

MILLENNIALS:
PART THREE OF A
SIX-PART SERIES

Support me but don't tell me what to do

WHO AND WHAT INFLUENCES MILLENNIALS' CAREER CHOICES? THE ANSWERS AREN'T AS CLEAR-CUT AS ONE MIGHT THINK.

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As global organizations compete to hire the best Millennial talent, they often bet big on digital and social media to reach this always-on generation. Is it a well-researched bet?

Interviewing more than 16,000 Millennials across the globe, we asked: What are Millennials' preferred and trusted sources of career information? And are Millennial parents really so involved in their adult-children's decision-making?

What we found out may surprise you.



A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH STUDY FROM THE INSEAD EMERGING MARKETS INSTITUTE, THE HEAD FOUNDATION AND UNIVERSUM.

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Millennials have grown up with the Internet and on-demand access to information. They are the first generation to come of age using social media. It's clear based on how Millennials make connections and share information online, they are simply wired to communicate differently than those who preceded them.

Logically, global organizations seeking to woo this generation of plugged-in, mobile-savvy young professionals are hyper-focused on ramping up their digital content and social media efforts.

And yet anyone who works in content-related fields will tell you it's becoming harder and harder to win attention online. Social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn have become so popular that brands struggle to get their messages in front of coveted audiences. Many reports show brand "reach" (i.e. visibility) on Facebook, for example, declined as much as 50 percent in 2014 alone due to changes in Facebook's algorithms. Even the most experienced social media experts struggle to be seen online as they compete with a massive



MANY REPORTS SHOW BRAND "REACH" (I.E. VISIBILITY) ON FACEBOOK, FOR EXAMPLE, DECLINED AS MUCH AS 50 PERCENT IN 2014 ALONE DUE TO CHANGES IN FACEBOOK'S ALGORITHMS.

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WHAT BOTHERED US IN PARTICULAR IS THE WAY MANY ORGANIZATIONS TREAT MILLENNIALS AS A HOMOGENEOUS GROUP, REGARDLESS OF AGE OR NATIONALITY.

variety of online content (after all, your employer brand content is competing with everything from other brand content, to cat memes and vacation selfies).

Add to that, many organizations take a siloed approach to digital and social media; the marketing division owns technology, talent, strategy and processes quite apart from HR and recruiting. Marketing has experimented with reaching and engaging their audiences online far longer than their peers in HR, but few organizations have broken the barriers that exist

between marketing and HR to share resources and talent.

Should HR and talent leaders focus on playing catch-up? Is winning at digital content and social media the only answer to reach Millennials? (It feels almost like heresy to say otherwise these days.)

We set out to question the conventional wisdom about Millennials. What bothered us in particular is the way many organizations treat Millennials as a homogeneous group, regardless of age or nationality. Yes, Millennials

are in many ways more global-minded than any generation before; they share musical tastes and fashion trends across regions, for example, in a way that older generations never did. Do 25 year-olds in Nigeria share the same ideals as those in Indonesia?" Do Millennials in the Asia-Pacific countries consult parents' advice to the same extent as those in Latin America? And how can companies make decisions about Millennial talent development without local knowledge of Millennial attitudes?

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Who and what influences Millennials' career choices?

WHERE DO MILLENNIALS TURN FOR CAREER INFORMATION AND ADVICE?

How to reach and influence younger Millennials

With regards to your future career, how important is empowerment to you? What do you understand by it?

IT'S THE FREEDOM OF SELF-DETERMINATION.

MALE, GERMANY

SUPPORT ME BUT DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO

For all the focus on digital and social media, our research shows Millennials crave something more. In a study conducted earlier this year, we asked university-aged Millennials (i.e. those who have not yet entered the workforce) where they currently access information, and how they would prefer to get information about employers. (Universum Global Communicating with Talent Survey, 2014.)

