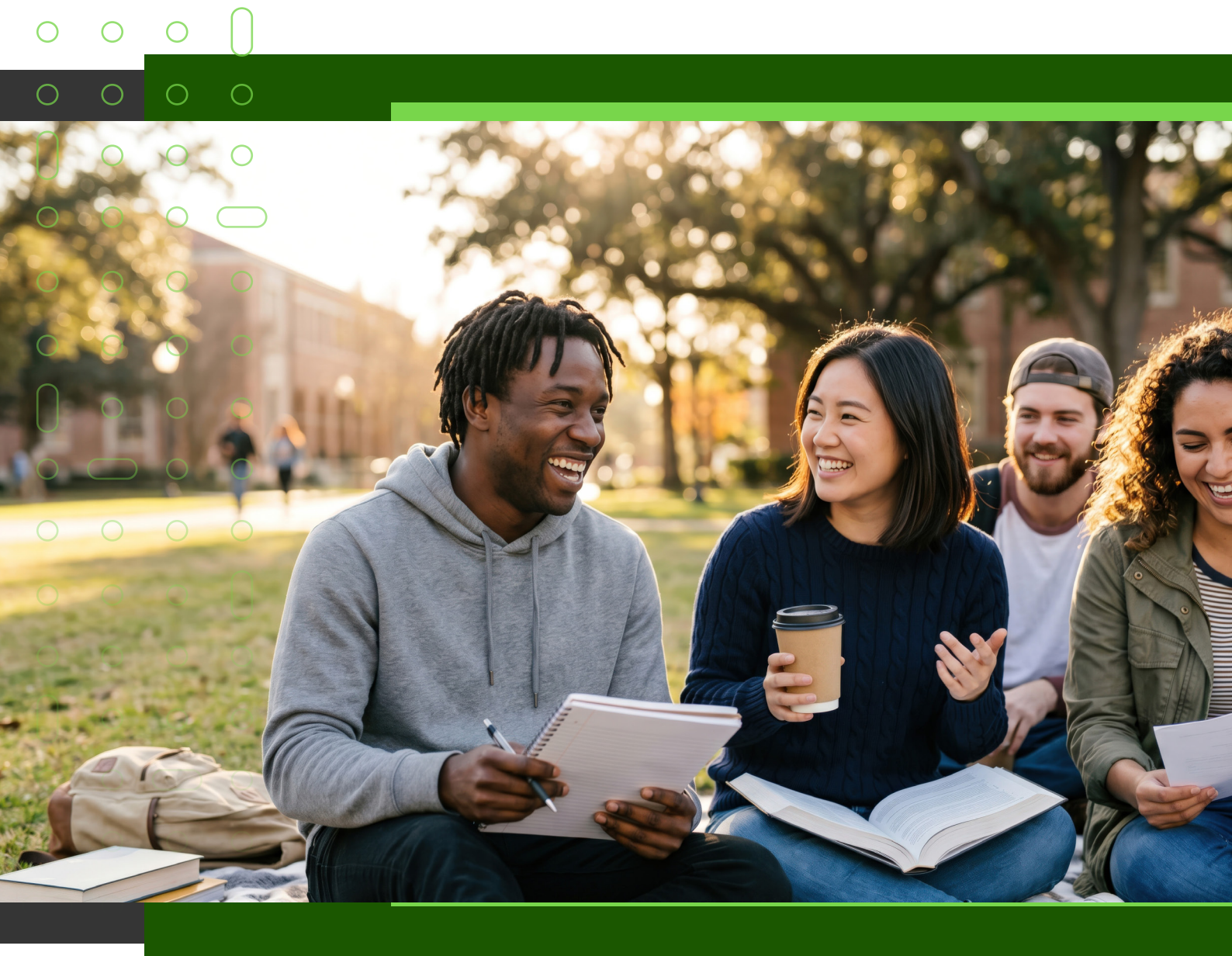




Graduates, Five Regions Apart: What the Data Shows

A skill-by-skill analysis of what graduates are bringing to employers today, and how that picture changes depending on where they're hired.



Five years of data, skill by skill.

Graduates entering the workforce over the past five years have faced a period of significant disruption, and it's reasonable to ask whether that has shaped the skills they bring into their first roles. This report looks at how those skills have changed across the five major regions in which SHL assesses graduates.

The data is drawn from an SHL's Graduate assessment, which measures 11 skills identified as essential to succeeding in a graduate role. We tracked how common each skill is among graduates, region by region, over the past four to five years.

Globally, the pattern is fairly consistent, with a few notable exceptions: most skills rose to a peak around 2023, then declined.

This report examines the same data by region, to give graduate recruiters a view of the specific skills context they're hiring from. For each region, we ask what the graduate skills profile looks like there, and how that compares with the wider global pattern. This report is intended as context, to be used alongside Insights your organization already has about its own regional hiring.

The 11 skills that predict graduate success

SHL's Graduate 8.0 Job-Focused Assessment measures 11 skills, identified through job analysis conducted with partner organizations globally as predictive of success in graduate roles across a wide range of industries. This report draws on assessment data from 509,911 graduates who applied for graduate roles.

