A DIGITAL DISCONNECTION?

How a holistic view of our digital future can better support opportunities for young people.

His Majesty King Charles at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Rwanda 2022, with Farah Golant, King's Trust International Trustee, and Emmanuel Edudzie, Executive Director, YOTA.

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HSBC FOREWORD

About HSBC and The King's Trust Group

Over the four years to March 2024, our Global Founding Corporate Partner HSBC enabled The King's Trust Group to support over 18,000 young people in Australia, Canada, India, Malaysia, Malta and the United Kingdom.

Foreword by Stuart Riley, Group Chief Information Officer at HSBC

The world is experiencing a profound digital transformation, reshaping industries, economies, and the nature of work itself. As technology continues to evolve, digital literacy has become essential for navigating the modern world. Alongside this, the demand for digital skills is growing across all sectors.

In my role, I have witnessed firsthand how technology transformed the banking industry, and I believe that equipping young people with digital skills is essential to ensuring they can thrive in the workplace.

Financial services, once dominated by brick-and-mortar branches and paper-based transitions, have now moved into a digital-first era. Customers expect seamless, secure, and personalised experiences across platforms. To meet these expectations, we're investing in cutting-edge technologies and in the people who can harness them effectively. For young professionals, developing digital literacy, and skills such as data analytics expertise, cybersecurity awareness, and coding will be invaluable as they navigate the future job market.

However, as this report illuminates, young people across the globe continue to face significant barriers to acquiring these essential skills.

At HSBC, we believe in opening up opportunities, and are committed to help young people to develop the skills they need to succeed.

Together with The King's Trust Group we're proud to have supported young people across the world to fulfil their potential and continue to platform the voice of the next generation on the global stage. I hope this report serves as a catalyst for meaningful action. By working together, we can ensure that digital skills become a bridge to opportunity rather than a barrier to inclusion.

Stuart Riley,
Group Chief Information Officer at HSBC

HSBC

ABOUT US:
THE KING'S TRUST GROUP

The King's Trust Group is a global network of support for young people, inspired by the vision of our Royal Founding President, His Majesty King Charles III. Our mission is to work for young people, by empowering them to build the skills for a brighter future.

Since 1976, we have enabled over 1.3 million young people to change their lives for the better. We support young people to continue their education, to secure employment, and to build new businesses. During 2023/24, we supported almost 100,000 young people across over 20 countries across Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Middle East. Well over 70% of those young people who completed our employment programmes achieved a positive outcome.

His Highness the Aga Khan is the Global Founding Patron of The King's Trust Group. HSBC Holdings plc is our Global Founding Corporate Partner. We are immensely grateful to them and all our supporters globally.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world is in the midst of a workplace digital revolution. Digital jobs are widespread; digital skills are increasingly essential. Even in low-income countries, many jobs require basic use of a computer or smartphone. Increasing numbers of jobs require the use of basic programmes such as email and spreadsheets. In the future, many more jobs will require ever higher levels of digital skills and digital literacy.

Yet, young people face several barriers to acquiring these skills: education systems often fall short, technology is rapidly changing so skills become obsolete, access to devices and data is not always available due to income constraints, and women face additional challenges in gaining access to skills and devices.

The digital revolution poses an opportunity to level the playing field, but it is clear that without equitable access, the digital revolution risks entrenching or even exacerbating already existing global inequalities.

Addressing inequity in this sector is complicated by a lack of clarity in the discussion about the digital economy. Our central argument is that employers, educators and young people each have a different perspective of what is needed when it comes to digital jobs and skills and often talk past each other. This lack of clarity can make digital jobs and skills feel abstract, out of reach and unattainable. Some conversations are rooted in the here and now, the opportunities available in the labour market today; others focus on the future, too often painting a utopia or dystopia of an AI-led world.

Meanwhile, employers say they need young people with digital skills, too often ignoring their own role in preparing young people; young people say they need access to digital skills but do not think that educators provide courses and training that are fit for purpose. We need to resolve this impasse. We present a framework to help us make sense of these different perspectives and support a more holistic analysis.

In aid of this ambition, this report puts young people at the centre of the debate by listening to their perspective, giving them a voice in a debate which is often carried out for them, rather than with them. Through a series of focus groups with young people, we have explored with them the nature of digital jobs, digital skills, and how to ensure they are accessible to all young people. It is clear that young people know how important digital skills are, but their understanding of what they are is limited by their own experiences, as such it is also therefore clear it is the job of employers, educators and government institutions to support them in understanding the full scope of digital opportunities.

We propose solutions for the consideration of these actors to ensure more equitable access to essential digital skills.

We hope this research helps employers, educators, civil society and young people to build a shared view of digital jobs and skills and what equity in these spaces looks like. Only a holistic approach can ensure that all young people gain the skills they need to access the digital jobs of the future.

This report on digital jobs and skills is the fourth in our series on young people's attitudes to the future of work. Like its predecessors, Generation 'Stand Up, Start Up', published in 2021, An 'Upskill Struggle', published in 2022, and 'Overlooked and Underprepared', published in 2023, it is supported by HSBC Holdings plc, the Global Founding Corporate Partner of The King's Trust Group.

In undertaking this research and publishing our findings, we aim to ensure the voices of young people:

▶ are central in debates about their future, whether that be with policymakers, education institutions, employers or charities who support young people; and

▶ inform the work we do with them and the programmes we deliver.

How are we understanding digital jobs and digital skills?

Digital jobs are not just about coding or cyber security; they encompass a wide range of roles that require engagement with digital technology. These jobs can be categorised into various types, from "hard" digital jobs requiring advanced technical skills through to "hybrid" jobs that combine digital and non-digital skills.

Digital skills are diverse, ranging from basic skills, such as using email, word processors and spreadsheets, to more advanced skills, like coding or data analysis. Functional skills should ideally be supported by wider digital literacy, such as an understanding of how data and privacy work, as well as analytical and meta-cognitive skills.

As outlined above, different stakeholders in the debate on jobs and skills bring different standpoints. This report introduces a framework which sets out four broad perspectives offering different ways of understanding the complex issue of digital skills development:

Tech innovation

This perspective focuses on the rapidly evolving technological landscape and the need for young people to rapidly adapt to new technologies.

Digital life skills

This perspective focuses on the view that digital skills are essential not just for employment but also for young people to feel happy, healthy and successful in all aspects of their lives, emphasising the importance of digital literacy and access for personal growth and development.

Workplace skills

This perspective focuses on the demand for digital skills and the need for young people to acquire them to succeed in the future job market.

Digital exclusion

This perspective focuses on the social and economic barriers that prevent some young people from accessing digital technologies and acquiring digital skills, emphasising the need for equitable access and support.

These perspectives have often been discussed in isolation even though they have a strong influence on each other and can address a wide range of challenges and opportunities. By taking a holistic approach, we can integrate these perspectives in a way that helps us understand the wide range of issues facing young people.

This report brings together in-depth insight from focus groups with young people in Australia, India, Kenya, Nigeria and the UK. All report experiencing barriers.

Young people clearly recognise the importance of digital skills for their future employment prospects. They understand that digital skills are essential across various sectors and that having these skills can make them more competitive job candidates. They also understand that other core skills, such as communication, problem-solving and critical thinking, are essential to the workplace in combination with digital skills.

