

# The pulse of Malta's future generations

EY Generate Youth Survey

2022



Building a better  
working world

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ABOUT

The 5th EY Generate Youth Survey gathered the views of over 700 Generation-Z and Millennials in Malta. The survey was conducted between the 30th September and 31st October 2022.

The survey's purpose is to provide public and private sector leaders with deeper insights into the thinking of Malta's younger generations, their similarities, and their differences, particularly on the topics of economy, entrepreneurship, society, and the future outlook.

Gen-Z refers to ages 16-25 while Millennials ages 26-39.

# FOREWORD



“  
With strong opinions  
and unwavering  
priorities Malta’s youth  
have a lot to say.

Welcome to the 5th edition of EY Generate. Every year we discover what it means to be young in Malta through our questions in this survey. Despite living in an ultra-connected world, we must reflect on our youths' priorities and concerns. And we need to be honest with ourselves. Are we listening enough to what the next generation of leaders has to say?

How do they feel about Malta's trajectory? Do they share the same views on our economy? Do they have the same anxieties and concerns? What do they care about, and what do they want to change?

These are the questions that the Generate survey aims to ask, focusing on the different perspectives that can be seen between Generation Z and Millennials. I found these results inspiring because even in the tumultuous events that have characterized these last five years, there has always been a constant hope for a brighter future ahead.

Our youths appreciate that our country has a lot to offer but are mindful of many factors that they think we can do better, including sustainability and caring for our environment. In this year's edition, it is evident that inflation is very topical, and youths are concerned.

We hope that these results shed some light for those in public and private sectors as to how the younger generations see the country through their lens and assist them in their goal to build a brighter future.

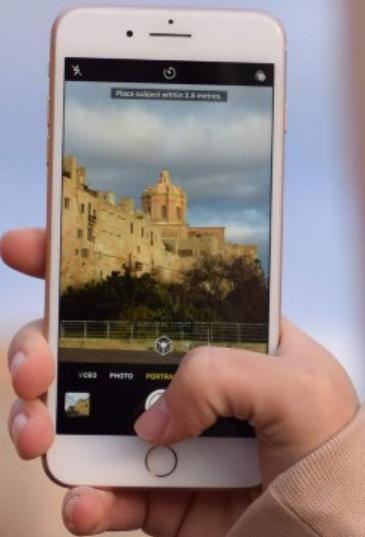
This year we have asked two open-ended questions prompting our young people's ideas for the evolution of the education system and the future of Malta. With strong opinions and unwavering priorities, Malta's youth have a lot to say.

Please read through the results and consider what these mean while considering that the future of Malta's potential could very well be within these pages.



**Ronald Attard**  
Country Managing Partner,  
EY Malta

# 1 21st century society

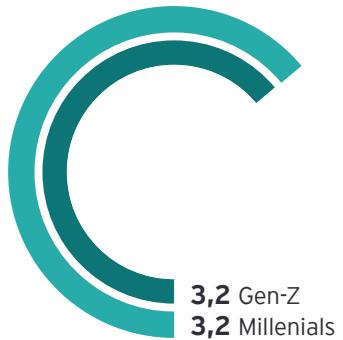


This island, although small, boasts many achievements that exceed its size. With a long history of perseverance through struggle and rebuilding with visions of a greater future the Maltese and the island's inhabitants have much to be proud of. Just as those before us built temples, fortifications, churches, palaces, industries, and a strong sense of culture for us to experience and enjoy, it is now our turn to preserve and create the Malta of the future.

The 21st century brought unimagined comforts and opportunities. As we adapt to the digital age, ushering in new levels of connectivity, building stronger communities, and enhancing inclusivity, today's youths are clear with their priorities and what they find to be a greater quality of life.

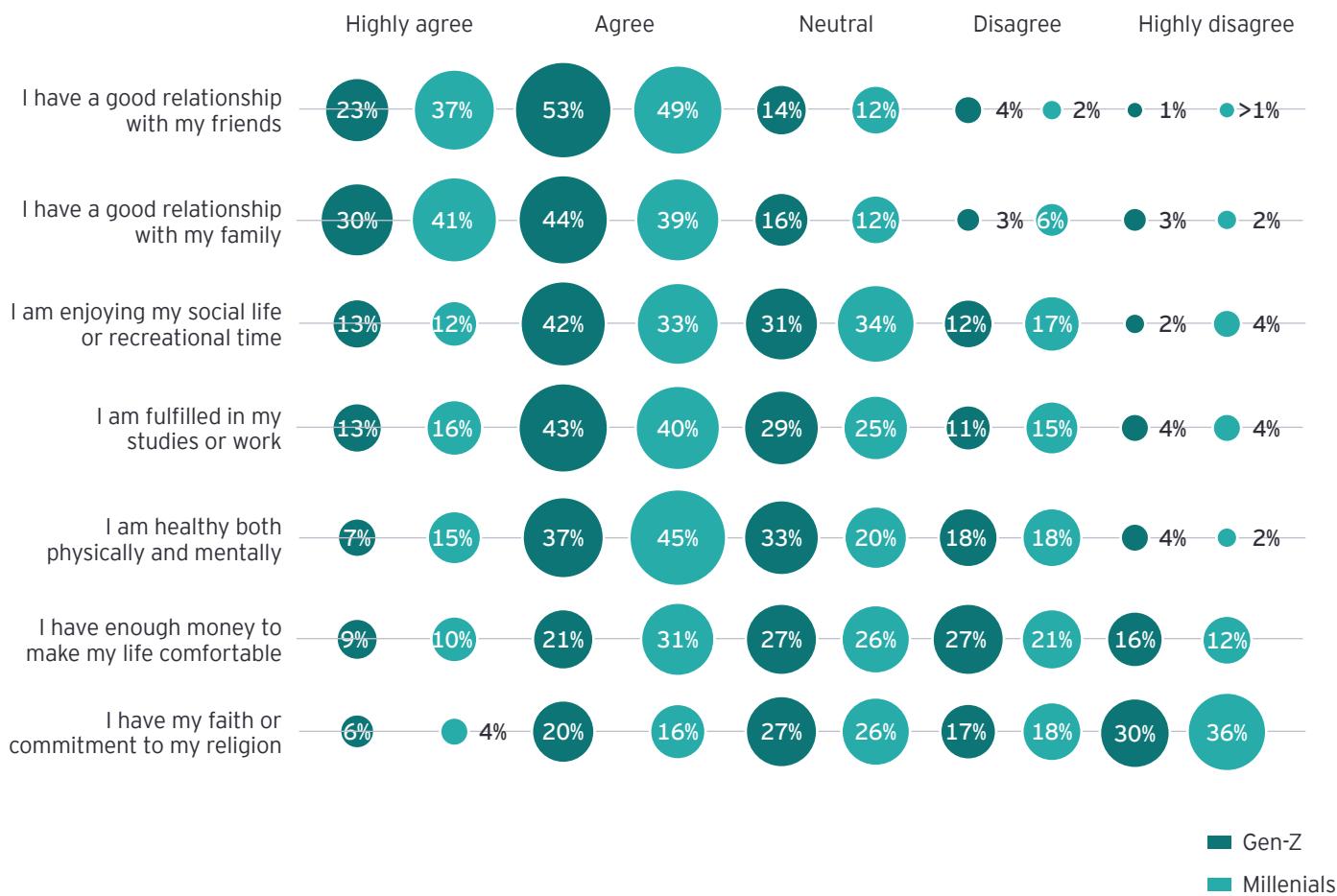
On a scale of 1-5, with five being very happy, the two generations registered an average of 3.2. Both Gen-Z and Millennials take comfort in their relationship with friends and family and find their studies or work to be fulfilling.

