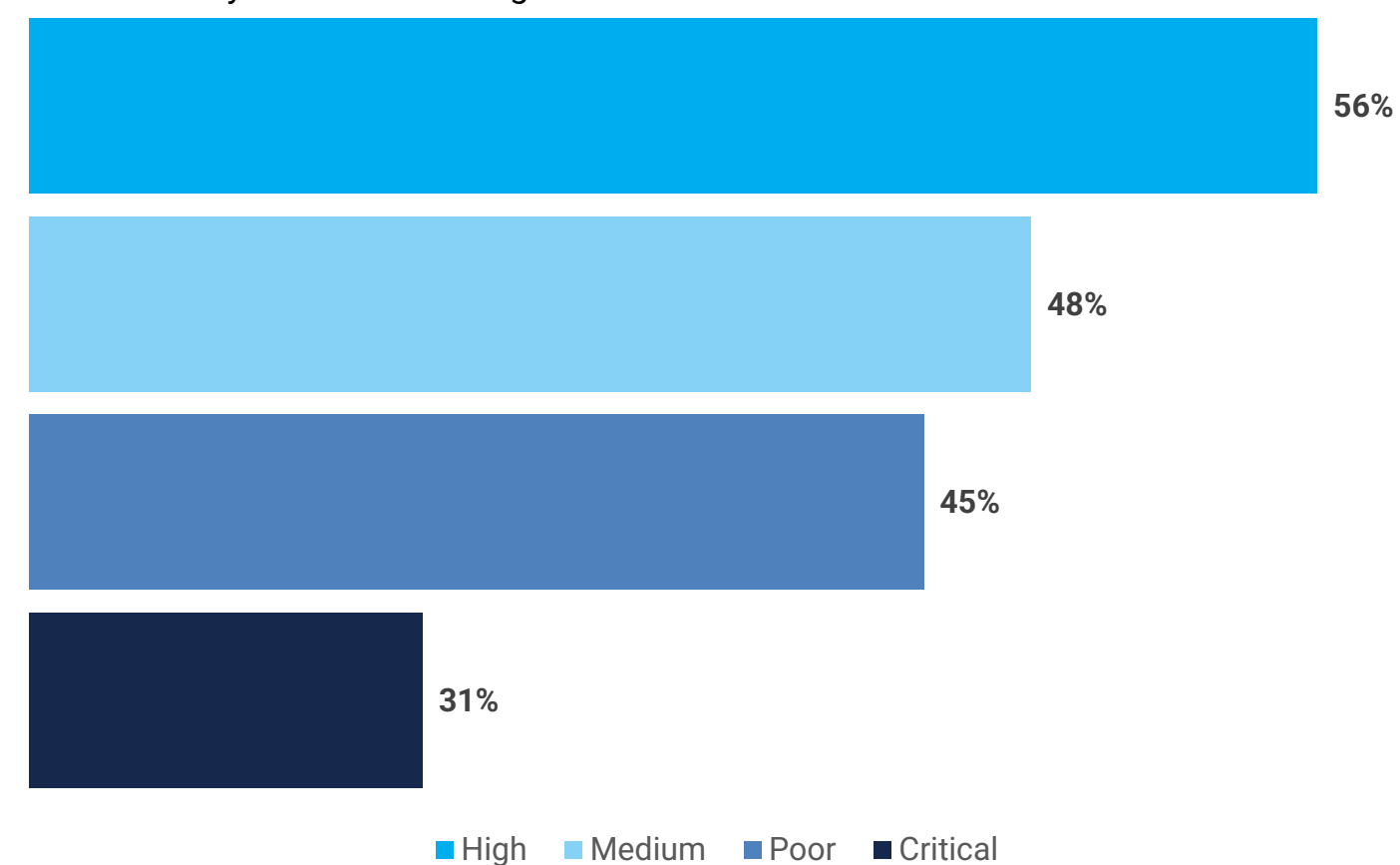
52%

Among the countries surveyed are knowledgeable about where to find resources and help to support their mental health and well-being.