Skill name	Definition
Takes responsibility	This measures the extent to which the candidate is accountable for work outcomes and accepts responsibility when things go wrong.
Fosters team cohesion	This measures the extent to which the candidate energizes the team and keeps them cohesive.
Maintains good working relationships	This measures the extent to which the candidate puts effort into developing good relationships with others.
Analyzes information	This measures the extent to which the candidate identifies key factors and integrates information to understand data or situations.
Learns quickly	This measures the extent to which the candidate picks up new information and techniques easily.
Generates new ideas	This measures the extent to which the candidate creates innovative approaches.
Uses time efficiently	This measures the extent to which the candidate manages own time and delivers work on schedule.
Works to high-quality standards	This measures the extent to which the candidate completes every task with a high degree of quality.
Adapts to change	This measures the extent to which the candidate accepts and adapts to changes without difficulty.
Copes with setbacks and criticism	This measures the extent to which the candidate stays positive when facing difficulties and does not dwell on negative events.
Strives to achieve	This measures the extent to which the candidate sets demanding goals and makes a determined effort to meet or exceed them.

Graduates are rated Low, Medium, or High on each skill. Every percentage shown in this report indicates the share of graduates who earned a High score on that skill. When this report says a skill “rose to 36%” or “fell to 28%,” it means that percentage of graduates earned a “High” score on the skill that year, not that the skill itself reached that level.

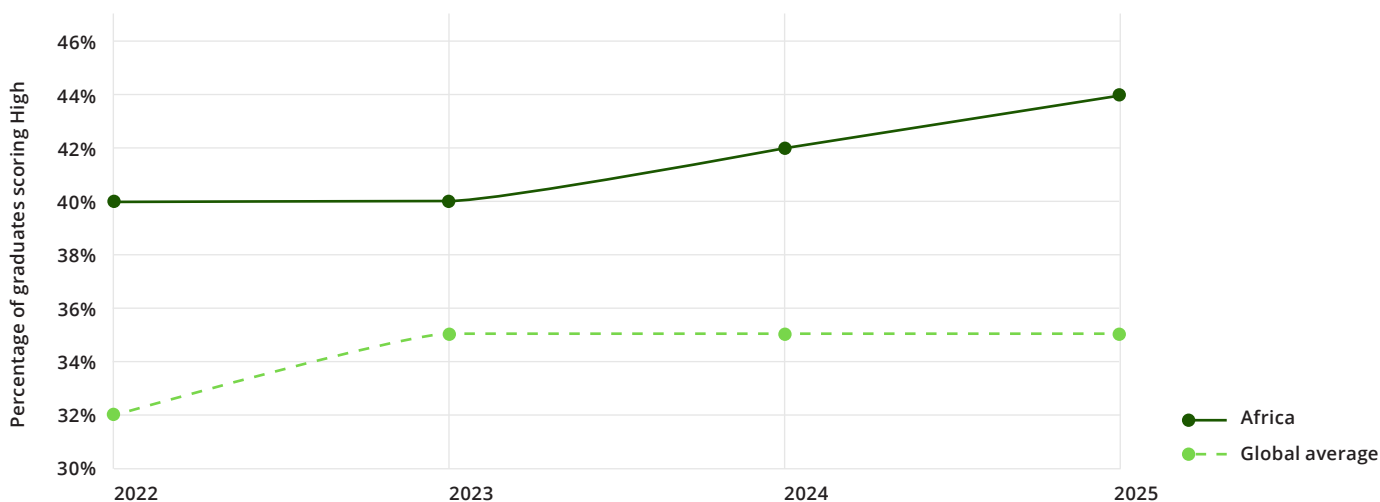
As a reference point, the assessment is designed so that around 30% of graduates are expected to earn a “High” score on any given skill under typical conditions. Figures well above or below that benchmark suggest that a skill stands out as unusually strong or weak.

Africa

Two of the skills that stand out most in Africa moved in opposite directions from each other, and neither tracked the global figure for that skill over the same years.