University students told us the channels they most often use are the employer website (55 percent), career fairs (44 percent) and social networks (42 percent). However, when asked not for actual channels but preferred channels for information, it's clear that another myth may be busted. Many Millennials don't crave more social content – but rather face-to-face interactions on campus. The top two preferred channels for information about a potential employer are

employer presentations on campus (41 percent), and career fairs (39 percent). [FIGURE 1](#)

We also asked university-aged Millennials which sources of information are most influential. The top pick: getting information from others they know who work or have worked for that particular employer (49 percent). And at the near-bottom of the list: friends, parents and classmates. [FIGURE 2](#)

Finally, the degree to which social media figures prominently as a source of information varies by country/region. Millennials from China, France and Switzerland for example are not as enthusiastic about using social networks as their peers from other countries. On average only 23% of Millennials in these countries prefer to use social networks when learning more about employers compared to 42 % globally.



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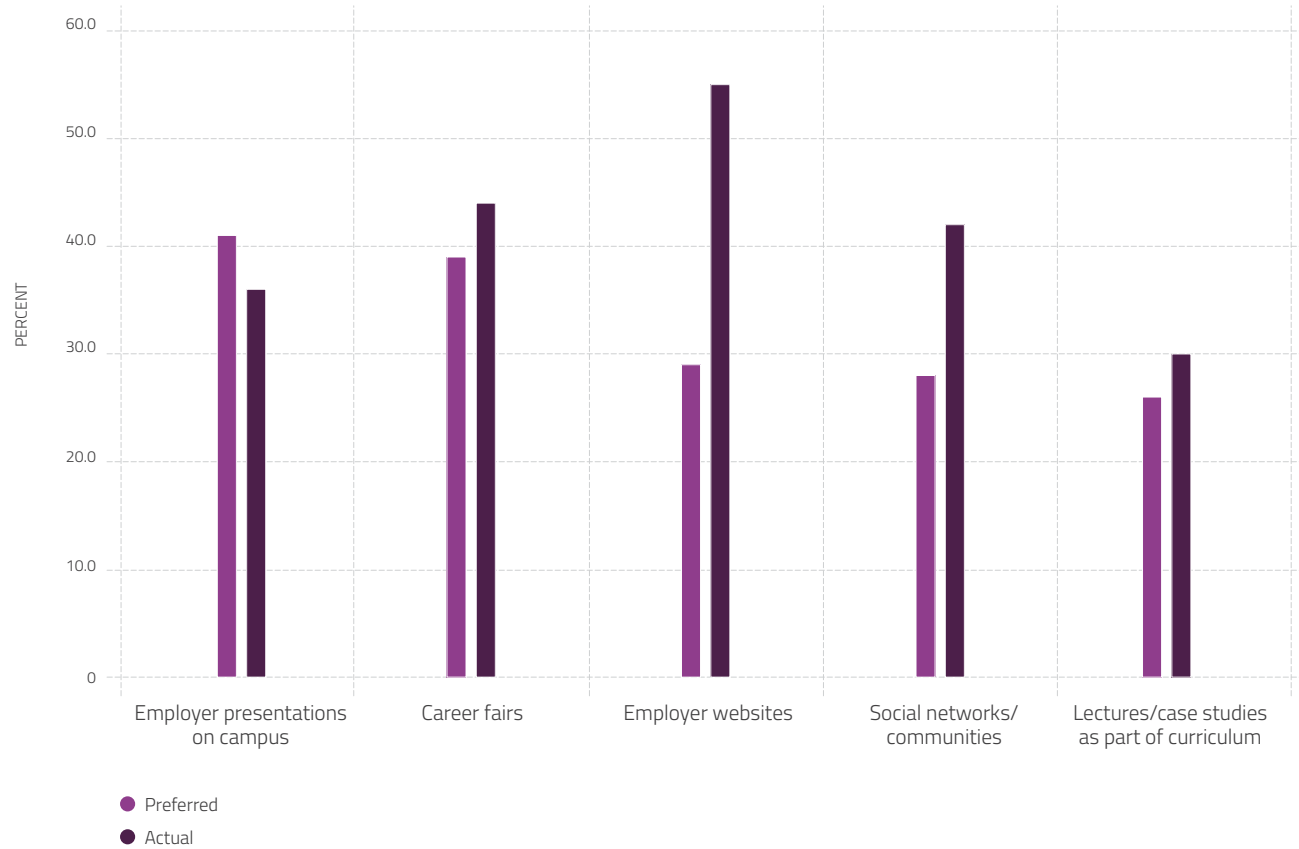
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FIGURE 1

IN WHICH CHANNELS DO YOU THINK EMPLOYERS SHOULD INVEST MORE TIME AND MONEY TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU?