ONLY HALF FEEL KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT ACTUAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THEM

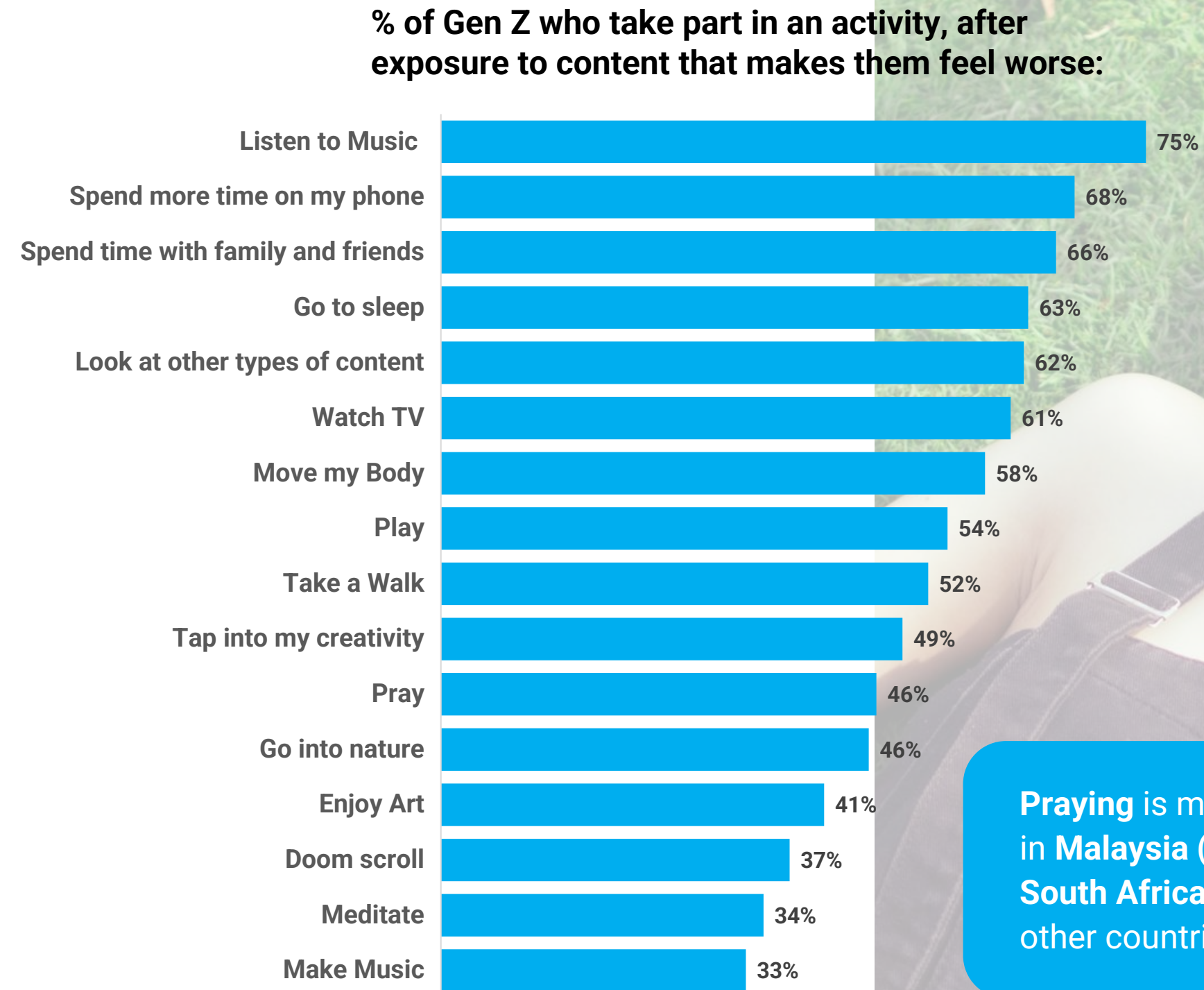
Those with higher well-being scores are also more likely to be knowledgeable about mental health resources:

% of those who are knowledgeable about where to find mental health resources by WHO-5 Well-being Index Score



