

Data Digest:

Career Report



Introduction

Helping students get the edge for their future

Careers education is vital to supporting young people as they make decisions about their futures in a rapidly changing work environment and labour market. The pandemic escalated changes in working patterns, with significant increases in remote working, e-commerce, and automation (McKinsey Global Institute, 2021). These changes present new challenges for young people beginning their career journeys, making complex decisions more difficult to navigate, and opportunities for practical experience harder to find.

Though we have seen promising progress in the introduction of updated Gatsby recommendations, and an increase in careers resources, there is still a lack of data about students' career readiness. With the UK government set to release updated careers guidance next year, it's critical that we can implement data-driven careers planning.

This report shares insights from data on student career readiness, gathered from 3016 students in the OxBright Career Test. The Career Test is a questionnaire that analyses students' preferences, interests and skills, to generate personalised career recommendations. The aim of this report is to provide evidence and context for the trends that we are seeing among young people, in relation to their career choices. This allows us to provide data-driven advice and practical recommendations for schools, parents, and students, to help young people get the edge for their future careers.

We hope you'll find the insights and recommendations in this report useful for you and your students!

Best wishes,
The OxBright Team



JAMIE DEAR
Co-Director



LAVINIA ABELL
Co-Director



JO CRUSE
Head of Schools



IZZY MENCATTELLI
Project Executive

"I didn't consider becoming a forensic scientist before but now that I think about it, it really may be something that I want to do! Thank you for this Test!" – Student

Summary of findings

Our report found that:

- 1 Regardless of age or course, students consistently scored impact and salary higher than other factors influencing their career preferences. As impact score increases, salary score plateaus.
- 2 Students motivated by impact tend to be more confident, and have more clarity about their futures than their peers.
- 3 The more important salary is to a student, the more likely they are to want to be their own boss.
- 4 Students scored lowest on having participated in work experience.
- 5 Students scored highest on having read about careers related to their subject.
- 6 Students' clarity over their futures increases with age from 15 to 17, but then falls between 17 and 18.
- 7 Students who have taken external courses are more likely to have role models, and are more likely to perceive themselves as good leaders.



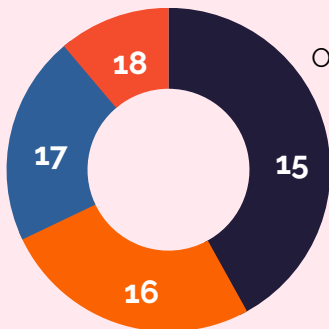
Overview of our Career Test Data

The data in this report is based on 3016 student responses, from 1500+ schools across the world.

What does our Career Test measure?

Our Career Test asks students to score themselves from 1-5 in a series of questions about their skills, interests, and preferences in relation to their future. We then collect data on what matters to students when they're exploring careers, and what skills students are most and least confident with.

Who are our participants?

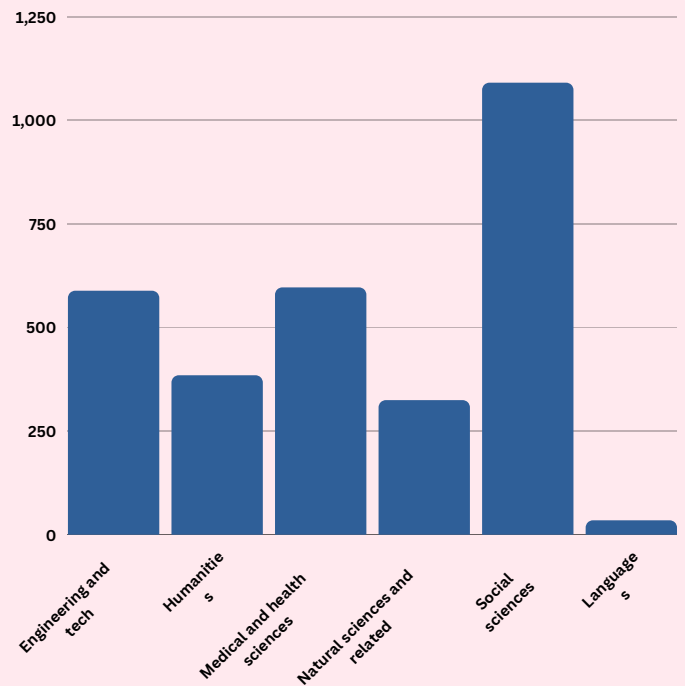


Our participants are aged 15-18.