Yet young people face several barriers to acquiring the digital skills they need. These include a lack of emphasis placed on digital skills in education settings; a disconnect between those skills that are taught in formal education and those required in the workplace; the rapidly evolving nature of technology which outpaces digital skills courses; and unequal access to digital devices and learning resources. Additionally, in some countries, there is a gender gap in digital skills, with women facing additional challenges in accessing digital opportunities.

The disconnection between the skills taught in formal education and those required in the workplace can cause some young people to worry about their lack of digital skills as well as a lack of confidence in applying them in a professional context. Many are pursuing self-directed learning outside of formal education, such as signing up to online courses or using online video tutorials to fill skills gaps.

However, access to these resources and interventions can be uneven, depending on factors such as socioeconomic background and geographic location.

Learnings from young people highlight the need for targeted interventions which address specific skill gaps, tackle inequities and help them build confidence.

> **Software is constantly developing, and people [and] companies change what works best for them. So, you might learn something to a good standard and then the company's changed what you need to know anyway, so there's always this, kind of, disconnect between learning [and work]"**
>
> **Female, 24, UK**

> **For us to access a computer or laptop, you must have the funds. For one student, he/she may have a variety of laptops but for you, the best your mum can afford is a phone. When you go to school, you experience a lot of inequality, especially in university."**
>
> **Participant, Kenya**

> **The world we are in now, digital skill is very important. It's like the oxygen we take in."**
>
> **Female, 24, Nigeria**

A call to action

To address these challenges and ensure that young people are prepared for the digital economy, a collaborative effort is needed from various stakeholders.

▶ **Governments** could consider investing in digital access and minimum digital standards for young people, updating educational policies and curricula to incorporate digital skills and addressing broader socioeconomic issues that hinder digital inclusion.

▶ **Educators** should look at ways to embed digital skills in all disciplines, invest in teacher training, and raise awareness about digital literacy and diverse career paths in the digital sector.

▶ **Employers** should provide training and upskilling opportunities, broaden recruitment criteria to prioritise potential over existing skills, and collaborate with educational institutions to ensure curricula is aligned with industry needs today and in the future.

▶ **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)** should create spaces for young people to articulate their need to access digital skills; support wider recommendations by implementing these in ways that suit the local context and working with national agencies to deliver supplementary digital curricula.

Most of all, it is important that governments, educators, employers and CSOs work together with young people. The opportunity in front of us is immense but the risk of it exacerbating existing inequalities is sobering. By working together, we can ensure that all young people have the opportunity to thrive in the digital economy and shape their futures.

INTRODUCTION:
THE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

This introduction sets the scene for this report, building on our previous research and laying out the background context. It is then followed by a chapter that sets out what digital skills and digital jobs are before focusing on the voices of young people. The final chapter details our call to action to ensure that all young people have access to tomorrow's digital economy.

What is the scale of the issue?

In 2023, estimates showed 64.9 million 15–25-year-olds were out of work.[1] The rate was higher in some regions, such as Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, where one in three young people were not in education, employment or training.

Globally, the youth unemployment rate has remained above 13% for over fifteen years, consistently exceeding the adult unemployment rate (i.e., individuals aged 25 and older) by more than three times. Recent research highlights that these trends persist.[2] In 2023, one in five young people were neither employed nor engaged in education or training, with women comprising two-thirds of this group. Even among those employed, anxiety is prevalent, as two out of three young people expressed concerns about losing their jobs.

What sits behind the unemployment crisis?

In our 2023 survey , one in three young people reported that they think the education system is doing poorly when it comes to equipping them with the skills needed for work.[3] This view was held by young people with a range of job types, working across a variety of sectors and – significantly – held across different levels of education: young people with a university degree were equally likely to say the education system was doing a bad job as those educated to secondary or high school level.

This 'learning crisis' suggests that young people find the transition to employment difficult, with many failing to secure employment. Even those who find work may take up temporary or insecure work or jobs that do not match their qualifications. Worryingly, some groups are getting further left behind. Our data shows, for example, that it is young men, globally, who have benefitted more from the post-Covid-19 improvements to unemployment.

Whilst unemployment levels are slightly improving from the worst years post-Covid-19, the rates of those not in education, employment or training (NEET) are still extremely high, meaning that significant groups of young people are locked out of the labour market and lacking the opportunities to enter. This is exacerbated for young people by an unequal distribution of jobs. In periods of upheaval and technological change, such as during the 2009 financial crisis, growth in the supply of graduates outpaced the growth of high-skilled jobs in many countries. This trend can lead to low job satisfaction or high turnover, as well as increased anxiety and depression for those unable to find a job at all.[4]

In our 2023 report, 'Overlooked and Underprepared', we specifically highlighted three areas where action was required:

▶ **A skills gap** – too many young people leaving school without the skills they need for the world of work

▶ **A jobs gap** – there are not enough entry-level jobs for young people

▶ **An experience gap** – employers will not take a chance on young people, which would give them the experience that those employers say they need

Digital technologies could ease the youth unemployment crisis

In the previous research, young people identified two areas with opportunities for the future: green jobs and digital jobs. This report picks up the thread of digital jobs, skills and experiences to explore what it means for young people to be successful in the future digitally dominated labour market.

Digital technologies can create new jobs, alter the way jobs are imagined, and reshape the entire economy. The impact on our labour markets will be profound, with new waves of innovation now led by artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. This impacts all industries and can no longer be considered one distinct sector of the economy.

This could bring significant potential for young people. However, the way young people experience it will depend on their context, with their opportunities and challenges impacted by investment decisions, regulatory decisions and social and educational policies in their region. So, while there is a significant opportunity, there are risks that developments in these areas could further entrench inequalities, creating conditions for some young people to access opportunities whilst some are disconnected from them.

The challenge in the evolving digital economy is clear – there are going to be plenty of jobs and new skills, but who is going to be able to access them? In listening further, exploring more, and thinking globally about this problem, we want to articulate a positive case for how whole societies should be thinking about the digital future, in order to support digital skills as a driver for global equity and growth.

CHAPTER 1:
A new framework to make sense of the debates surrounding the digital economy

We need ways to make sense of the digital economy and adapt in the face of rapid change and uncertainty, ensuring that young people are enabled rather than disadvantaged.

What do we mean when we talk about digital jobs?

In talking about digital jobs, it is first important to underline that we are talking about both the current labour market that young people will be entering, and a rapidly changing one. This means we can't tell young people in education now that the job market they enter will look the same. A quarter of all jobs in the next five years will be affected by the 'churn' effects of old jobs and skills being cut back as new ones are created. Much of this 'churn' will be digitally driven.[5]

To some people, digital jobs only mean 'hard', computer science-driven roles like coding or cyber-security. But to others, it means any job that engages with a piece of digital technology, which could mean the majority of the labour market in many countries due to the nature of office work, and the ways in which digital technologies have been incorporated into so many roles across manual and service sectors.

To understand the wide range of digital jobs, we present an illustrative spectrum below.

Those able to access the 'global', 'hybrid', or 'hard' digital jobs are likely to gain greater job stability, as the predicted churn will adapt these jobs more than it will delete them. However, these jobs are predominantly found in more advanced economies, or emerging economies with a burgeoning tech sector, suggesting it is young people in these economies who will be better able to access these jobs; with young people living in other economies not having the same access.