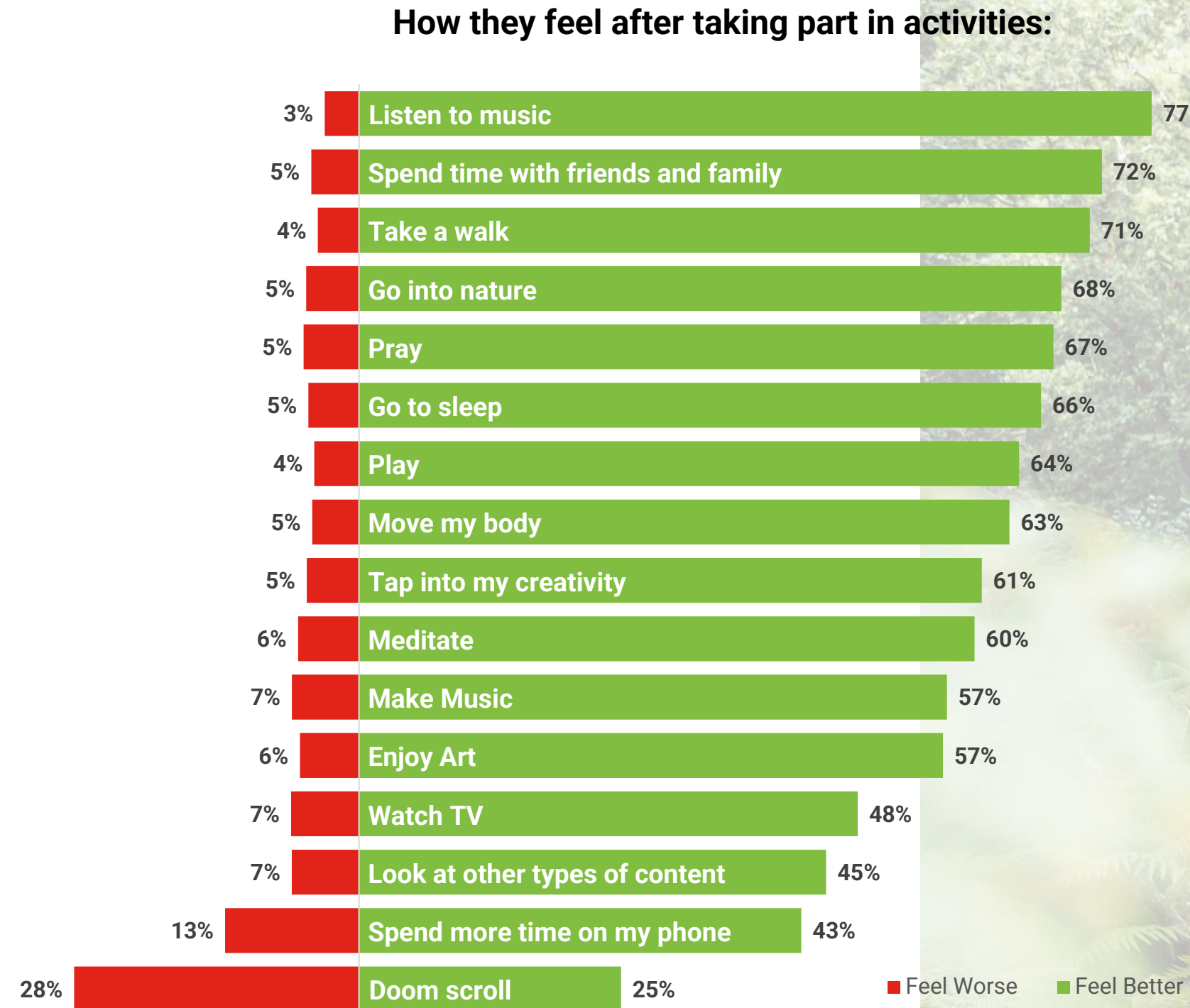
Score on the WHO-5 Well-being index:

ON AN EVERYDAY
BASIS THERE ARE
MANY ACTIVITIES
THAT GEN Z TURN
TO WHEN THEY
ENCOUNTER
OVERWHELMING
CONTENT



Praying is more common in Malaysia (75%) and South Africa (69%) than other countries surveyed.

**MANY OF THESE
ACTIVITIES
IMPROVE THEIR
MOOD AFTER
ENGAGING WITH
OVERWHELMING
CONTENT**



Teens are more likely to feel better after **listening to music** than Young Adults are (83% for teens vs 72% for Adults).