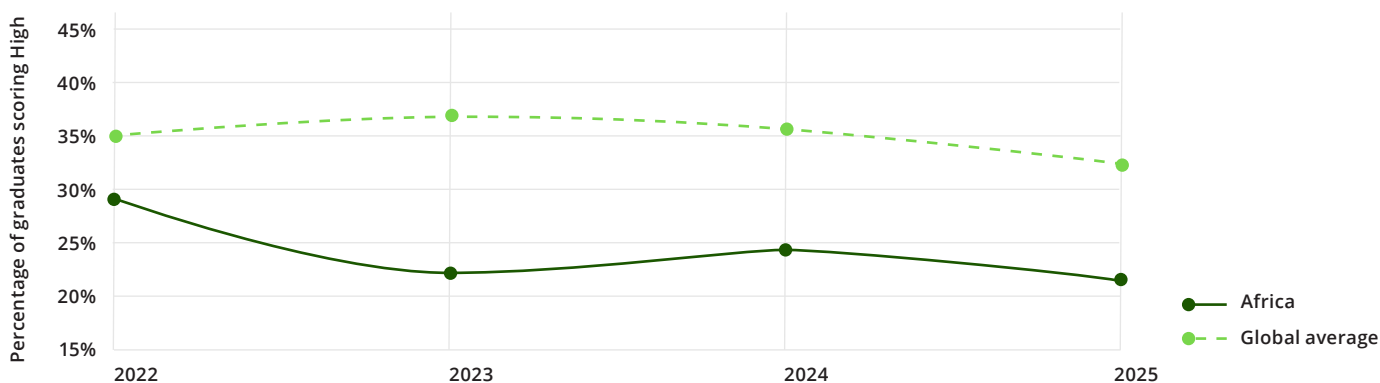
What stands out

Copes with Setbacks and Criticism, Africa vs. global average (2022-2025)



Copes with setbacks and criticism, staying positive when facing difficulties and not dwelling on negative events, rose across the period in Africa: 40% in 2022 to 44% in 2025. Globally, the same skill held flat between 32% and 35% over the same years. Graduates in Africa didn't just start ahead here, they kept improving while graduates globally stayed still.

Analyzes Information, Africa vs. global average (2022-2025)



Analyzes information, identifying key factors and integrating information to understand data or situations, moved the opposite way. High scores fell dramatically across the period, from 29% in 2022 to 22% in 2025, while the global figure for this skill held in the mid-30s throughout. The gap between Africa and the global figure widened overall.

What this means for hiring graduate in Africa

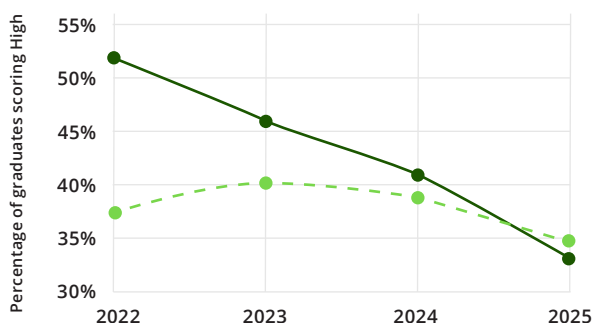
If you're comparing graduates from this region, an unusually strong result on *Copes with setbacks and criticism*, or a weaker one on *Analyzes information*, might look like something specific to that candidate. It is worth checking against the regional pattern first: graduates here have scored consistently higher than the global figure on the first skill since 2022, and consistently lower on the second, with that gap widening every year. A result in line with that pattern says more about the region than about the individual. Graduates in this region may benefit from training and development initiatives specifically targeted toward the *Analyzes information* skill.

Americas

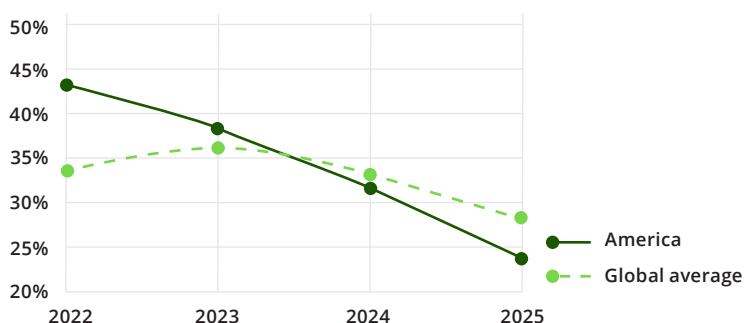
Graduates in the Americas started 2022 above the global average on nearly every skill measured. Since then, most of that advantage has disappeared.

What stands out

Americas vs global average:
Adapts to Change (2022-2025)

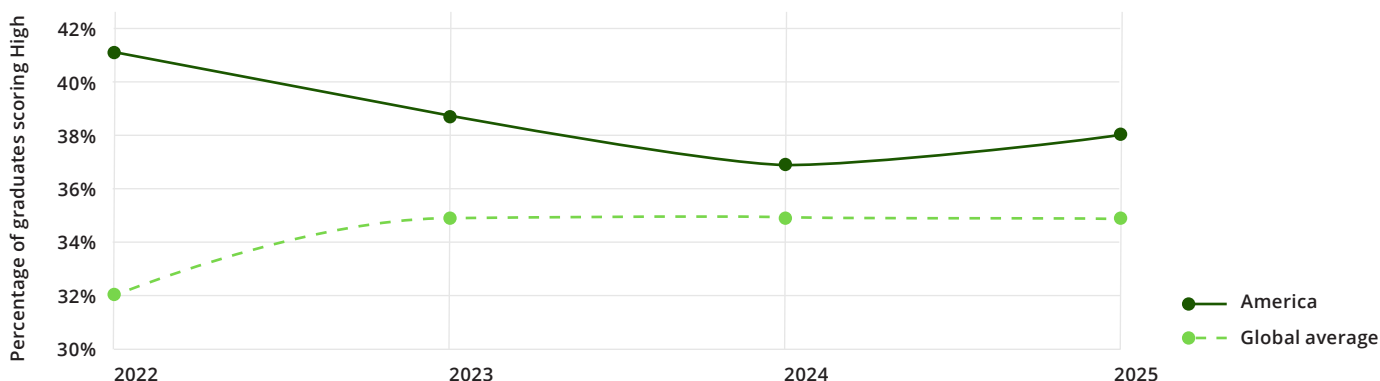


Americas vs global average:
Fosters Team Cohesion (2022-2025)



