

LIFE ASPIRATIONS 2026

A 30-Country Global
Advisor Survey

August 2026



INTRODUCTION:

Aspiration without expectation

Welcome to the *2026 Life Aspirations* report which explores how people across 30 countries view a successful life today. Our key headline: **people seem united in what they consider a successful life, but differences appear when it comes to who believes they can achieve this.**

Our survey finds economic security being prioritised, with stable employment (65%) and owning a home (58%) leading the way as the key markers of a successful life, ahead of other milestones like having children (31%) or getting married (25%). This focus on economic security reflects the high housing costs, economic uncertainty and high cost-of-living seen in many parts of the world.

Men place greater importance on traditional family markers. While men and women rank a range of life events in

the same order of importance, men are significantly more likely than women to say that getting married (+7 percentage points) and becoming a parent (+5pp) are important signs of a successful life. This pattern holds across almost all countries surveyed. It would seem the “tradwife” lifestyle is a way off becoming mainstream.

We see a surprising degree of alignment across generations when it comes to what marks a successful life. Popular narratives often portray Gen Z as fundamentally different from their parents and grandparents. Despite young people today getting married, buying a home, and having children later in life, young adults broadly rank life’s milestones in the same order as older generations do.

Where the generations diverge is not in aspiration but expectation. Every generation is less confident than the one before that they will meet major milestones by the end of their lifetime – with a sharp drop off when it comes to Gen Z. This gap is particularly evident when it comes to expectations of one day becoming a parent or owning a home – despite Gen Z sharing older generations’ views on how important these milestones are.

Whether confidence grows with age or whether Gen Z are truly different from the generations that came before remains an open question. Their changing (or unchanging) expectations will be one to watch.

Continued overleaf.

65%

of people across 30 countries say **having a stable-full time job is an important sign of a successful life** – ahead of other milestones like getting married or becoming a parent.

INTRODUCTION:

Aspiration without expectation

Gen Z are also much more likely to say they'll feel sad if these milestones remain unmet, raising worries about a potentially bleak future on the horizon.

The distinction between aspiration and expectation matters because it points to 'delayed adulthood' not being a result of changing values but a result of barriers to attainability.

In western countries* Gen Z are more likely to expect to own a pet than become a parent. Almost six in ten Gen Z in our selection of European and North American markets have either already owned a pet as an adult or expect they'll do so in their lifetime (58%). Just 44% say the same of becoming a parent.

There's significant variation by geography. Latin American countries

rank consistently low for traditional family milestones, with Mexico, Peru and Colombia the three countries least likely to consider becoming a parent an important marker of a successful life (Mexico: 16%; Peru and Colombia: both 19%).

But even within regions we see strong variation. Malaysia ranks #1 in considering getting married an important marker of success (42%), while neighbouring Indonesia ranks bottom at just 10%.

Similarly, Europe contains both leaders and outliers for nearly every life event. Great Britain ranks #1 for considering home ownership as a key life event, at 69%, while Germany ranks second from the bottom, at 38%.

The clearest dividing line is income.

Higher-income households are more likely to regard traditional milestones as important, more likely to have achieved them already, and more confident of achieving those still outstanding. Lower-income respondents are less certain across all three measures.

Our changing modern milestones are not a question of abandoning traditional values. They're questions of attainability.

This document contains headline data from the study. For the full question set and country-level data, please get in touch.

You can find more of our work on Modern Milestones and how these are changing in the [2026 Ipsos Generations Report](#).



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*Generational labels have limited meaningful application outside North America and Europe. Western world countries include: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United States. For more info see [Ipsos Generations Report 2024 | Beyond the Stereotypes](#)

At a glance

MODERN MILESTONES

Economic security leads the way

Stable employment (65%) and **home ownership (58%)** are the primary markers of global success.



Men prioritise traditional family markers

Men are more likely than women to view **marriage (+7pp)** and **parenthood (+5pp)** as important signs of a successful life.

THERE'S MORE THAT UNITES US THAN DIVIDES US

Despite popular narratives, Gen Z align with older generations on life's important milestones

THE ASPIRATION-EXPECTATION GAP

"Western" Gen Z: pets over parenthood



58%

already own,
or expect to
own a pet

44%

already are,
or expect to
become a parent

THE GEN Z CONFIDENCE QUESTION

Every generation is less confident than the one before it about reaching major milestones



HIGH EMOTIONAL STAKES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Gen Z is the generation most likely to feel sad if milestones remain unmet

