A Novel Situation:

Generational Views on Life amidst COVID-19

While passion, extremism, and polarization are often believed to drive turnout among young voters, data in this study shows repeatedly that this is not the case. Instead, those driving voting trends are the middle group of young adults, the moderates who find themselves unable to commit fully to one ideology or party.

Study Introduction:

To say that 2020 has been a strange year so far is to deliver a somewhat stale understatement. 'Unprecedented circumstances', 'unexpected challenges', and 'trying times' are just a few of the phrases used in the scramble to make sense of such a dramatic situation. From social distancing and the rise of Zoom to failing businesses and job loss, COVID-19 has dramatically changed the reality of American life in 2020. With experts expecting waves of coronavirus to continue for the next two years, this new reality won't be ending anytime soon.[1]

Innumerable news articles and recent studies have hypothesized what this means for the future. A number of these studies have focused on the when and how a vaccine or cure will be available.[2] Some are predictions about the economy and finances.[3] Others focus on the sociological and psychological impacts of the virus. A rapidly expanding selection of studies includes these and other topics, too.[4] However, few of these studies address the short term future and the expectations that Americans have regarding their behavior and practices in the next 6 months.

July 2020 study by McKinsey investigated consumer sentiment and attitudes and touched on the short term future in one of their questions. They found that Americans expect to increase the number of purchases that they make online post-COVID. Despite general health advice to remain self-quarantined indoors as much as possible, this study found that a high percentage of Americans still intended to go out. Over 80A% said that in the 2 weeks following their participation in the survey, they intended to leave home for essential activities such as grocery shopping. Meanwhile, 20-39% said they intended to leave home in the two weeks following for non-essential outings such as visiting friends, dining out, and hair or nail appointments.[5]

While the McKinsey study and others answer some crucial questions regarding Americans' behavior, they fail to create a comprehensive overview of how these pandemic-induced changes will shape our short term future. How will lifestyle norms, consumer habits, and workplace practices be revised? To fill this void, the SoGoStudy team posed these questions and more to 1,025 American adults, diving deep into how America perceives its future in light of the coronavirus. These results are especially interesting when broken down by age groups, delivering a clear picture of just how expectations and opinions vary (or coalesce) across generational divides.

Acknowledging that the situation continues to rapidly evolve, these results reflect American sentiments during the month of May 2020.

Study Highlights:

- **Less than half** of Americans trust news about the current crisis.

- The youngest generation surveyed approaches the pandemic with the greatest skepticism. **37% of Generation Z** does not believe that authorities are making the right decisions.

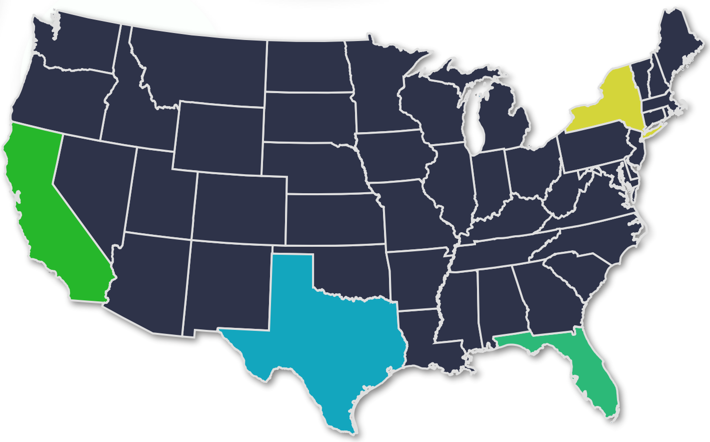
- Workplace trends have shifted: **50% of participants believe flexibility** in their work location is more important than salary, and **51% think flexibility in work hours is more important than salary.**

- **In the next 6 months, Millennials and Generation Y are the most likely to work from home regularly,** work in a (public) co-working environment, seek fully remote work, and connect with clients/prospects in person more.

SoGoSurvey

Demographics

- Geographic Breakdown



12%
California

08%
Florida

08%
New York

06%
Texas

- Employment Status Breakdown

20%
Unemployed

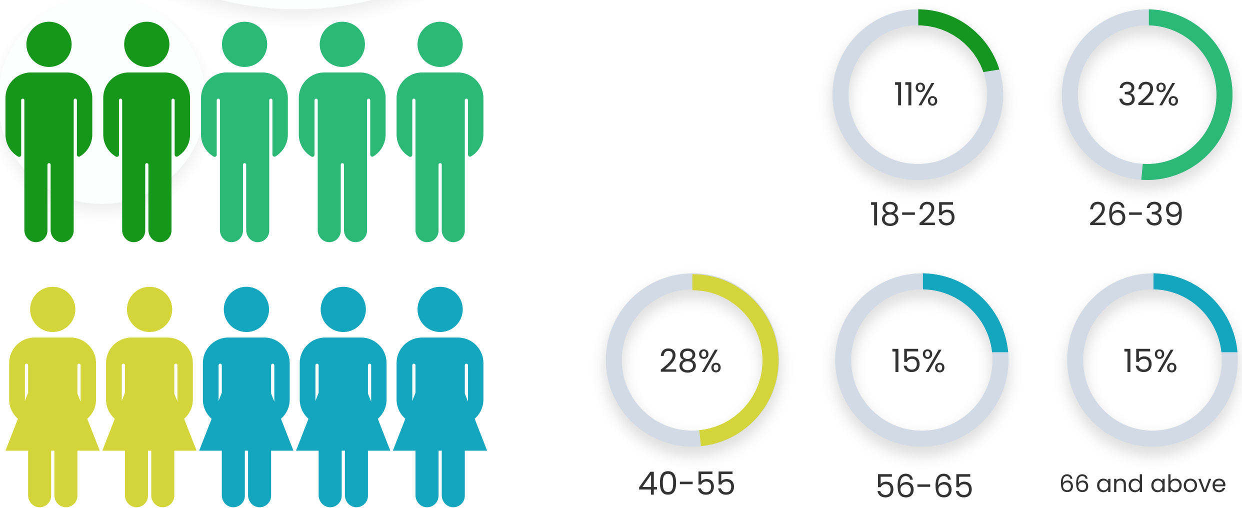
15%
Employed Part-time

45%
Employed Full-time

20%
Retired

Demographics

- Age Breakdown

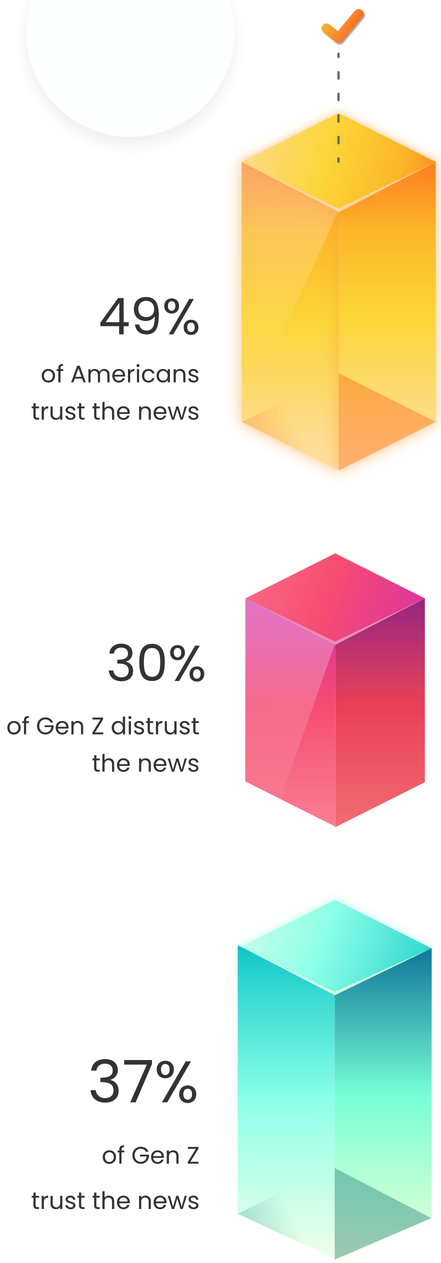


- 18-25: Generation Z
- 26-39: Millennials
- 40-55: Generation X
- 56-65: Baby Boomers
- 66 and above: Boomers - Silent Generation[6]

Take a look at how America views the immediate future in light of COVID-19 and dive deep into how drastically different those views are across different age groups.

Questions and Responses

05. Rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements regarding the pandemic's effect on public life.



- **Overall Highlights:**

At **49%** in agreement or strong agreement, less than half of Americans trust news about the current crisis.

Generation Highlights:

- The belief that everyone should wear a mask in public tends to increase with the age of the participant.[8]
- Generation Z distrusts news about the pandemic most, with **30%** disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that news about the crisis can be trusted; only **37%** believe that it can be trusted.[9]

The Takeaway:

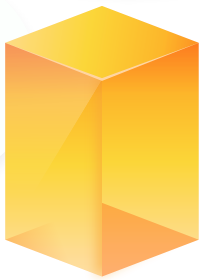
A level of caution and paranoia is not unexpected in the current situation. However, when these same results are broken out by age group, a splintering appears among generations. Each group is in overall agreement, but Generation Z seems to consistently disagree with the more paranoid views of older generations. What do these results say about the generational approach to worry, anxiety, and paranoia?

Questions and Responses

06. Rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements regarding the pandemic's effect on decision making.

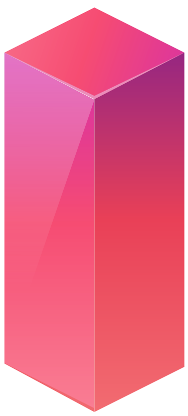
50%

Overall Agreement



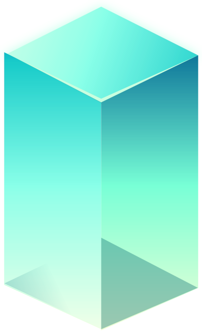
84%

of Americans Believe



63%

of Gen Z Believe



- **Overall Highlights:**

The greatest concern shown here is whether authorities are making the right decisions. This question has both the highest percentage of overall disagreement (**22%**) and the lowest percentage of overall agreement at **50%.**

- **Generation Highlights:**

As Americans get older, the belief that their actions make a difference increases. **84%** of Americans ages 66 and up believe that their actions make a difference, compared to only **63%** of Generation Z who believe the same.[10]

The Takeaway:

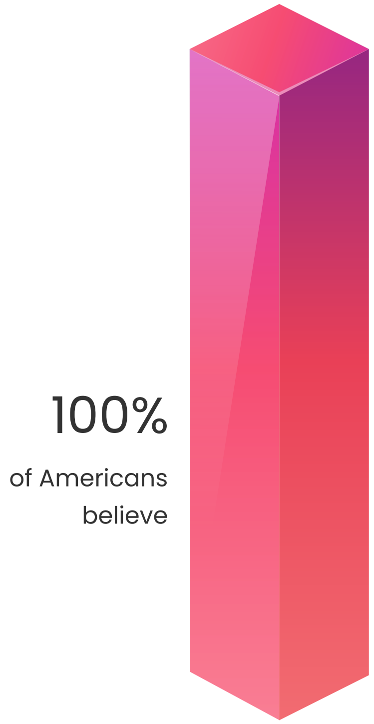
These findings, along with the paranoia noted in question 5, are consistent with Generation Z's overwhelming distrust noted in other studies. For example, a 2019 study found that 60% of adults ages 18 to 29 say most people "can't be trusted."[11] This pessimism of younger Americans is generally directed towards all people, not just authorities and news. Forbes calls this heightened level of distrust a sense for "anything that smells even faintly inauthentic."[12]

Questions and Responses

Q07. Whose responsibility is it to take action to protect personal and community health?