WHICH CHANNELS DO YOU USE IN GENERAL TO LEARN ABOUT POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

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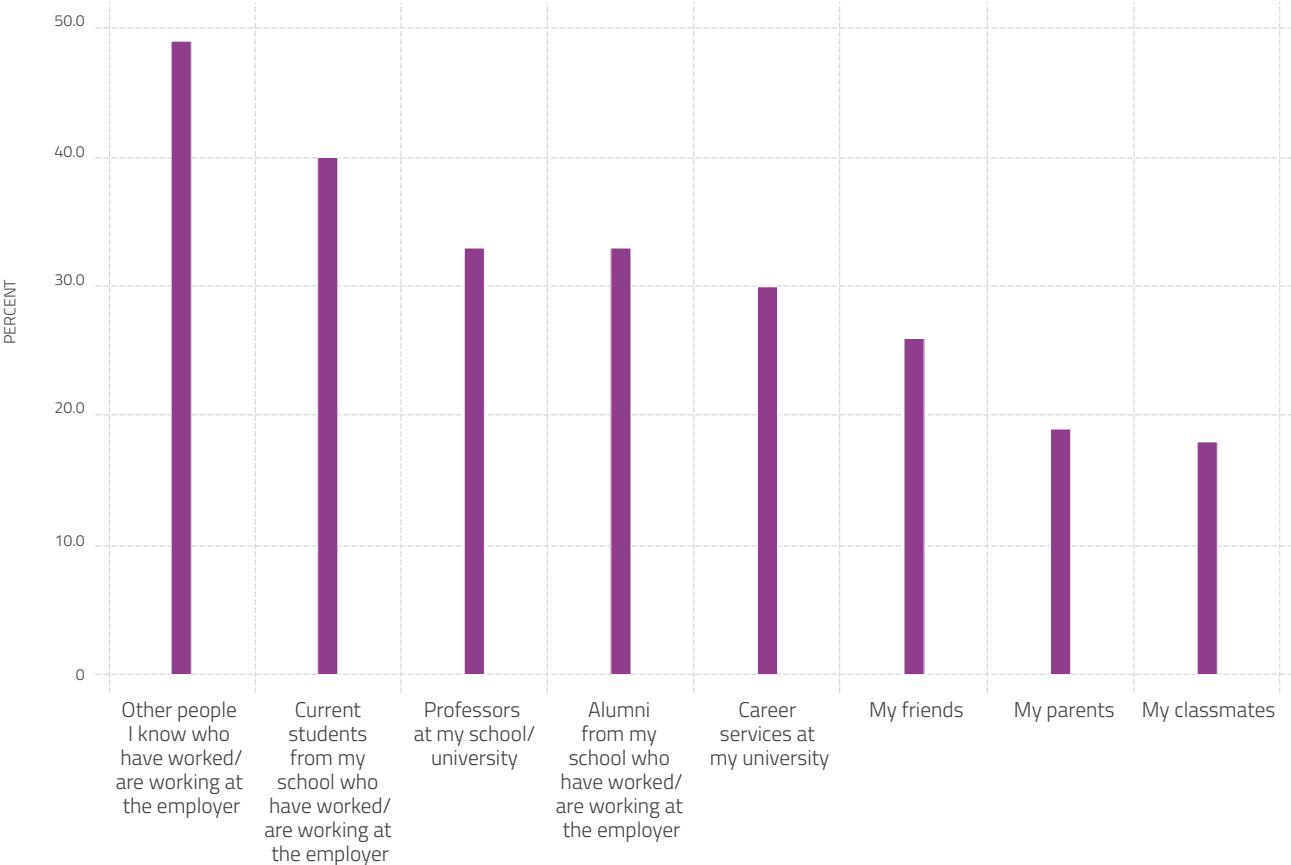
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FIGURE 2
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCES INFLUENCE YOU THE MOST WHEN GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS?

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Investigating the role of parents in Millennials' work lives

How important is advice from friends or family when you make choices about your career? Why?

I ASK FOR ADVICE WHEN I HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT THE CHOICES I'M ABOUT TO MAKE.