Two skills show just how far that early advantage fell. *Adapts to change*, accepting and adapting to changes without difficulty, reached 51% in 2022 among graduates in the Americas, the highest single result for any skill in any region across the whole dataset. By 2025 it had fallen to 34%, in line with the 2025 global figure of 35%. *Fosters team cohesion*, energizing a team and keeping it cohesive, fell from 44% to 24% over the same period, a 20-point drop, the steepest decline of any skill in any region in the dataset.

Americas vs global average: Copes with Setbacks and Criticism (2022-2025)



Copes with setbacks and criticism, staying positive when facing difficulties and not dwelling on negative events, is the one skill that didn't follow this pattern. High scores among graduates in the Americas declined only slightly, 41% to 38%, with a partial recovery in the final year. By 2025, it was the strongest-performing skill in this region, and the only one still clearly above the 2025 global figure.

What this means for hiring graduate in the Americas

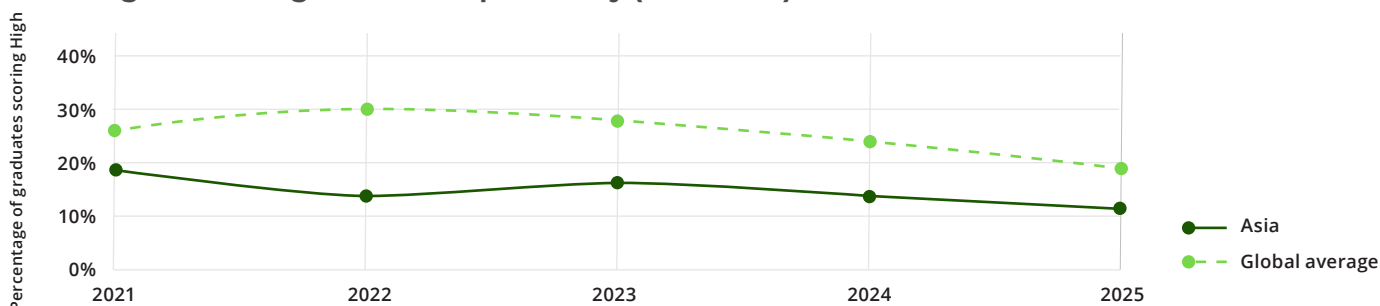
If a candidate from this region scores lower on *Adapts to change* or *Fosters team cohesion* than you'd expect, check that against the regional pattern before reading it as a concern. Both skills looked exceptionally strong across this region in 2022 and have fallen sharply since, so a result closer to the global figure now reflects that broader shift, not a weaker individual result. *Copes with setbacks and criticism* moved the other way: it declined less here than almost anywhere else covered in this report, so a strong result on this specific skill is a less rare outcome in this region than elsewhere. Graduate training should focus on rebuilding the advantage the Americas region once held over other regions across skills.

Asia

Graduates in Asia score below the global average on every one of the 11 skills, every year measured.

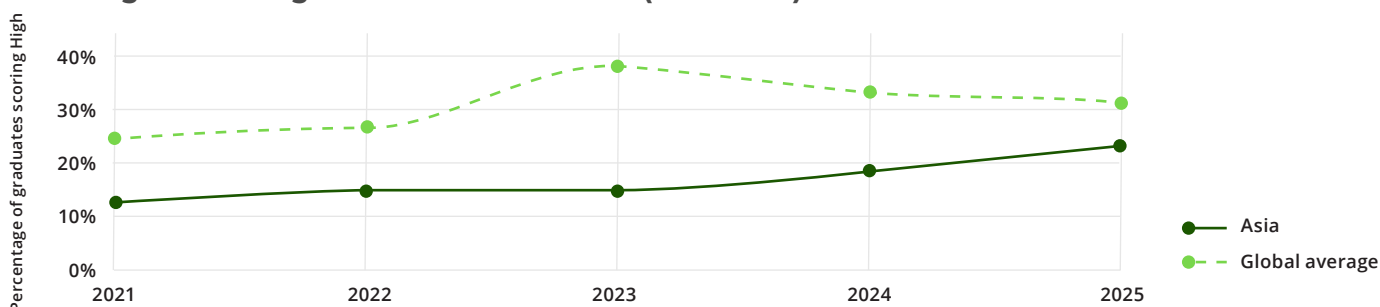
What stands out

Asia vs. global average: Takes Responsibility (2022-2025)



Takes responsibility, being accountable for work outcomes and accepting responsibility when things go wrong, fell across the period among graduates in Asia, from 19% high scores in 2021 to 13% in 2025. That's tied for the lowest result for any skill in any region across the whole dataset. In 2025, 52% of graduates in this region scored Low on this skill, also the most extreme result of any skill in any region.