No or very low digital jobs

- ▶ Almost no use of digital technology.
- ▶ The use of digital tools or devices would be occasional and incidental to the work.

Where?
Found globally

Examples
Agricultural labourer

Digital task jobs

- ▶ Very low-skill tech roles that require the use of a digital device or a response-based approach, such as following pick-up routes in a warehouse.
- ▶ The demand for digital skills is entirely responsive to business and role needs.

Where?
Found globally

Examples
Call centre work

Platform jobs

- ▶ Non-or low-digital skilled jobs that require a digital platform, such as food delivery and transport.
- ▶ A wide range of skills is required.

Where?
Found globally

Examples
Food delivery driver; app-based taxi driver

Global digital jobs

- ▶ Desk-based roles in a variety of sectors that use a range of digital products and communication tools as standard.
- ▶ A wide range of digital skills is required.

Where?
Found globally but more likely in more advanced economies.

Examples
Office worker specialising in HR or finance.

Hybrid digital jobs

- ▶ Hard digital skills that are developed in addition to a non-digital sector.
- ▶ This can include things such as Fintech or MedTech roles.

Where?
Typically found in more advanced and rapidly developing economies

Examples
Medical professionals

Hard digital jobs

- ▶ Computer science-based jobs such as coding, cyber security or technical programming roles.

Where?
Typically found in more advanced and rapidly developing economies.

Examples
Security software development

What do we mean when we talk about digital skills?

There is no question that digital skills are, and will continue to be, highly valued in the world of work. The question is, which skills will be needed, both for the jobs of today, the jobs of the future, and for the lives that young people want to live?

What should a young person looking to find work in the coming years do? Are education systems able to support them to acquire the skills needed?

What kinds of skills are required for the digital economy?

Digital skills are a core part of the skill set everyone needs, and they are also interdependent with other core skills. In writing this report, we spoke to a number of organisations supporting young people to access digital skills and identified these three broad categories of skills needed for the digital economy:[6]

1. **Functional digital skills:** (How to use a tool) Related to doing an action, often through using typical productivity software. For example, knowing how to send emails, enter data into a spreadsheet, input prompts into AI platforms or complete searches on search engines. These tasks can become more technical and specific to industries.

2. **Digital literacy skills:** (How to use a tool safely and well) Related to understanding how digital products, tools and approaches work. This might mean knowing what data is and how it is used, how privacy and online safety can be encouraged, what disinformation and misinformation can look like, and how to analyse information and tools. With the growth of generative AI tools, this can include understanding the difference between how search-based tools, such as Google, and machine learning tools, such as ChatGPT, identify and synthesise information.

3. **Analytical or meta-cognitive skills:** (How to think about when to use digital tools and what they are able to do) Related to how digital tools are used in the workplace. This may include the ability to think critically about tools available and how to use them effectively, and where to be creative and innovate. For example, meta-cognitive skills such as critical thinking are important when obtaining information through a search engine. Users need to be able to evaluate whether websites suggested by the search engine are credible and know how to verify sources if they are unsure.

Functional digital Skills

Doing:

▶ Tasks

▶ Products

▶ Skills

Digital literacy skills

Understanding:

▶ Data

▶ Privacy and safety

▶ Search vs. prediction

Analytical skills

Critiquing:

▶ Critical capacity
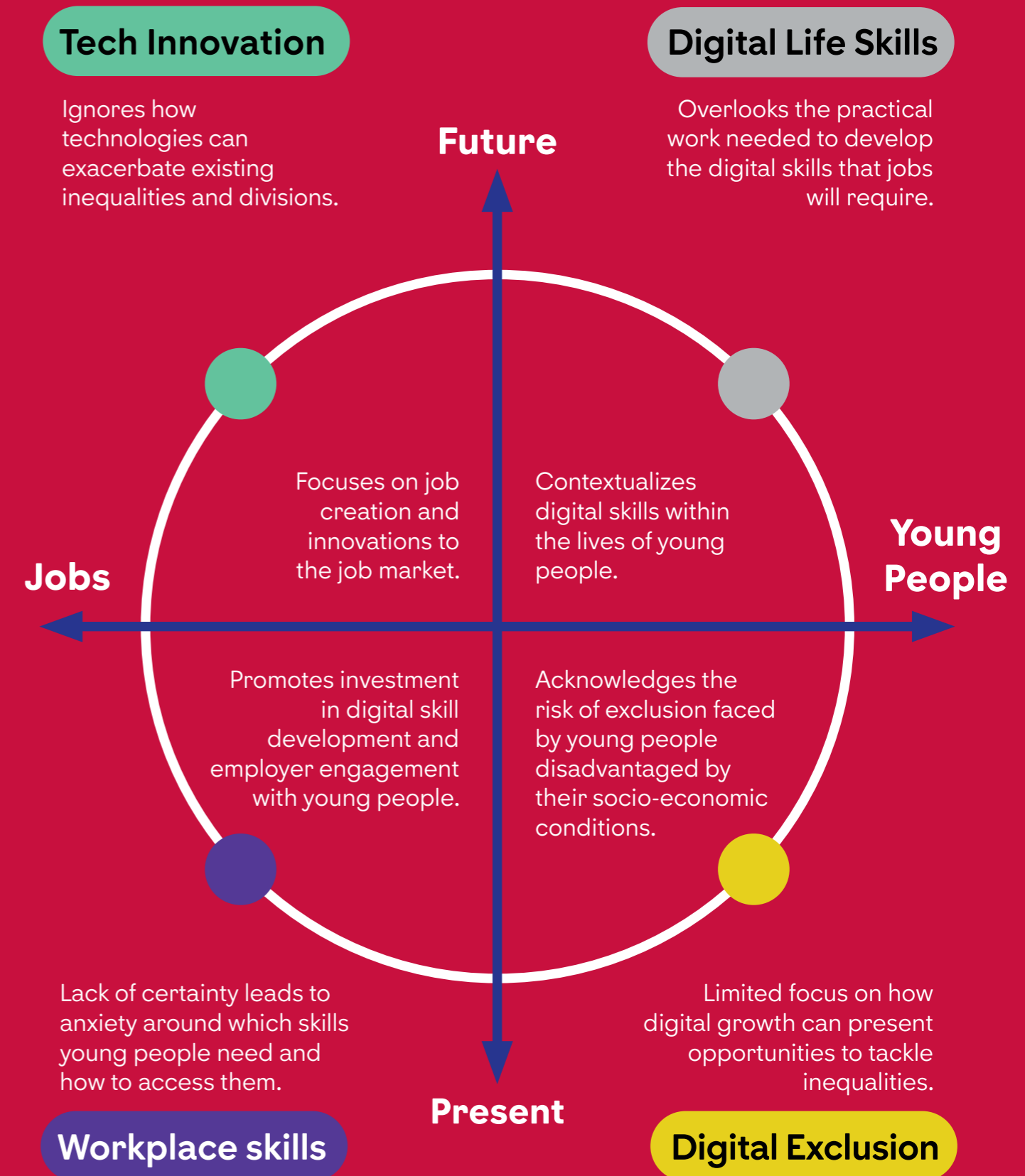
▶ Social intelligence

▶ Innovation and curiosity

Our framework supports a more holistic approach to understanding the digital economy

Through conversations with various organisations that support young people in accessing digital skills, we identified four distinct approaches to talking about and understanding young people and the digital economy, as shown in the diagram below. These are based on:

▶ Whether you choose to focus more on the present or the future

▶ Whether you focus more on jobs (and the demand for skills in the workplace by employers), or young people (and the supply of skills by them, alongside their wider needs)

The diagram below positions each of these four perspectives depending on whether they are future focused or rooted in the present, and whether they are centred more on the demands of employers or the needs of young people. Additionally, this diagram illustrates how each of these perspectives can inform our understanding of the digital skills debate, while highlighting which areas of the debate they overlook. There is a need to bring together these four distinct viewpoints, to develop a more nuanced view of the experiences of young people, and how their needs can be better met.