FEMALE, BRAZIL

SUPPORT ME BUT DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO

In our most recent study, we asked Millennials more broadly (across age groups and countries across the world) who influences their career decisions. One of the claims the study hoped to test was the notion that Millennials are still deeply influenced by their parents.



One of the most enduring stereotypes applied to Millennials is that parents hover over them into adulthood, micro-managing their lives ... even attending job interviews in extreme examples. Many employers have bought into this stereotype; in countries such as the US and China, employers host career fairs that include information for parents. Is catering to parents a good idea?

Our research simply does not support the idea that parents have an outsized influence on Millennials' work lives. [FIGURE 3](#)

On the whole, 26 percent of Millennials reported they involve parents in their career decisions, but only 10 percent say parents are "very involved." Thirty-nine percent disavowed the statement

altogether, saying they disagreed or strongly disagreed that parents are involved in professional decision-making.

Those in Central and Eastern Europe were most opposed to the idea (61 percent opposed) while those in Africa were most likely to involve parents (29 percent very much involved parents).

Yet when asked whether family is a support mechanism, the answers were more parent-friendly. Overall 64 percent say family is a key support to respondents' career aspirations, and 31 percent strongly agree with the statement. In Latin America this is particularly true (71 percent agree or strongly agree) and it's least true in Central and Eastern Europe (44 percent agree or strongly agree). [FIGURE 4](#)

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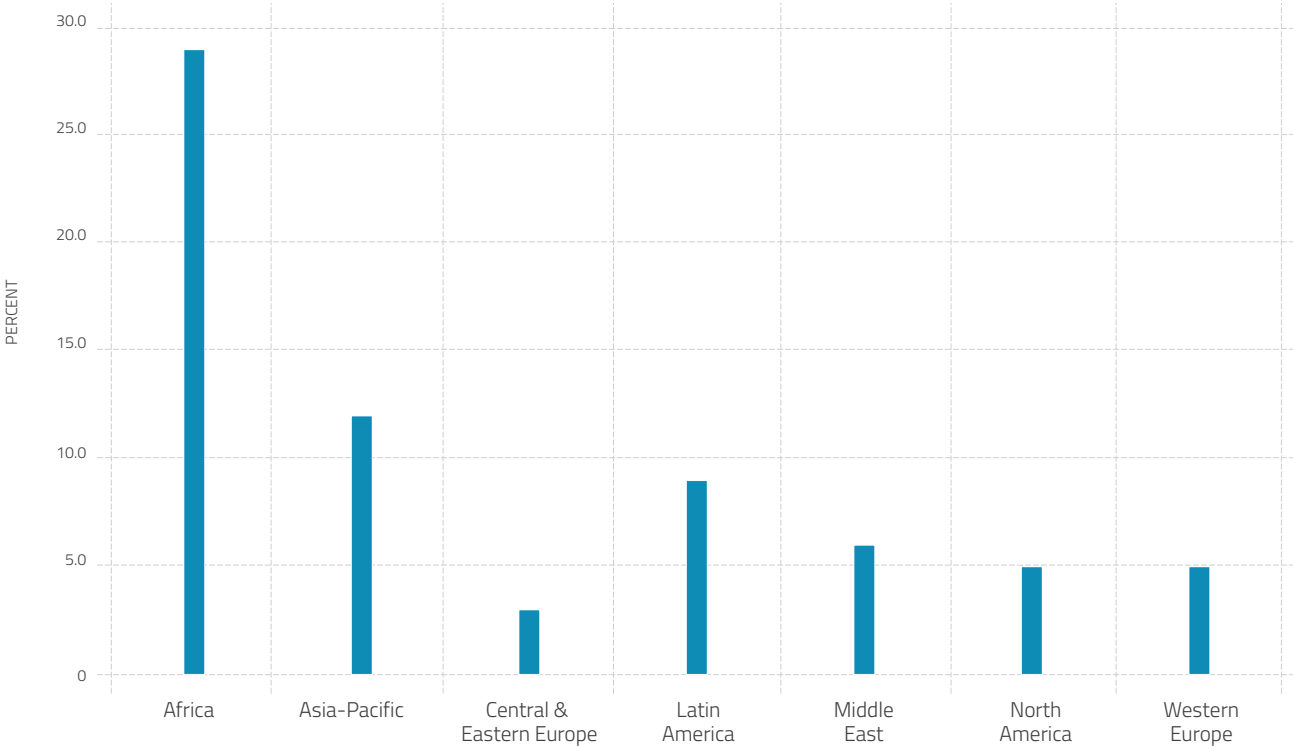
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FIGURE 3
HOW INVOLVED ARE YOUR PARENTS IN THE CAREER DECISIONS YOU MAKE? (VERY MUCH INVOLVED)