Overall Highlights:

100% of Americans believe that the national government has the most responsibility for taking action to protect personal and community health.



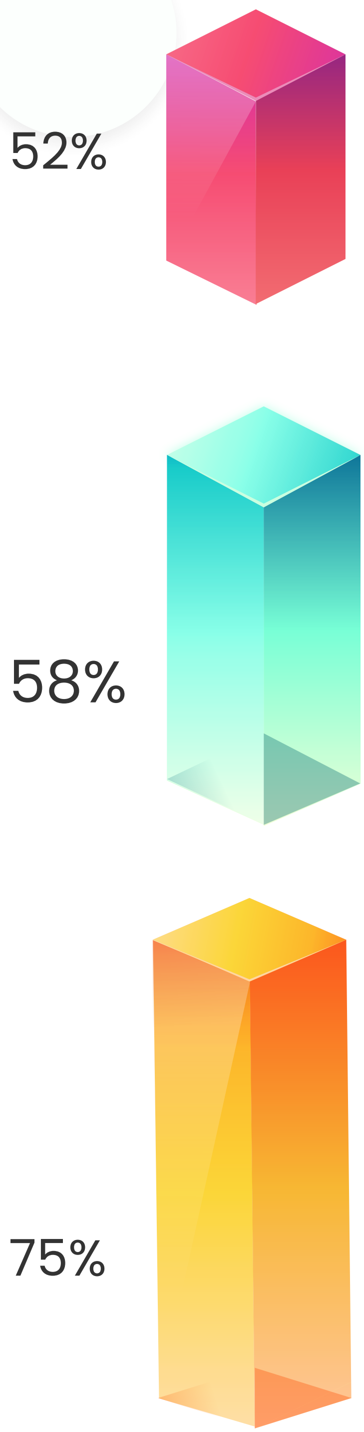
The Takeaway:

An overwhelming percentage of Americans believe that it is the responsibility of both state and national government to ensure the personal and community health of its residents. Because individuals are ranked third for having responsibility to protect the health of themselves and the local community, we see that the reliance on government for safety is not exclusive. Americans still feel like they themselves have some agency. However, as the government is still ranked higher, it appears that those entities with the greatest authority are also those we consider to have the greatest responsibility.

It should be noted that these results indicate the level of responsibility that Americans assign to different authorities when it comes to protecting people from COVID-19. This responsibility distribution, however, is not necessarily reflective of the trust Americans feel for these same authorities.

Questions and Responses

Q08. Please reflect on how your future habits are likely to compare to your past habits. Are you more or less likely to do any of these things in the next 6 months, as compared to the past 6 months?



- **Overall Highlights:**

Overall, we see that the majority of Americans expect to decrease their habits that bring them in contact with people outside their home (i.e. shaking hands, visit another's home, join a social gathering, or go on vacation).

A steep incline trend can be seen with people's approach to the news. A total percentage of **52%** of people will be increasingly likely to pay attention to the news over the next 6 months.

- **Generation Highlights:**

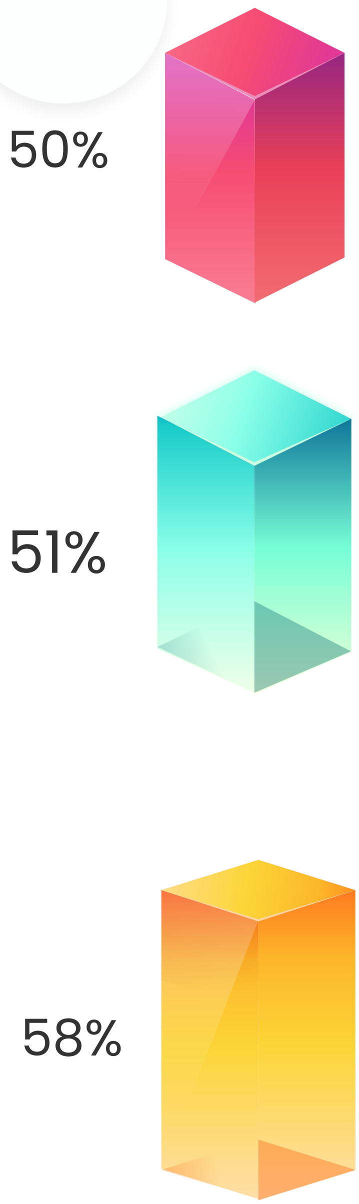
Americans aged 56 to 65 are the least likely to engage in habits that bring them in contact with people outside their homes. 80% expect to decrease the amount that they shake hands with other people[13], **58%** expect to decrease their visits to other people's homes[14], and **75%** expect to decrease their attendance of social gatherings[15].

The Takeaway:

For the next 6 months, American's habits that lead them to be in direct contact with anyone outside of their own home will most likely decrease significantly. From handshakes to visits, especially for the older generations, these routine actions will be put on hold for the time being.

Questions and Responses

Q09. Rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the pandemic's effect the workplace.



- **Overall Highlights:**

50% of participants believe that flexibility in work location is more important than salary, and 51% think flexibility in work hours is more important than salary.

58% of Americans believe that employers should be required to provide internet access for every employee.

- **Generation Highlights:**

With the exception of one statement, 18 to 25 year olds consistently have the highest percentage of choosing to neither agree nor disagree.[16]

The Takeaway:

Once, employers were asking WHEN to bring back their employees to the office. Now, they're asking IF it's necessary to bring them back to the office at all because working remotely has been favored by many.[17] The above graph shows people overwhelmingly have preferences regarding location and flexibility in their careers. Going forward it might behoove employers to take their employees' work from home preferences into account.

Across the board, 26-39 year olds and 40-55 year olds have nearly identical response rates. Meanwhile, 18 to 25 year olds give responses that are most similar to 56 to 65 year olds. This is a surprising finding as Generation Z frequently distance themselves from Baby Boomers on social media. It appears that these two groups have more in common than they let on via social media.

Questions and Responses

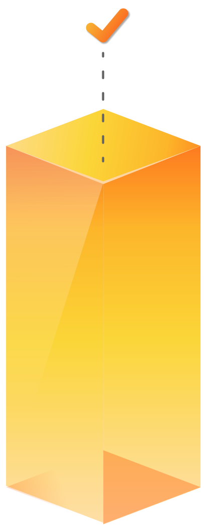
Q10. Please reflect on how your future work practices are likely to compare to your past practices. Are you more or less likely to do any of these things in the next 6 months, as compared to the past 6 months?

- **Overall Highlights:**

As compared to the past 6 months, in the next six months, **50%** of people are more likely to work from home regularly.

- **Generation Highlights:**

Millennials and Generation Y are the most likely to work from home regularly, work in a (public) co-working environment, seek fully remote work, and connect with clients/prospects in person more in the next 6 months[18]



50%

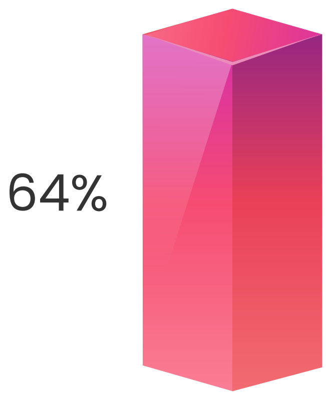
are like to reguarly work from home

The Takeaway:

Overall, changes to working conditions are less likely to occur than changes to the lifestyle habits in question in Q08. The variance in these answers are most likely due to the difference in requirements of the participants' jobs. These results are not the reflection of the participants' personal choices, but rather what their job situation mandates. Some jobs may require in person attendance, some may already have been remote, and some may have transitioned to WFH recently but are working well as remote positions.

Questions and Responses

Q11. Rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the pandemic's effect communication and services.



- **Overall Highlights:**

64% of participants said they are more likely or much more likely to now "try to accomplish as much as [they] can online or over the phone rather than in person."

- **Generation Highlights:**

Apart from 56 to 65 year olds, every age group is in favor of more automated services.[19]

The Takeaway:

Every age group would like to accomplish more online and via phone now than in the past. The rapid shift to working from home and social distancing has probably increased the technological competencies of many Americans. This increased competency would make the users more willing to implement it into their normal practices.

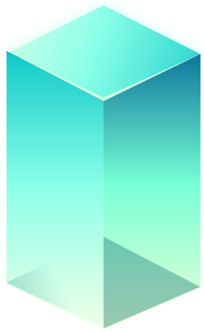
Questions and Responses

Q12. Please reflect on how your future consumer behaviors are likely to compare to your past behaviors. Are you more or less likely to do any of these things in the next 6 months, as compared to the past 6 months?

- **Overall Highlights:**

Out of all the in-person consumer practices, Americans are most likely to shop in a brick and mortar store. **23%** of Americans say they are more likely or much more likely to do so in the next 6 months compared to the past 6 months.

23%



- **Generation Highlights:**

Millennials and Generation Y are the most likely age groups to engage in consumer behavior that brings them in contact with others.

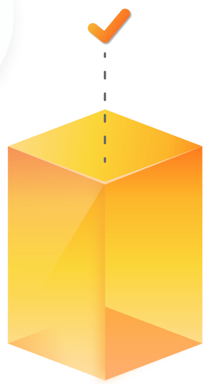
The Takeaway:

Participants predict that as compared to the past 6 months, the next 6 months will find them less likely to engage in consumer behavior that brings them in contact with other people. These responses may indicate that people believe that the pandemic will continue to be a risk to their health and well-being.

Questions and Responses

Q13. Please identify your level of agreement with this statement: As a result of COVID-19, things will never be the same

62%

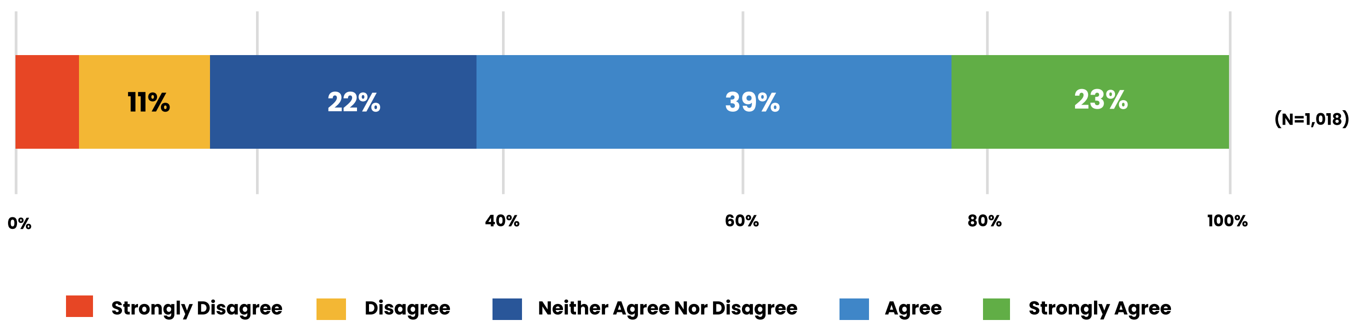


- **Overall Highlights:**

62% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the sentiment.

The Takeaway:

It's no surprise that the majority of people think that the world will likely not be the same as a result of COVID-19. What is a surprise is the disagreement that we see. 16% of people believe that things will eventually return to pre-COVID-19 normalcy.



Methodology

This study was conducted by SoGoSurvey as part of its ongoing SoGoStudy series. A total of 1,025 responses were recorded on May 28 and 29, 2020. Responses were collected from American adults, and responses for the work-related questions (9 and 10) were collected only from those 609 participants who identified themselves as employed full- or part-time (question 3).