**Figure 1:** Happiness of youths in Malta



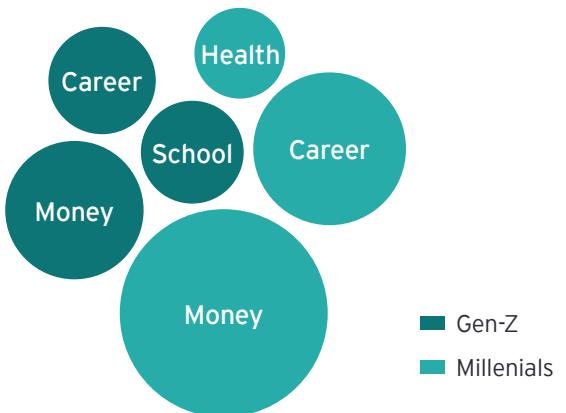
*Happiness rating: 5 is very happy*

**Figure 2:** Factors affecting happiness

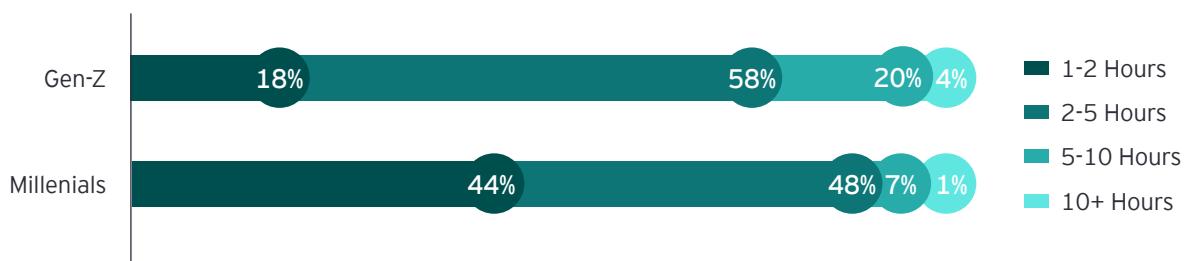


The survey suggests that the top anxiety factors for Maltese youths are financial and career pressures. In 3rd place Gen-Z classify school as their source of anxiety while Millennials are concerned about their health. Results indicate that the least sources of anxiety for both generations are physical harm, the war in Ukraine, and their relationship with friends.

**Figure 3:** Top 3 sources of anxiety



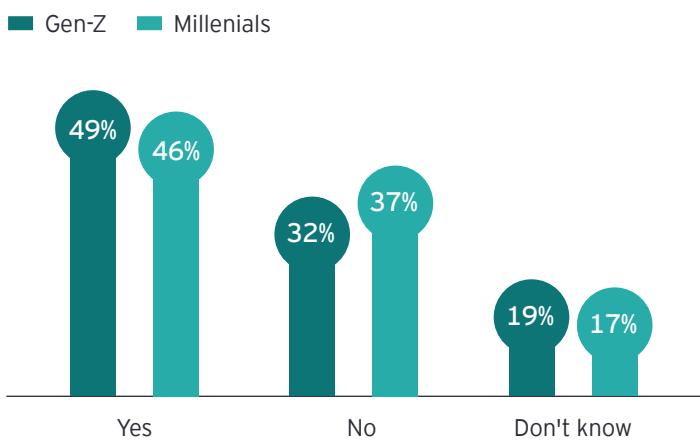
**Figure 4:** Time on average spent on social media



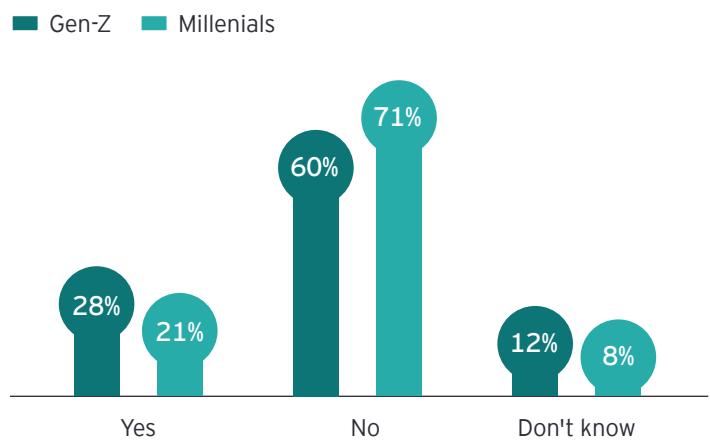
Social media revolutionized how we view connectivity and has shifted everyday interactions into a virtual space of instant and constant interaction. 7% of Millennials spend longer than 5 hours on social media, with the majority of 48% spending around 2-5 hours. On the other hand, 1 in 5 of every Gen-Z respondent spends between 5 and 10 hours on social media, with more than half spending up to 5 hours.