By region



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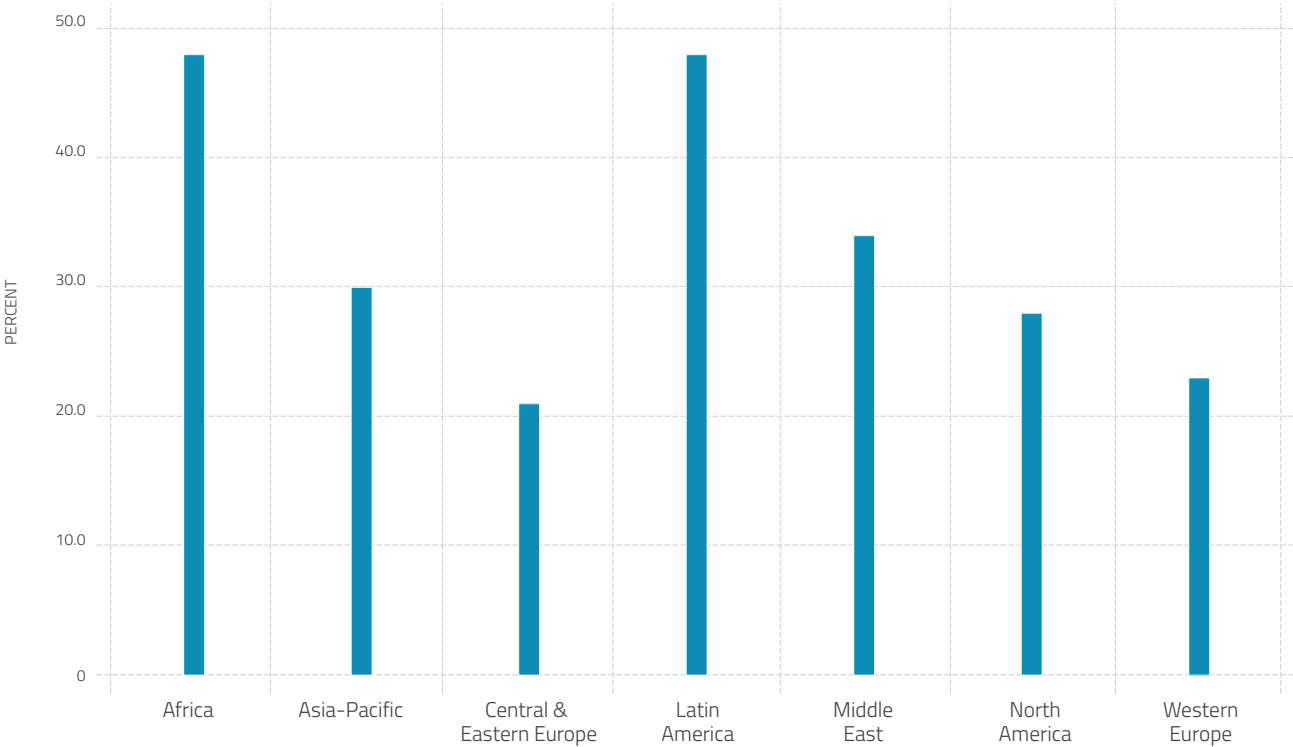
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FIGURE 4
MY FAMILY IS A KEY SUPPORT TO MY CAREER ASPIRATIONS (I STRONGLY AGREE)

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Other sources of influence for Millennials

Who do you think has more influence in society today – government, private business or individuals?

PRIVATE BUSINESS, AS POWER SHOULD BE MORE EVENLY SPREAD OUT AND NOT IN THE HANDS OF A FEW INDIVIDUALS OR ENTITIES.