Tech Innovation

Ignores how technologies can exacerbate existing inequalities and divisions.

Digital Life Skills

Overlooks the practical work needed to develop the digital skills that jobs will require.

Future

Jobs

Focuses on job creation and innovations to the job market.

Contextualizes digital skills within the lives of young people.

Young People

Promotes investment in digital skill development and employer engagement with young people.

Acknowledges the risk of exclusion faced by young people disadvantaged by their socio-economic conditions.

Lack of certainty leads to anxiety around which skills young people need and how to access them.

Limited focus on how digital growth can present opportunities to tackle inequalities.

Present

Workplace skills

Digital Exclusion

Workplace Skills

This perspective thinks about the needs of employers in the short to medium term, who frequently cite missing basic digital skills. Employers may identify certain tools they need employees to use, which will give a sense of the skills we think young people should be focussing on getting today.

How does this perspective inform our understanding of the debate?

Rooted in this perspective, several organisations in and across countries are developing high-quality programmes that can support young people. A key focus of this is investment in education systems, curriculum and pedagogy.

The ubiquity of technology means that, if the resources are available, these skills can be learned in many places. There is potential for tools and approaches to support young people in a variety of settings and with different needs.

Examples include:

▶ The King's Trust, and more specialist organisations like Raspberry Pi Foundation developing programmes that support young people to build the skills that they need, in partnership with employers, tech firm, and school systems.

▶ The Royal Society in the UK exploring how to support young people to gain the mathematical, data and computational thinking skills they will need.

▶ A recent study on Generative AI by Generation Unlimited on preparing young people for work in an AI-powered world centres on the importance of foundational content, mitigating the digital divide and investing in the human skills of young people.

Tech innovation

This perspective is focused on the technologies of the future, such as AI and its potential to impact the world of work and our lives as a whole. It is future-oriented and uncertain, which can be both exciting to imagine and anxiety-inducing for young people.

How does this perspective inform our understanding of the debate?

In recent years there are two types of innovation that have driven changes to and growth in new jobs. Both are creating opportunities for young people.

AI and productivity growth: There is a significant focus in policy and wider debates about Artificial Intelligence and generative AI in particular. A PwC study focused on this potential, showing that sectors that are adopting AI the quickest, such as professional services, financial services, and technology, are seeing significant productivity growth gains compared to those making less use of the technology. That matters to current and future workers, because those who have AI skills can command up to a 25% wage premium.

Platform versus informal economy: Platform economies, where digital platforms have created new routes to work in areas such as driving, delivery and task delivery, also continue to shape labour markets. A 2022 study on India's platform and gig economy, for example, gives lots of insight for understanding how to consider the changing realities for young people from fast-moving digital technology. Research across Asia highlights the potential for platforms to be alternatives to informal employment in countries undergoing digital transformation.

Digital social security: With these sorts of changes to an economy also comes an opportunity for governments to rethink how to construct social security, which could support young people and other citizens more holistically. There is a live policy debate across Asia about how to best regulate evolving platform economy work, and South Korea, for example, is looking at how to do this with employment insurance programmes for workers in this evolving sector.

Digital Exclusion

This perspective focuses on the social and economic circumstances of young people. It is particularly interested in those who are already disadvantaged by socio-economic conditions and is concerned about worsening conditions for those already in poverty, with low access to digital technology or networks.

How does this perspective inform our understanding of the debate?

This perspective thinks about all young people, and it situates young people in their own context rather than placing them in the context of employers. It is focused on capabilities and allows for a rounded view of the barriers to the development of digital skills, which can be missed in the other perspectives. It highlights four key areas where we can improve our support to young people.

Education systems: in many low-income countries, the fundamental challenge lies in the education system's basic structure. In some nations, a significant number of young people leave school without acquiring even basic skills, making it seem impractical to prioritise more advanced competencies.

Exclusion within countries: however, research in high-income countries, such as Australia, emphasises that low-income groups suffer a digital divide everywhere. We know from research in the UK, for example, that young people who already face disadvantages (such as already being out of employment, education or training) show the lowest confidence and engagement with pursuing digital skills and jobs.

Perpetuating inequity: in countries and cultures where gender, class, race, or other demographics are used to exclude people from labour markets, growing digital opportunities will do nothing to end existing inequity.

Digital uniquity exacerbating issues: as economies become more digitally focussed, with retail, government services, culture, social connections and employment all being increasingly centred around the use of digital devices and services, access is an essential part of the chain of achieving what young people want from all of their life. Digital skill requirements can create new exclusions as well as perpetuating old ones.

Digital Life Skills

At the heart of this perspective is the assumption that digital skills should not just be valued in relation to employment, and they should be understood as part of a debate on how young people can get the skills, assets and capabilities they need for the life that they want. It therefore includes a forward-facing focus on what young people might want rather than what employers might need.

How does this perspective inform our understanding of the debate?

This perspective creates an opportunity for young people by placing them at the centre of the debate. It takes a holistic view of their lives rather than emphasizing skill deficits, which could lead to anxiety—a risk posed by other approaches.

It is focused on the imagination and aspiration of young people and gives them the space to think about a future they want, rather than one that is dictated by the needs of employers.

This includes research on concepts like what a minimum digital living standard might be, which includes a broader range of skills, assets and capabilities for different parts of society. It encourages questions like: do young people need to participate positively in society and their lives?

Conclusion: the risks of a siloed approach

▶ No single one of these four perspectives is sufficient. When used in isolation, each of them overlook important aspects of the digital skills debate.

▶ Thinking too much about technological developments can mean that we ignore how new technologies can exacerbate existing inequalities and divisions.

▶ However, focusing too much on inequalities prevent us from seeing how digital growth gives us opportunities to tackle inequity

▶ And focusing too much on digital life skills can mean overlook the practical work needed to develop the digital skills that jobs will require.

If we are going to support young people in the emerging world, we must use each of these four perspectives, to build a holistic view that supports all young people. The next section will explore what we know about how young people themselves understand and talk about this issue.

CHAPTER 2:
What do young people think about their digital futures?

After three years of surveying young people in 12 countries about the future of work, we wanted to go into more detail on this topic. We heard from young people aged 18-24 in Australia, India, Kenya, Nigeria and the UK perceptions of digital skills, jobs, experiences and opportunities.

This chapter outlines:

▶ **Perceptions:** How important are digital skills to young people?

▶ **Experiences:** How are young people gaining digital skills?

▶ Young people's **views** on digital skills gaps

It is then followed by a call to action in the next chapter, where we explicitly bring in the views of young people about what they feel **stakeholders** should be doing to support them.