41.9% were age 15.
26.0% were age 16.
20.9% were age 17.
11.2% were age 18.



Our participants come from **1500+ schools** globally. From Paris to Brasilia, to Cairo, to Indiana, our report digests insights from students across the world.



Our participants are aiming to study a range of subjects at university. The most popular sectors were:

- **Social sciences**, including law (230), business (189), and psychology (136).
- **Medical and health sciences**, of which 364 want to study medicine.
- **Engineering and technology**, including computer science (162).



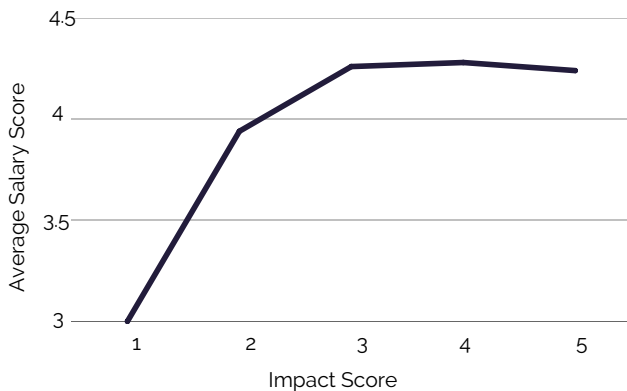
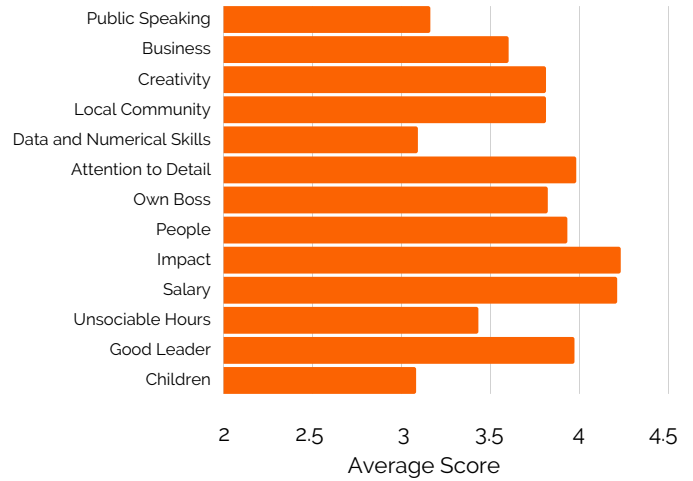
DATA DIGEST: OXBRIGHT CAREER TEST

1 Regardless of age or course, students consistently scored impact and salary higher than other factors influencing their career preferences. As impact score increases, salary score plateaus.

DATA 1

Students were asked to score how far they agreed that certain factors were important to them when considering careers, from 1-5. Of these factors, **impact and salary consistently scored the highest.** The average for salary was **4.21**, and the average score for impact was **4.23**.

Nearly half, **49.6%**, of students scored impact a **5**, with only 1.9% scoring it a 1. It matters to students whether their careers make a positive impact.



DATA 2 As impact score increases from 1-3, the average score for salary increases rapidly, from 3 to 4.16. **95.4% of students scored salary a 3 or above.** suggesting that salary is a key consideration when choosing a career.

However, as impact score increases to 4, salary score plateaus, and even decreases as impact score rises from 4 to 5.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students were presented with a range of statements about different career preferences, and asked to score from 1 to 5 how much they agreed. On average, earning a **high salary**, and having a career that makes a **positive impact**, were scored the highest, with little variance across age groups or subject categories. This may seem unsurprising, with 'money' and 'altruism' often driving students' motivations to work (Kniveton, Research in Education, 2004).

