

“Soft” Skills that Open Doors

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About Child Trends

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that improves the lives and prospects of children and youth by **conducting high-quality research and sharing the resulting knowledge** with practitioners and policymakers.

We . . .

1. take a whole child/youth approach
2. study youth in the real world
3. want youth to flourish
4. value objectivity and rigor
5. pursue knowledge development *and* knowledge transfer

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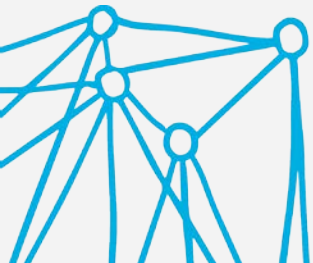


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Motivation

- Obtaining employment and becoming financially independent is a critical component in the successful transition to adulthood.
- Yet, **75 million youth** around the world are unemployed.
- Individual factors contribute to youth unemployment including technical, academic, and **“soft skills”**.
- Currently, there is a lack of consensus on which soft skills are the best investments for improving youth workforce outcomes, and how these skills are defined.
- To this end, Child Trends seeks to answer the question,

“What soft skills are most important for workforce success?”



Framework for Linking Individual Skills to Workforce Success

Contextual Factors

- Family
- Schools
- Community
- Job Availability
- Accessibility
- Education
- Training
- Policies



Soft Skills

Academic Skills

Technical Skills

Employment

Performance & Promotion

Income

Entrepreneurship



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Methodology

- Reviewing the literature
- Expert & Implementer interviews and focus groups
- Focus groups with youth and employers led by FHI360
- Drawing conclusions across sources and perspectives: *economics, employers, organizational development, workforce development programming, positive youth development, psychology*
- Asking for your input!



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Soft Skills Literature

Empirical studies

Employer Surveys

Consensus Projects

Other literature



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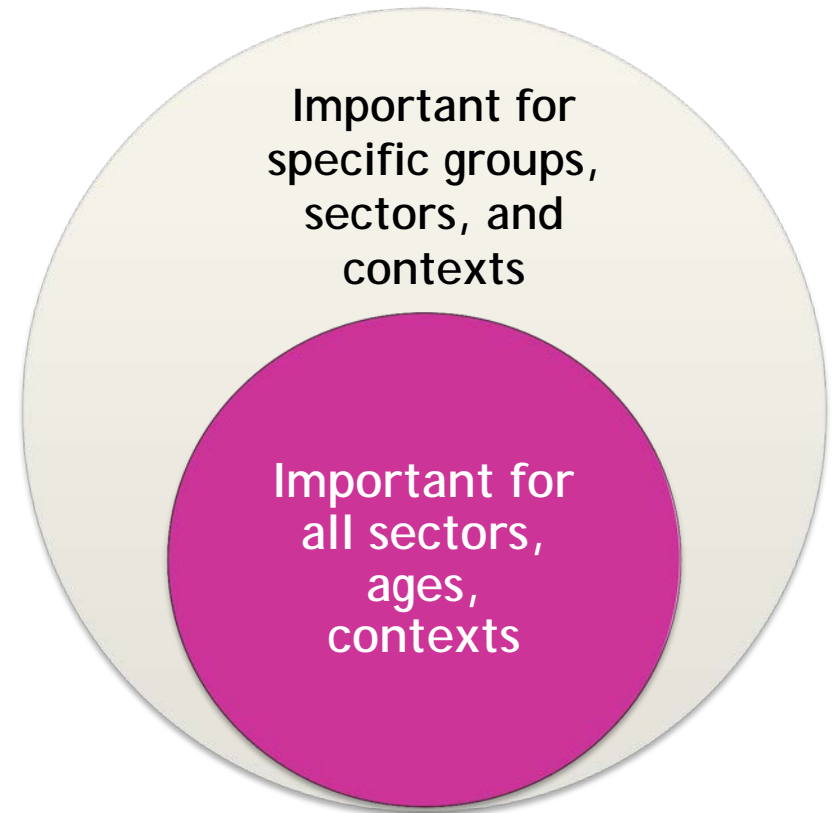


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Considerations in Selection

Key soft skills for workforce success should:

- Predict workforce outcomes
- Be applicable across contexts and sectors
- Be malleable