MALE, SINGAPORE

With regards to friends influencing professional decisions, Millennials' answers vary widely. Overall only 16 percent say friends have a strong influence on career decisions.

[FIGURE 5](#)

Looking at influence more generally, Millennials think very differently about the relative power of institutions versus individuals to influence society. In the Asian-Pacific region, for example, more

than half say government has the strongest ability to influence society of the choices given, while those in North America ranked government as least influential (18 percent). Millennials in the Middle East, Western Europe and North America view private business as the dominant force, those in Latin America and Central/Eastern Europe say individuals have the strongest influence. [FIGURE 6](#)



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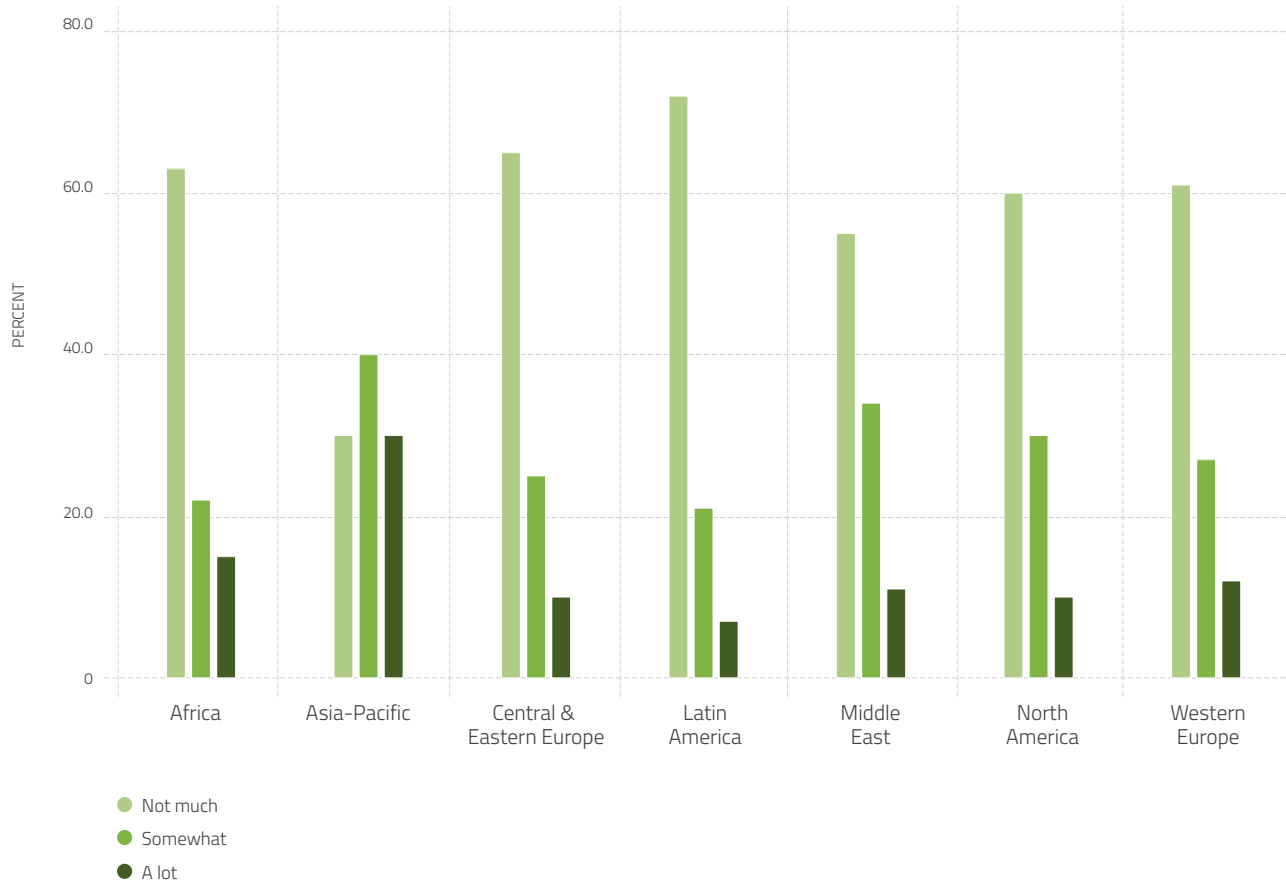
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FIGURE 5