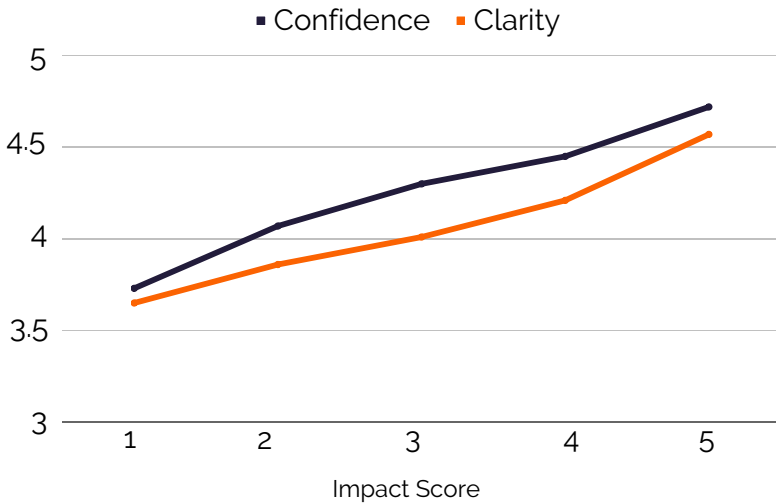
However, our data found that **as students' score for impact increased, the average score for salary plateaued**, and even fell marginally as impact score increased from 4 to 5. This might suggest that students who place a high value on impact are more willing to accept a lower salary for an impactful role, or are less concerned with making a higher salary. For example, a recent study by Deloitte found that 42% of Gen Z have already changed, or plan to change, their job or industry due to climate concerns. Meanwhile, we have seen that the **popularity of 'green' and ESG careers** is increasing rapidly (Deloitte, 2023). So, whilst salary remains an important factor for young people exploring careers, it seems that many are increasingly concerned with finding a career that makes a positive impact.

Give your students the edge by:

Highlighting high-impact and high-salary careers available within different subjects. Share our OxBright blog post on high impact and high salary career options: <https://www.oxbright.org/blog/content-for-educators/high-impact-and-high-salary-career-options-for-high-school-students/>.

2 Students motivated by impact tend to be more confident, and have more clarity about their futures than their peers.

DATA 3

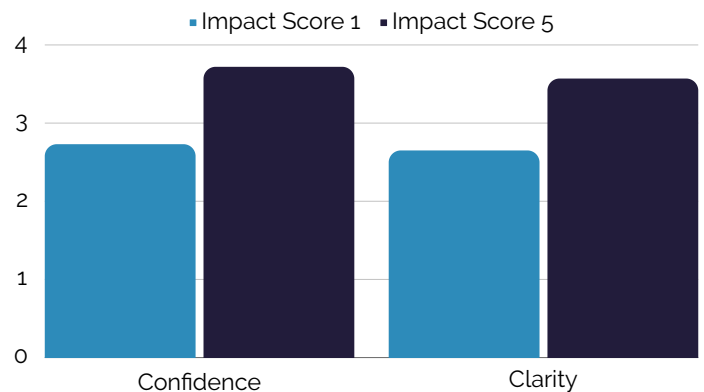


The more strongly that a student agreed with the statement "I want my work to have a positive impact on society and the world", the **more likely they were to have clarity** over their future career direction, **and feel confident** about their future career success.

Students who scored impact as 5 reported, on average, a **0.99 higher confidence** (average of 3.72), than those who scored impact a 1 (average of 2.73).

They also reported on average a **0.94 higher clarity**, (average of 3.57) than those who scored impact as 1, (average of 2.63).

DATA 4



ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our data shows that young people care about making a difference with their careers. Further, students who are more motivated by impact (score higher for wanting to make a positive impact) report, on average, higher scores for clarity about their future career, and confidence about their future career success. We found a **strong positive correlation between how students scored impact, and how they scored impact and clarity.**

Perhaps students who are impact-orientated are more prone to **long-term thinking**, and are concerned with the long-term consequences of their career choices. This might make them more likely to engage in long-term thinking about, and planning for, their careers, explaining their greater clarity and confidence.

Give your students the edge by:

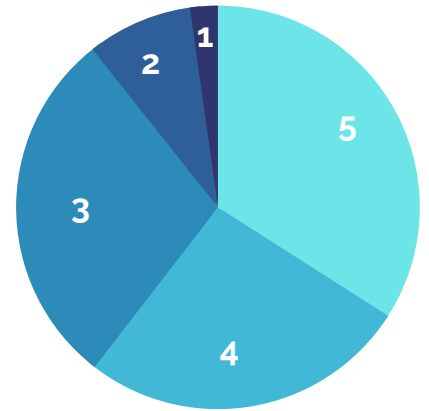
Showing students how different careers may be impactful. Encourage them to think about how they can use their skills and futures to make a difference. Read our OxBright blog post on how to support your students in exploring impactful careers: <https://oxbright.org/blog/content-for-educators/unlocking-the-purpose-generation-how-gen-z-can-choose-careers-that-matter/>.