Almost half of the survey respondents believe in God, but when asked whether they see themselves as religious, the numbers shifted, with 60% of Gen-Z and 71% of Millennials saying they are not.

**Figure 5:** Believe in God

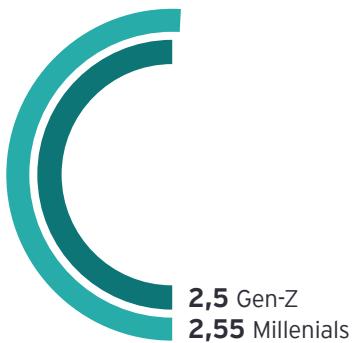


**Figure 6:** Believe that they are religious



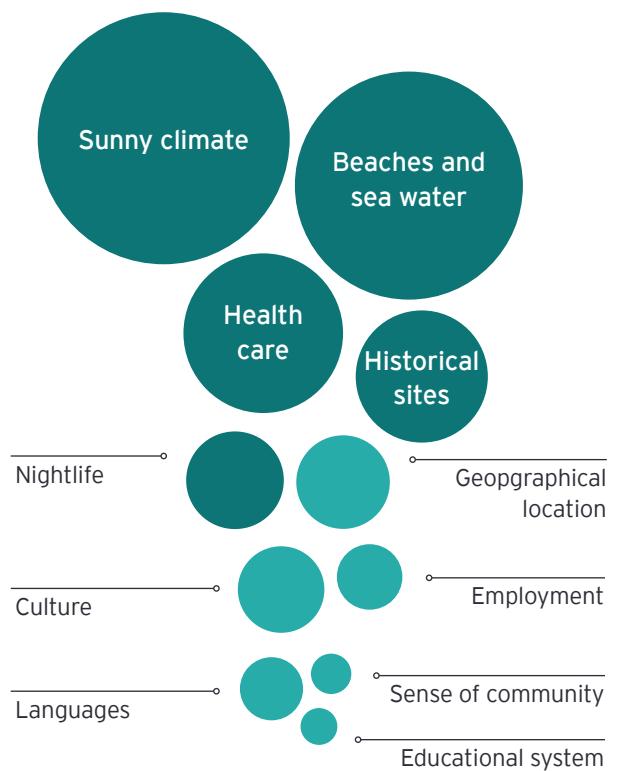
On average, Malta's youth are at a neutral standpoint on whether Malta is a good place to live, registering a 2.5 on a scale of 1-5. Respondents identify the country's best features as sunny climate, beaches, and health care.

**Figure 7:** Believe Malta is a good place to live



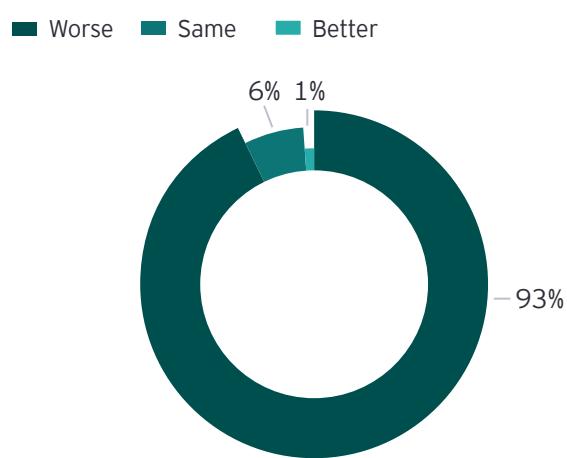
Good place rating: 5 is very good

**Figure 8:** Malta's best features



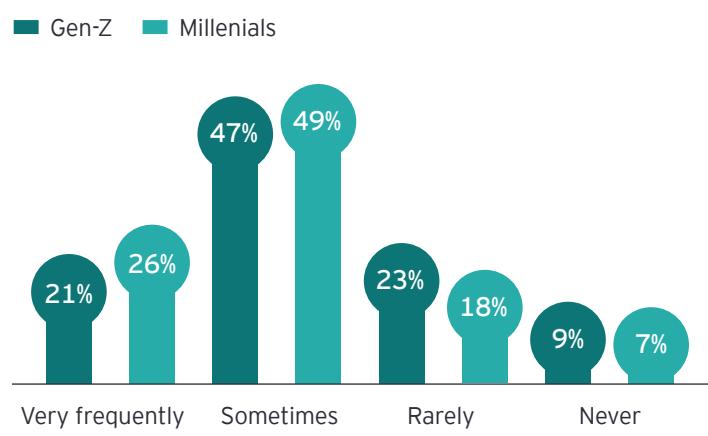
This is why it's not surprising that there is a substantial concern over the environment. An overwhelming 93% of youth believe that the state of Malta's nature is getting worse, with just 1% stating that it is getting better.

**Figure 9:** The environment is getting

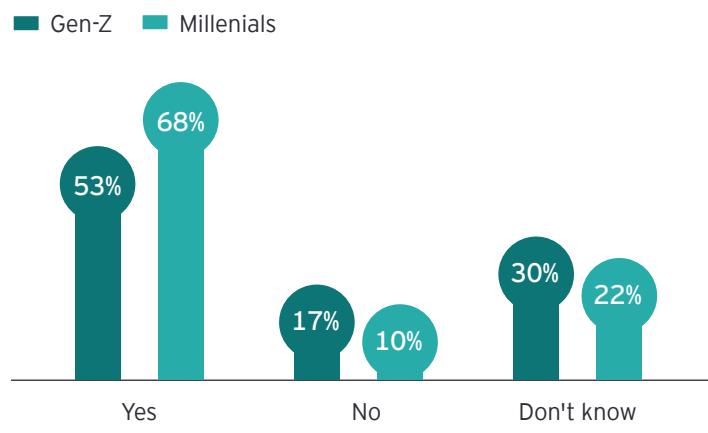


Continuing at a national level, most of Gen-Z and Millennials follow Maltese politics, albeit not frequently. 53% of Gen-Z and 68% of Millennials also attest that they will consider voting for different political parties.