HOW MUCH DO YOUR FRIENDS' OPINIONS INFLUENCE YOUR CAREER DECISIONS? (NOT MUCH AT ALL)

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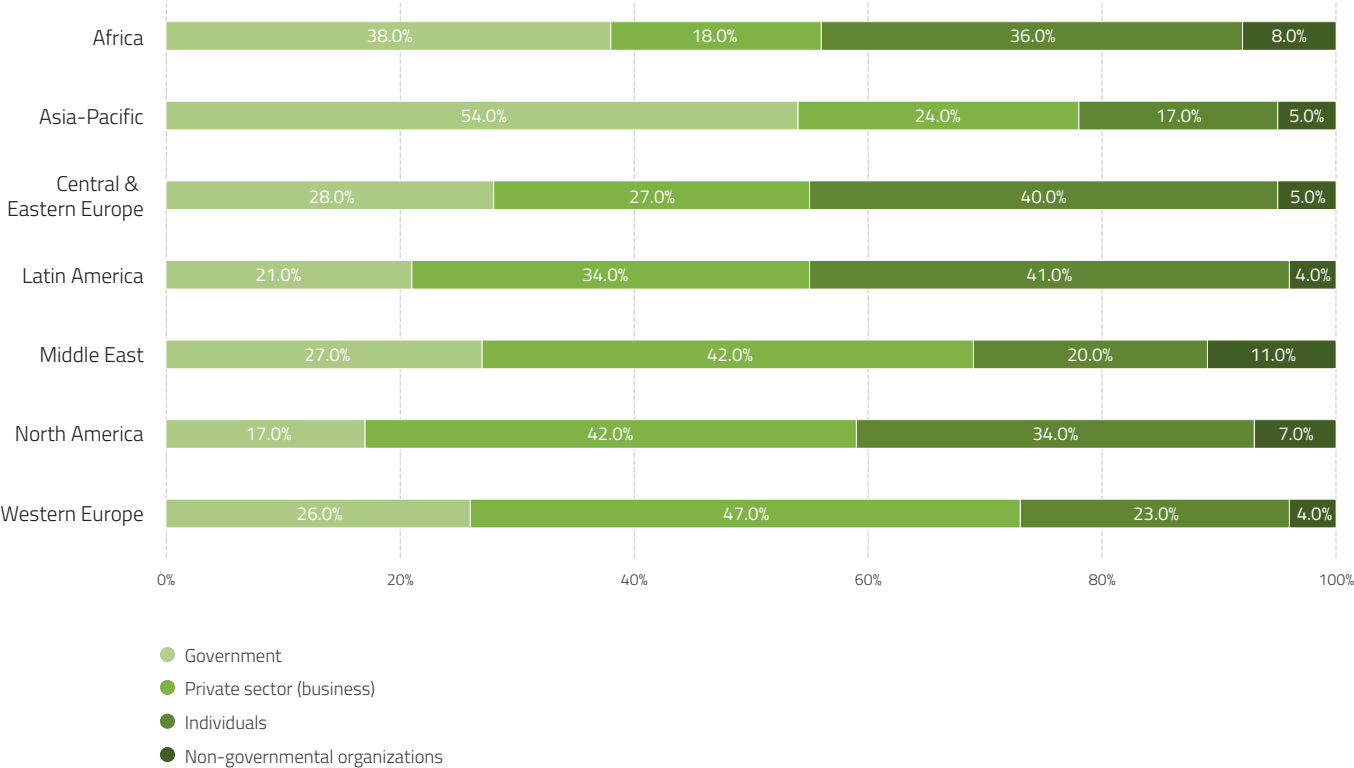
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FIGURE 6
WHO DO YOU THINK HAS THE STRONGEST ABILITY TO INFLUENCE SOCIETY?

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Implications for employers

In our first eBook, entitled *Understanding a Misunderstood Generation*, we reviewed a string of stereotypes long imposed on the Millennial generation. These included:

- Millennials are interested in leadership positions and expect to advance rapidly in their careers.
- Millennials care more about personal development and work-life balance than traditional trappings of success, such as money and status.
- And the long-favorite: Millennials (over)-rely on friends and family for input on career issues.