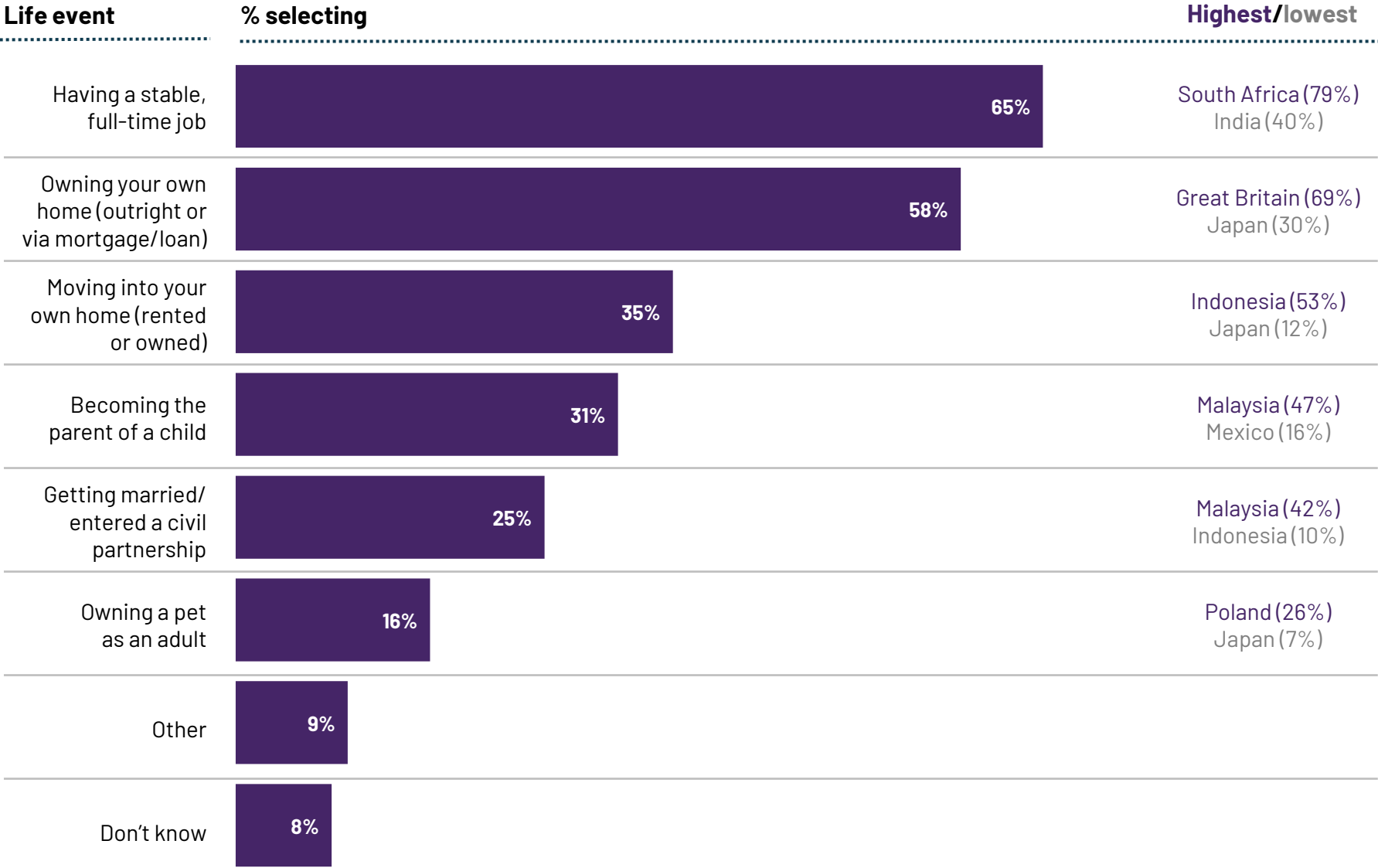
MODERN MARKERS OF SUCCESS

Secure employment ranks as the top sign of a successful life. This is particularly significant given widespread anxieties over what the future of work holds, in an era of rapid AI adoption and global economic volatility.

Which, if any, of the following would you say are important signs of living a successful life these days? (select all that apply)

30-Country Average

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.



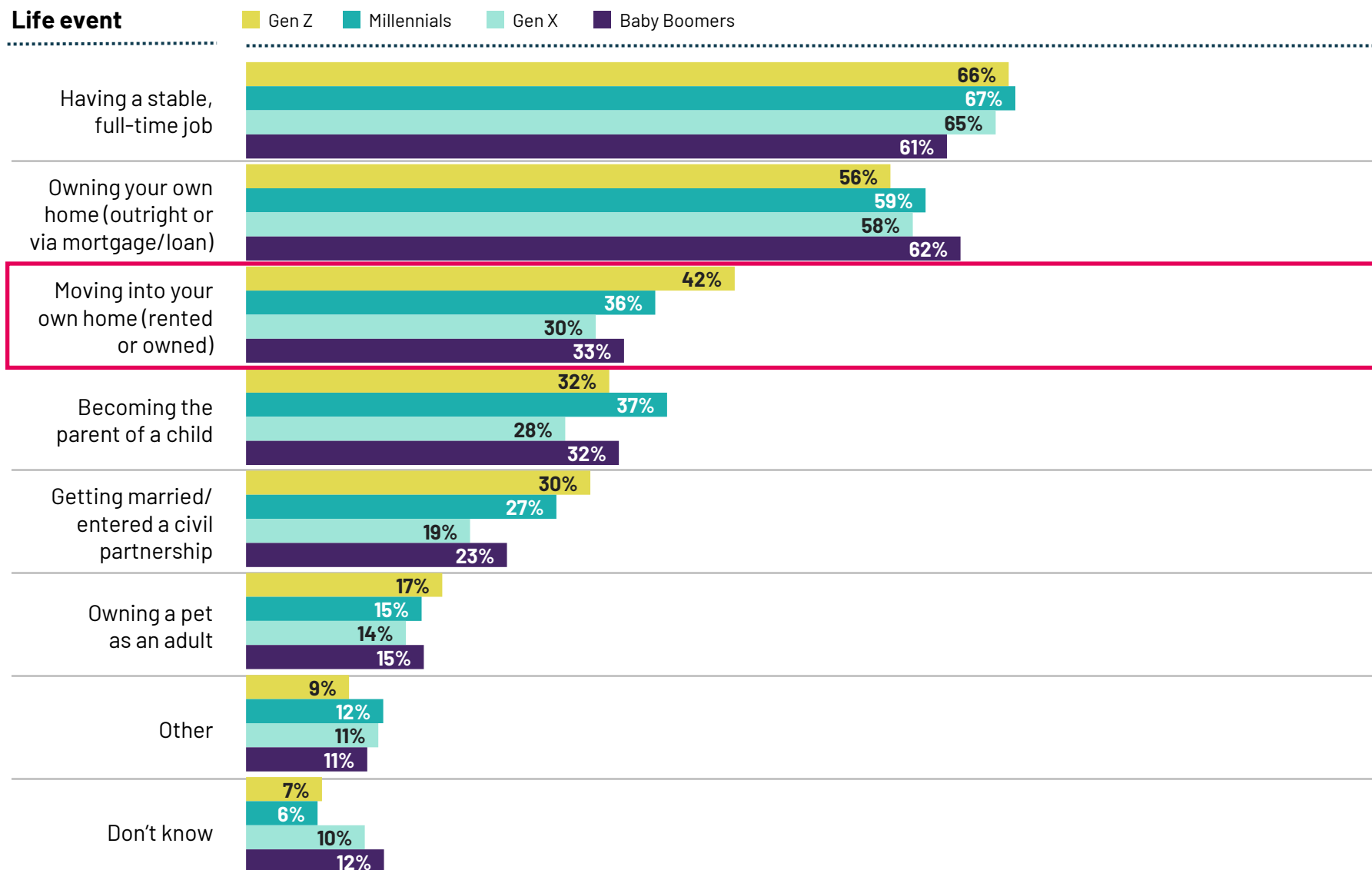
Despite narratives that Gen Z are fundamentally different, we see striking alignment across generations on what makes a successful life. Moving into your own home stands out as an area of difference.