**Figure 10:** Follow Maltese politics



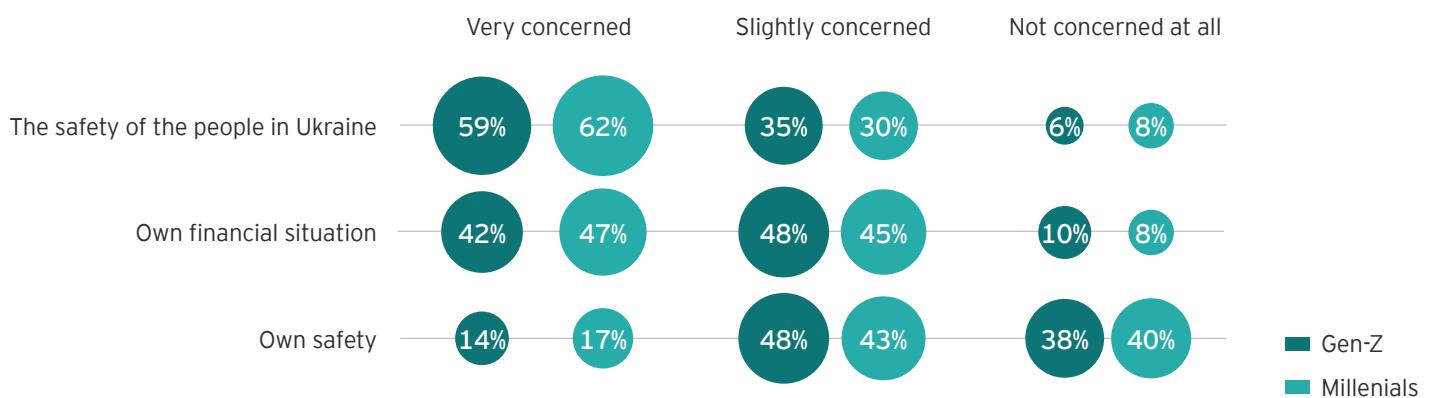
**Figure 11:** Consider voting for a different political party



Although it is geographically far, the war in Ukraine has had an impact on Malta's youths. In terms of empathy and a need for social justice, 94% of Gen-Z and 92% of Millennials have shown concern for the well-being of Ukrainians.

In terms of their own safety 62% of Gen-Z and 60% of Millennials are slightly or very concerned. Over 90% of both generations are slightly or very concerned about the financial implications as an indirect result of the war.

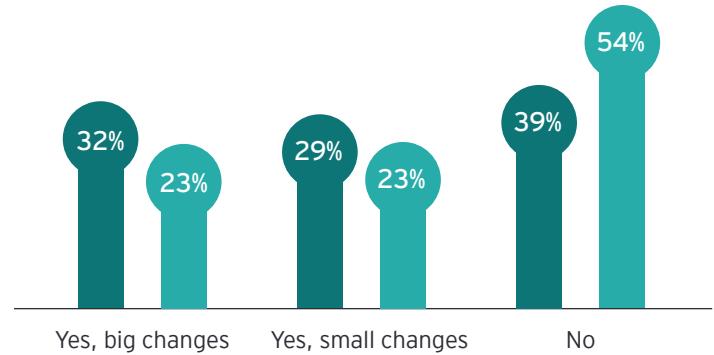
**Figure 12:** Concern about the war in Ukraine in regards to



Over 60% of Gen-Z feel that they can bring about small or big changes in Malta. Millennials do not feel that they can create change with more than half claiming that they do not feel actively empowered to bring upon change in Malta.

**Figure 13:** Do you feel actively empowered to bring upon a change in Malta

■ Gen-Z ■ Millenials





# Economy and entrepreneurship

Covid 19 has resulted in economic turmoil for many countries across the globe. Against this chaotic backdrop a number of companies had to rethink their business models and adapt to a new reality. In 2022, as we slowly approached a new normal, we were faced with the war in Ukraine.

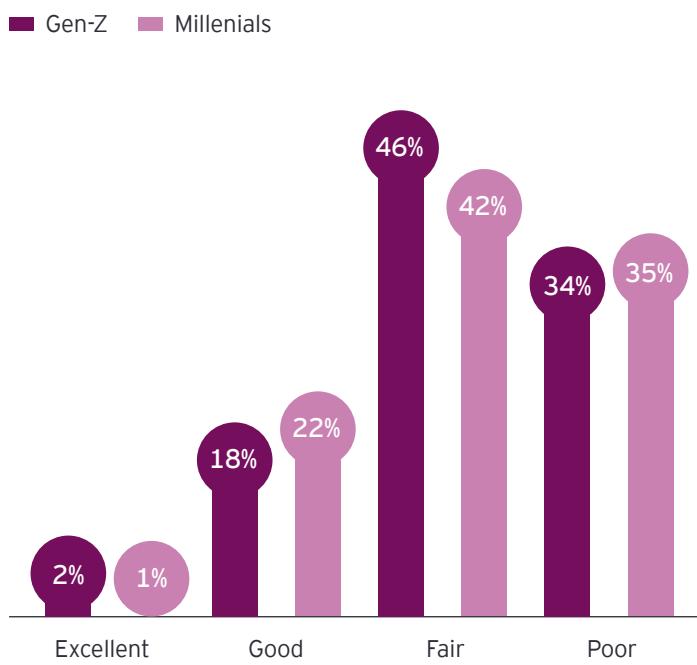
The realities that companies have had to face over the last few years has accelerated the need and pace of adaptation and flexibility - not only impacting these businesses directly, but their people and customers too.

Despite the challenging business landscape, Malta's economy has remained resilient. In fact, most data indicates an above average economic performance when compared to other countries - although this was not without its challenges.

Against this backdrop, what do Malta's young people think of today's economic reality?

When it comes to the economy these days, Millennials and Gen-Z broadly share the same view, with the highest amount of respondents answering that the economy's condition is fair. Despite Malta's economy faring above average compared to its European counterparts, a good portion of Gen-Z and Millennials still have a different perception of the economy's performance with 35% of Millennials stating that the economy is poor. One cannot help but wonder what criteria are taken into consideration by Malta's young people when forming an opinion about the economy.