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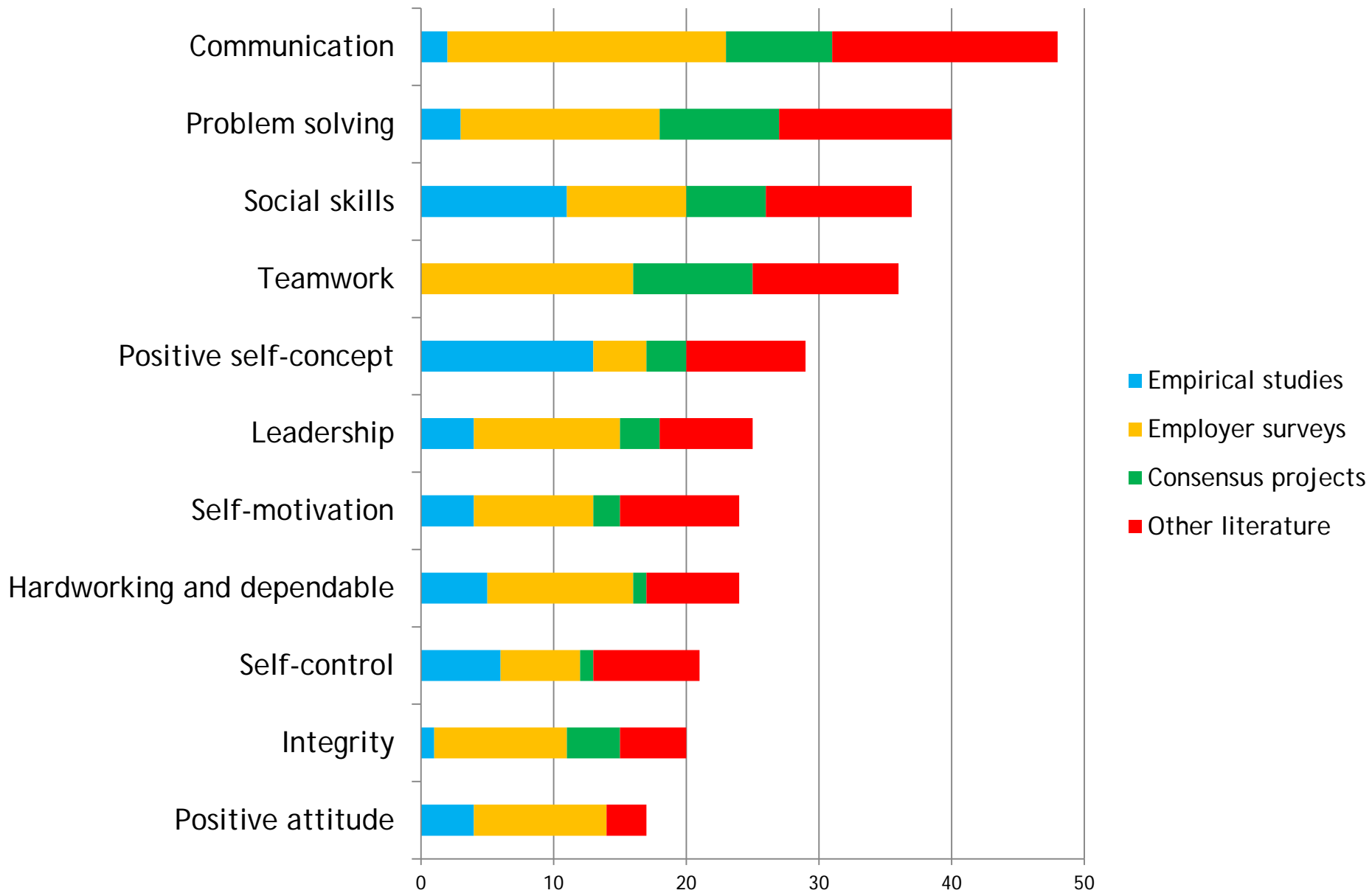
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PRELIMINARY Key Soft Skills Across All Workforce Outcomes

- Communication
- Problem solving, critical thinking, decision making
- Social Skills
- Self-control
- Positive attitude
- Hardworking and dependable
- Teamwork
- Positive self-concept
- Self-motivation
- Leadership
- Integrity