Asia vs. global average: Generates New Ideas (2022-2025)



Generates new ideas, creating innovative approaches, moved the opposite way. High scores rose from 13% in 2021 to 24% in 2025, the largest gain of any skill in this region. The 2025 result still sits below the global figure of 31%, but this pattern shows an improvement at a time when this skill is declining elsewhere.

What this means for hiring graduate in Asia

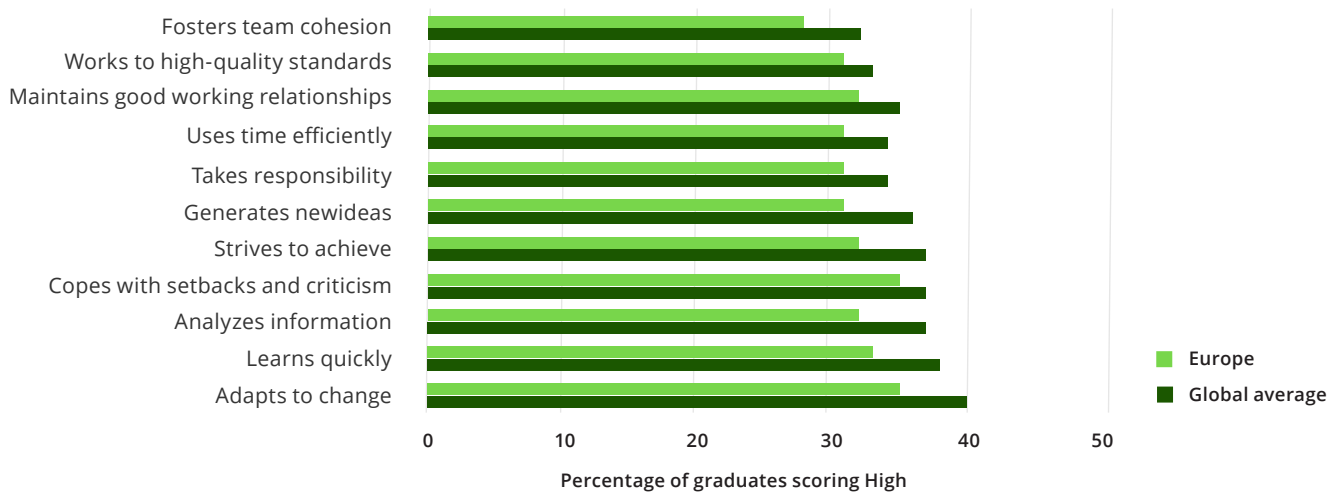
If a candidate from this region scores very low on *Takes responsibility*, or surprisingly strongly on *Generates new ideas*, check both against the regional pattern before treating either as unusual for that individual. Only 13% of candidates here earn a High score on *Takes responsibility*, and 52% earn a Low score, the most extreme figures for any skill in any region in this dataset. *Generates new ideas* has moved in the opposite direction: it's the fastest-improving skill in the region, so a strong result here is becoming more common, not less.

With 52% of candidates in this region scoring Low on *Takes responsibility*, a Low/Medium/High cut has less power to tell candidates apart here than it would on a more evenly spread skill, over half the pool carries the same label. Where this skill matters for a role, it's worth looking at where a candidate sits within the band, or probing it directly in interview, and using region-specific norms rather than global norms for interpretation. Further, culturally-informed training supporting candidates in developing the *Takes responsibility* and *Uses time efficiently* skills may support graduates in growing closer to the global average.

Europe

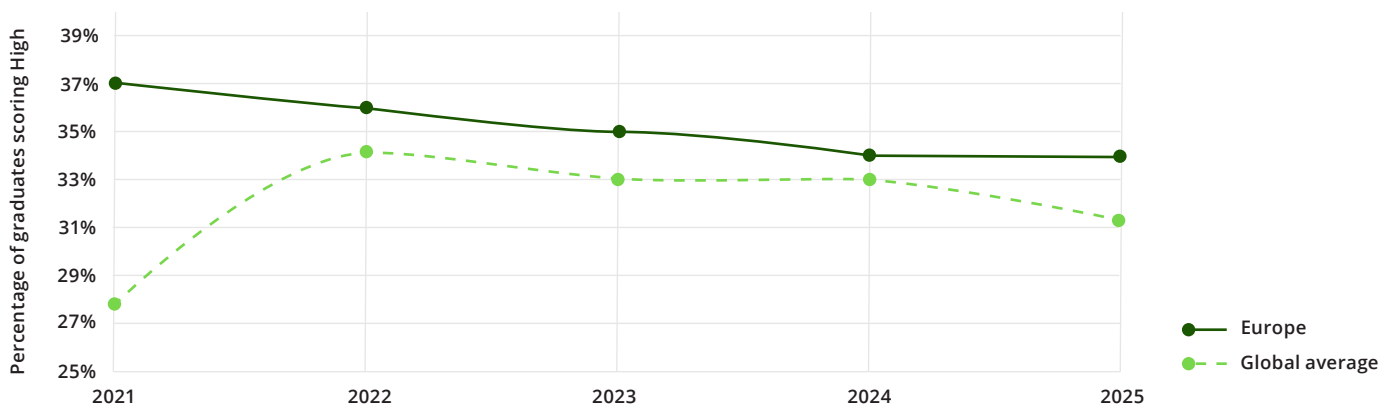
Graduates in Europe are the only regional group in this dataset scoring above the 2025 global average on all 11 measured skills.