The Platform

This research was conducted using the SoGoSurvey Enterprise solution. Ready to learn more about the topics you care about? Learn more about how our platform can deliver the answers you need! Visit us at SoGoSurvey.com or call us at +1 (800) 646-0520.

About SoGoSurvey

Founded in 2013, SoGoSurvey answered the market demand for a robust survey platform delivering high-quality analysis at an affordable price. Today, clients worldwide trust SoGoSurvey with their most sensitive and powerful data, as they investigate employee engagement, customer experience, and more. We are the challengers, and we continue to expand our products and services to deliver the critical answers that inform positive change.

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7. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic. (2020, May 05). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/cps/demographics.htm#age

8. Fig. A-1 in the appendix

9. Fig. A-5 in the appendix

10. Fig. B-3 in the appendix

11. Gramlich, J. (2020, May 30). Young Americans are less trusting of other people – and key institutions – than their elders. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/06/young-americans-are-less-trusting-of-other-people-and-key-institutions-than-their-elders/

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12. Pollack, S. (2020, February 18). Council Post: Why Gen Z Is Cynical About Your Restaurant Marketing Shenanigans. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2020/02/18/why-gen-z-is-cynical-about-your-restaurant-marketing-shenanigans/#ebb77cd30369

13. Fig. C-1 in appendix

14. Fig. C-2 in appendix

15. Fig. C-3 in appendix

16. Fig. D-1 through D-6 in the appendix

17. Routley, N. (2020, June 01). How People and Companies Feel About Working Remotely. Retrieved from https://www.visualcapitalist.com/how-people-and-companies-feel-about-working-remotely/

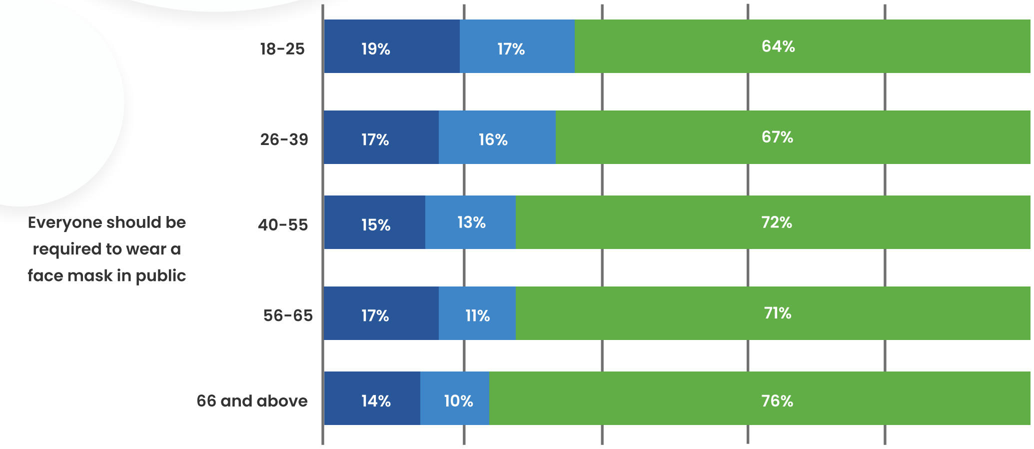
18. Fig. E-1 through E-4 in the appendix.

19. Fig. F-1 in the appendix

Appendix

Q5. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements

A-1



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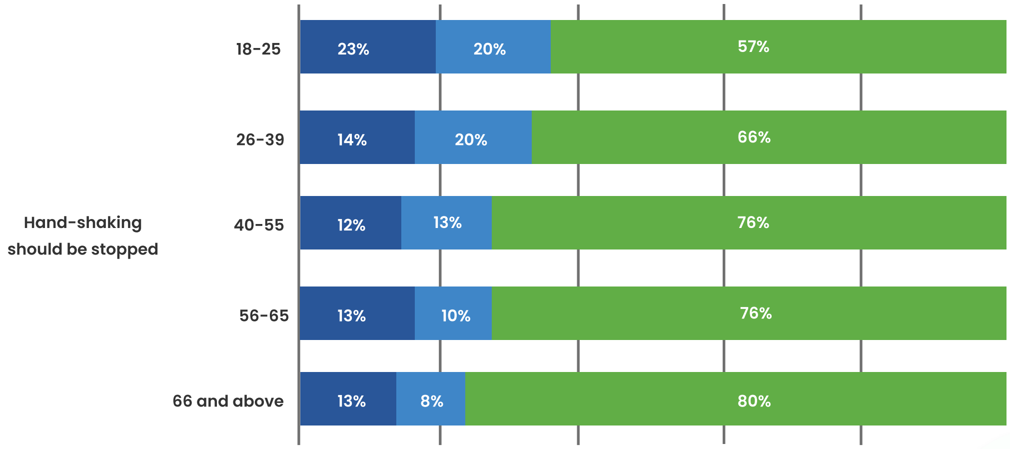

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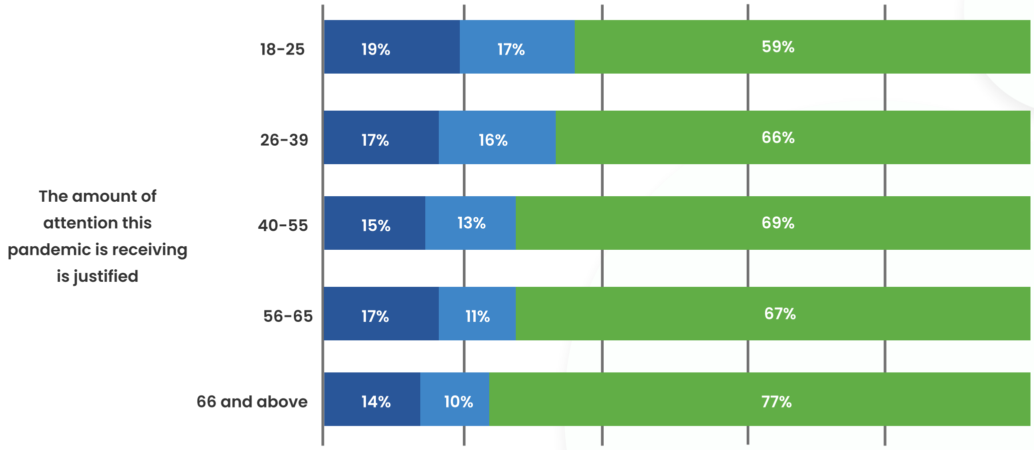

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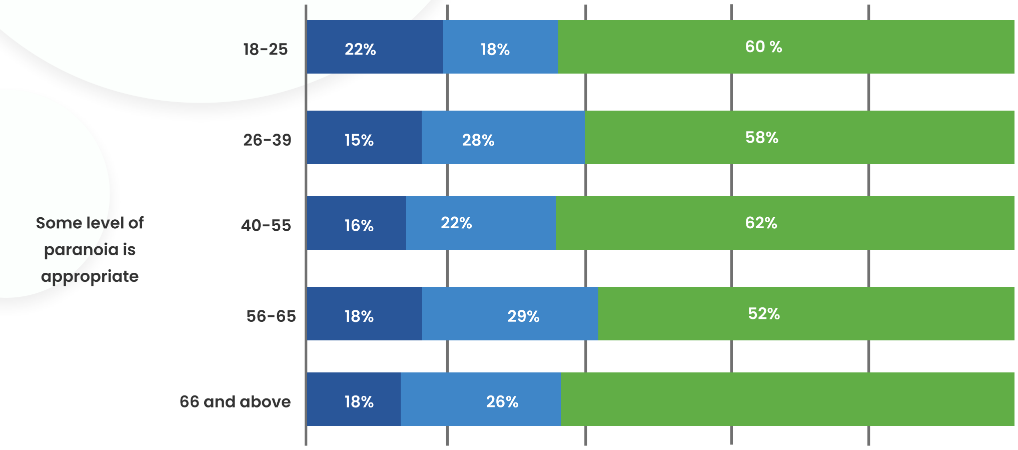
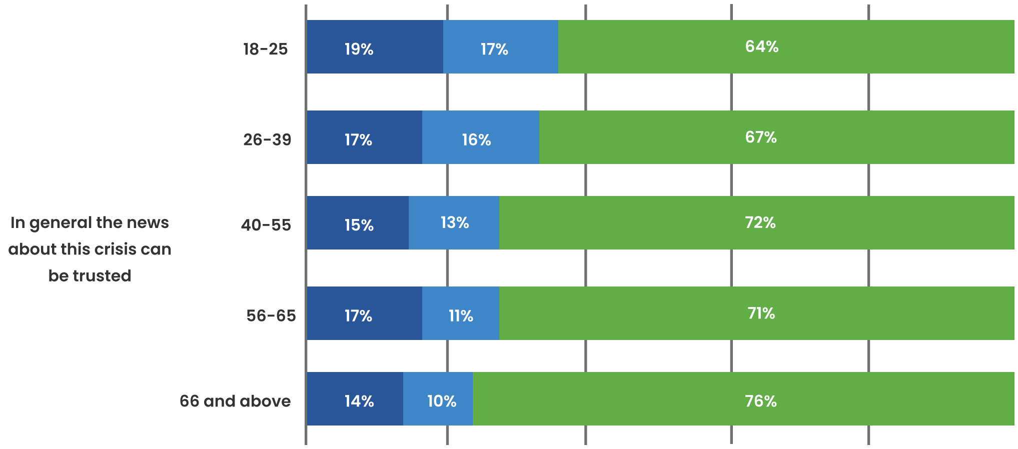
A-4