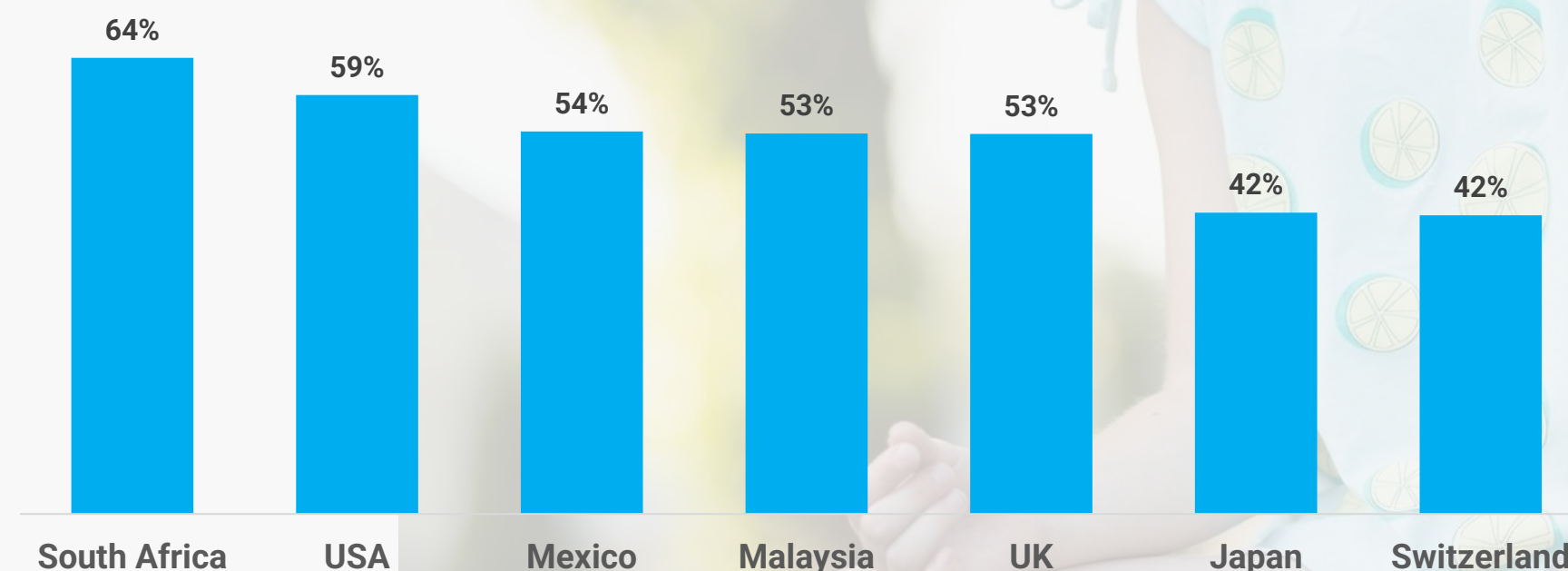
BUT ULTIMATELY ONLY AROUND HALF OF GEN Z FEEL THEIR COPING MECHANISMS FOR STRESS, ANXIETY AND OVERWHELM ARE EFFECTIVE

55%

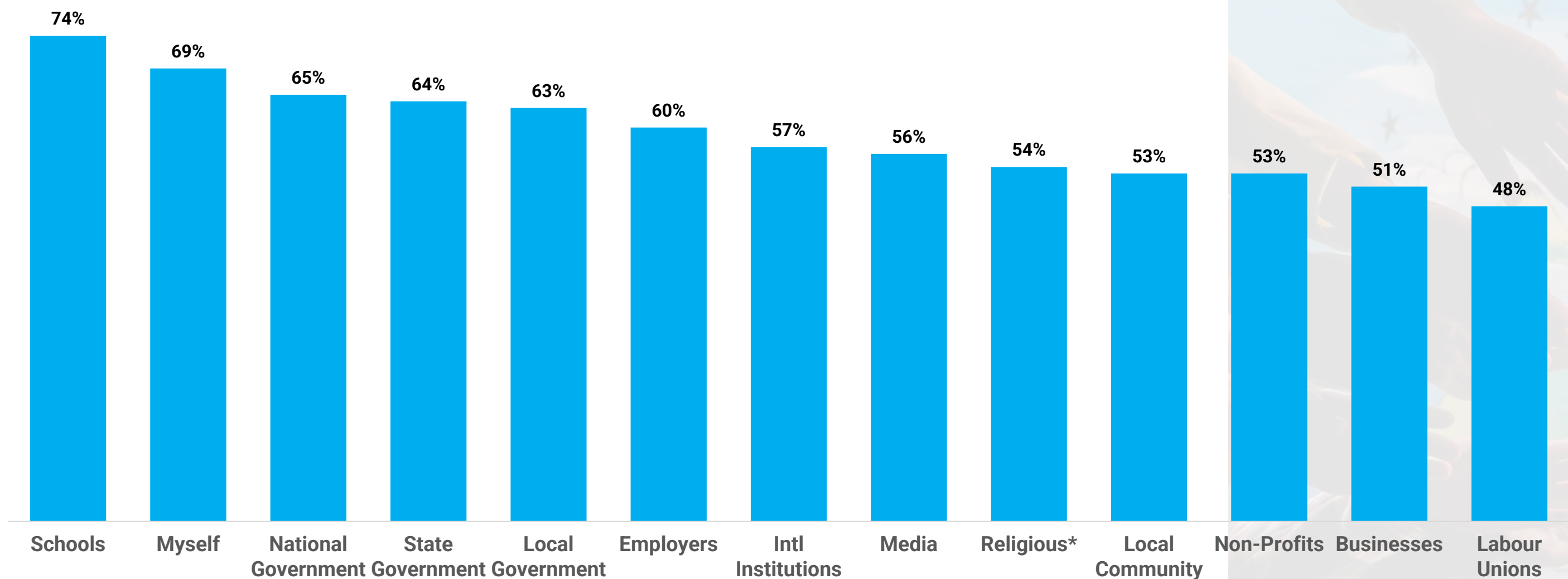
of Gen Z find the activities /
actions they do to manage
stress / anxiety / overwhelm
effective