Our research partner, Ipsos

Our research partner, Ipsos UK, conducted five, in-person focus groups in Australia (Melbourne), India (Delhi), Kenya (Nairobi), Nigeria (Lagos), and UK (London) in September and October 2024, gathering insight from 38 18-24 year-olds. The King's Trust works in all of these countries, and they were chosen in order to hear a range of global contexts.

Participants consisted of a mix of men and women who were either studying, in training, or looking for formal work. Participants represented a mix of socioeconomic backgrounds in most countries, except India, where the sample primarily included higher socioeconomic backgrounds (see appendices for full sample details). None of the participants were currently employed in full-time formal work; however, across the countries, many had previously looked for employment or had experienced part-time work. Most participants across countries were secondary-level educated, and many were currently studying for a university degree. We heard from young people from urban, peri-urban, and in fewer cases, rural areas. The full list of participants and demographic breakdown for each group can be found in the appendices.

This qualitative method provides descriptive, illustrative and exploratory findings and does not suggest these findings are statistically representative of all young people in the countries. The voices of young people in this research are contextualised by the country-specific information in the map below.

This map is based on data from the World Skills Clock, a global partnership tracking the skills needs of young people around the world.[9]

United Kingdom

Number of young people (15-24) (2022)

7,426,670

Percentage of young people without secondary education level skills

16.5%

Percentage of young people without digital skills

25.1%

Digital skills are essential entry requirements for two-thirds of UK occupation types and carry with them a wage differential over non-digital roles. These occupations account for 82% of online job vacancies.[7]

India

Number of young people (15-24) (2022)

249,761,080

Percentage of young people without secondary education level skills

77.7%

Percentage of young people without digital skills

66.3%

In three to four years, about 24 million jobs are predicted to convert to technology-based 'gig' labour, characterised by short-term contracts and freelance work.[11]

Australia

Number of young people (15-24) (2022)

2,996,300

Percentage of young people without secondary education level skills

21.9%

Percentage of young people without digital skills

18.7%

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index of 2023 highlights that 9.4% of the Australian population is highly digitally excluded, and people who did not complete secondary school are particularly at risk.[12]

Nigeria

Number of young people (15-24) (2022)

42,731,660

Percentage of young people without secondary education level skills

87.4%

Percentage of young people without digital skills

80.5%

A growing number of digitally literate graduates and investment from tech companies such as Google, IBM, and Facebook are aiding digital adoption among the population. However, challenges remain related to electricity provision, lack of teacher training, and poor quality of curriculums.[8]

Kenya

Number of young people (15-24) (2022)

11,525,160

Percentage of young people without secondary education level skills

68.4%

Percentage of young people without digital skills

18.7%

50-55% of jobs are estimated to require some level of digital skills by 2030. There is considerable anticipation of a surge in demand for digital skills in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly as non-specialist enterprises adopt digital technologies. Given the nature of the economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, 70% of demand is expected to be for foundational skills, followed by 23% for non-ICT intermediate skills.[10]

The importance of digital skills for employers

"With digital skills, you expand your portfolio of employment, and it sets you apart from that person who does not have such skills and you [have] more options. You are in a better position to get a job."

Participant, Kenya*

Young people know digital skills are a cornerstone of their future employment prospects:

We saw in our 2023 survey of 13,000 young people in ten countries around the world, that 84% of respondents said providing young people with digital skills is fairly or very necessary for their country's economic future. Young people see digital literacy (alongside literacy and numeracy) as more important to driving employment than a university qualification or high school diploma.[13]

This was echoed in our focus groups: for the young people across all the countries, there is no doubt that digital skills are essential for securing and maintaining employment. Young people recognise that digital skills are no longer limited to specific industries but are in demand across various sectors.

* Our research in Kenya did not link the demographics of young people to their quotes, and so quotes from young people in Kenya do not identify their age or other information.

Young people highlighted it was essential to know 'the basics' when looking for work:

In each of the countries, respondents drew a distinction between basic and advanced functional digital skills (like coding, data analysis, and software development), highlighting it was essential to know the 'basics' (such as emails or use of Microsoft Office programmes like Excel or Word). They noted that these skills made them more appealing candidates for employers and were often needed to go through the job application process itself, such as when communicating with a recruiter online or via LinkedIn.

"You should definitely know at least the basics pretty well because that's the way we're moving… When they look at hiring someone, they want that they have at least the basic[s]."

Female, 24, UK

"Every job application requires either phone calls, emails, or an online application of some sort. And a lot of them are even using AI chat bots and video interviews and stuff, so you can't really get by without any digital skills at all."

Gender not specified, 21, Australia

Young people in Kenya and India could cite examples of how proficiency in more advanced skills could lead to more opportunities or better pay:

When it came to more advanced skills, young people could cite how specialist skills might be needed in certain careers, such as finance (e.g., coding with Python), creative industries (e.g., design software), healthcare (e.g., operating MRIs), and even traditionally labour-intensive fields like carpentry and cooking (e.g., for online marketing and business management).

"Your salary also depends on your skills. For example, if you go there and learn, they will not pay you that much. If you know beforehand, then you can demand [a higher salary]."

Female, 22, India

In Australia young people felt that opportunities to gain better pay would depend on the role and the saturation in the skills required in the market. In Nigeria young people were more focussed on how digital skills could increase their employment opportunities in the first place.

Nigerian and Kenyan young people specifically noted how digital skills could support self-employment:

These young people noted that users were able to create digital promotion content, market themselves online or track finances, possibly leading to the creation of more jobs.

"If you are marketing yourself, it will be easier for you to reach out to more clients not just in Nigeria but outside Nigeria."

Male, 19, Nigeria

Young people were all aware of the growing importance of AI but were unsure where this might end up being most transformative:

Most felt that AI proficiency was important in some areas, but not all (e.g. work in call centres). Some could see the benefit of AI in performing general administrative tasks (such as payroll and managing Microsoft Excel) but others felt AI was not essential in these areas. Still more felt that those lacking digital skills could leverage AI to compensate their lack of skills – such as in digital marketing. In Australia, respondents felt that the rapid development of AI may mean that learning specific skills like coding would be considered obsolete in future.

The digital skills gap

Young people feel they are not gaining the digital skills they need from their education or training systems:

Around a third of respondents to our 2023 survey said they thought the education system in their country does badly at providing people with the digital skills they need. This was backed up by the focus groups. While the majority reported feeling confident in their basic digital skills, in several countries (Australia, Nigeria, and the UK), young people noted discrepancies between the digital skills taught in formal education and the skills required in the workplace or for job applications.

> **"If you look at the economy right now, 90% of the time, what we study is not what we eventually do... You have to skill up..."**
>
> **Female, 24, Nigeria**

Some young people were gaining foundational skills in formal education, but these were not felt to be enough for what was demanded in the workplace:

In India and the UK, formal education was providing some with key foundational skills, although some felt that the skills they learnt in school were very basic in comparison to what was needed in work – for example learning to type in Information Communication Classes in the UK.