Which, if any, of the following would you say are important signs of living a successful life these days? (select all that apply)

(% selecting)

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.

Life event



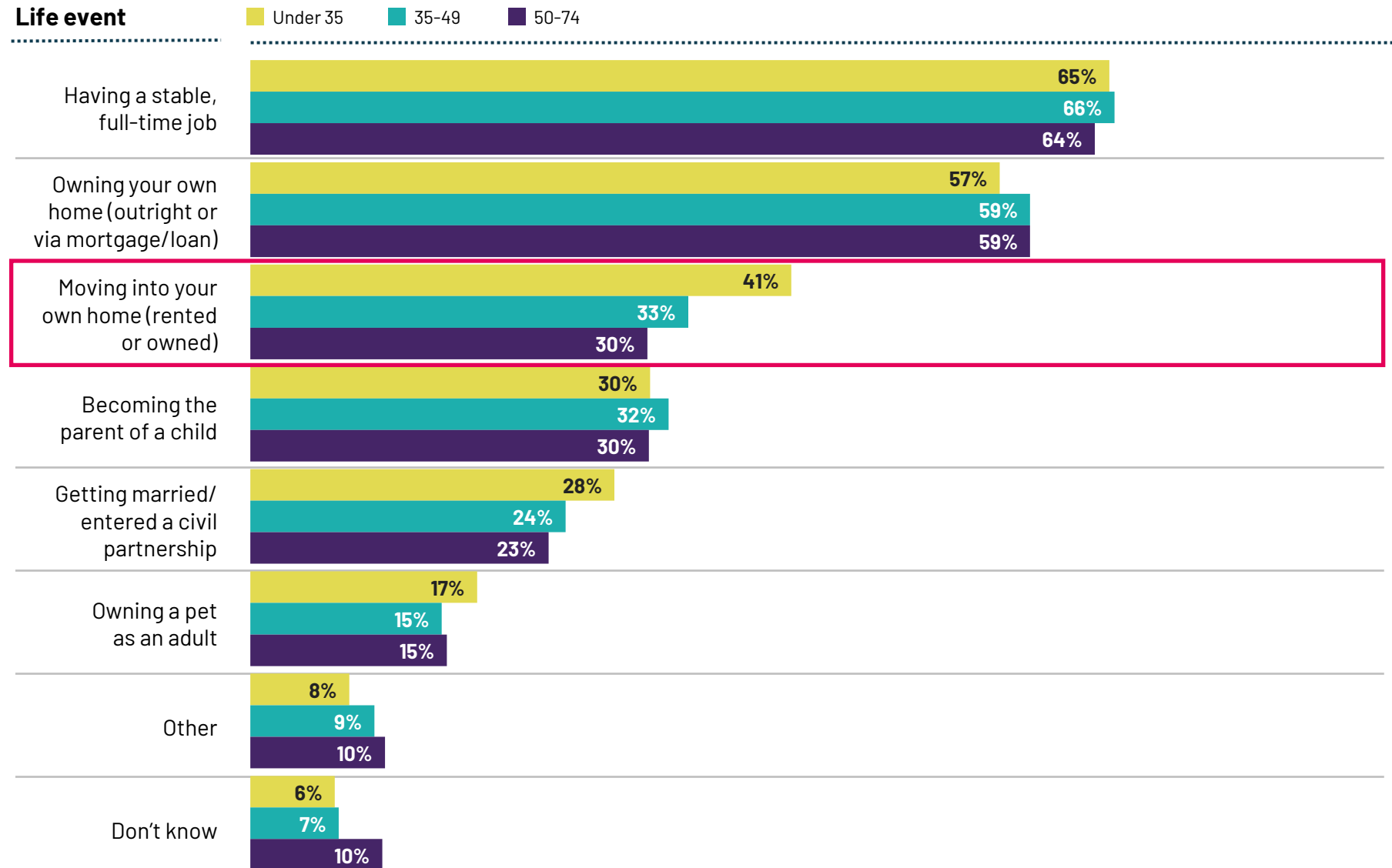
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The same pattern holds globally when we look at attitudes by age, younger people are aligned with older people except for moving into their own home.

Which, if any, of the following would you say are important signs of living a successful life these days? (select all that apply)

30-Country Average
(% selecting)

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.