Europe vs. global average, all 11 skills (2025)



What stands out

Europe vs. global average: Uses time efficiently (2022-2025)



The one skill moving differently within that otherwise strong profile is *Uses time efficiently*, managing own time and delivering work on schedule, which declined across the period, from 37% in 2021 to 34% in 2025. It remains above the global figure of 31%, but it's the only skill in the region trending in the opposite direction from the rest.

What this means for hiring graduates in Europe

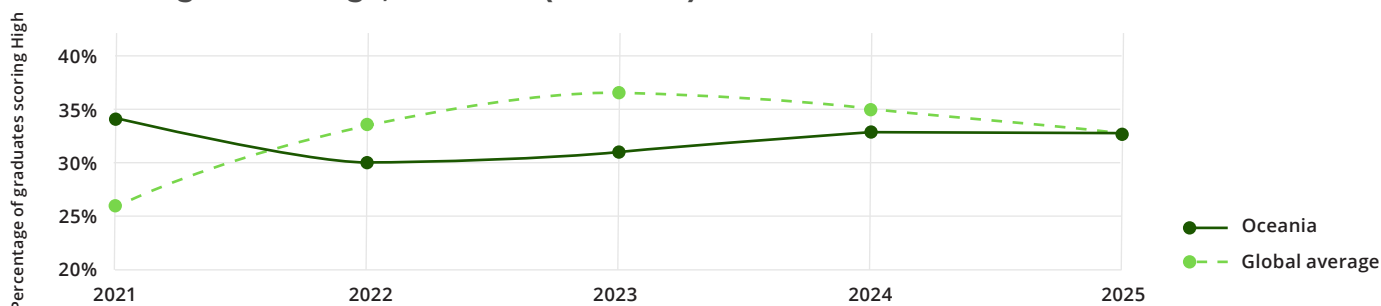
Most results from this region are unlikely to look unusual against a global comparison, since the overall profile sits above the global figure across all 11 skills. However, *Uses time efficiently* is worth watching as the margin above the global figure has narrowed every year, from 9 points in 2021 to 3 points in 2025. It is worth checking this skill against the trend if it comes up in a conversation about a candidate or a cohort from this region, since the gap it once had is smaller now than it may have been a few years ago. Additionally, training initiatives in Europe may be more broadly effective for graduates when addressing behaviors related to the *Uses time efficiently* skill than behaviors related to other skills in which graduates are already excelling.

Oceania

Most regions in this report show a turning point around 2022 or 2023. Oceania's came a year earlier.

What stands out

Oceania vs. global average, all 11 skills (2021-2025)



Oceania's average across all 11 skills follows a shape not seen in the other four regions in this report: above the global figure in 2021, then converging with it through 2025. Global's own average across the same 11 skills was still climbing toward its 2023 peak during the years Oceania's overall figure was already falling.

Five skills account for most of that early elevation. *Takes responsibility*, *Adapts to change*, *Learns quickly*, *Strives to achieve*, and *Generates new ideas* averaged 37% among themselves in Oceania in 2021. By 2022, each had fallen closer to the levels of the other six skills in the region. These five specific skills drove the 2021 peak, the other six were never elevated in the same way.

What this means for hiring in Oceania

If you're comparing current results against older figures for this region, particularly on *Takes responsibility*, *Adapts to change*, *Learns quickly*, *Strives to achieve*, or *Generates new ideas*, consider that 2021 was an unusually high year; today's numbers reflect where the profile has settled, not a decline specific to recent candidates. Additionally, training, onboarding, and development programs may need to support the growth of these targeted skills for graduates to remain globally competitive.



How five regions relate to one global shape

Most graduate skills, globally, rose to a peak in 2023 and have declined since. Across the five regions in this report, that shape shows up differently. Europe's own profile follows a similar pattern, staying above the global figure on all 11 skills throughout. The Americas region shows a similar shape arriving a year earlier and falling further, its own peak came in 2022, and its declines since have been the steepest of any region covered here. Oceania's peak came earlier still, in 2021, for five specific skills, before converging with the global figure by 2025.

