

The Career Readiness Gap What Students Need vs. What They're Getting

Employers desperately want graduates with future-ready skills ...

The top 3 skills employers look for



Communication



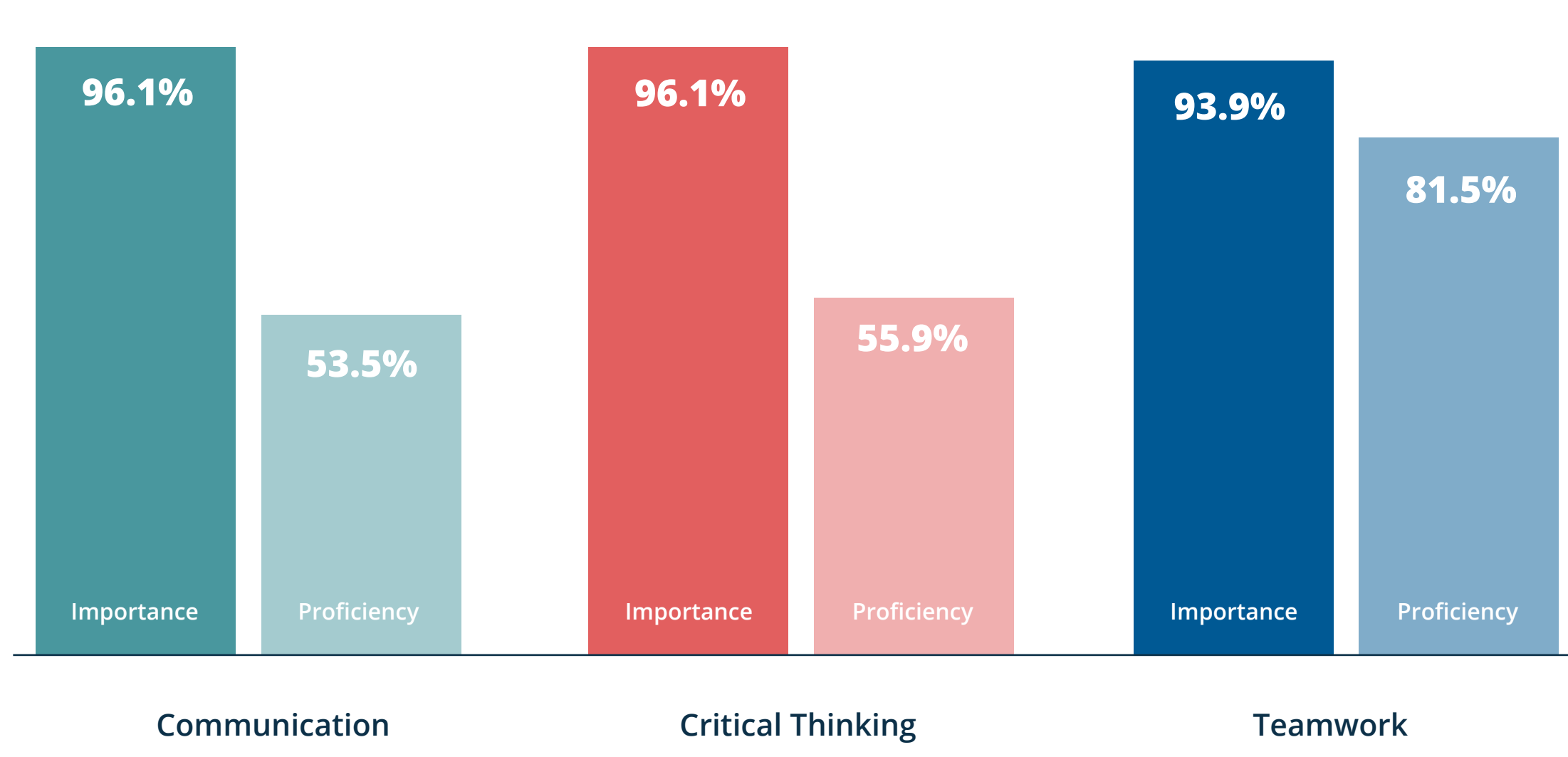
Critical Thinking



Teamwork*

... but not enough students graduate with these skills

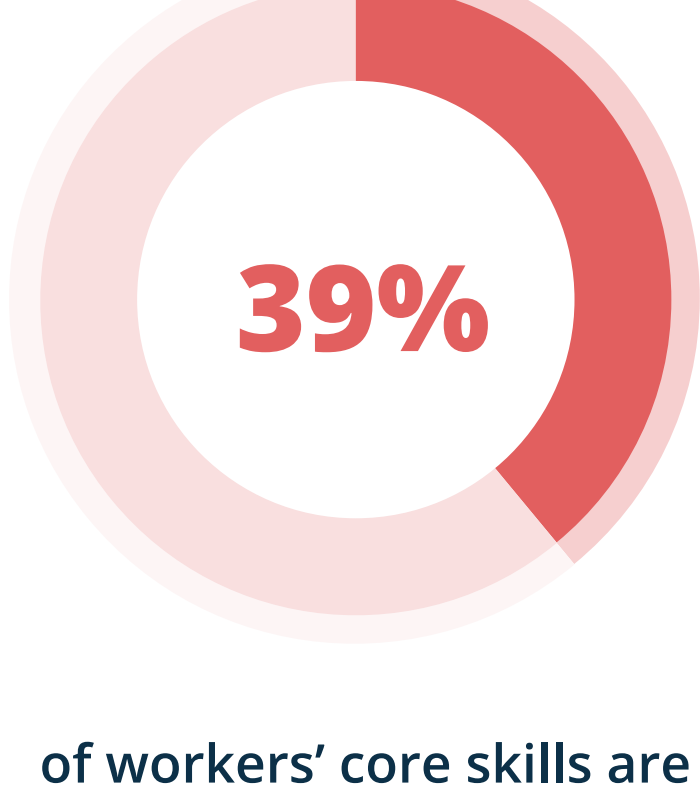
The gap between how important these skills are to employers and how employers rate the proficiency of recent graduates in these areas:*