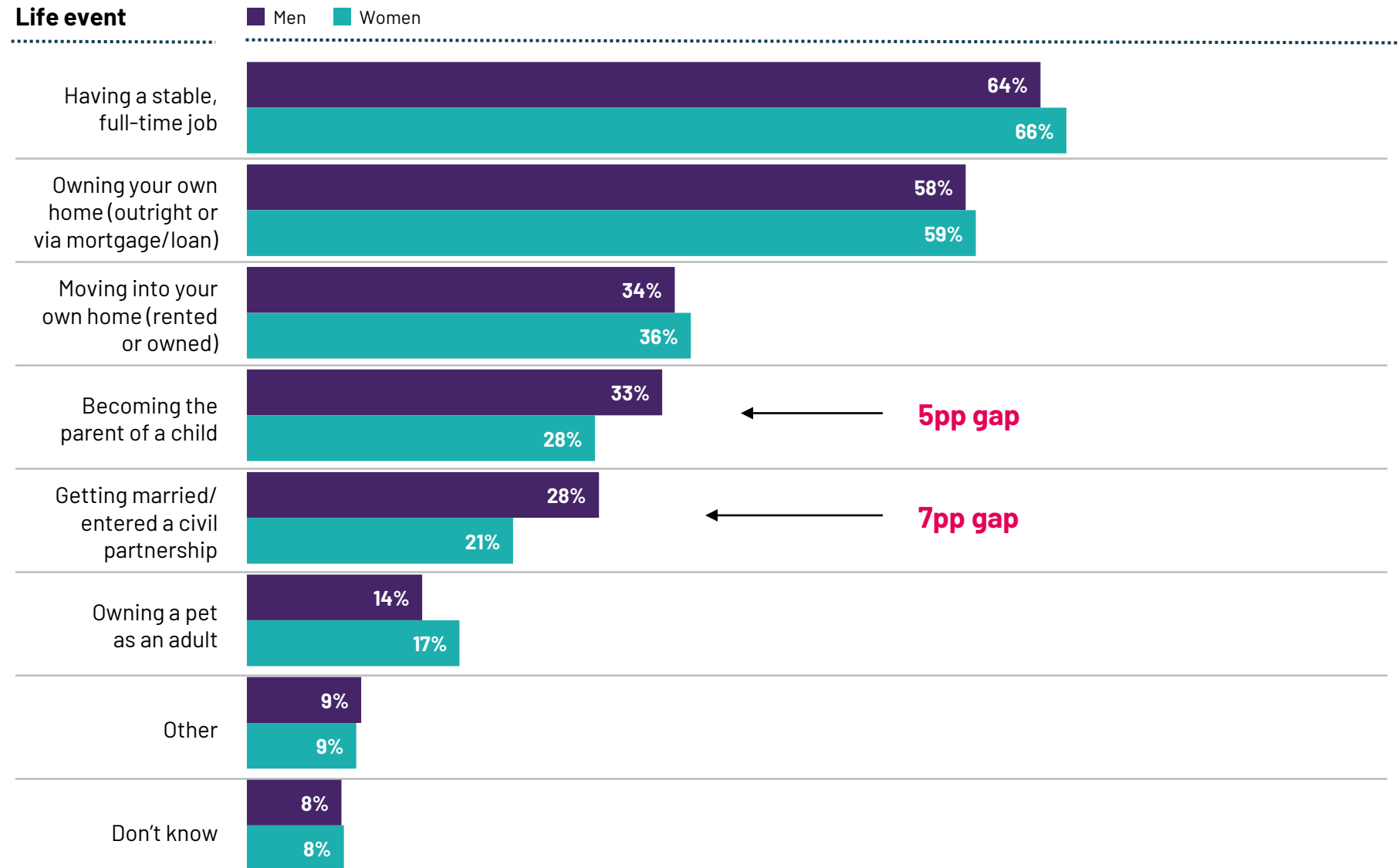


While men and women rank the life events in the same order, men are significantly more likely to say traditional family markers like having a child and getting married are important markers of a successful life.

Which, if any, of the following would you say are important signs of living a successful life these days? (select all that apply)

30-Country Average
% selecting

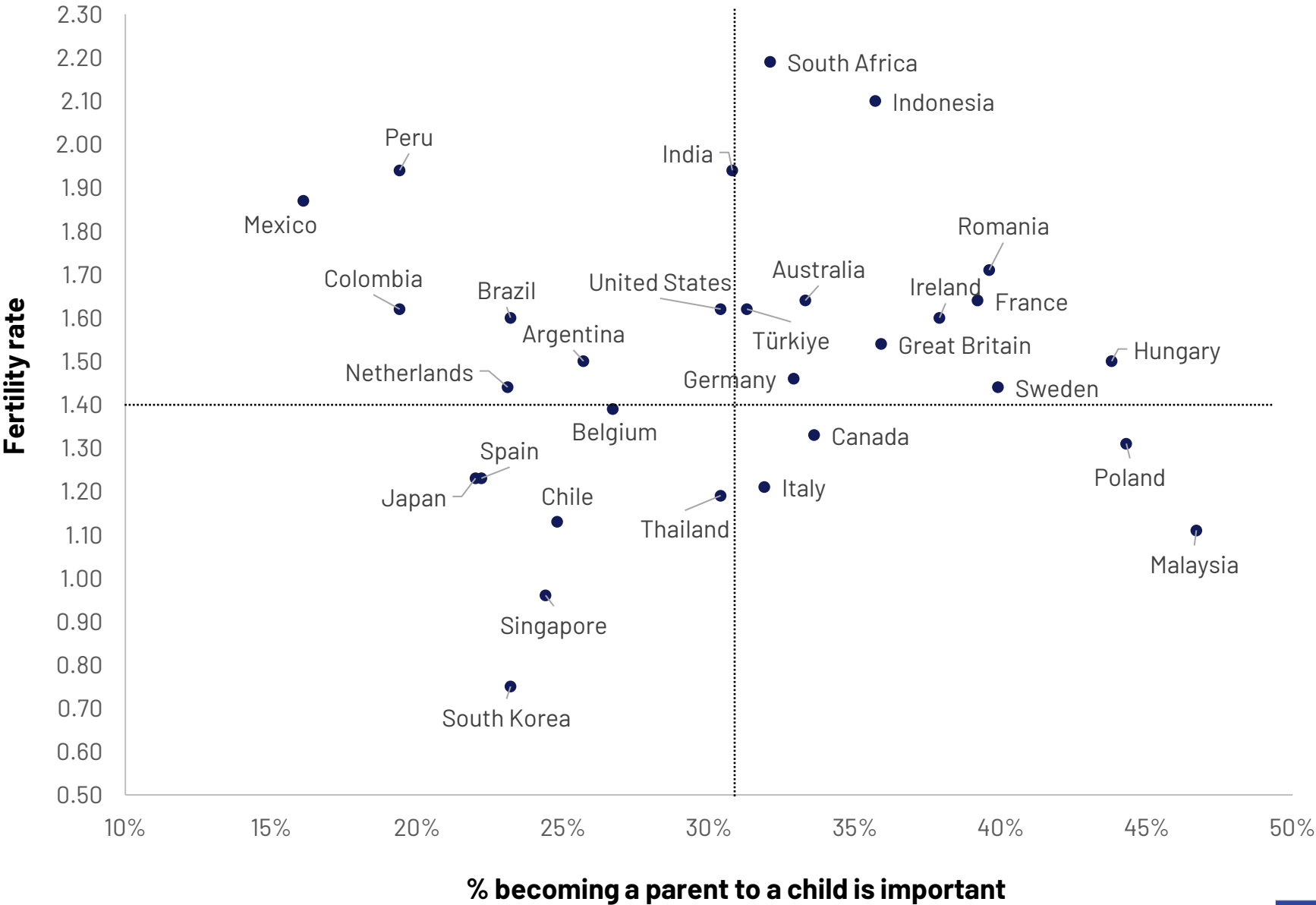
Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.



There is no clear relationship between the importance a country places on becoming a parent and its fertility rate. Countries that place greater importance on becoming a parent do not necessarily have higher fertility rates.

Source: Ipsos, UN World Population Prospects

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.