3 The more important salary is to a student, the more likely they are to want to be their own boss.

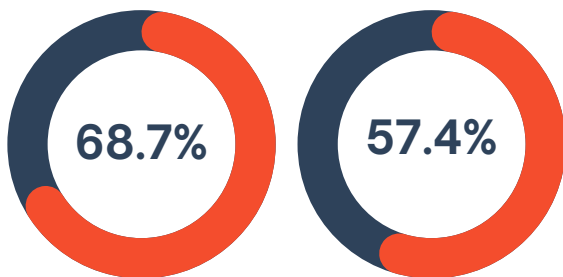
DATA 5

Students were asked how strongly they agree with the statement "I would like to be my own boss". **89.3% scored a 3 or above**, with only 2.2% scoring a 1.

There was a strong correlation between whether a student wanted to be their own boss and how important they considered salary when choosing a future career. **Students who scored salary a 5 had an average score of 4.15 for whether they wanted to be their own boss.** Students who scored salary a 1 had an average score of 2.63 for whether they wanted to be their own boss.



DATA 6



68.7% of students who scored being their own boss as 5, also scored salary as 5.

57.4% of those who scored being their own boss a 5 scored themselves a 5 for good leadership.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

More than **one third** (34.0%) of students scored 5 for wanting to be their own boss, with **89.3% scoring a 3 or above**. Of the students who scored 5 for wanting to be their own boss, **68.7%** also scored salary as 5. This might suggest that students perceive a correlation between being their own boss and earning a high salary, and thus that a desire to earn a high salary influences students to want to be their own boss. The desire to be one's own boss may also be related to autonomy, with a Deloitte study of Gen Z finding that they care more about work-life balance and flexible hours than previous generations did.

However, only **57.4%** of those who scored being their own boss a 5 scored themselves a 5 for good leadership. Whilst this is high, it's perhaps not as high as expected. This may suggest that being one's own boss is about autonomy, rather than the desire to progress into managerial positions. Alternatively, it may identify a **skills gap**, in which students would like to be their own boss but don't yet see themselves as good leaders.

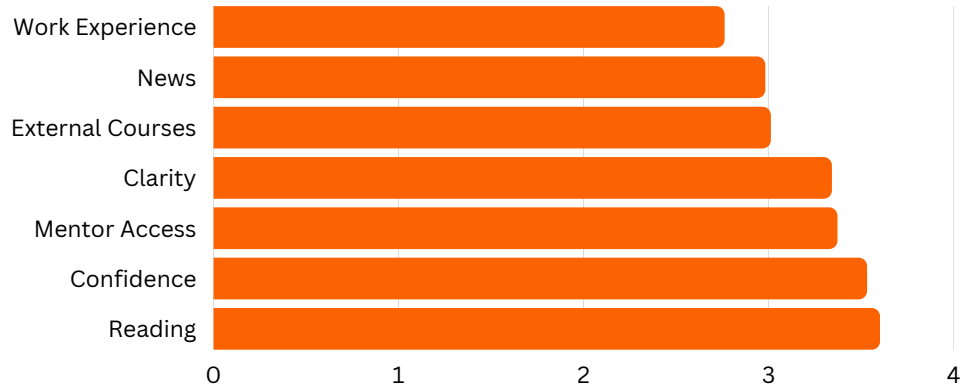
Give your students the edge by:

Giving them a better understanding of what it means to be your own boss. Share this clip of our conference session, 'A Day in the Life of an Entrepreneur': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gq2WqLo_kuw.

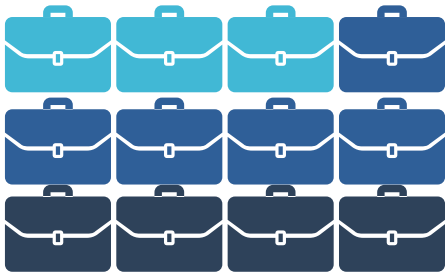
4 Students scored lowest on having participated in work experience.

D A T A 7

Students were asked to score from 1-5 how much they agreed with the statement, 'I have participated in work experience'. The **average score was 2.76** - significantly lower than the other measures of career readiness that we investigated.



D A T A 8



25.2% of students scored work experience as a 1, suggesting they have not participated in any work experience. A further **40.7%** scored it as a 2 or 3, suggesting limited exposure or engagement.