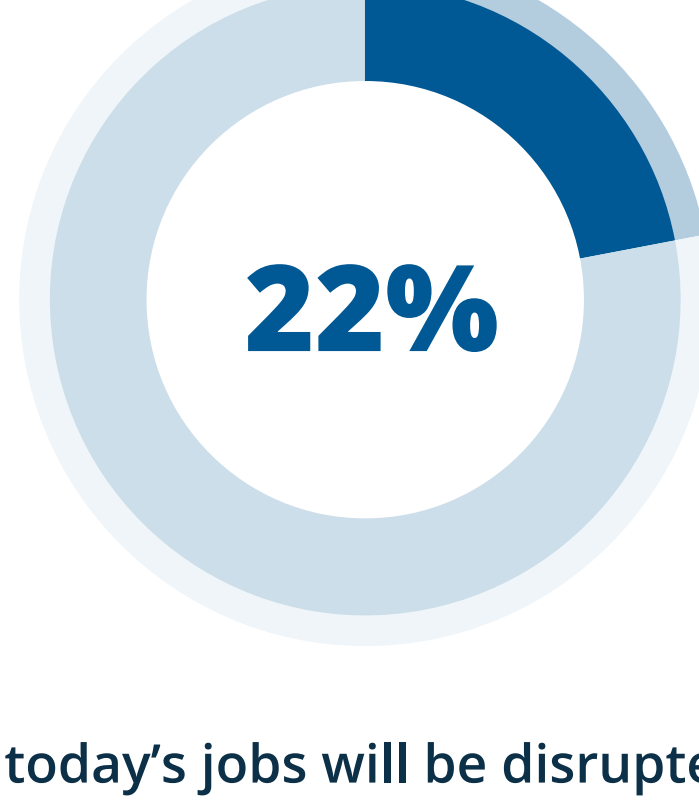
Future-ready skills are only becoming more important

Graduates need durable skills to adapt and thrive in a fast-changing workplace

BY 2030:



of workers' core skills are expected to change



of today's jobs will be disrupted by labor-market transformation



Demand will increase "for creative thinking and resilience, flexibility, and agility skills"

"Future-ready skills aren't specific to a particular job or industry, and **they're likely to remain valuable no matter how workplaces evolve in the future.**"

Dr. David Reese, Chief Academic Officer, Defined

Causes of the career readiness gap

The skills employers want are also ones that districts prioritize in their Portraits of a Graduate. So why do we see this career readiness gap? For several reasons:



Lack of Career Awareness Early On

Students often don't explore careers until high school, which limits informed decision making



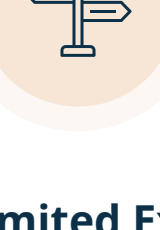
Disconnected Curricula

Academic content isn't always aligned with real-world applications or industry expectations



Insufficient Durable Skills Development

Traditional education underemphasizes skills like communication, problem solving, and collaboration



Limited Exposure to Career Pathways

Students rarely get opportunities to explore a variety of industries and roles or to understand local workforce needs



Limited Work-Based Learning Access

Few students engage in job shadowing, internships, or career simulations that build readiness



How to close the career readiness gap

Defined helps districts all over the country give students future-ready skills by:



Starting Career-Connected Learning Early

As early as kindergarten, students explore careers through project-based learning tied to real jobs



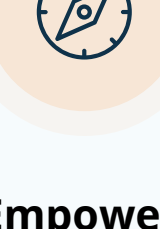
Aligning Pathways to the Local Labor Market

Students explore careers across all industries, learning to identify and pursue opportunities that exist in their regions and communities



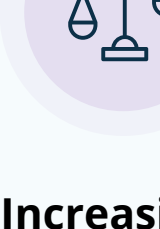
Integrating Academic and Career Skill Development

By utilizing the Defined ecosystem, the Defined develop both academic knowledge and future-ready skills through authentic, career-connected learning experiences that bridge classroom and workplace readiness



Empowering Student Self-Discovery Through Experience

Students explore their unique strengths, values, and interests, then experience authentic career tasks to determine their ideal pathways and find careers where they can truly thrive



Increasing Equity

All students — regardless of background — get structured access to explore high-skill, high-wage, high-demand careers, discovering opportunities they may have never known existed

Find out how **Defined** can help your district's students develop future-ready skills while boosting academic outcomes.