Young people in all countries felt the need to pursue self-directed learning to gain the skills they needed:

▶ Young people in Kenya had mostly self-taught skills through YouTube, AI assistants, or friends who supported them. Some also mentioned learning skills through specific programmes such as 'Girls Can Code' and 'Ajira' that support the development of coding and other digital skills. One mentioned a programme called 'Nairobots' that upskilled young people's skills in graphic design as well as supporting networking to enable them to get into employment more easily.

▶ In Australia, young people used tools such as YouTube, ChatGPT, or Google to support their learning, pursued online courses, or 'played around' with different platforms and software to learn how to work with it. One participant mentioned that this would be the approach for those whose school did not have the resources to support them in their learning:

> **"[I'm] just teaching myself what I find online, because the schools I went to... didn't really have the resources to teach us any of that stuff... when you come from my background, a lot of it is self-taught."**
>
> **Male, 23, Australia**

▶ Young people in India were pursuing informal, self-directed learning using Coursera or Henry Harvin Education to access university or corporate courses in digital skills, some of which are free. Others used more informal channels such as YouTube to learn more about specific digital skills e.g. pivot tables in Excel. Some young people learnt from their friends who were good at certain skills.

▶ In Nigeria, young people used the 'data entry academy by Chioma Lfeanyi-Eze' which offered free basic courses and advanced courses for a fee.

Self-directed learning did not always pay off, with some young people reporting a lack of confidence in their skills:

Young people with varying levels of digital skills reported a lack of confidence in their skills, with a few saying they would struggle with even more basic skills, such as keyboard shortcuts, and others feeling nervous about applying their digital skills in a professional context. One participant mentioned that if digital skills were a requirement in a job application, they would not apply for the role, as they did not feel confident in their skills beyond working with Microsoft Office. Even at a more advanced level, a participant who was applying for roles as a software engineer mentioned a worry that they would not know the right coding language for the job:

> **"Even when I apply for software engineer roles, they would require me to know some kind of language. But to be honest, like in my school, they only teach a few. So even I as a computer science major student, I don't have those skills."**
>
> **Female, 21, Australia**

The 'skills gap' affects some young people more than others

The highest-paid and best-quality digital jobs are not accessible to those in low and medium-income contexts:

Research suggests that in many low- and middle-income countries, digital employment is characterised by a higher degree of job stability than 'non-digital' employment, presenting more opportunities for waged rather than self-employed work. The same research, however, underlined that the best-paid and best-quality 'digital jobs' in different digital sectors are still concentrated in high-income countries.[14]

It was not easy for everyone to pursue self-directed learning:

One participant in Kenya had to choose between paid work to earn money for food and continuing with the course, showing how relying on self-directed learning could exacerbate existing inequalities and see some young people excluded from the digital economy.

There is a significant gender divide:

Our research shows fewer young women express an interest in digital jobs (58% compared with 69% of young men) and believing they have the skills needed for them (49% compared with 63% of young men).[15] This is particularly the case in middle- and low-income countries, with World Bank and Plan International supported research finding very low levels of digital literacy among women in Asia.[16]

There is an uneven distribution of digital skills among young people:

The inconsistencies in education systems and difficulties with self-directed learning described above all contribute to an inequalities in digital skills among young people, which is particularly felt in the context of a rapidly evolving technological landscape in which there is a growing demand for more advanced skills, such as coding, data analysis, AI management and specialised software proficiency.

The barriers facing young people

The typical barriers young people face when trying to gain digital skills for work include:

Not knowing what the industry requirements are:

As previously mentioned, young people felt they were not equipped with the skills they needed in their education, sometimes feeling that this was more theory-based than the on-the-job skills required by employers.

As a result, some reported feeling unclear on the importance of being proficient at digital skills until they started applying for jobs. University courses or school classes had not outlined the importance of these skills for the job market, meaning that young people may not have been aware of how important they would be, and some felt they had missed out on opportunities to gain key skills. Young people also reported feeling like the investment to learn more advanced skills at a later point was just too great:

"A lot of skills, like coding, to get really fluent, it just feels like something that I should have started when I was a lot younger. Now, because I didn't do that, it feels like it's not really worth it because it's just going to take a huge amount of time."

Male, 21, Australia

Keeping up with a rapidly evolving technological landscape:

Young people in Australia and the UK felt it was hard to stay ahead of the curve, noting that software proficiency quickly becomes outdated as employers change the software they use and that each sector had its own requirements for digital skills that may not be transferable to other sectors.

"Software's constantly developing and people, companies change what works best for them. So, you might learn something to a good standard and then the company's changed what you need to know anyway, so there's always this, kind of, disconnect between learning."

Female, 24, UK

Disadvantaged young people being excluded from digital spaces:

Young people in low-income communities are impacted by a lack of access to devices (such as laptops and computers), teaching resources within schools, and lack of funds to access courses post-school education. They are also less likely to be able to access good quality courses and opportunities for learning. Young people in Kenya and Nigeria also noted it would be hard to access role models or teachers with advanced digital skills (such as data science) in more rural areas of the country, which could make it harder for young people in these areas to learn those skills.

"Most of us from where we come from, there are no coding classes; you have to come to town. The environment is not conducive for what I want to get."

Participant, Kenya

"Without resources at home or school, it's tough to learn these skills."

Male, 23, Australia

In all countries, young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to grow up in homes with access to devices or the spare time to learn about them, meaning they have more limited exposure and less opportunity to learn digital skills. Young people also noted the need to have access to these devices from a young age in order to learn skills quickly; and for those looking to develop advanced skills, access to high quality, more expensive devices:

"The calibre of tools is also important. You cannot be a data analyst without having a laptop. There's no way not even the basic laptop but a very a good one. So, finance also affects [it]."

Male, 22, Nigeria

Even for those with bigger budgets, accessing software subscriptions can be expensive:

Young people highlighted the prohibitive cost of industry-standard software, particularly in the creative and music industries. This financial barrier could make it harder for them to learn new skills or hone existing skills, potentially limiting their career prospects.

"There's also access to software and some software's really expensive. Some people wouldn't be in a place to afford to learn in the first place."

Female, 24, UK

Gender gap:

Some young people held the perception that men have been embedded in fields that require digital skills for longer than women, who have relatively recently been accessing these spaces. This was specifically highlighted in Kenya, where societal expectations and gender norms limit women's participation in certain digital spaces.

"In the tech sector and coding, [you will find a lot more] men than women."

Participant, Kenya

Our research in previous years has revealed a significant digital gender divide, spanning key areas such as interest in digital careers, confidence in possessing the necessary skills, and perceptions of how accessible these opportunities are.[17]

Linked to this, and more generally, young people noted that **parents may not see the value of investing in digital skills** or may have concerns about their children using digital technology. This could influence adoption in young people or even limit their access to devices, perhaps leading them to assume digital skills are not important or relevant to them in their future careers. This was particularly emphasised in Nigeria.

Conclusions

Young people are aware they are entering a complex world and have thoughts on what is and will be important to them for the future. However, their lived experiences will impact the way they view the future. It is the job of governments, educators, and employers to support young people in understanding the scope of digital opportunities. The rich detail from our qualitative research provides information for where there are opportunities for intervention and to support more equity in the digital future.

These conversations highlight the real risk of disconnection for so many young people:

1. A disconnection between the digital skills taught in formal education and those required in the workplace. This can cause some young people to worry about their lack of digital skills and lead to young people reporting a lack of confidence in applying them professionally. Many are pursuing self-directed learning outside of formal education to mitigate this.