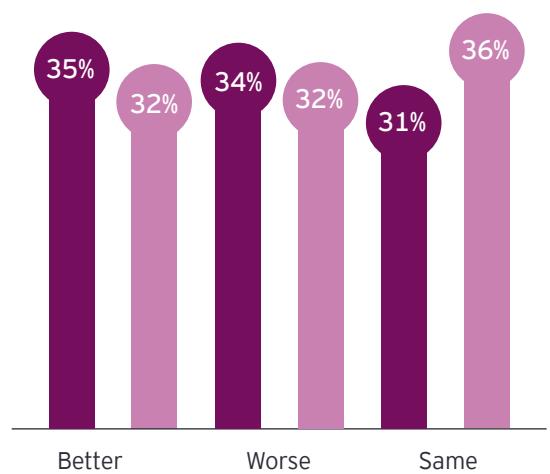
**Figure 14:** Malta's economy these days



Looking at their financial situation compared to a year ago, Millennials and Gen-Z are also broadly in line. Among the respondents who claimed that they were worse off, Millennials cited property purchasing, health expenses, and inflation as the main reasons. At the same time, Gen-Z blame inflation, low salaries, and failed risky investments.

**Figure 15:** Financial situation compared to last year

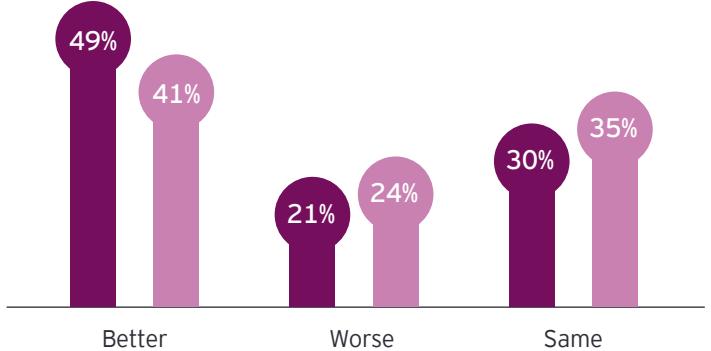
■ Gen-Z ■ Millennials



On a more positive note, young people hold a brighter outlook on their financial future, as 49% of Gen-Z believe they will be in a better situation next year, 30% believe they will be in the same position. Millennials share the same thought, with 41% hoping for better. Respondents that think they will be worse off next year have primary concerns over inflation and a rising cost of living.

**Figure 16:** Financial situation next year

■ Gen-Z ■ Millennials

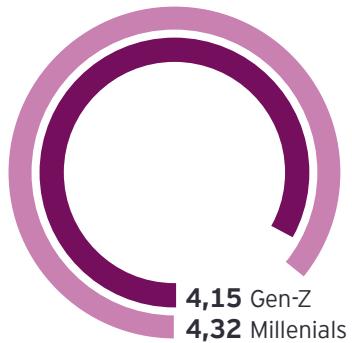


In consideration of the above, the survey found that 89% of Malta's young people do not believe that wages in Malta compare positively to global salaries. In addition, they find the cost of living in Malta is expensive.

**Figure 17:** Believe Maltese wages are globally competitive in the same fields



**Figure 18:** Cost of living in Malta

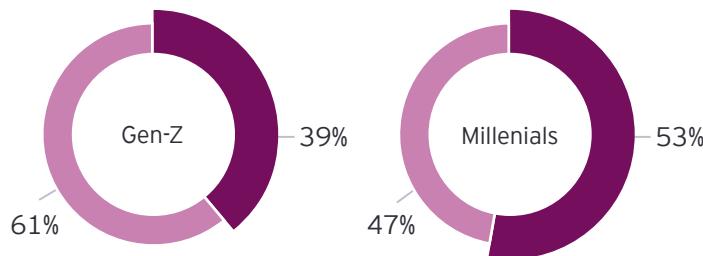


*Expense rating: 5 is very expensive*

Inflation resulting from the war in Ukraine was this year's unexpected challenge. Results have shown that Millennials are more capable of keeping up with rising costs when compared to Gen-Z.

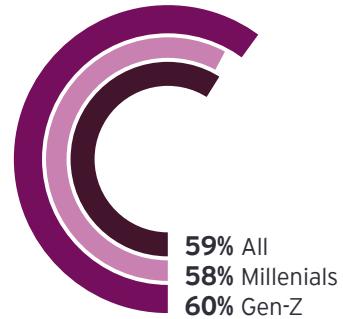
**Figure 19:** Keeping up with inflation costs

■ Yes ■ No



60% of Gen-Z are very concerned about inflation, with Millennials following shortly behind at 58%. To reduce costs, 51% of Gen-Z plan to eat out less, while 50% are aiming to increase their income to keep up. 55% of Millennials also plan to reduce eating out, in addition to that 48% will be switching to lower priced brands.

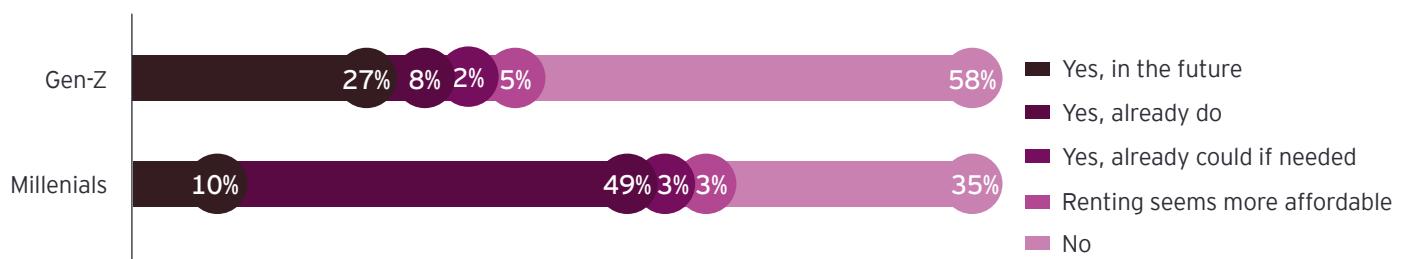
**Figure 20:** Are very concerned by inflation



When it comes to property, there is quite a difference between the two generations. More than half of Gen-Z do not feel they will be able to buy property in the future.

On the other hand, 49% of Millennials already own property. Another 13% think they could in the future or already have the capacity to if they wish to do so.