LIFETIME EXPECTATIONS

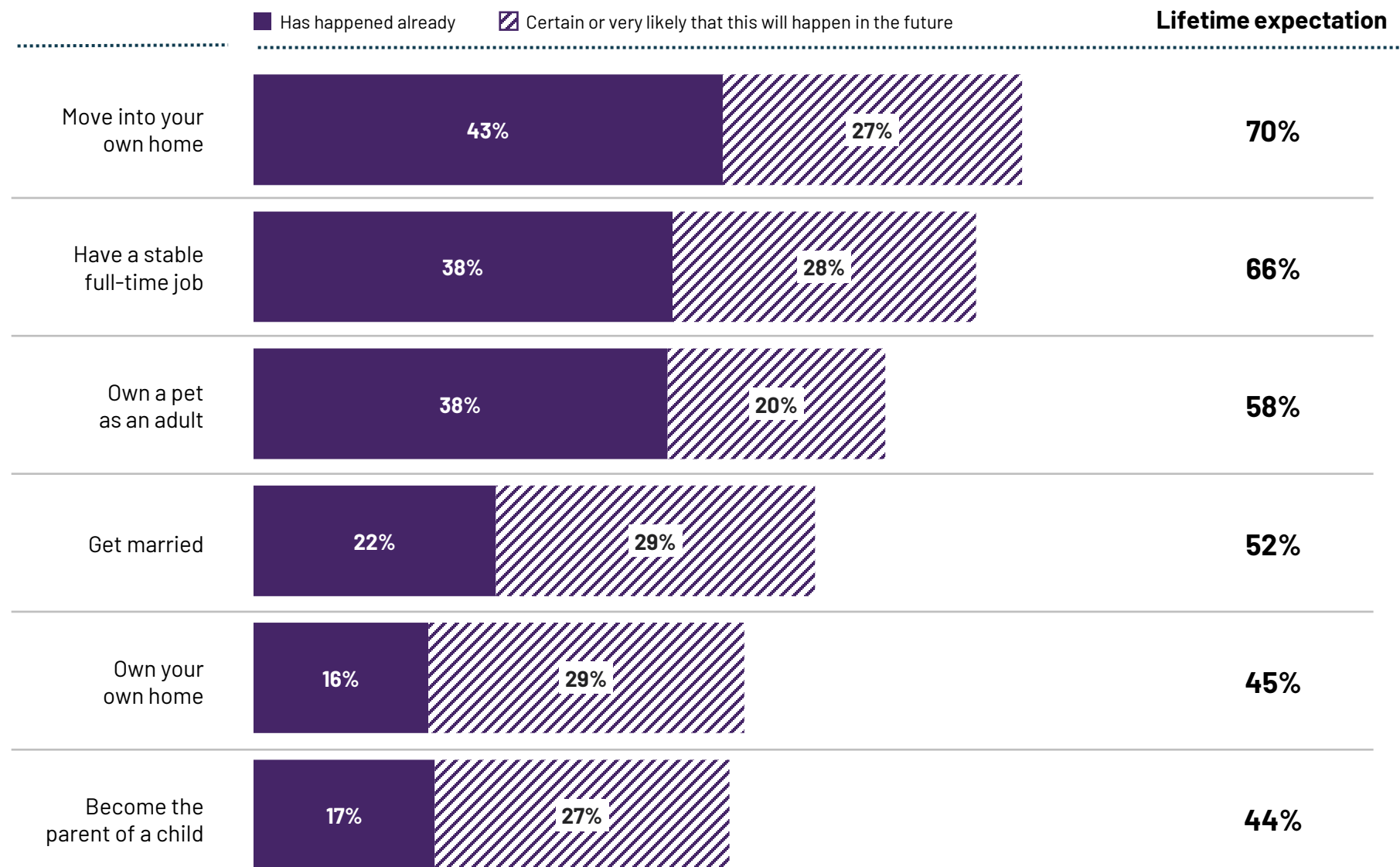


Across Western countries*, Gen Z are more likely to say they'll own a pet in their lifetime than have a child.

Q. For each of the following, please tell me if it has happened to you in your life so far? Q. For each of the following, please indicate if you expect it will happen to you during your lifetime?

[among those for whom it has not yet happened]

Base: 1,885 online adults under the age of 31 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.



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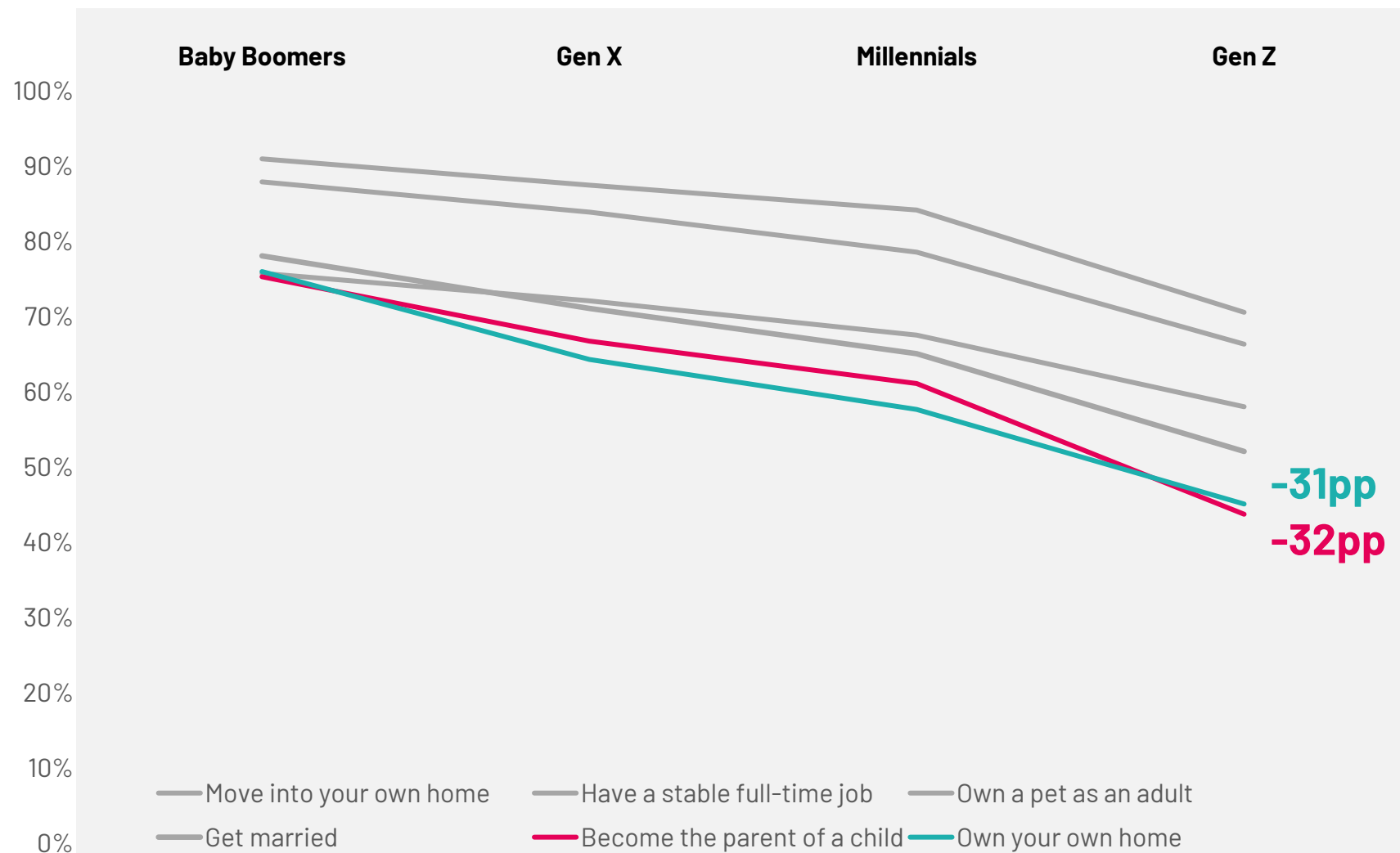
Across Western countries*, expectations of reaching a range of traditional life events drop off more sharply at Gen Z, particularly for becoming a parent or owning a home.