Africa and Asia show a different kind of pattern. In Africa, *Copes with setbacks* and *criticism* rose every year measured and *Analyzes information* fell every year measured, neither shows the shared 2023 peak. Asia sits below the global figure on every skill, every year, and its individual skills move in different directions from each other, some rising, some falling.

For organizations hiring across several regions, this report adds a layer the global figure alone can't provide: visibility into where a specific region's own graduate profile genuinely differs from the wider pattern, relevant when weighing decisions that span more than one market. This information can also be used to design region-specific targeted development initiatives, addressing regional needs and improving global competitiveness for the upcoming workforce.

Why SHL?

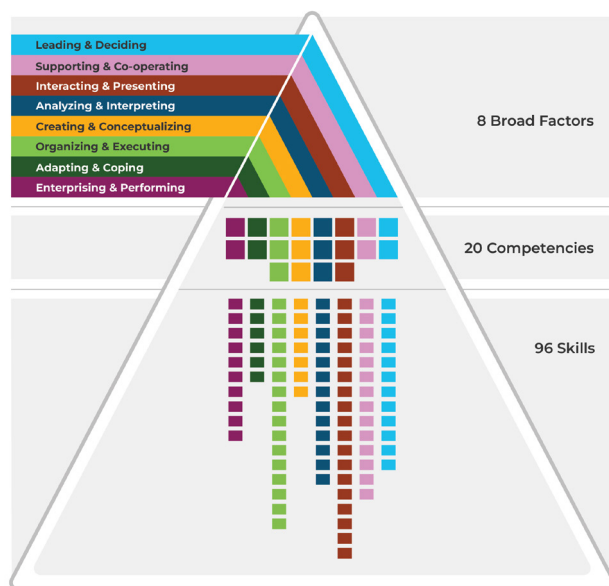
SHL has a long history of scientific research into what predicts success at work. We use data from the 45 million candidates we assess each year to help organizations understand the talent around them.

SHL's **Graduate Hiring solution** helps you form a comprehensive view of every hire, supporting a talent strategy built on evidence rather than assumption.

Our validated toolkit helps organizations identify current and future potential through clear, actionable talent insights, designed to give candidates an engaging assessment experience.

What makes SHL's behavioral skills unique?

Objective | Scientifically-rigorous | Work-relevant | Predictive | Reliable | Holds proven results



SHL's Universal Competency Framework (UCF) Skills Taxonomy is a scientifically validated model for understanding and assessing people's behavior at work. Built on decades of empirical research, it links broad competencies to 96 behavioral skills and real-world business outcomes.



Hire, onboard and develop the right graduate talent with SHL.

Learn more at shl.com/graduate.

Appendix

Five-year data by region

Percentage of graduates scoring High, by skill and year, with the 2025 global figure for reference.

Africa (2022-2025)

Skill	2022	2023	2024	2025	Global (2025)
Takes responsibility	31%	35%	33%	37%	31%
Fosters team cohesion	38%	38%	33%	35%	28%
Maintains good working relationships	38%	42%	39%	39%	32%
Analyzes information	29%	23%	24%	22%	32%
Learns quickly	37%	32%	32%	31%	33%
Generates new ideas	37%	32%	31%	30%	31%
Uses time efficiently	32%	29%	32%	31%	31%
Works to high-quality standards	34%	35%	36%	35%	31%
Adapts to change	35%	30%	32%	31%	35%
Copes with setbacks and criticism	40%	40%	42%	44%	35%
Strives to achieve	30%	31%	30%	30%	32%

Americas (2022-2025)

Skill	2022	2023	2024	2025	Global (2025)
Takes responsibility	38%	36%	32%	30%	31%
Fosters team cohesion	44%	38%	32%	24%	28%
Maintains good working relationships	37%	34%	31%	28%	32%
Analyzes information	49%	45%	38%	32%	32%
Learns quickly	46%	42%	37%	32%	33%
Generates new ideas	43%	39%	34%	28%	31%
Uses time efficiently	41%	37%	36%	33%	31%
Works to high-quality standards	39%	38%	34%	32%	31%
Adapts to change	51%	47%	40%	34%	35%
Copes with setbacks and criticism	41%	39%	37%	38%	35%
Strives to achieve	49%	45%	38%	32%	32%

Asia (2021-2025)

Skill	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Global (2025)
Takes responsibility	19%	15%	16%	15%	13%	31%
Fosters team cohesion	21%	22%	20%	21%	22%	28%
Maintains good working relationships	26%	28%	26%	25%	21%	32%
Analyzes information	14%	14%	16%	17%	20%	32%
Learns quickly	16%	17%	19%	19%	23%	33%
Generates new ideas	13%	16%	16%	19%	24%	31%
Uses time efficiently	26%	24%	26%	25%	19%	31%
Works to high-quality standards	21%	16%	18%	19%	19%	31%
Adapts to change	18%	20%	21%	22%	23%	35%
Copes with setbacks and criticism	14%	16%	17%	18%	23%	35%
Strives to achieve	17%	13%	15%	16%	17%	32%

Europe (2021-2025)