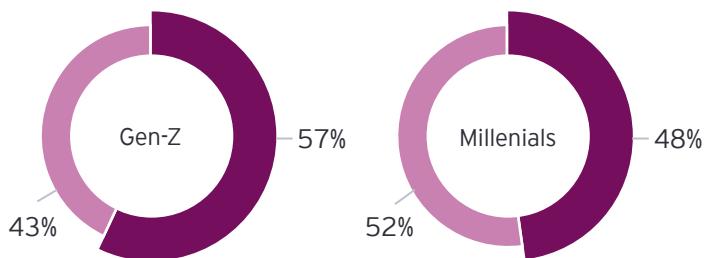
**Figure 21:** Believe that they can afford a sole property in the future



57% of Gen-Z respondents have indicated that they would prefer being an entrepreneur. Millennials are relatively in balance as to their preference.

**Figure 22:** Would you rather be

■ An employee ■ An entrepreneur



57% of Gen-Z believe that their generation is more entrepreneurial than Millennials. On the other hand, a quarter of Millennials seem to think that they are as entrepreneurial as the Gen X generation.

**Figure 23:** Believe their generation is more entrepreneurial than previous ones





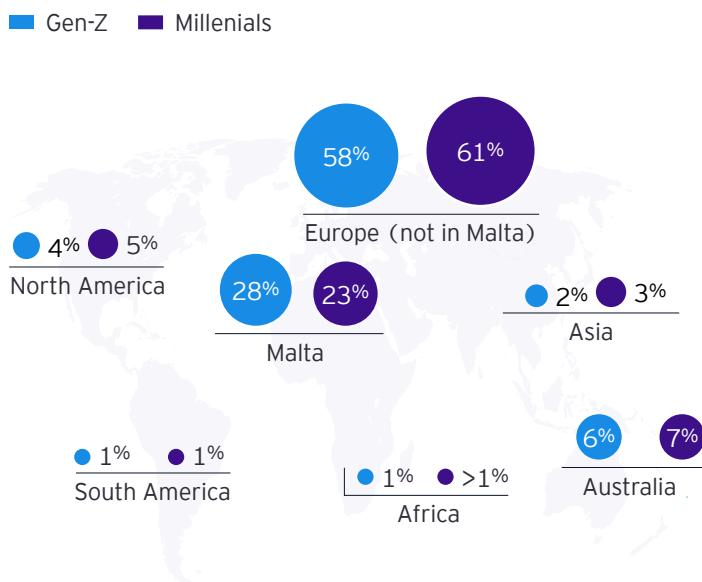
# 3 Future

We often forget that what we do now impacts tomorrow's world, one which we may not all live to see but which those younger than us will inhabit. Long-term strategy and solutions mean keeping this audience in mind, understanding their wants so that the country and culture we now design will coincide with their beliefs and not act as a hinderance.

It is essential that our younger generations know that they have a voice to speak their thoughts, suggestions, and concerns, and that these will be heard not only by those surrounding them but by those that can create the change and bring on a brighter future. They do not hold back when it comes to their wishes for a better future and they are unwavering in their belief that Malta's environment needs protecting.

When asked where they would rather live and work 72% of Gen-Z and 77% of Millennials would rather live outside of Malta. But what is their motivation for this?

**Figure 24:** Would you rather live and work in...



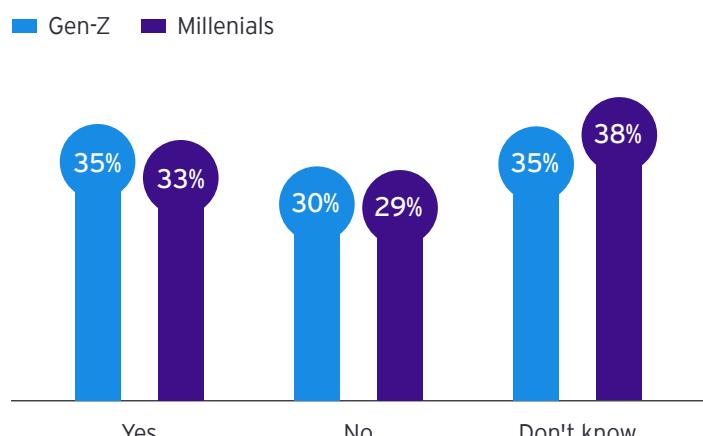
Better employment and salaries are the top scoring factor for both generations. Gen-Z also have a hunger for new experiences and feel a constraint in Malta's size. Millennials also would like new experiences but give a greater priority to being in a space that is quieter and more relaxing than contemporary Malta.

**Figure 25:** Top 3 reasons behind wanting to live and work somewhere else



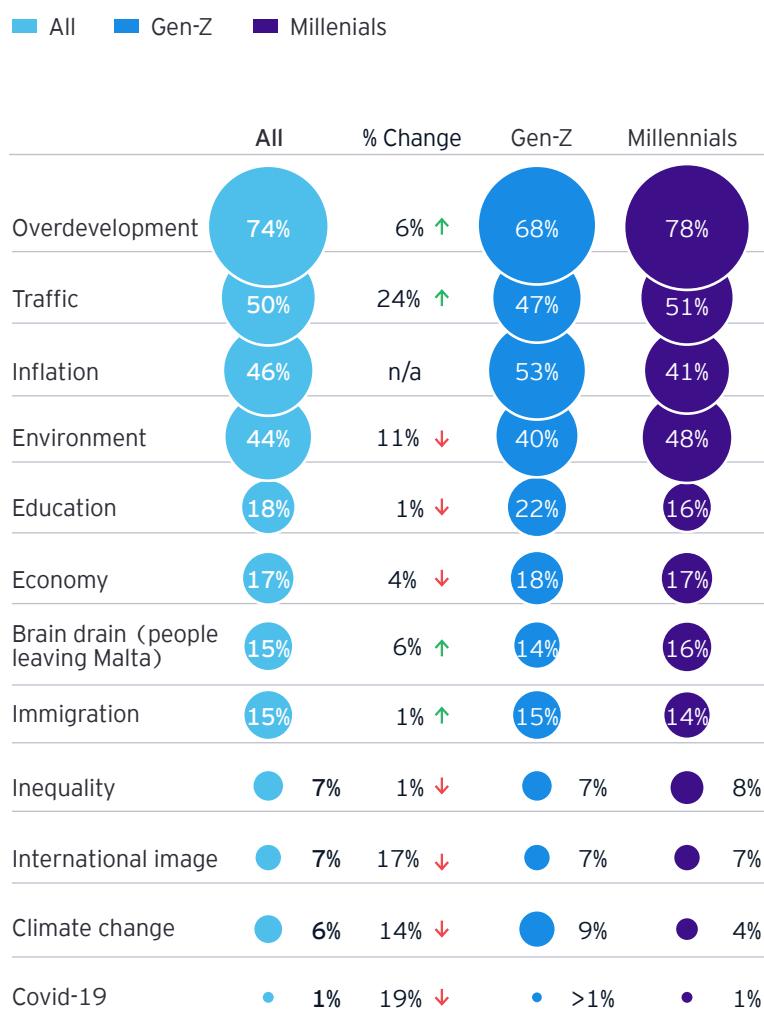
Mixed results followed when asked about whether they would return to Malta after moving abroad. While 35% of Gen-Z and 33% of Millennials responded that they would return to Malta 35% of Gen-Z and 38% of Millennials are still uncertain.