2. A disconnection between learning opportunities (whether self-directed or taught) and access to them, depending on factors such as socioeconomic background and geographic location. Women and those from less affluent backgrounds, for example, typically face more barriers to accessing digital opportunities.

3. A disconnection between the digital skills young people believe employers require and the skills young people feel are important for their wider lives. Many approaches to support young people focus on the technical skills needed in the workplace without considering the broader digital skills young people need to thrive. This drives a sense of disconnection and anxiety around digital skills with young people confused on which skills to focus on.

Support for young people must focus on these disconnections and find ways to bridge them so that all young people have the opportunity to benefit from the evolving digital economy.

CHAPTER 3:
What can we do to support equity for young people in the digital economy?

Throughout this report, we have seen how digital skills are essential for young people, yet education and employment systems are too often ill-equipped to give them the skills they need. We have seen the various ways in which digital jobs can perpetuate and exacerbate existing inequalities. There are also very real opportunities to disrupt and subvert these inequalities with the right digital interventions.

The primary recommendation of this report is that societies need to take a collaborative, young person-centred approach to think about the future of skills, jobs, economies and productivity. We have seen how focussing too much on narratives that present one way of seeing the problem (e.g. social exclusion, employer needs) can skew away from a focus on what matters to young people. Centring the needs of young people is the way to re-connect the debate to the issues that matter to them.

Across our focus groups, young people had country-specific ideas, but there are also four areas of clear agreement across the research, which should frame what comes next:

▶ **Emphasis on collaboration:** Young people across all countries recognise the need for collaborative efforts between government, employers, and educational institutions.

▶ **Focus on practical skills and training:** There is a universal call for more practical, hands-on training that aligns with industry needs.

▶ **Need for increased access to resources:** Equitable access to digital devices, software, and training opportunities is a common concern.

▶ **Importance of continuous learning:** Young people recognise the need for ongoing learning and adaptation to keep pace with technological advancements.

Government

Across countries, young people want governments to play a more active role in fostering the development of digital skills.

Improving access to technology and resources

Young people in the UK, Australia, and Nigeria emphasise the need for equitable access to digital devices, software, and learning resources. Suggestions include government-funded laptop leasing programs for schools, grants for software purchases, and free or subsidised training courses. Kenyan young people highlight the need for accessible IT programs.

> **"(…)if the money does not flow from the government, it will be difficult for educational sectors to forge ahead to get the equipment needed to help students [to]- you know- gain more knowledge in their fields"**
>
> **Female, 24, Nigeria**

This supports wider research and evidence on the need for governments to think about investing in access, equity and appropriate minimum digital living standards to protect the young people who are already disadvantaged by labour markets.

Practically, this could look like:

▶ Considering what a minimum digital standard is for their country, and what government could do to enable young people to access it.

▶ Prioritising the security around new opportunities, such as those in the platform economy, so that young people are not exploited by change. This means looking at adaptations to social security for young people that respond to the new realities of the labour market.

Updating educational policies and curricula

Young people in Australia, India and the UK stress the importance of aligning school curricula with the demands of the digital job market. They call for updated policies and programmes that prioritise digital skills development from an early age. Indian young people emphasise the need for effective implementation of existing policies and quality assurance of government-funded courses. Kenyan young people call for increased awareness campaigns about the importance of digital skills and mandatory computer classes in public schools.

> **"The government should create more awareness on digital skills. Things you need to have in the changing environment. As a young person, you know what's going to happen in the next five years."**
>
> **Participant, Kenya**

Around the world, countries are grappling with how to design curricula to meet the challenges of today. There are countries, such as Scotland, where innovations in curriculum design are underway, and there are non-profits, such as the Raspberry Pi Foundation, who are developing bodies of evidence and practice. Governments should convene educators and employers with young people to develop clear and inclusive pathways to work.

Addressing broader socioeconomic issues

In every country, there is a need to keep in mind the connection between existing socio-economic issues and how digital skill development and jobs can exacerbate and feed into them. Kenyan young people, for example, highlight the need for government action on corruption to ensure fair access to economic opportunities based on skills, not connections. These young people also emphasise the importance of promoting gender equality in digital opportunities by addressing disparities in internet access and digital skills proficiency.

There are also calls for government to provide support and legislation for employers to encourage better access to roles that are less precarious and provide greater security for young people,

Education institutions

Young people across all countries identified a crucial role for educational institutions in preparing them for a digital workforce. Key recommendations include:

Upskilling teachers

Young people in Australia and the UK highlight the importance of investing in teacher training to ensure that educators have the knowledge and confidence to teach digital skills effectively.

"Refresh teacher knowledge so teachers are able to teach those lessons [digitally] (...) [the lesson] doesn't need to be computer science, it could be history or anything"

Female, 24, UK

The need to focus on digital skills and literacy across the curriculum is a significant challenge for many school systems, and there aren't enough resources to upskill all teachers in computer science. What young people want more than this, are digitally confident teachers across the curriculum, which should be a bigger priority.

Raising awareness and promoting digital literacy

Indian young people note the need for educational institutions to highlight the importance of digital skills from an early age and engage students by making it clearer on how these skills link to a broad range of career opportunities. Kenyan young people call for awareness campaigns about digital skills, cybercrime, and the diverse career paths available in the digital sector. Nigerian young people emphasise the need for increased capacity and facilities, including computer labs and smaller class sizes.

Education providers should connect digital skills to all disciplines and invest in training, particularly towards social and citizenship elements of curriculums, to support young people in centring themselves confidently in the digital world, as opposed to solely chasing employer-focused skills. This should include ensuring that young people are equipped to understand the fears and anxieties that these technologies are provoking through skills and awareness, prioritising safe access to resources and devices and working with partners on connectivity out of schools, particularly in rural or other types of excluded areas.

Employers

Young people across the countries had clear expectations for employers to support their digital skills development. Key recommendations include:

Providing training and upskilling opportunities

Young people in Australia, India, Kenya, and Nigeria emphasise the importance of employer-sponsored training programs, both on and off the job. Suggestions include paid training during work hours, funding for external courses, and mentorship programs. UK young people encourage a focus on transferable skills and a willingness to train new hires in company-specific software.

"At the beginning of the month, they bring in specialists to train everyone, whether new or old to keep them updated on how to run the facility properly. Employers also have a role to play in this part."

Female, 21, Nigeria

Broadening recruitment criteria

UK young people encourage employers to prioritise applicants' potential over existing skills, particularly for entry-level roles. They suggest focusing on transferable skills and providing opportunities for new employees to learn specialised software on the job. Indian young people echo this sentiment, urging employers to prioritise demonstrable skills over formal certifications.
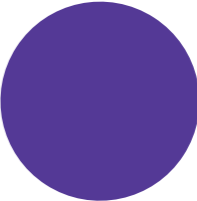
Collaborating with educational institutions

Australian young people highlight the need for stronger partnerships between employers and educational institutions to ensure that curricula align with industry needs. Nigerian young people emphasise the need for specialist training provided by employers.

"Employers (...) [should be] saying, look most of us are going to want this certain digital training. [This needs to be] in your curriculum so people are set when they're looking for work."