Q. For each of the following, please tell me if it has happened to you in your life so far? Q. For each of the following, please indicate if you expect it will happen to you during your lifetime?

[among those for whom it has not yet happened]

Base: 10,512 online adults under the age of 75 across 12 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.

Lifetime expectations (% has happened already + certain or very likely to happen)



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WHAT IF IT NEVER HAPPENS?

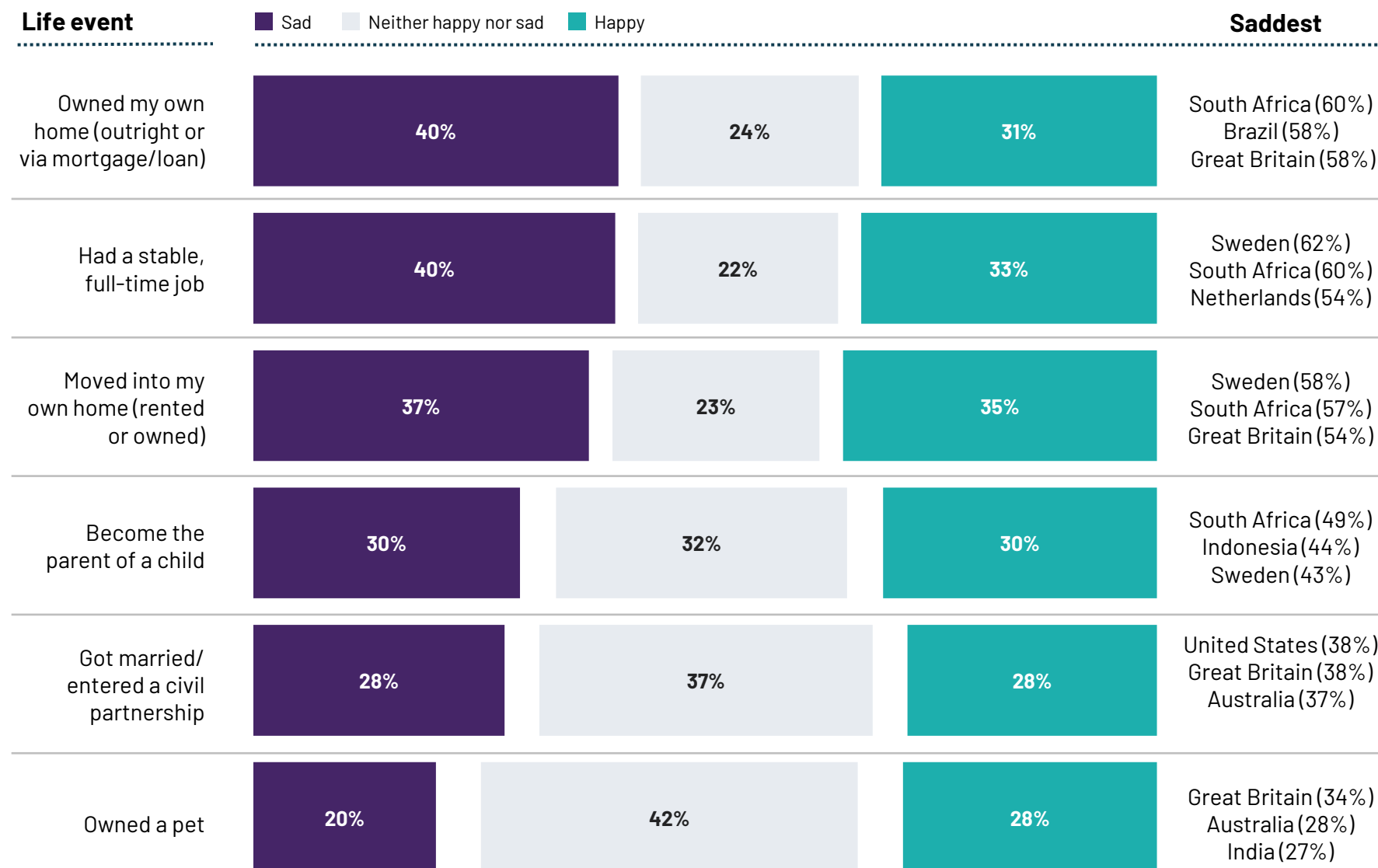
Across all 30 countries, people are most likely to say they'd feel sad if they never owned their own home or held a stable job, while reactions to potentially never becoming a parent are more split.

For each of the following, please indicate how you would feel if, for whatever reason, it did not happen to you in your lifetime?

30-Country Average

(among those for whom it has not yet happened)

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.