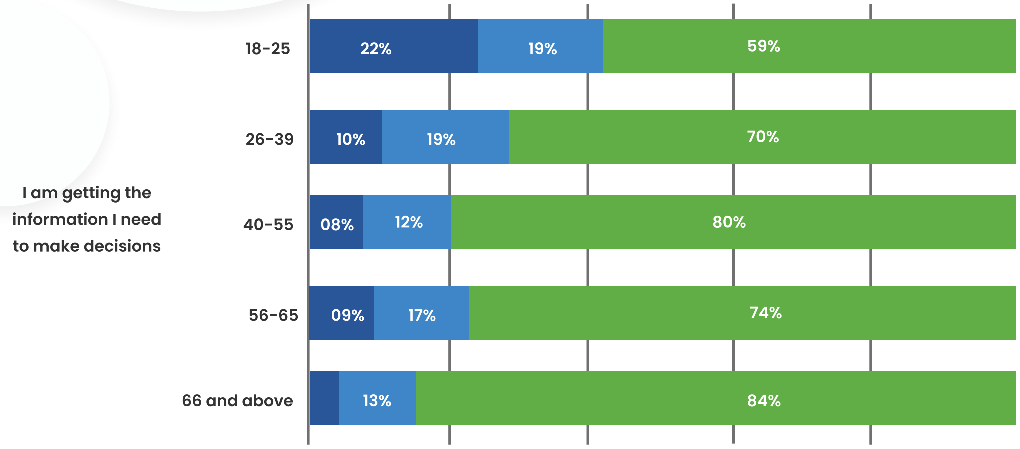
A-5



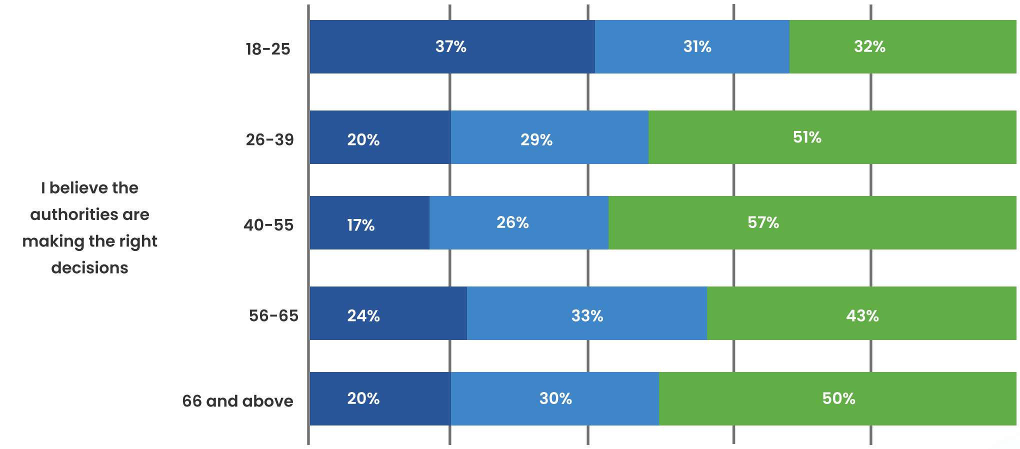
Appendix

Q6. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements

B-1



B-2



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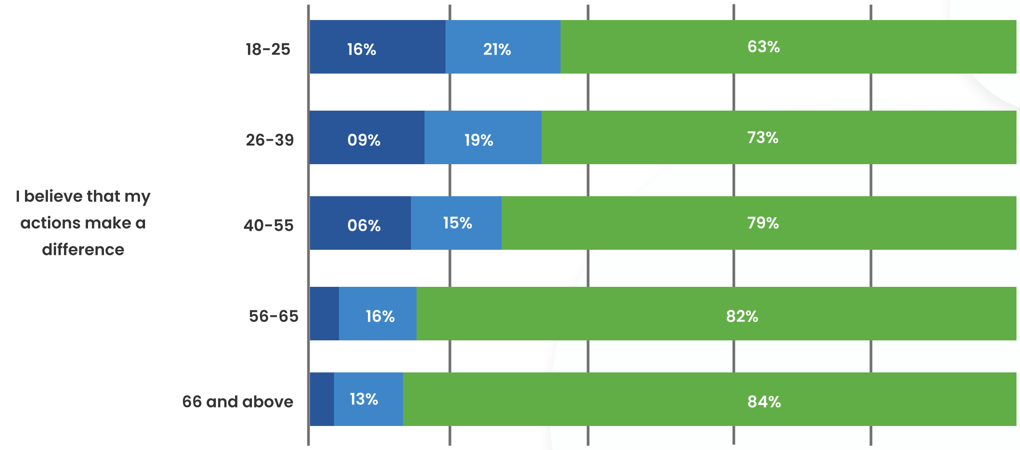

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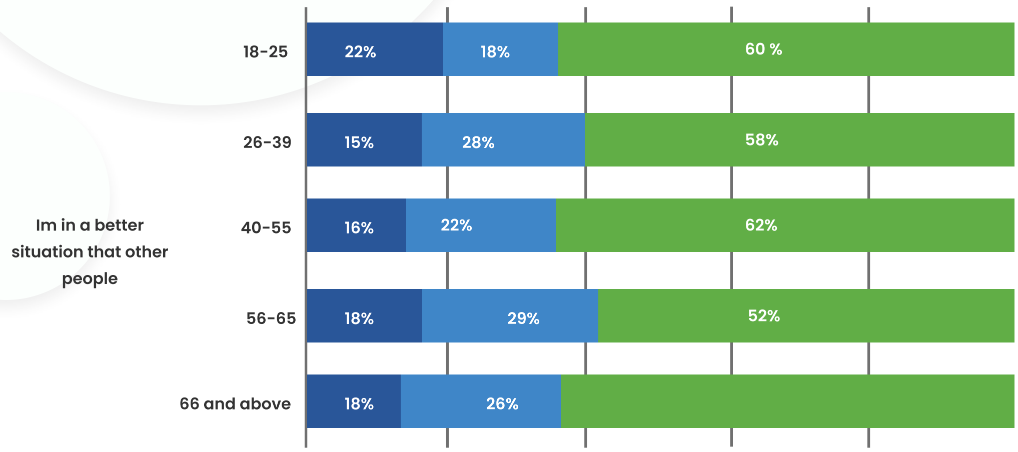
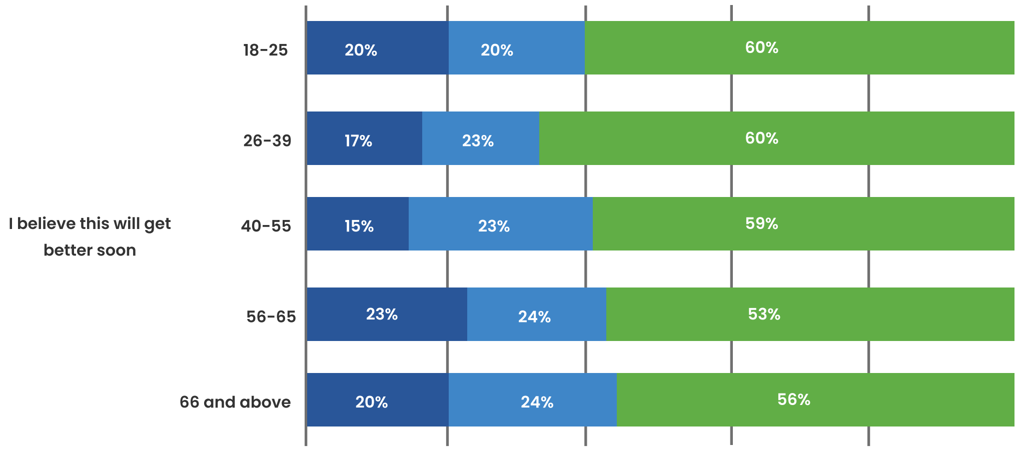
B-4



B-5

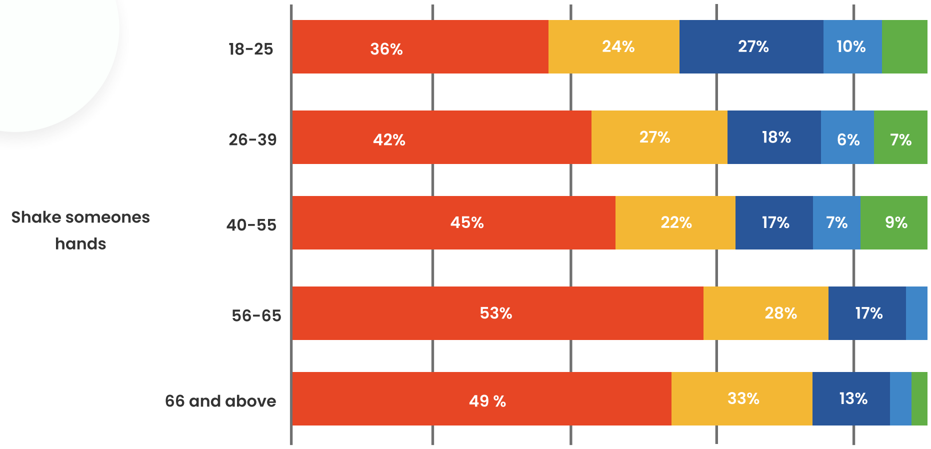


Appendix

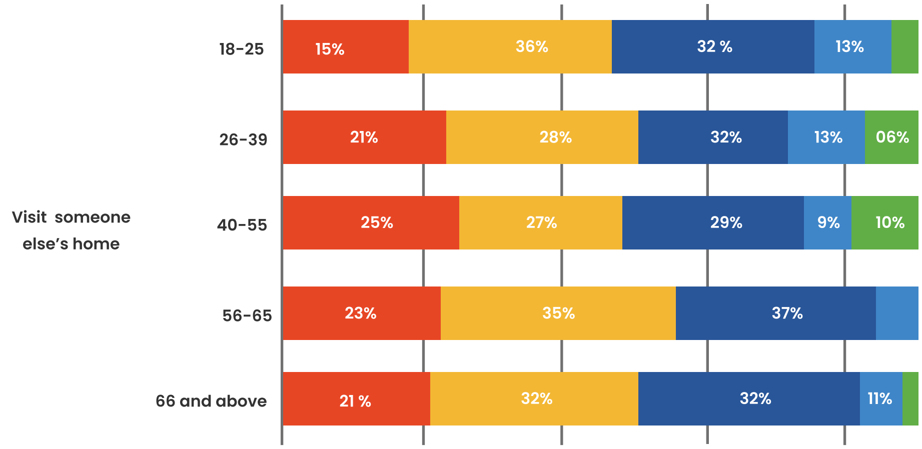
Q8. Please reflect on how your future habits are likely to compare to your past habits. Are you more or less likely to do any of these things in the next 6 months, as compared to the past 6 months?

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree

C-1



C-2



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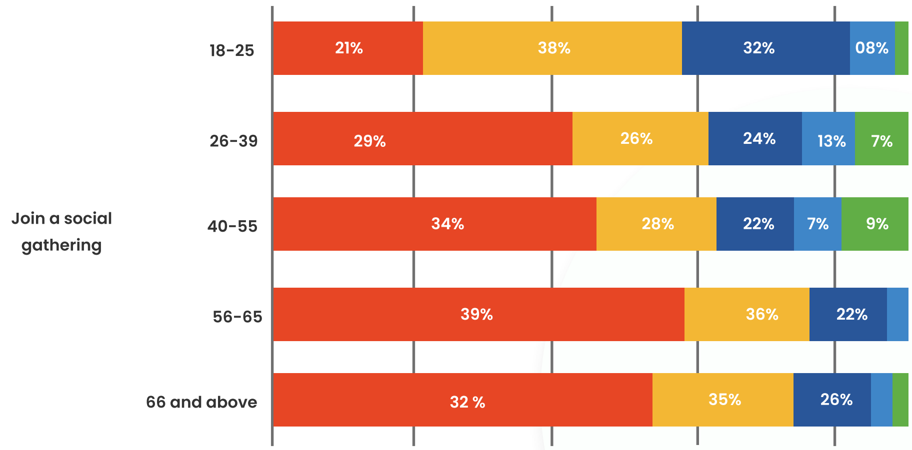

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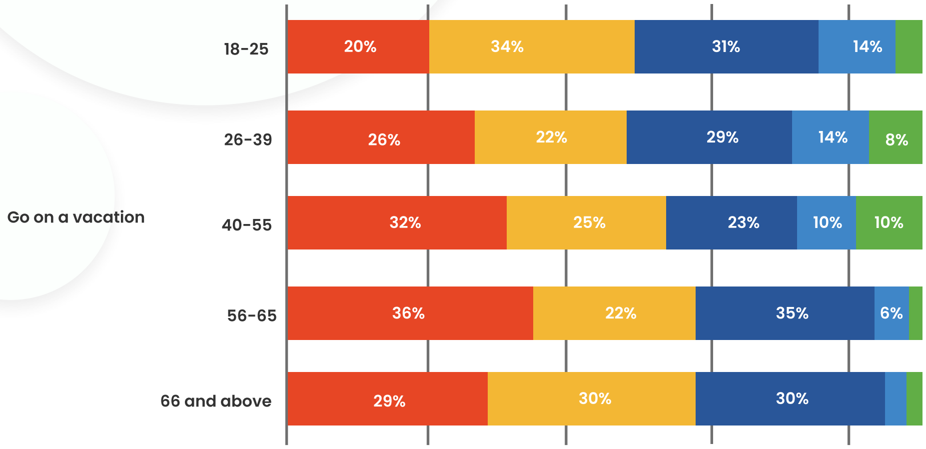