Female, 20, Australia

Across this research, employer engagement is essential, and governments, educators and non-profits can always look to do more to work closely with employers to support young people. However, there are clear things that young people need from employers to bridge some of the disconnections they are experiencing. Young people want to see recruitment approaches that allow them to demonstrate their potential skills and assets, access to roles that are less precarious, and better connections between employers and education institutions. Strengthening these links will help align training with job market needs and ensure that valuable knowledge and talent are retained within the country.

Civil Society Institutions

All these stakeholders and actors need to come together to discuss the issues facing young people and the solutions to address them. However, the voices of young people still need to be heard.

Civil Society Organisations play a vital role in advancing these recommendations by tailoring their efforts to the specific needs of each country. In some regions, this may involve advocacy and campaigning; in others, the delivery of outsourced services; and elsewhere, collaborating across civil society to bridge gaps in education and skills development.

Finally it is clear that civil society institutions have a unique role in being able to create more spaces that platform and centre youth voices in these discussions, empowering them to feel in control of their lives.

Building a more equitable digital future

"We have passed the age where things are documented with paper and pen ... a skill that is needed now and will still be needed for five years, is digital skills."

Female, 24, Nigeria

Debates around digital skills and digital jobs are only going to grow more important as the world becomes increasingly digital.

By taking a collaborative and inclusive approach with young people, we can support them in accessing the opportunities of the future. However, we must do more than consult young people on the issue. Young people may be limited by their own lived experience, and it is the job of adult stakeholders to support them to expand their horizons, aspirations and opportunities.

We have seen how the debate around digital skills can feel murky and complex, and the way forward is not always clear for these stakeholders.

Using frameworks, like the one presented in this report, can support a more nuanced understanding of the issues at play, and enable actors to adopt a more holistic approach to tackling skills gaps and inequities.

Over the past decade, the pace of technological change has accelerated at an unprecedented rate, showing no signs of slowing. Innovations such as satellite internet have, in theory, levelled the playing field, enabling a child in rural India to access the internet as readily as one in inner London. This progress holds immense potential to democratize employment, drive entrepreneurship, and foster a more equitable world where the benefits of growth are shared by all. However, this outcome is far from guaranteed.

This report highlights the significant challenges and pitfalls on the path to a truly equitable digital future. Yet, it also underscores a historic opportunity: for governments, educators, employers, and civil society to collaborate in building a world where every young person can thrive and benefit from the digital revolution.

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- ▶ Royal Society
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- ▶ We and AI
- ▶ World Economic Forum

APPENDICES

Sample profile – Australia

Age	SEG	Gender	Economic activity	Ever been in employment	Willing to work in the digital sector in the future	Highest level of education	Area type	Any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses
24	Middle	Female	I am a full time or part time student	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in part time work	University degree	Urban	No
21	Middle	Prefer not to say	I am a full time or part time student, I am a full time or part time student	Yes, in part time work	No	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Outer suburbs	Yes
21	Middle	Female	I am in informal work, I am a full time or part time student, I am looking for work	No	Yes, in full time work	University degree	Urban	No
21	Higher	Male	I am a full time or part time student, I am looking for work	Yes, in part time work	No	University degree	Urban	No
20	Middle	Female	I am looking for work	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in part time work	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Urban	No
23	Middle	Male	I am a full time or part time student, I am looking for work	No	No	Upper high school / finished high school	Outer suburbs	Yes
24	Higher	Female	I am a full time or part time student, I am looking for work	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in part time work	University degree	Urban	No

Sample profile – India

Age	SEG	Gender	Economic activity	Ever been in employment	Willing to work in the digital sector in the future	Highest level of education	Area type	Any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses
19	A	Female	I am a full time or part time student	No	No	University degree	Urban	No
20	B	Female	I am not in employment or training	No	No	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Peri-urban	No
19	B	Male	I am in training for employment	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in part time work	University degree	Peri-urban	No
23	B1	Male	I am in training for employment	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in part time work	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Peri-urban	No
22	A	Female	I am looking for work	No	No	University degree	Urban	No
24	A	Female	I am looking for work	No	No	University degree	Urban	No
21	A	Male	I am not in employment or training	No	No	University degree	Urban	Yes
22	B	Male	I am not in employment or training	No	No	University degree	Peri-urban	Yes

Sample profile – Kenya

Age	SEG	Gender	Economic activity	Ever been in employment	Willing to work in the digital sector in the future	Highest level of education	Area type	Any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses
19	Lower	Female	I am Looking for work	No	Yes, in full time work	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Urban	Yes
23	Lower	Male	I am a full time or part time student	No	Yes, in full time work	University degree	Urban	No
24	Lower	Male	I am a full time or part time student	No	Yes, in full time work	University degree	Urban	No
24	Middle	Male	I am in training for Employment, I am a full time or part time student	Yes, in part time work (attachment)	Yes, in full time work	University degree	Urban	No
24	Lower	Female	I am in informal work	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in part time work	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Urban	No
19	Lower	Male	I am in informal work	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in full time work	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Peri-urban	No
18	Middle	Female	I am not in education, employment or training	No	Yes, in full time work	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Peri-urban	No
22	Middle	Female	I am not in education, employment or training	No	Yes, in full time work	University degree	Urban	No

Sample profile – Nigeria

Age	SEG	Gender	Economic activity	Ever been in employment	Willing to work in the digital sector in the future	Highest level of education	Area type	Any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses
24	C1	Female	I am looking for work	Yes	Yes	University degree	Urban	No
20	C2	Male	I am in training for employment	Yes	Yes	University degree	Urban	No
18	C1	Male	I am a full time or part time student	No	Yes	University degree	Peri-urban	Yes
21	C2	Female	I am in informal work	Yes	Yes	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Urban	No
18	DE	Female	I am not in education, training, or employment	No	Yes	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Rural	No
22	DE	Male	I am looking for work	No	Yes	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Rural	No
19	DE	Male	I am looking for work	No	Yes	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Rural	No
24	DE	Female	I am in informal work	No	Yes	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Peri-urban	No

REFERENCES

Sample profile – UK

Age	SEG	Gender	Economic activity	Ever been in employment	Willing to work in the digital sector in the future	Highest level of education	Area type	Any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses	Ethnicity
24	D	Female	I am looking for work, I am not in education, employment, or training	Yes, in part time work	Yes	University degree	Peri-urban	No	Black British
22	C1	Male	I am a full time or part time student	No	Yes, in full time work	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Peri-urban	No	Asian
23	E	Female	I am looking for work	Yes, in part time work	No	University degree	Urban	No	White and Black Caribbean
24	C1	Female	I am in informal work	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in part time work	University degree	Peri-urban	No	White British
21	C2	Male	I am a full time or part time student	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in full time work	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Urban	No	White British
24	C2	Female	I am in training for employment	Yes, in part time work	Yes, in full time work	University degree	Peri-urban	Yes	White British
20	C2	Male	I am a full time or part time student	Yes, in part time work	Possibly	Upper secondary that allows access to university	Peri-urban	No	Pakistani British

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6   This thinking aligns with the ILO's Global framework on core skills for life and work in the 21st century (2021), which includes digital skills along with social and emotional skills, cognitive and metacognitive skills, and the basic skills for green jobs - the other area of significant potential for young people. Report: Global framework on core skills for life and work in the 21st century (ilo.org)

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