**Figure 26:** Returning to live in Malta after moving abroad



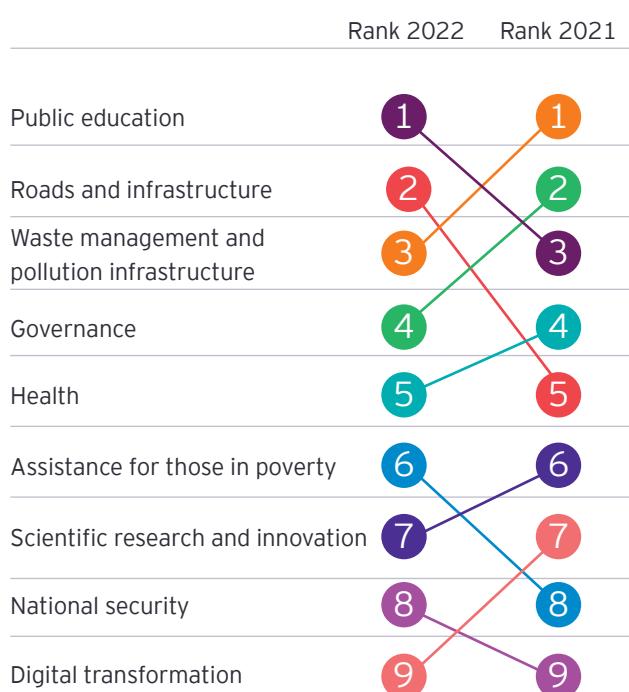
According to almost three quarters of youth Malta's biggest challenge is overdevelopment. This result has gone up 6% points since last year's survey. Following it is traffic that has increased by 24% in one year. In third place comes inflation. On the lower end of the list concerns over international image, climate change, and Covid-19 have decreased substantially in comparison to last year.

**Figure 27:** Malta's biggest challenges



According to Malta's young people the major priorities for government investment should be public education, roads and infrastructure, and waste management and pollution. On this, both generations have some ideas...

**Figure 28:** Government's investment priorities





Ideas for a  
better Malta...

4

On improving the education system Malta's young people have a 5-point strategy.

# 1

## Teachers' salaries

As the student population grows the need for qualified educators grows with it, but the supply remains thin. Youth believe that increasing teachers' pay is necessary to match educators' current workload and encourage students to work in the profession.

# 2

## Holistic approach

Education should be holistic and should take into consideration both the academic and physical education. Furthermore, there should be greater focus on hands-on experience. Respondents argue that this approach should be extended to earlier years where many believe that play is an essential element boosting social skills and creativity that has been set aside.

# 3

## Basic skill sets

Following a large disjoint between school life and the adult world Malta's young people have expressed the wish of having basic skill sets included in the curriculum. This involves cooking, nutrition, housekeeping, basic tax knowledge, financial management, and other necessary life skills. Moving into a world of independent lifestyles and equal role households means that these are skills that are essential to everyone and should not be limited by age or gender.

# 4

## Moving away from exams

Malta's younger generations believe that assessments should be a mixture of coursework, assignments, and an emphasis on presentations as opposed to traditional exams. This comes not only with a desire for equal opportunity but focuses on an education that makes students better equipped for the working world of tomorrow. Several respondents also referenced Scandinavian models of education as ideals to strive for.

# 5

## Study to learn not to remember

Academic excellence must become more than just memory as Malta's youth have asked to shift education in favour of critical thinking, problem-solving, and an approach to knowledge centred around a joy for learning. This culture shift could encourage more students to continue into tertiary education, thus creating a qualified skills workforce with higher salary opportunities.

Finally, we asked for their insights on a better Malta which brought out a focus on 5 main themes.

# 1

## Less overdevelopment, more trees

While some call for a complete halt of development, pausing controversial permits, and demolishing those already built on former ODZ space, others identified a want for more aesthetic developments that fit the traditional image of Malta and a refocusing on renovating long abandoned and decrepit buildings. On the environment, in addition to green lungs and more trees to reduce the growing pollution that has been affecting the health of some respondents there is also a large desire for open green spaces within urban areas.

# 2

## Long-Term infrastructure, not short-term fixes

An infrastructure that promotes sustainable practices and is not catered towards cars was suggested. Malta's young people suggested pedestrianised areas, functional bicycle lanes, an increase in motorbike and electric car grants, and a dependable public transport system. This would not only reduce traffic and help combat climate change but can help improve air quality and promote healthier lifestyles.

# 3

## Transparency, accountability, and enforcement

Good governance is mentioned as youths call for transparency, accountability, and greater enforcements from those in authority. As a suggestion to counteract these issues respondents believe that the voting system which favours a two-party system should be altered to allow greater opportunity for third party and independent candidates to earn a seat in parliament and provide a stronger opposition. A number also cited long trials as a hindrance to justice rather than an aid.

# 4

## Rising population

Some respondents flagged rising population as a topic of concern, with many questioning whether our limited resources and infrastructure can cater for a substantial increase in population.