Overall, **most students do not have quality work experience.**

A N A L Y S I S A N D R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

Work experience is a valuable component of career readiness, helping young people to make good career choices and understand what they want to do (British Youth Council, 2018). As such, Gatsby Benchmark 6 states that **every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace** to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks (Good Career Guidance report, 2014). In the UK, an obligation to fulfil this benchmark replaced the mandatory duty for schools to offer work experience at key stage 4. However, this is one of the less commonly fulfilled Gatsby Benchmarks.

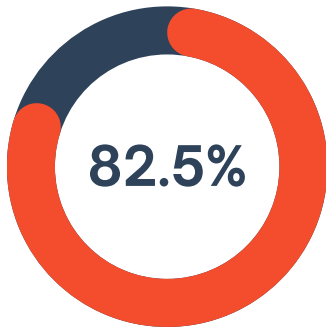
The House of Commons Education Committee highlighted "**gaps in access to high-quality work experience**" as a particular concern in their 2023 CEIAG report, finding that only 30% of year 13 pupils and 10% of those in key stage 4 report having taken part in work experience arranged through their school. Our data supports this, with work experience scoring the lowest average of all measured components of career readiness.

Give your students the edge by:

Encouraging them to reach out to 3 companies that they are interested in gaining work experience with. To make it as simple as possible, they can use our letter template, here: <https://view.publitas.com/d3332267-84fe-4ab6-gfb0-2538da550bbc/oxbright-work-experience-email/>

5 Students scored highest on having read about careers related to their subject.

DATA 9



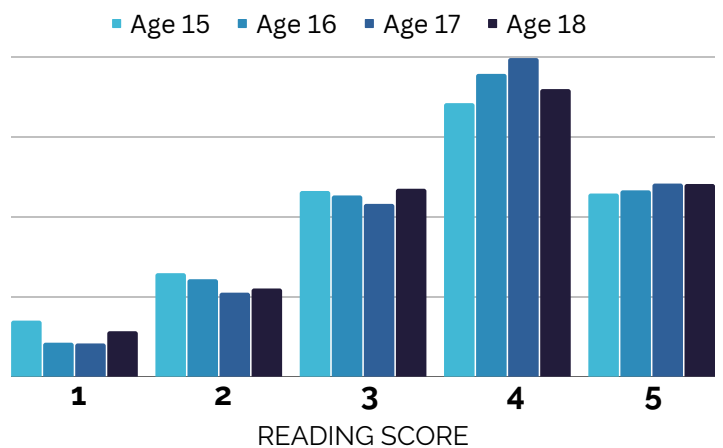
82.5% of students scored 3 or above for having read about careers related to their subject, with an **average score of 3.60**.

Only **5.5%** of students scored reading as a 1, suggesting that most students have done some reading about, and thus have some familiarity with, the careers related to their subject.

These results were remarkably **similar across age groups**, though 15 year olds were marginally more likely to give a lower score than their older peers, with **7.0%** giving a score of 1.

We found a positive correlation between reading score, and how much clarity students' had about their future, suggesting that **those who have read more about career options have a clearer idea of what they want to do**.

DATA 10



ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It's important for students to have good quality information about jobs and career paths. The Gatsby report highlights that familiarity with Labour Market Information needs to start young for students to build up a realistic picture of the job market. Overall, it seems that **students have a generally strong understanding of possible career paths related to their subject**.

A 2022 review found that over **90%** of post-16 providers ensured that most (94%) learners experienced curriculum learning that highlighted the relevance of their subject for future career paths (The Careers and Enterprise Company, 2022). This strongly mirrors the data found in our OxBright Career Test.

However, whilst only 5.5% of our students scored a 1 for having read about careers related to their subject, **only 23.3% scored a 5**. This suggests that whilst nearly all students have some understanding of careers related to their subject, most students would benefit further from deeper understanding.