This reduces for Women and Young adults:
Only 52% Women (vs 58% Men) and **52%
Young Adults (vs 57% Teens)** feel that their
activities are effective.

% who feel that their actions for managing stress, overwhelm or anxiety
about news are effective:



LOOKING TOWARDS SOLUTIONS: GEN Z FEEL THIS IS A PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES COLLECTIVE ACTION AND WANT TO BE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT



Myself, Schools, and National Government were called out as the three top people/institutions to take a **leading** role in helping young people with their mental health

Q24: Now thinking about the different institutions and organizations that exist within our society, please indicate the role you feel each should have in helping adolescents and young people like you manage the impacts of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events happening in your community, country, or the world? (N = 2034 – 5386)
Q25: Still thinking about the different institutions and organizations that exist within our society, please indicate the impact you feel each have had related to adolescents and young people like you managing the impact of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events happening in your community, country, or the world? (N = 2044 – 5399) *NB: Religious / faith-based institutions, and religious / faith-based communities, are included as composite data points on the same bar label

MEDIA AND GOVERNMENTS IN PARTICULAR ARE FALLING SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS

1 in 4 (26%)

believe that the **media has a negative impact** on younger people. This rises to just under 30% for **women** – the highest percentage to believe this among all sub-groups.

GEN Z WANT THEM TO LEAD SOLUTIONS, BUT BOTH DEMONSTRATE CLEAR NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Gen Z expect leadership from both the media and their governments, and while they sometimes have positive impacts, they also have **notably high negative impacts** too

	% who think they should have a role – leading or otherwise	Positive Impact (net)	Negative Impact (net)
Media	57%	40%	26%
Local Government	62%	40%	17%
State Government	63%	40%	17%
National Government	65%	40%	19%

Q24: Now thinking about the different institutions and organizations that exist within our society, please indicate the role you feel each should have in helping adolescents and young people like you manage the impacts of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events happening in your community, country, or the world? (N = 2034 – 5386)

Q25: Still thinking about the different institutions and organizations that exist within our society, please indicate the impact you feel each have had related to adolescents and young people like you managing the impact of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events happening in your community, country, or the world? (N = 2044 – 5399)

SCHOOLS & EMPLOYERS STAND OUT AS POSITIVE FORCES FOR GEN Z MENTAL HEALTH

THERE ARE CLEAR
EXPECTATIONS THAT
THEY CONTINUE
LEADING THE
CHARGE TO HELP
YOUNG PEOPLE

Gen Z have high expectations for **schools** to play a role, and schools are seen to deliver on this with strong positive impact

74%

say that **schools** should have a **role in** helping young people manage the impact of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events.

6 in 10
(61%)

say that **schools** have a **positive impact** on young people managing the impact of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events

Employers are also viewed as important contributors to improving mental health, and many deliver on this expectation

60%

say that **employers** should have a **role in** helping young people manage the impact of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events.