Skill	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Global (2025)
Takes responsibility	36%	34%	34%	32%	34%	31%
Fosters team cohesion	30%	36%	38%	36%	32%	28%
Maintains good working relationships	29%	38%	37%	35%	35%	32%
Analyzes information	41%	37%	41%	39%	37%	32%
Learns quickly	38%	40%	42%	39%	38%	33%
Generates new ideas	35%	40%	41%	39%	36%	31%
Uses time efficiently	37%	36%	35%	34%	34%	31%
Works to high-quality standards	32%	30%	33%	32%	33%	31%
Adapts to change	40%	43%	45%	42%	40%	35%
Copes with setbacks and criticism	30%	34%	36%	36%	37%	35%
Strives to achieve	37%	37%	41%	40%	37%	32%

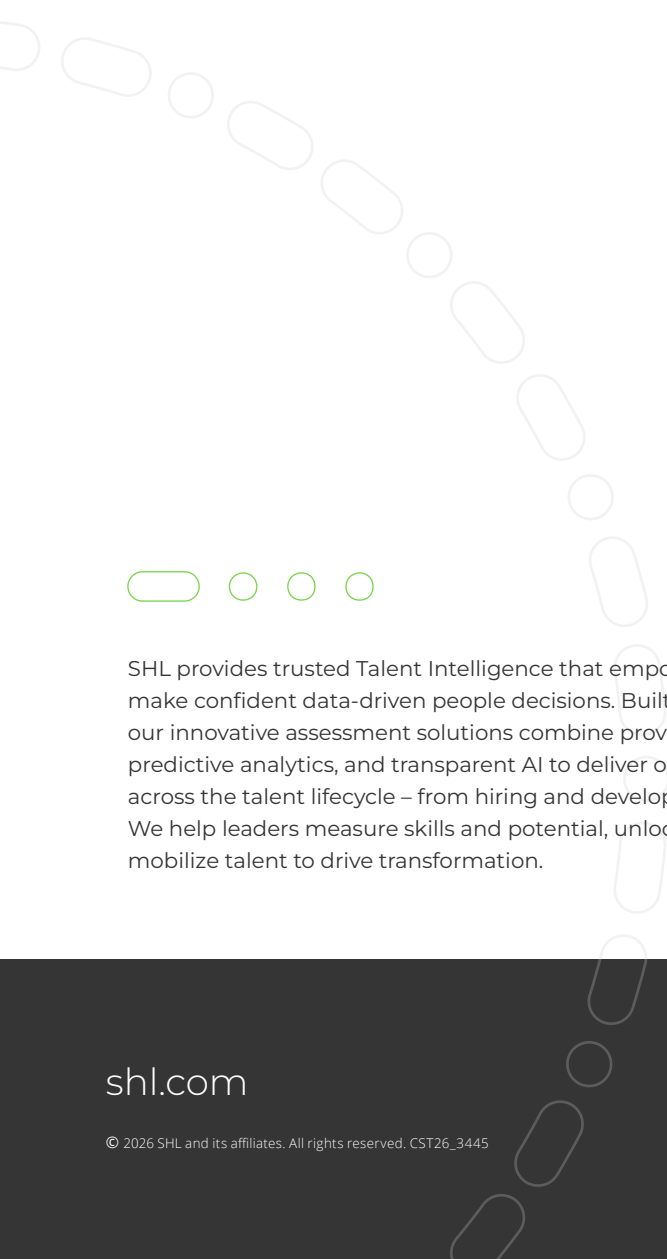
Oceania (2021-2025)

Skill	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Global (2025)
Takes responsibility	37%	32%	31%	33%	35%	31%
Fosters team cohesion	29%	28%	27%	29%	28%	28%
Maintains good working relationships	35%	34%	35%	35%	36%	32%
Analyzes information	35%	32%	33%	34%	32%	32%
Learns quickly	38%	32%	33%	34%	32%	33%
Generates new ideas	33%	28%	29%	31%	28%	31%
Uses time efficiently	27%	27%	27%	28%	28%	31%
Works to high-quality standards	30%	28%	28%	28%	29%	31%
Adapts to change	38%	33%	34%	36%	35%	35%
Copes with setbacks and criticism	31%	30%	30%	32%	33%	35%
Strives to achieve	38%	30%	31%	33%	32%	32%

Africa and the Americas: 2021 figures were excluded from analysis; sample size fell below the n = 100 minimum threshold for inclusion that year.

Asia's sample grew from 1,230 in 2021 to 7,818 in 2025, so changes are expected.

Europe was the largest region in the dataset, growing to a peak of 97,550 in 2024.



SHL provides trusted Talent Intelligence that empowers organizations to make confident data-driven people decisions. Built on 45+ years of expertise, our innovative assessment solutions combine proven behavioral science, predictive analytics, and transparent AI to deliver objective, actionable insights across the talent lifecycle – from hiring and development to internal mobility. We help leaders measure skills and potential, unlock performance, and mobilize talent to drive transformation.

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