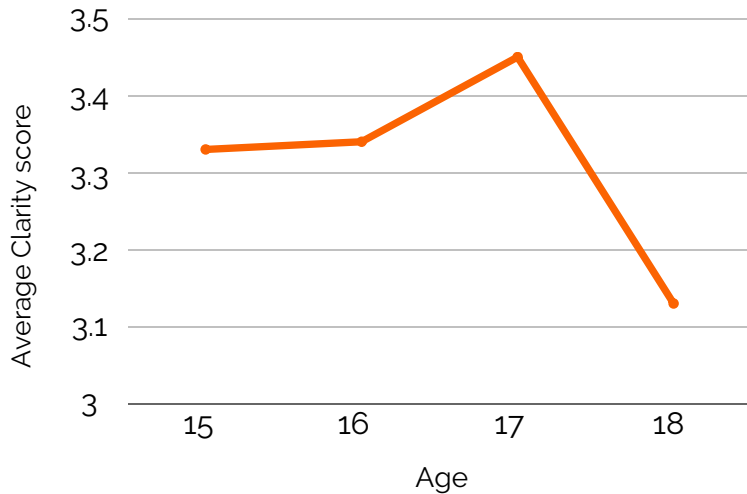
Give your students the edge by:

Increasing the depth in which they read around their subject. Students can fill out the OxBright Career test to receive personalised and tailored recommendations, based on their own interests, skills and preferences:

<https://www.oxbright.org/resources/career-test/>

6 Students' clarity over their futures increases with age from 15 to 17, but then falls between 17 and 18.

DATA 11



The clarity students had over their future career direction increased with age from 15 to 17, from 3.33 at age 15 to a **peak of 3.45 at age 17**.

However, **clarity then falls from age 17 to 18**, to a low of 3.14.

DATA 12

9.5% of 18 year olds scored clarity at a 1 out of 5. This was the highest proportion of any age group.

Only **13.4%** of this age group scored a 5. This was the lowest proportion of any age group.



ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Career and Enterprise Company's 2021/22 review of Careers Education assessed different measures of career readiness for students of different ages. Whilst most measures saw improvement as age increased, the number of students who reported having a plan for their next step decreased, from **86% in Year 11, to 83% in Year 13**. Our data reflects this trend. Whilst clarity over the future increases with age from 15 to 17, it **falls between ages 17 and 18**, (around Year 13). The drop in clarity shown in our data may be influenced by the results of 18 year olds who are currently in gap years or taking resits, and hence feel less clear about their future, but the parallel drop found in the CEC's data suggests that gap-year students don't account for this fall in clarity.

More likely, older students have a greater awareness of the multitude of careers and options available to them. The CEC measured a significant **increase in the percentage of students who had learned about careers other than that of their family/carer**, jumping from **77% in Year 11 to 87% in Year 13**. This increased awareness likely reduces clarity, as what may have previously seemed like an obvious career path for an individual becomes less certain, due to the increased awareness of options available. Thus, this drop in clarity may not be a negative reflection of career readiness.

Give your students the edge by:

Emphasising that it's okay to be unsure, and it's good to explore different options! Share our OxBright blog post on how to choose a career path: <https://www.oxbright.org/blog/university-preparation/how-to-choose-a-career-path-a-guide-for-high-school-students/>

7

Students who have taken external courses are more likely to have role models, and are more likely to perceive themselves as good leaders.