Through our research, we wanted to test (a) whether statements such as these hold up to testing and (b) to what extent these ideas hold true across different regions of the globe. Not surprisingly, we found that while certain ideas do indeed tend to be true across regions (e.g. a desire to attain a leadership role), there is a tremendous degree of variability region-by-region, and country-by-country.

Millennials feelings about the role of family and friends in their careers, and their belief in government and/or private institutions to influence change, is no different.

For employers, the findings should awaken their thinking about how to recruit, onboard, and retain

Millennials across different regions. What inspires (and worries) a Millennial in North America is quite different from that which inspires those in the APAC countries.

- Will employers continue to involve parents if so few Millennials say parents have a strong influence (and in some regions, such as Central and Eastern Europe, Millennials seem particularly opposed to it).
- How can employers' branding support Millennials' optimism in the Middle East, North America and Western Europe for the private sector's ability to effect change?

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For employers, it's critical to identify the areas of talent management that are most affected by these differences. For example, in Africa nearly a third strongly agree that parents are very much involved in career decisions, while in North America only five percent say this is true; career fairs should absolutely account for these differences region-by-region. And recruiters in Central and Eastern Europe, for example, should note Millennials' modest enthusiasm for working on teams.

Ultimately talent management leaders need to ensure their Millennial-targeted strategies are based on robust country-level research and the preferences of professional cohorts (e.g. understanding how 20-something engineers in Italy prefer to work), rather than perceived attitudes and unfair stereotypes applied to Millennials as a whole.

Finally, employers should ensure their HR organizations understand Millennials are a diverse group, a generation quite unlike the stereotypes we've been taught to believe over the last decade.

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Sign up to receive the full report, *Understanding a Misunderstood Generation*.

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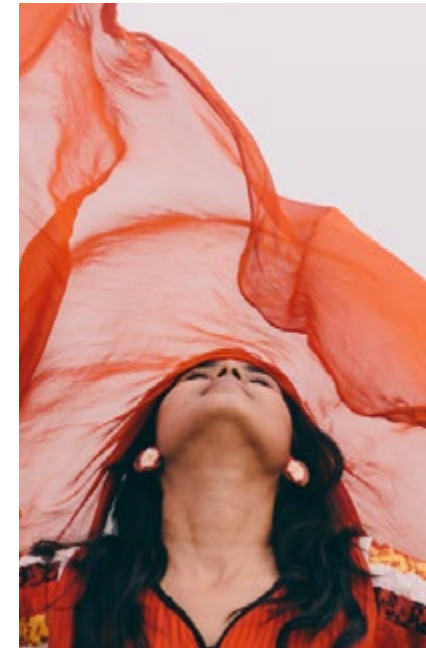
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Data for this study was collected mainly through Universum's proprietary Millennial database, as well as through external panel providers in selected geographic areas. Covering 43 countries, we surveyed 16,637 people between the ages of 18-30 during May to August 2014. *As with all surveys not based solely on probability sampling, error estimates cannot be calculated.*

Region/country	Sample size
Asia-Pacific (APAC)	
Australia	255
China	1,142
Hong Kong	142
India	1,084
Indonesia	295
Japan	202
Malaysia	279
Philippines	1,252
Singapore	130
Thailand	188
Vietnam	97
Africa	
Nigeria	128
South Africa	468
Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)	
Czech Republic	69
Poland	244
Russia	321

Region/country	Sample size
Latin America (LATAM)	
Argentina	110
Brazil	1,036
Chile	825
Colombia	308
Costa Rica	226
Mexico	1,026
Panama	127
Peru	193
Middle East (ME)	
Lebanon	54
Turkey	180
United Arab Emirates	89
North America (NA)	
United States	1,045
Canada	333

Region/country	Sample size
Western Europe (WE)	
Austria	142
Belgium	68
Denmark	304
Finland	212
France	440
Germany	550
Ireland	248
Italy	667
Netherlands	280
Norway	186
Spain	451
Sweden	310
Switzerland	236
United Kingdom	695

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16,637

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