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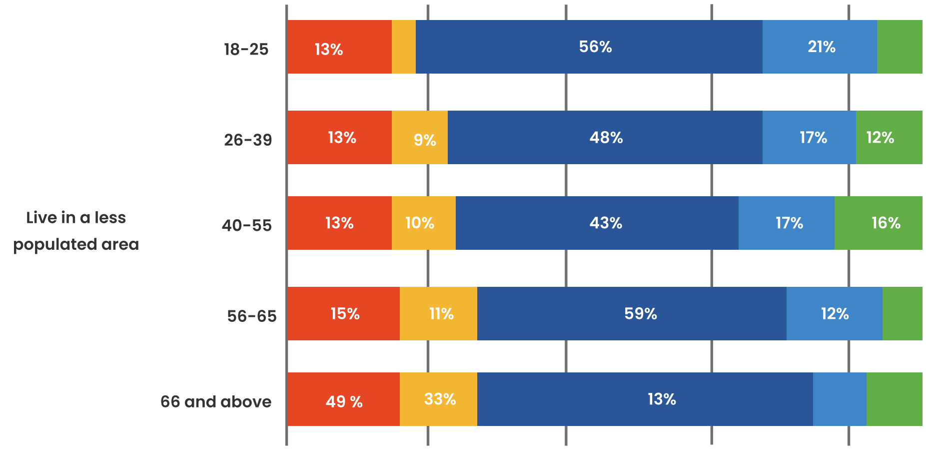
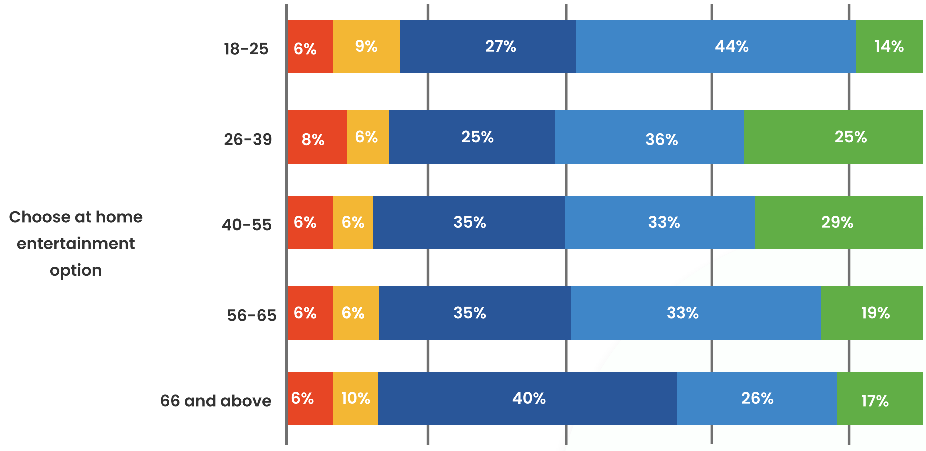


C-6



Appendix

Q6. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements

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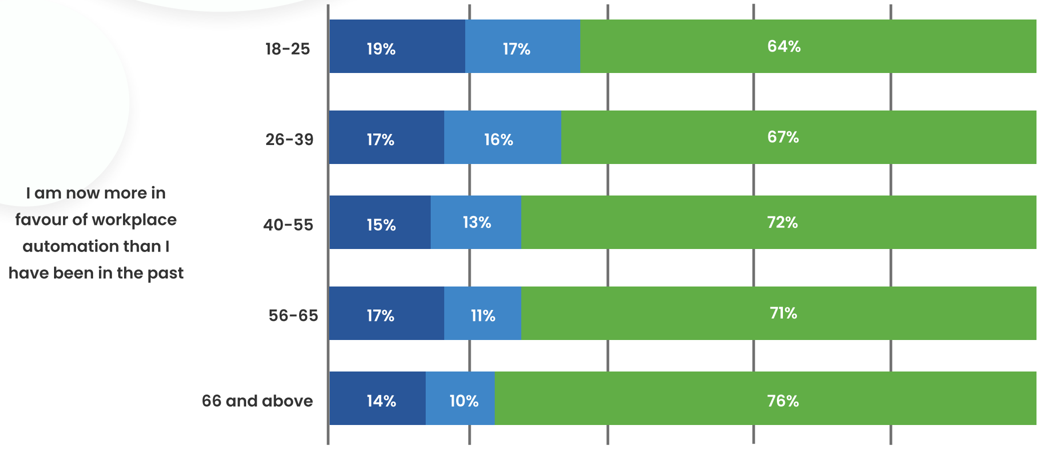
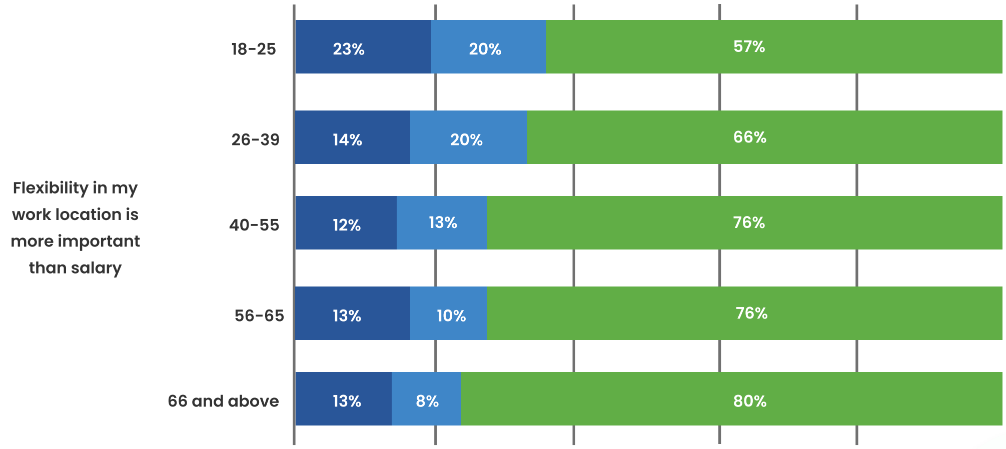
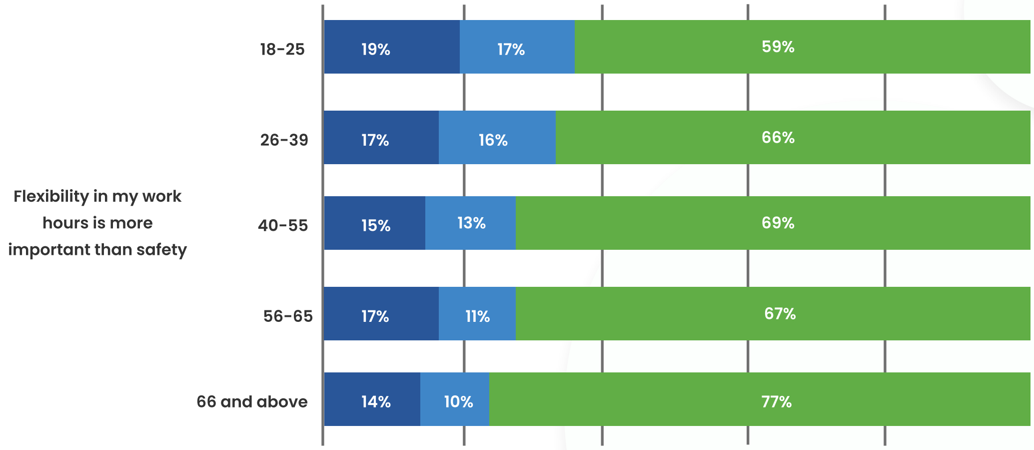


D-2



D-3



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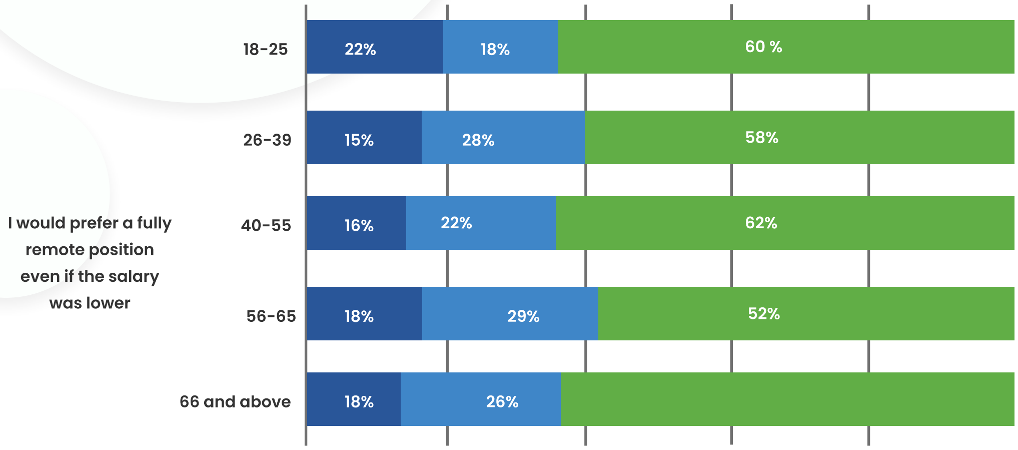
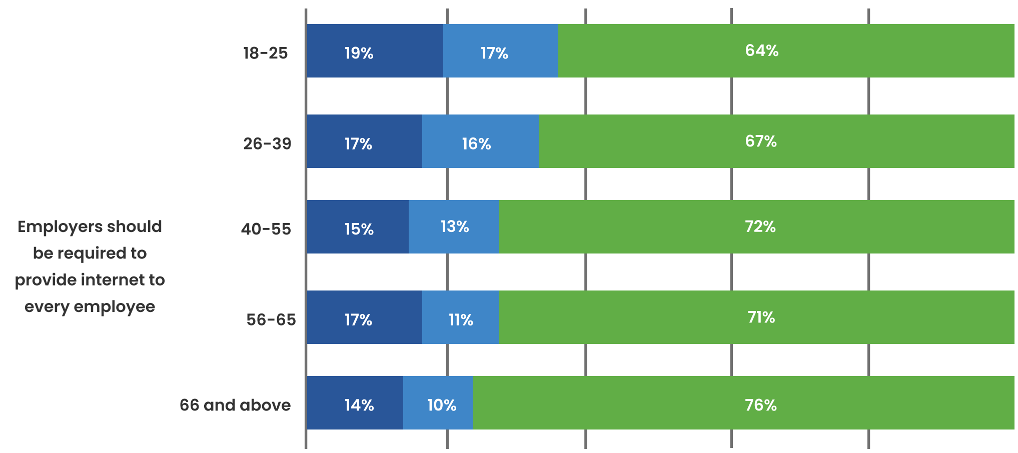
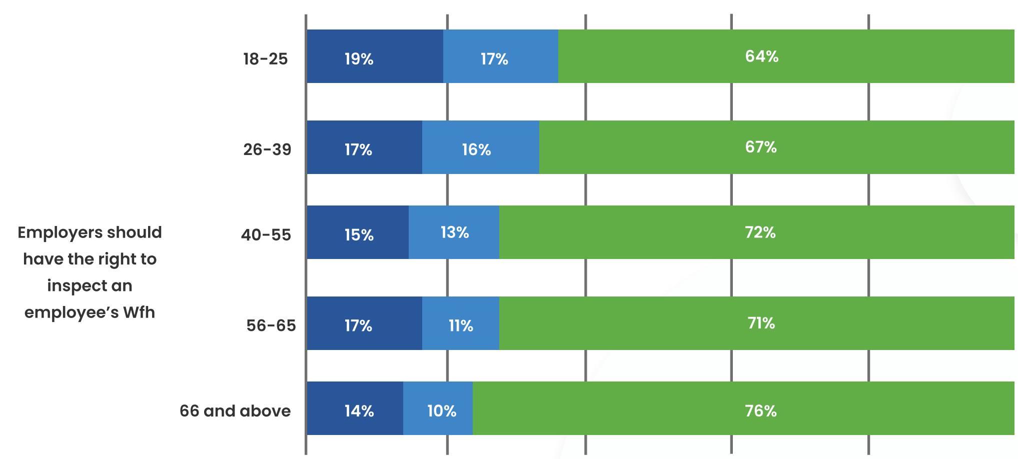
D-4