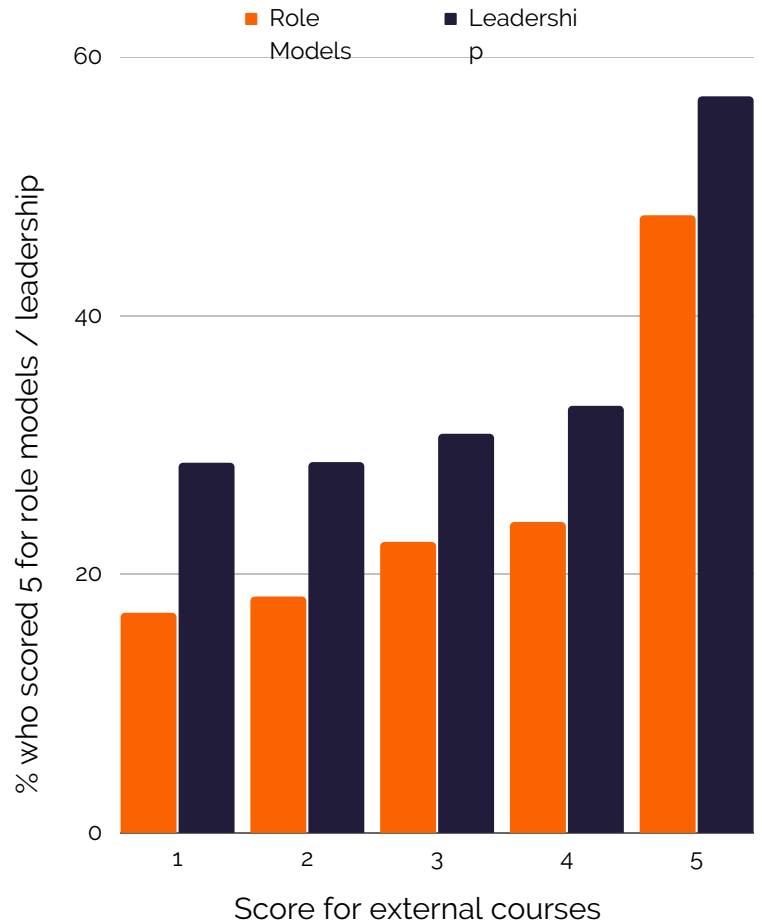
DATA 13

47.7% of students who scored 5 for external courses also reported 5 for having access to role models.

In comparison, only 17.0% of students who scored a 1 for external courses scored 5 for having access to role models.

This makes students who scored 5 for external courses 2.81x more likely to score 5 for having role models than those who scored 1 for external courses.

We see the same trend for leadership. Students who scored 5 for having ta external courses were 1.99x more likely to score 5 for perceiving themselves as good leaders, than those who scored 1 for external courses.



ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It's important for young people to have role models, particularly if students view some professions as inaccessible for someone like them. Role models are essential to **provide guidance and open doors to opportunities** (Careers and Enterprise Company, 2023). Our data found that students who have taken external courses were **more likely to have access to at least one role model** or mentor whose career they admire. This is likely because the courses provide such role models, through speakers, tutors, or panels.

Further, students who have taken external courses were **more likely to strongly agree with the statement, "I could be a good leader"**. Perhaps those with leadership tendencies are more likely to apply for external courses, but it seems that external courses might also be a valuable opportunity for students to develop and practise leadership skills, and thus come to see themselves as having the capacity to be a good leader.

Give your students the edge by:

Directing students to OxBright! OxBright offers online courses, internships, and conferences. Share our OxBright blog post, on how to choose an online summer school programme:

<https://www.oxbright.org/blog/online-summer-school/choosing-an-online-summer-school-programme/>.

Conclusion

Our key recommendations:

- 1 It's clear that impact and salary matter to students. Encourage them to explore this further by considering how different careers in their subject can make a positive difference, and earn them a high salary.
- 2 Most students lack adequate work experience. Help students to look into work experience opportunities early, and to reach out to companies or individuals that they're interested in learning from. Share our letter template to make things as simple as possible.
- 3 Students have less clarity about the future at age 18 than at any point from 15-17. They should continue exploring and researching the full variety of options available to them. External courses are a great way to do this, whilst also providing role models and developing leadership skills.

Join our Heads of Futures Network

For access to our full range of free careers resources – plus the latest insights from the field, and the chance to network with like-minded educators from around the world – become a member of our Heads of Futures LinkedIn network (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12883444/>). We'd love to see you there!

Final comments

Our data has shown that there is strong cause for optimism about the future of careers education. Most students have a strong awareness of the different career choices available to them, and are generally clear about their future career paths and confident about future success. Further, a promising number of students are committed to making a positive impact with their careers.

However, many students are still lacking critical practical skills and experiences to help them realise these ambitions. A large proportion of students don't have sufficient work experience, and many lack access to a mentor or role model. Online experiences provide a valuable opportunity to address these concerns, and will be fundamental to driving careers education in an increasingly online world.

References

<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/yvmnubxi/insight-briefing-update-on-student-career-readiness-in-2021-22.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-careers-guidance-in-schools-and-further-education-and-skills-providers/independent-review-of-careers-guidance-in-schools-and-further-education-and-skills-providers>

<https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf>

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/40610/documents/198034/default/>

<https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/issues/work/content/genzmillennialsurvey.html>

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/understanding-generation-z-in-the-workplace.html>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-careers-guidance-in-schools-and-further-education-and-skills-providers/independent-review-of-careers-guidance-in-schools-and-further-education-and-skills-providers>

<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/our-evidence/evidence-and-reports/insight-briefing-gatsby-benchmark-results-2021-2022/>

<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/y1vfabyd/cec-ready-for-the-future-2022.pdf>

<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-after-covid-19>

<https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf>

KNIVETON, B.H., 2004. The influences and motivations on which students base their choice of career. *Research in Education*, 72. pp 47-57

<https://www.byc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Youth-Select-Committee-Realising-the-Potential-of-Work-Experience.pdf>