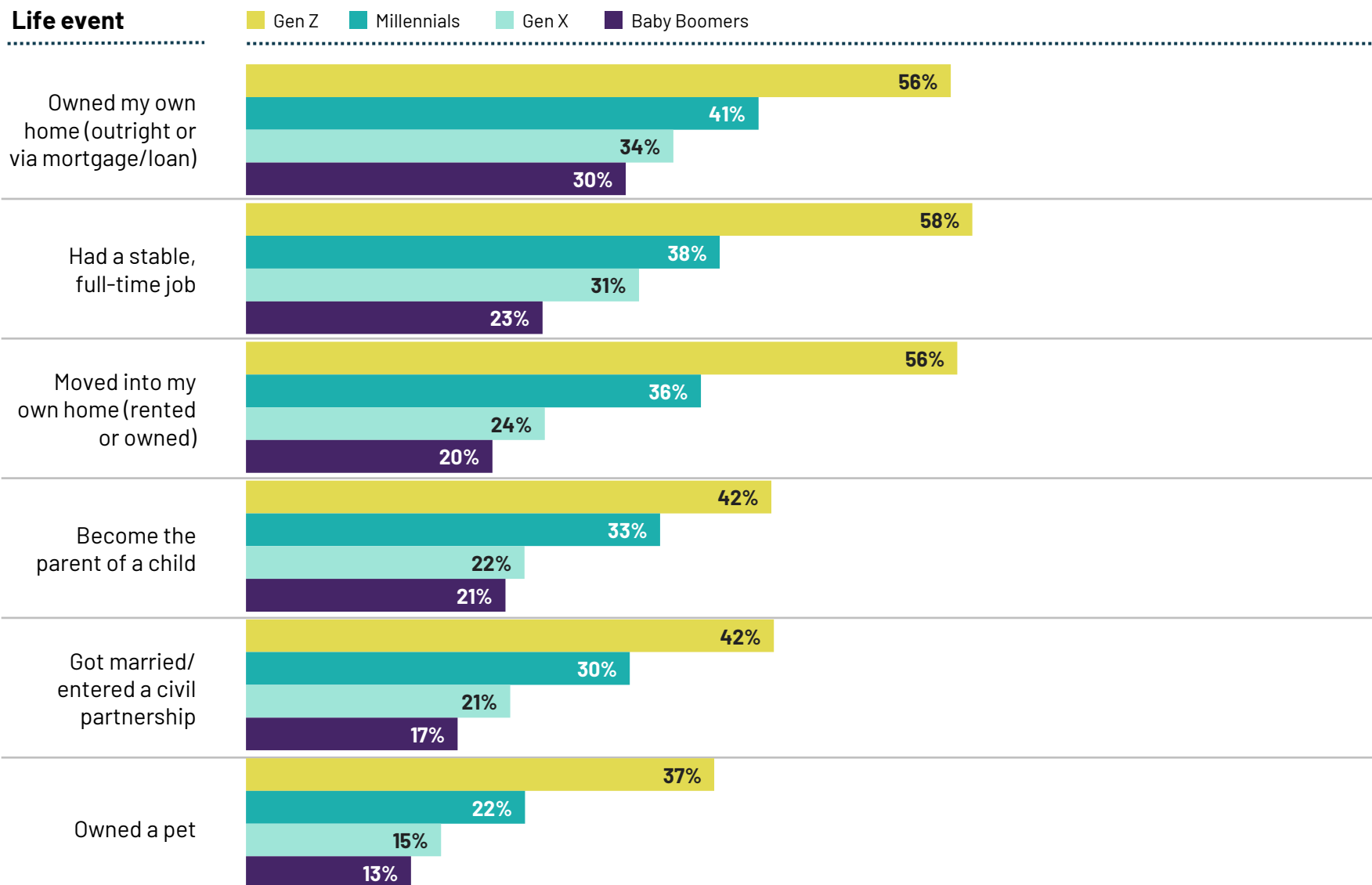
Across every life event, Gen Z are the most likely to say they would feel sad if these did not happen. This suggests their lower expectations of meeting these milestones stem from inaccessibility rather than a lack of aspiration.

For each of the following, please indicate how you would feel if, for whatever reason, it did not happen to you in your lifetime?