1 in 2
(48%)

say that **employers** have a **positive impact** on young people managing the impact of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events

Q24: Now thinking about the different institutions and organizations that exist within our society, please indicate the role you feel each should have in helping adolescents and young people like you manage the impacts of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events happening in your community, country, or the world? (N = 2034 – 5386)

Q25: Still thinking about the different institutions and organizations that exist within our society, please indicate the impact you feel each have had related to adolescents and young people like you managing the impact of the stress, anxiety, or being overwhelmed due to news or events happening in your community, country, or the world? (N = 2044 – 5399)

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The Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health

It's time to act on child
and youth mental health



OUR CALL TO ACTION

THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD ON ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES OF OUR TIME—YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

By investing in prevention, promotion, and care, businesses can help ensure that young people and their caregivers have timely access to quality mental health support. The private sector can play a critical role by championing holistic approaches and partnering with youth, NGOs, and governments to:

- Expand access to quality support through investment in promotion, prevention and care for children, youth, and caregivers
- Strengthen data and research to bridge the evidence gap
- Promote employee and caregiver well-being through internal strategies

Now is the time to act. Evidence-based solutions exist and are ready to scale. Your leadership can drive innovation, shift mindsets, and break the silence around mental health—while also enhancing your workforce, communities, and brand purpose.

UNICEF's success is built on strong partnerships—including with the private sector.

We invite you to join the largest private sector alliance for youth mental health. As a partner in the Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health, you will help transform insights into action by supporting scalable, evidence-based solutions at the country level and lending your voice to a unified global advocacy movement.

Carla Haddad Mardini

Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, UNICEF





METHODOLOGY

**FOR THIS STUDY, WE SPOKE
TO GEN Z IN 7 DIFFERENT
COUNTRIES, WITH A GOOD
SPREAD OF AGE, REGION,
GENDER, AND HOUSEHOLD
INCOME LEVELS**

We ran a questionnaire of approximately 15 minutes, where we asked adolescents and adult Gen Z questions about the impact of news and events on their mental health.

	Number of Adult Gen Z (18 – 25)	Number of Teen Gen Z (14 – 17)	Total Gen Z Sample
United States	490	502	992
Switzerland	197	201	398
Japan	398	399	797
Mexico	400	399	799
Malaysia	396	396	792
United Kingdom	499	500	999
South Africa	394	396	790
TOTAL	2,774	2,793	5,567

The spread of age, region, gender, race/ethnicity (where available), and socio-economic status (where available) was representative of the online population of each country.

**A ROBUST AND THOUGHTFUL
APPROACH TO ENSURE
VALUABLE, ACCURATE, AND
ACTIONABLE DATA**

Audience Recruitment Method: To ensure neutrality, invitations to the survey will be randomly sent to a panel of subjects available on a market research panel database. This is a large and varied collection of quality-controlled individuals who are willing to take online surveys, fostered and curated independently in every country. These individuals are recruited through a series of online methods and then registered after an intensive quality check to ensure validity and authenticity.

Despite not being academic, this method follows the rules and requirements of general market research in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society and has scientific grounding in human sciences such as Sociology and Anthropology.

Input from key experts:

- UNICEF programme specialists
- UNICEF Innocenti Global Office of Research and Foresight
- Independent ethics board review

LEVERAGING ACADEMICALLY VALIDATED SCALES TO MEASURE WELL-BEING

To ensure we ground ourselves in the forefront of academic thinking, the WHO-5 scale was selected as the determinant of mental well-being.

This was for the following reasons:

- Age appropriate (it was deemed appropriate for individuals aged 9 and above)
- Widely culturally applicable (it was validated in more than 30 different countries and languages)
- Simplicity (it is a 5 statement, 1 question instrument)
- Relevance

SCALE

Please respond to each item by marking one box per row, regarding how you felt in the last two weeks.

	RANDOMIZE	All of the time	Most of the time	More than half the time	Less than half the time	Some of the time	At no time
1	I have felt cheerful in good spirits	5	4	3	2	1	0
2	I have felt calm and relaxed	5	4	3	2	1	0
3	I have felt active and vigorous	5	4	3	2	1	0
4	I woke up feeling fresh and rested	5	4	3	2	1	0
5	My daily life has been filled with things that interest me	5	4	3	2	1	0

SCORING

The raw score is calculated by totaling the figures of the five answers. The raw score ranges from 0 to 25, 0 representing worst possible and 25 representing best possible quality of life. To obtain a percentage score ranging from 0 to 100, the raw score is multiplied by 4. A percentage score of 0 represents worst possible, whereas a score of 100 represents best possible quality of life.

High	Scoring above 76 points
Medium	Scoring from 51-75
Poor	Scoring 50 and below



Global Coalition for
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

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