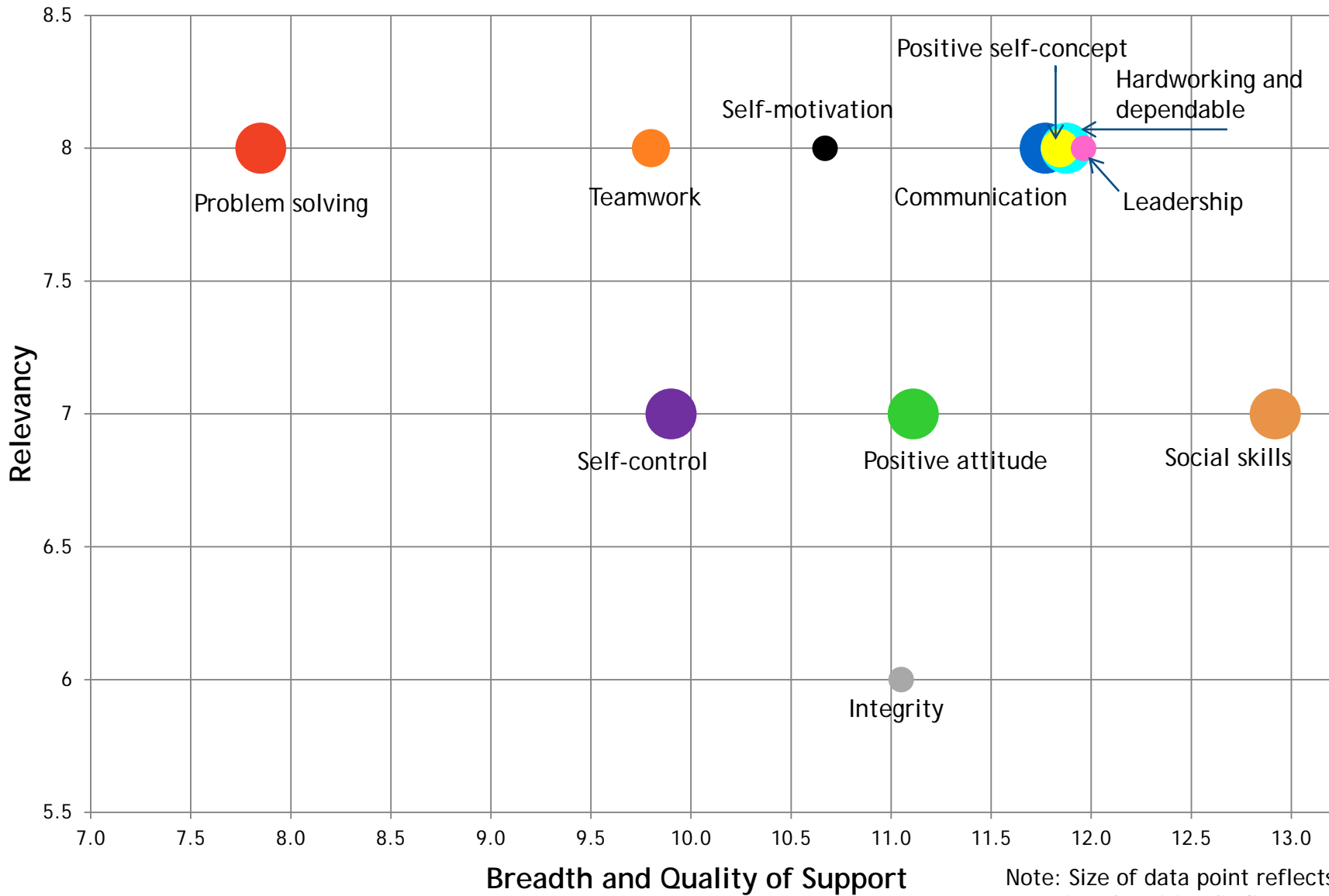




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Note: Size of data point reflects the quantity of positive findings



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Top Soft Skills by Workforce Outcome

Employment

Communication
 Problem solving,
 critical thinking,
 decision making
 Teamwork
 Social skills
 Leadership
 Positive attitude
 Hardworking and
 dependable
 Planfulness
 Positive self-
 concept
 Integrity

Performance/Promotion

Self-control
 Social skills
 Problem solving,
 critical thinking,
 decision making
 Hardworking and
 dependable
 Self-motivated
 Communication
 Positive self-
 concept
 Integrity
 Positive attitude
 Teamwork

Increased wages/Income

Responsibility
 Positive attitude
 Positive self-
 concept
 Self-control
 Social skills
 Hardworking and
 dependable
 Leadership
 Resilience
 Self-motivated
 Goal orientation

Entrepreneurship

Social skills
 Initiative
 Creativity
 Positive attitude
 Self-motivated
 Communication
 Learning and
 growth orientation
 Integrity
 Hardworking and
 Dependable
 Self-control
 Teamwork



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Next Steps

- White paper recommending Key Soft Skills to prioritize investments in programs
- Incorporate input from a Symposium of stakeholders in early Spring 2015
- Complete a review of existing measures of these skills
- Contribute to development of an instrument to assess skills that can be used in program evaluations

Thank you!



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