D-5



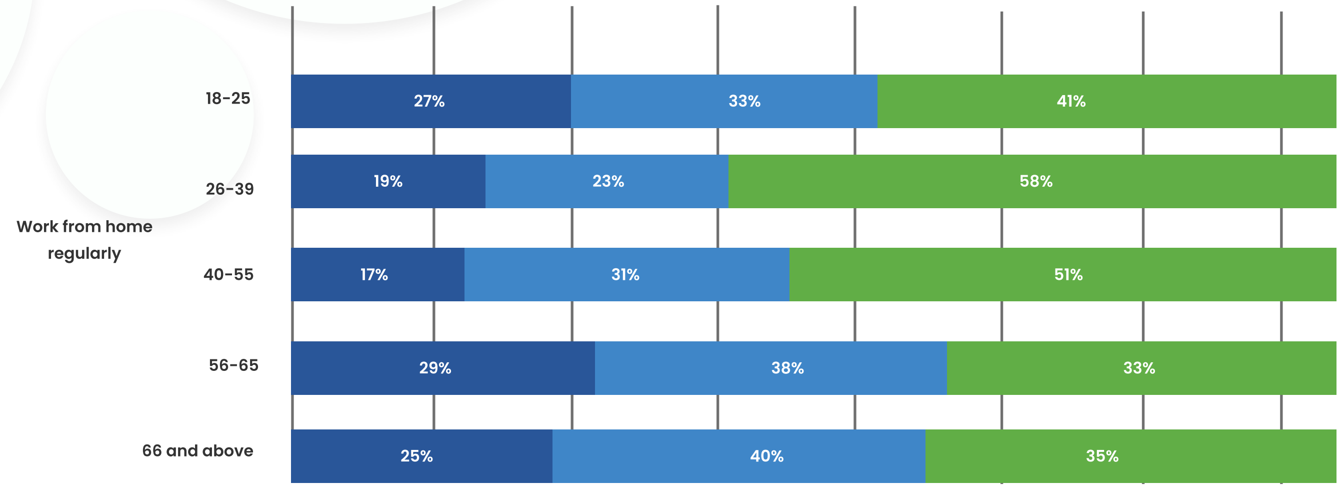
D-6



SoGoSurvey

Appendix

E-1



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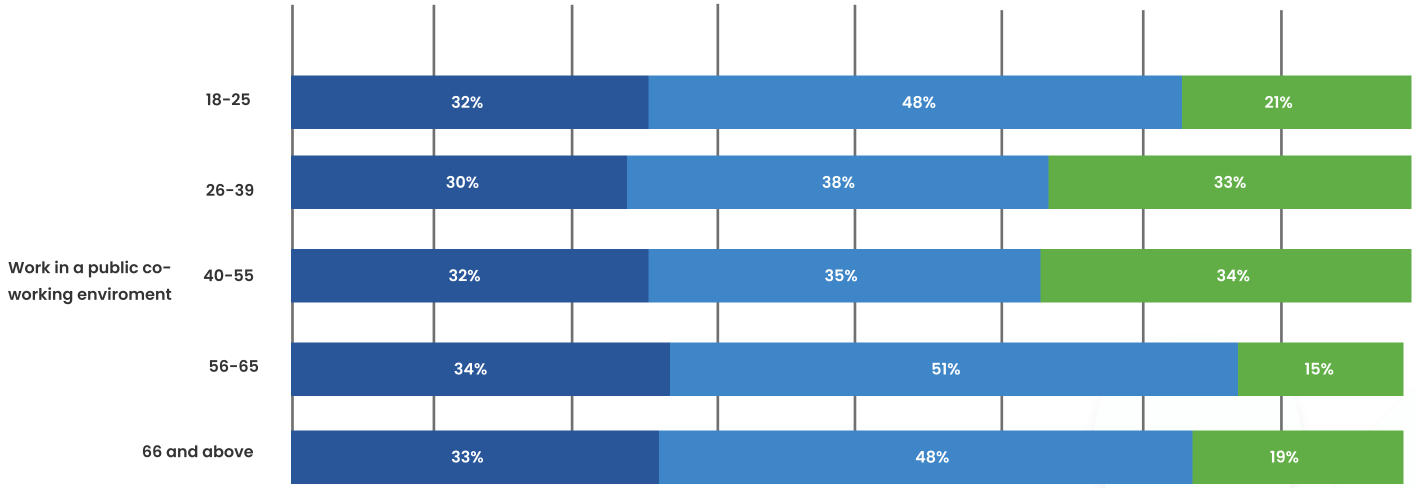

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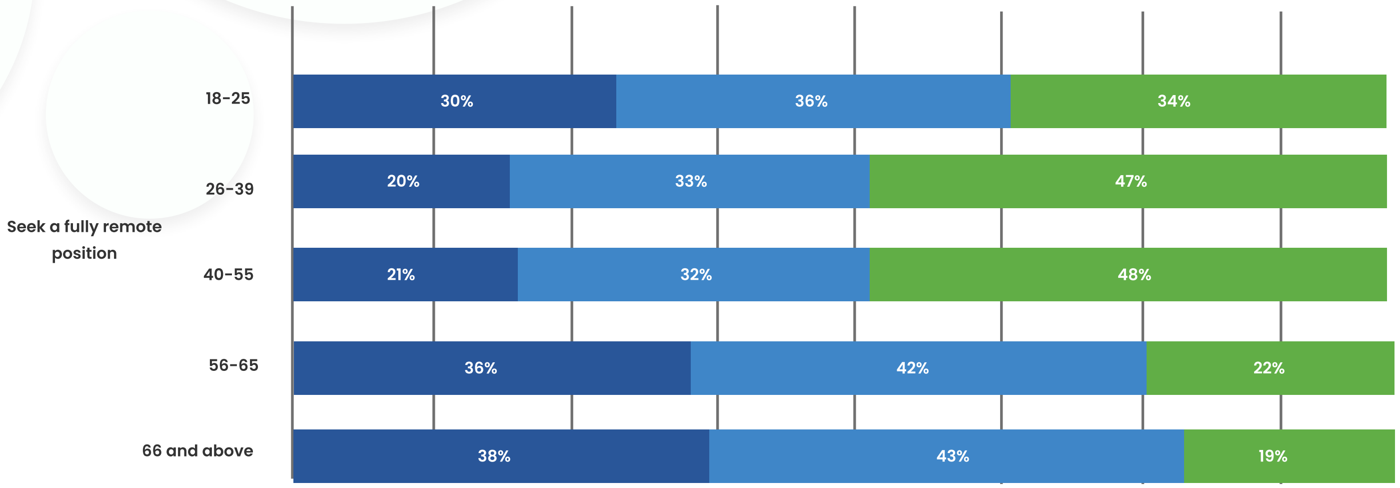
E-3



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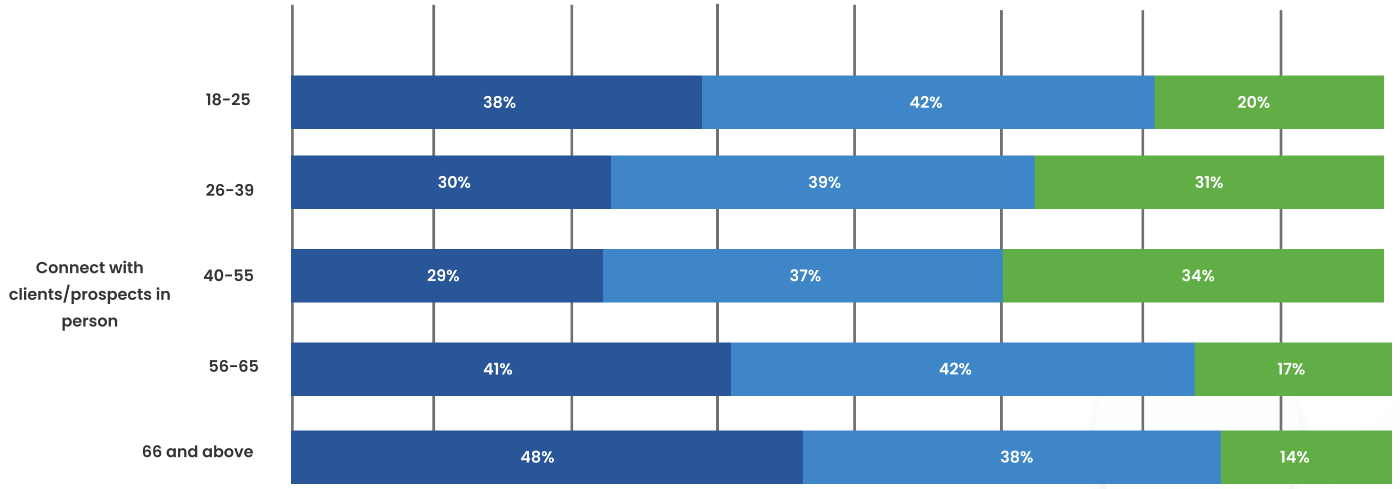

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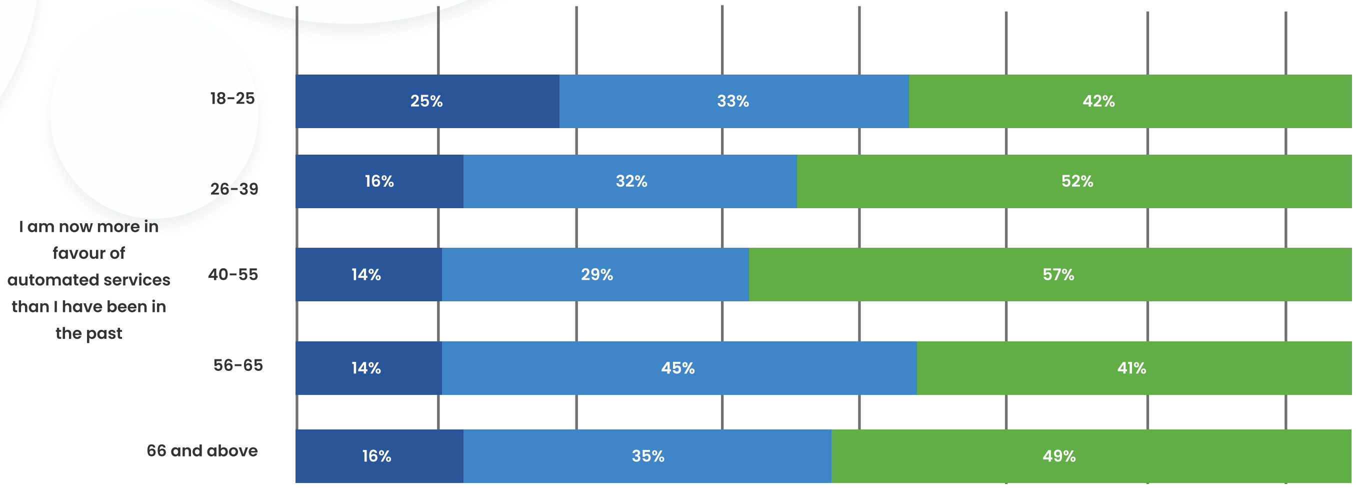
F-1