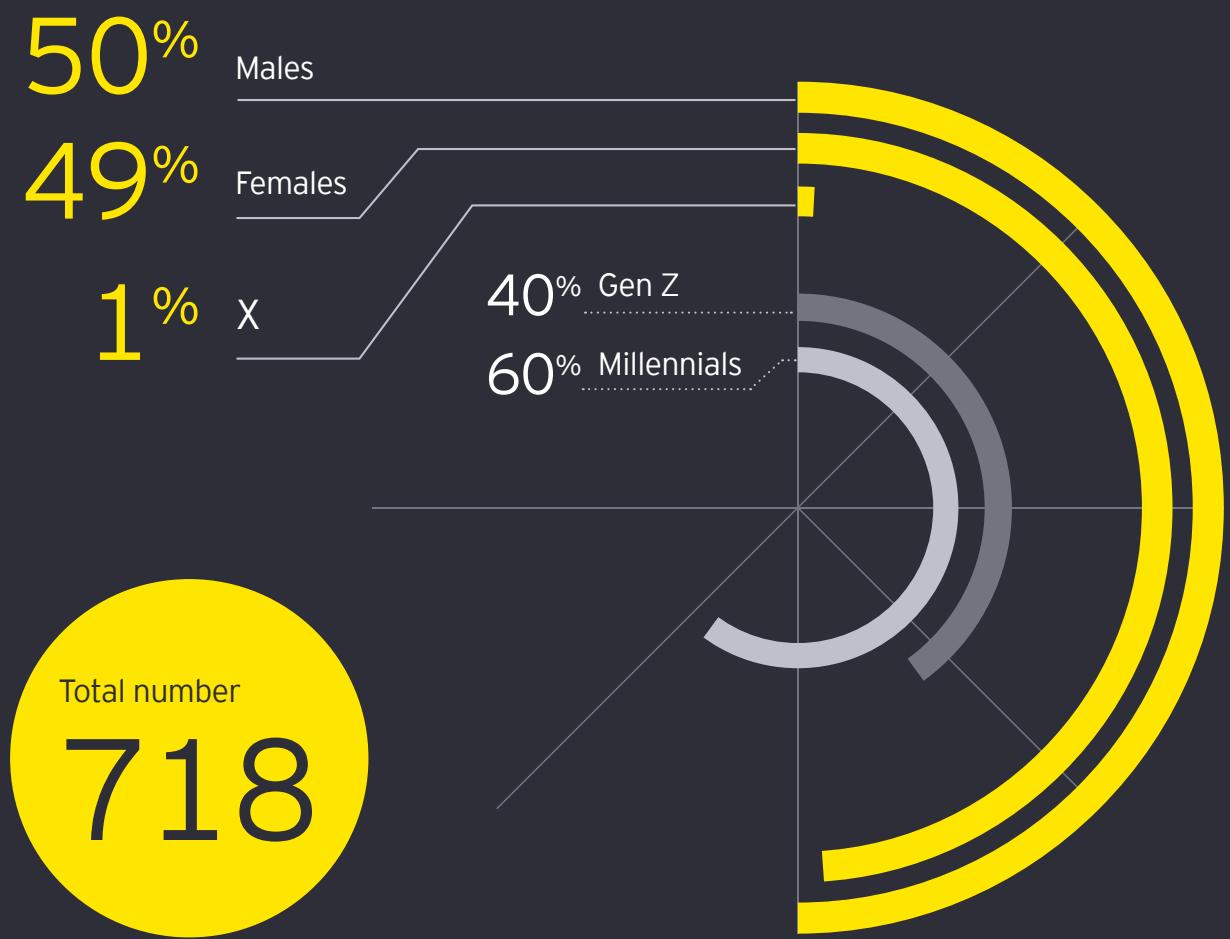
It is perhaps time to ponder whether the country will ever reach its critical mass.

# 5

## Balancing the cost of living

A greater connectivity with the working world outside of Malta has allowed the youth of today to easily compare the salary markets of their fields here and abroad. Seeing Malta come short when considering the high cost of living can make the option of moving abroad much more attractive. Balancing the rising cost of living with Maltese salaries may be the key to reducing brain drain and increasing Malta's skilled workforce.

# Demographics





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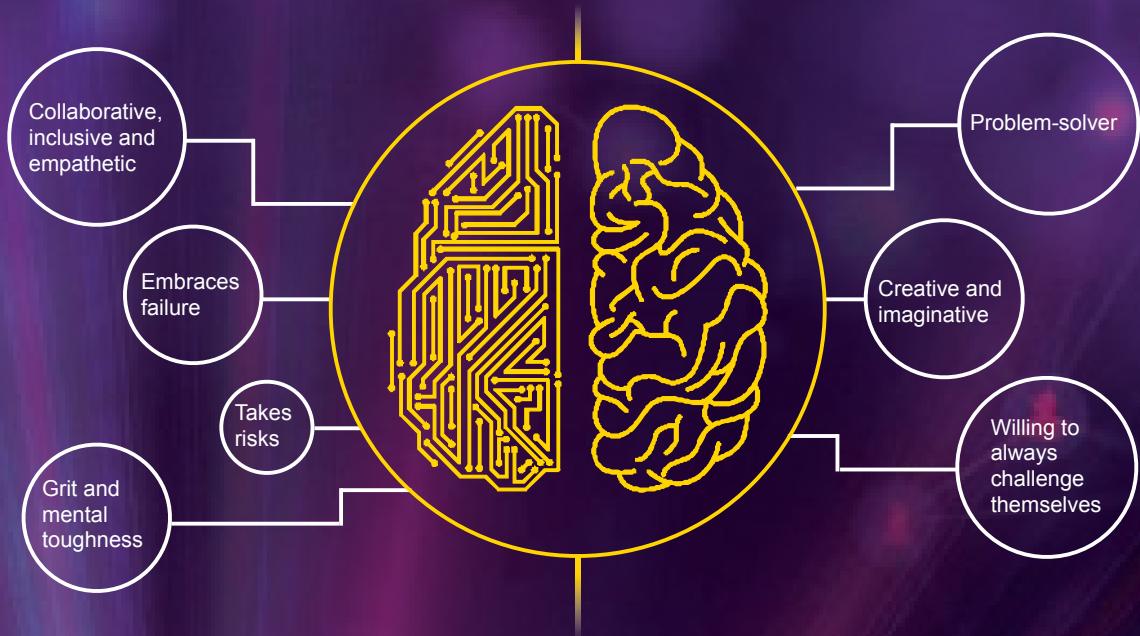
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# Anatomy of the innovative mindset



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