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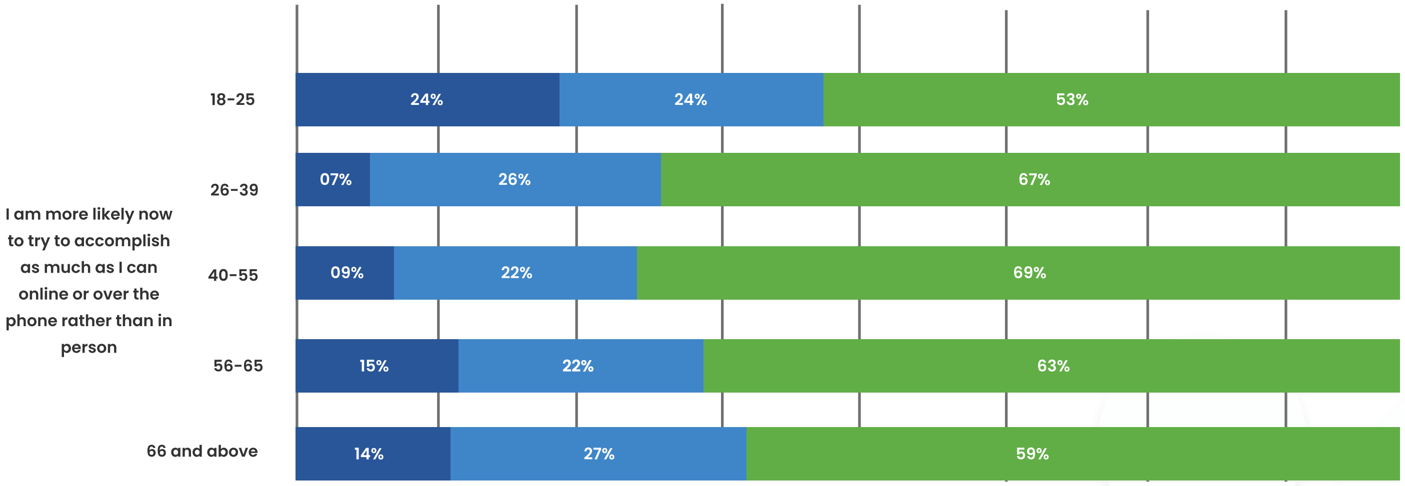

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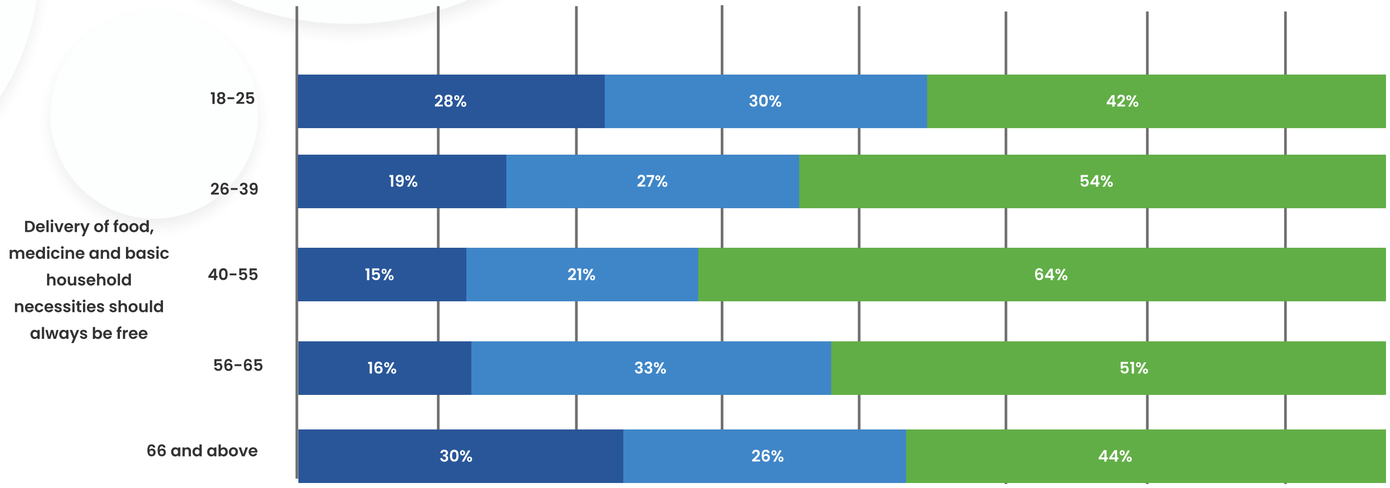
F-3



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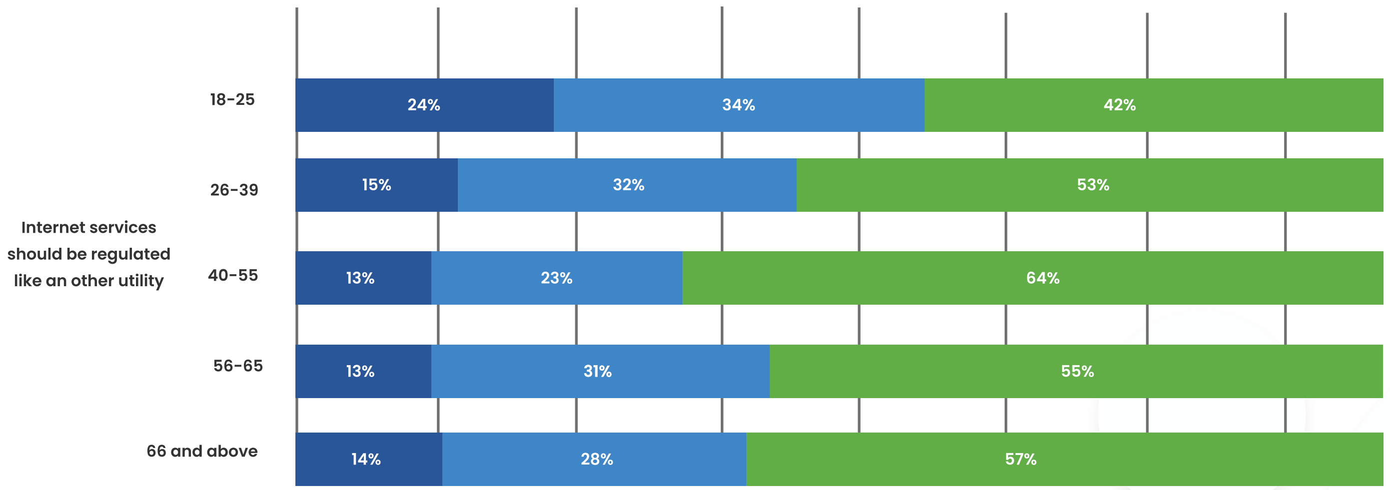

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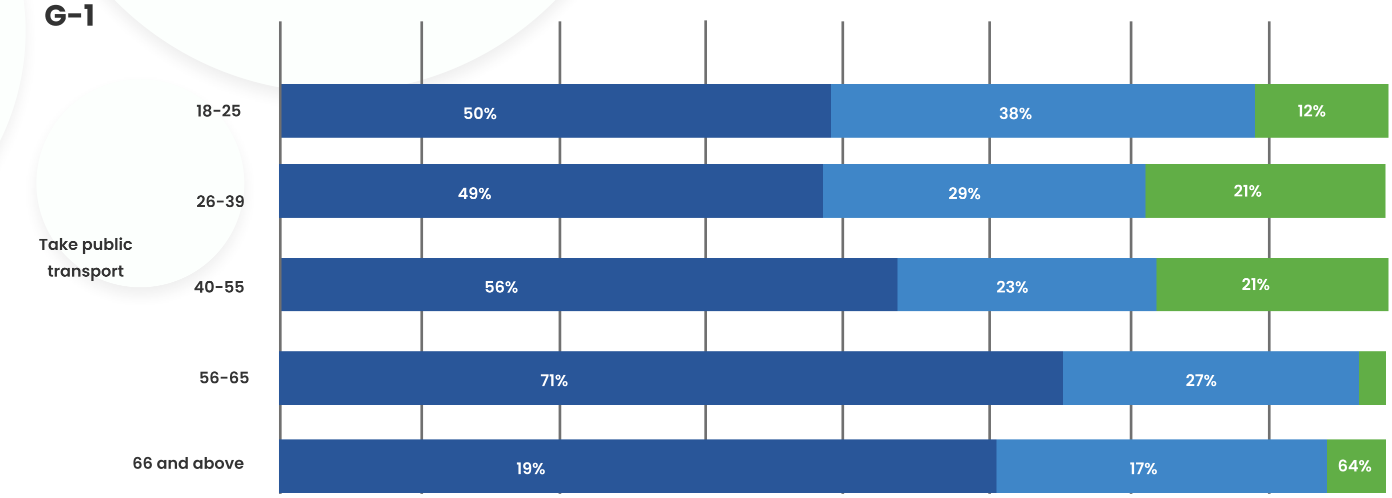
G-1



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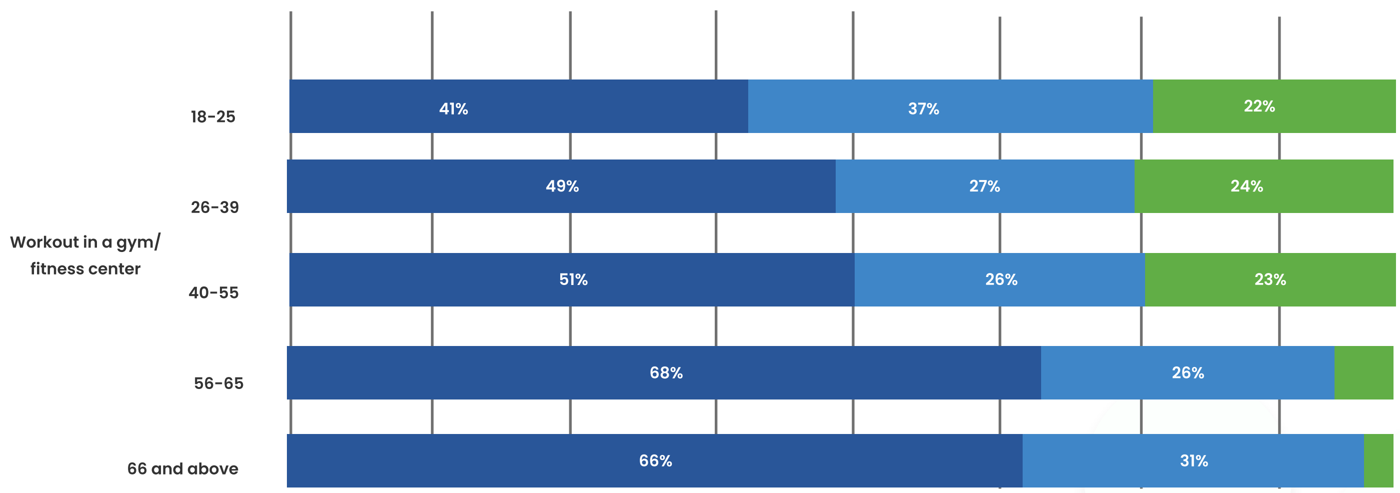

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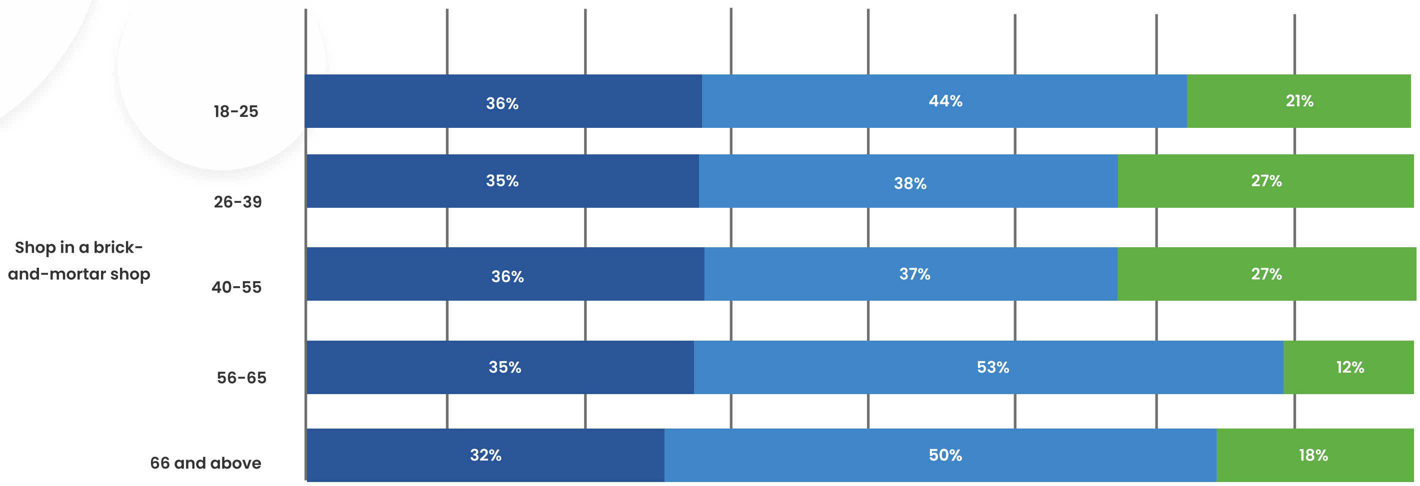
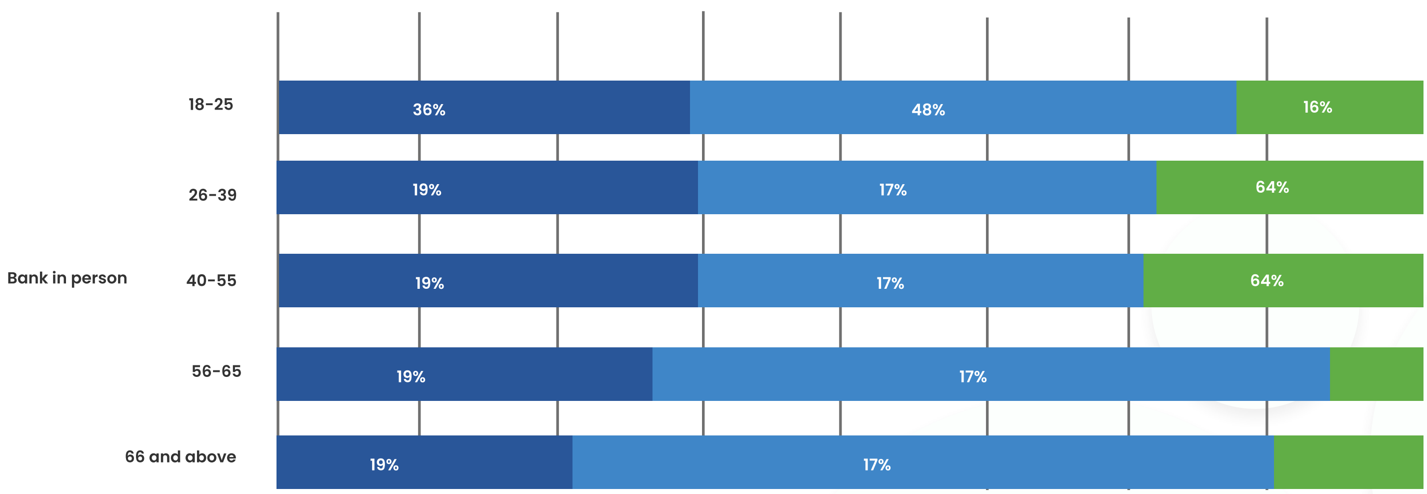
G-3



G-4



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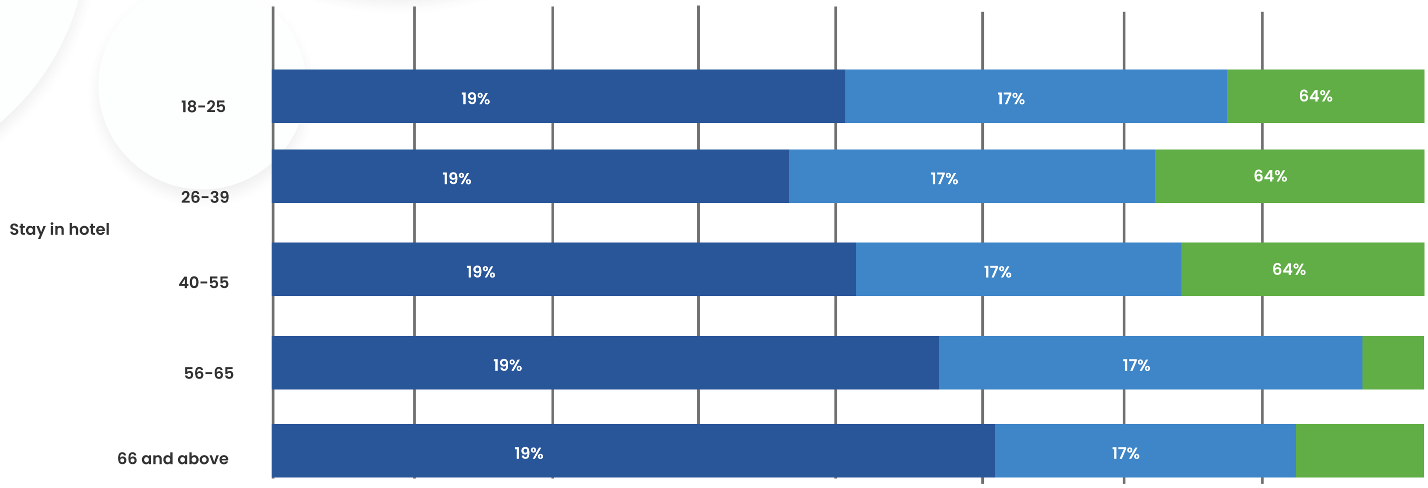
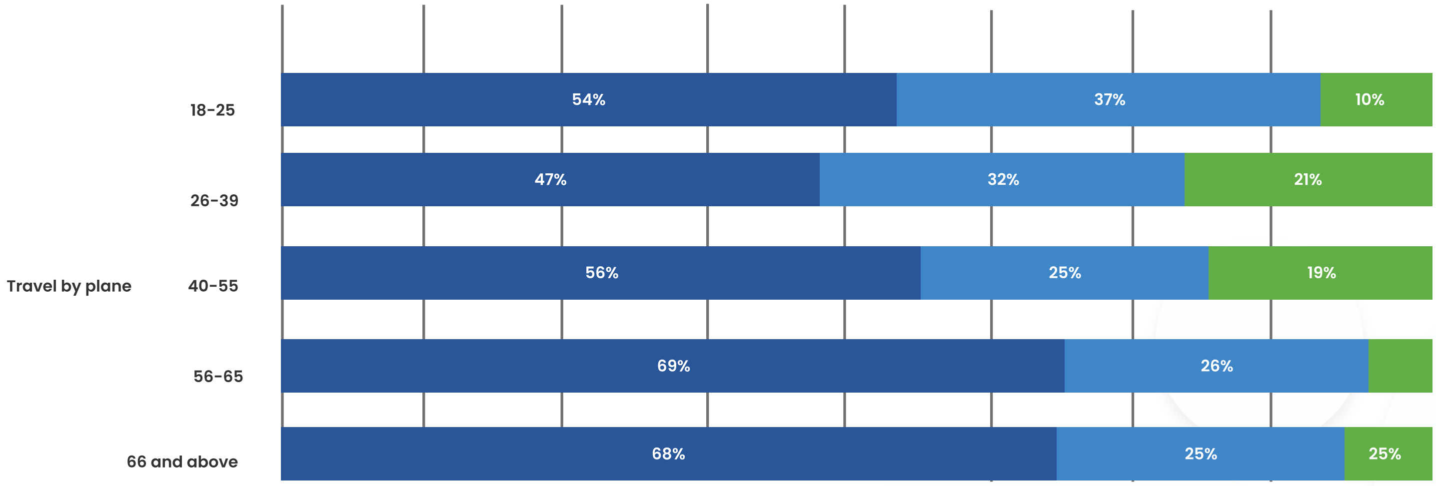
G-5



G-6



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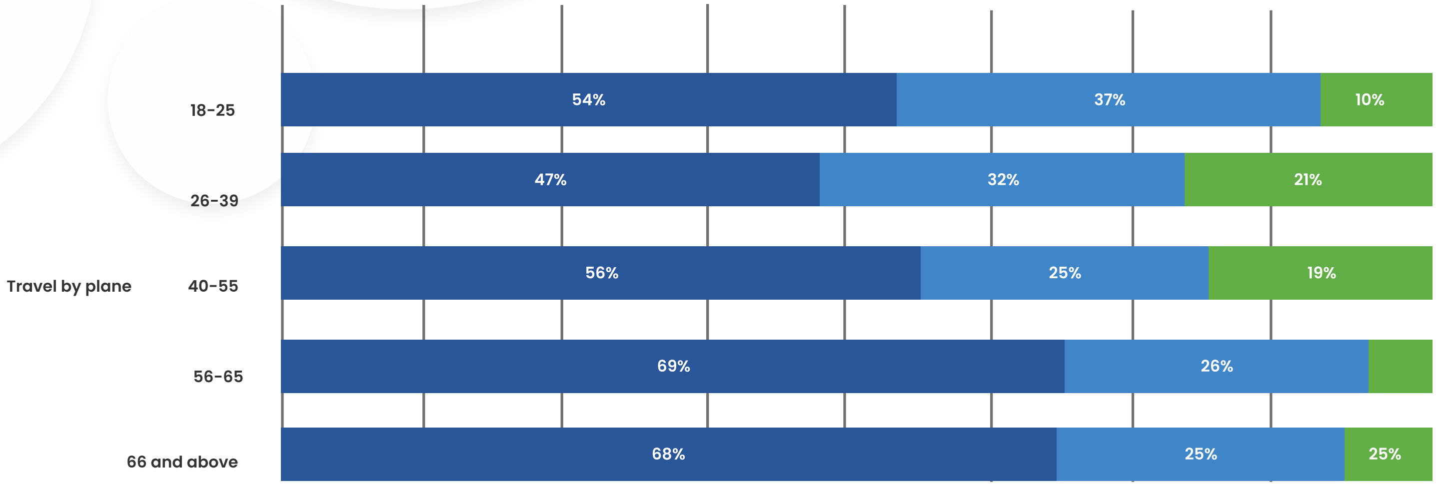
G-6



G-7