12-Country Average

(among those for whom it has not yet happened) % sad

Life event

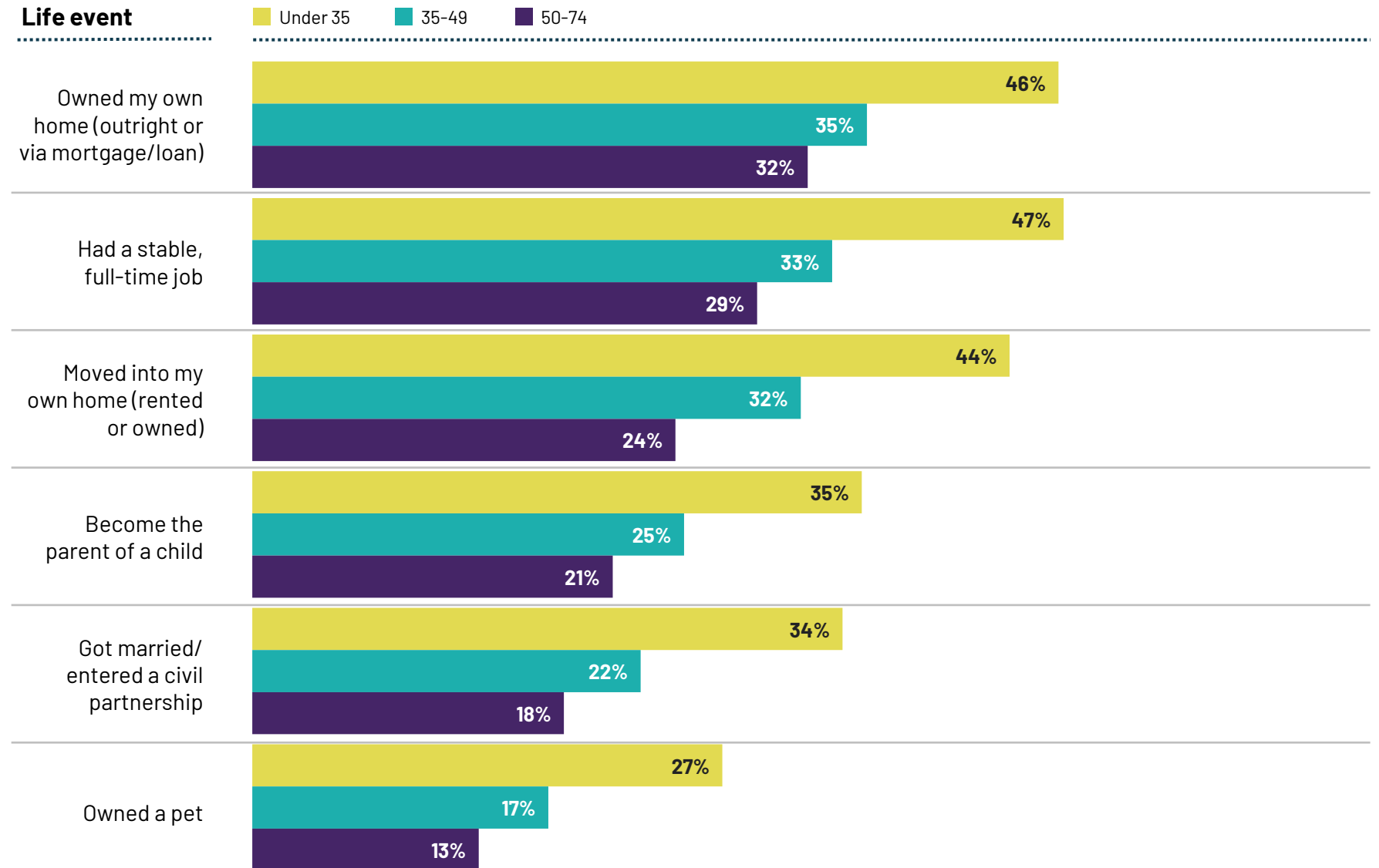


The same pattern holds across age groups globally, with younger people more likely across all life events to say they'll feel sad if these never happened.

For each of the following, please indicate how you would feel if, for whatever reason, it did not happen to you in your lifetime?

30-Country Average
(among those for whom it has not yet happened) % sad

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.

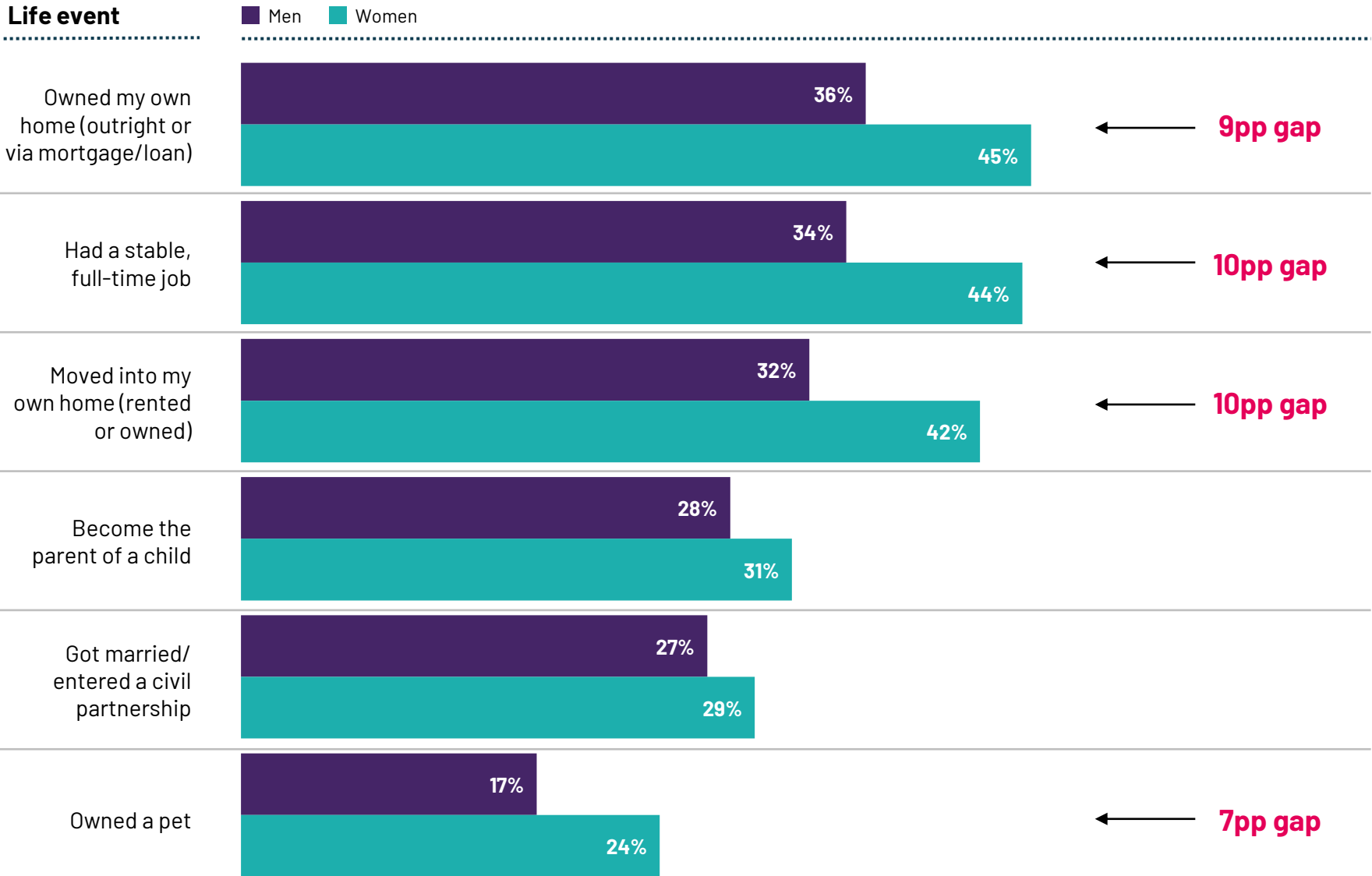


For every life event, women are more likely to say they'd feel sad if these never happened. But there's less of a gap when it comes to becoming a parent and getting married.

For each of the following, please indicate how you would feel if, for whatever reason, it did not happen to you in your lifetime?

30-Country Average
(among those for whom it has not yet happened)
% sad

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.



DOES INCOME DICTATE SUCCESS?

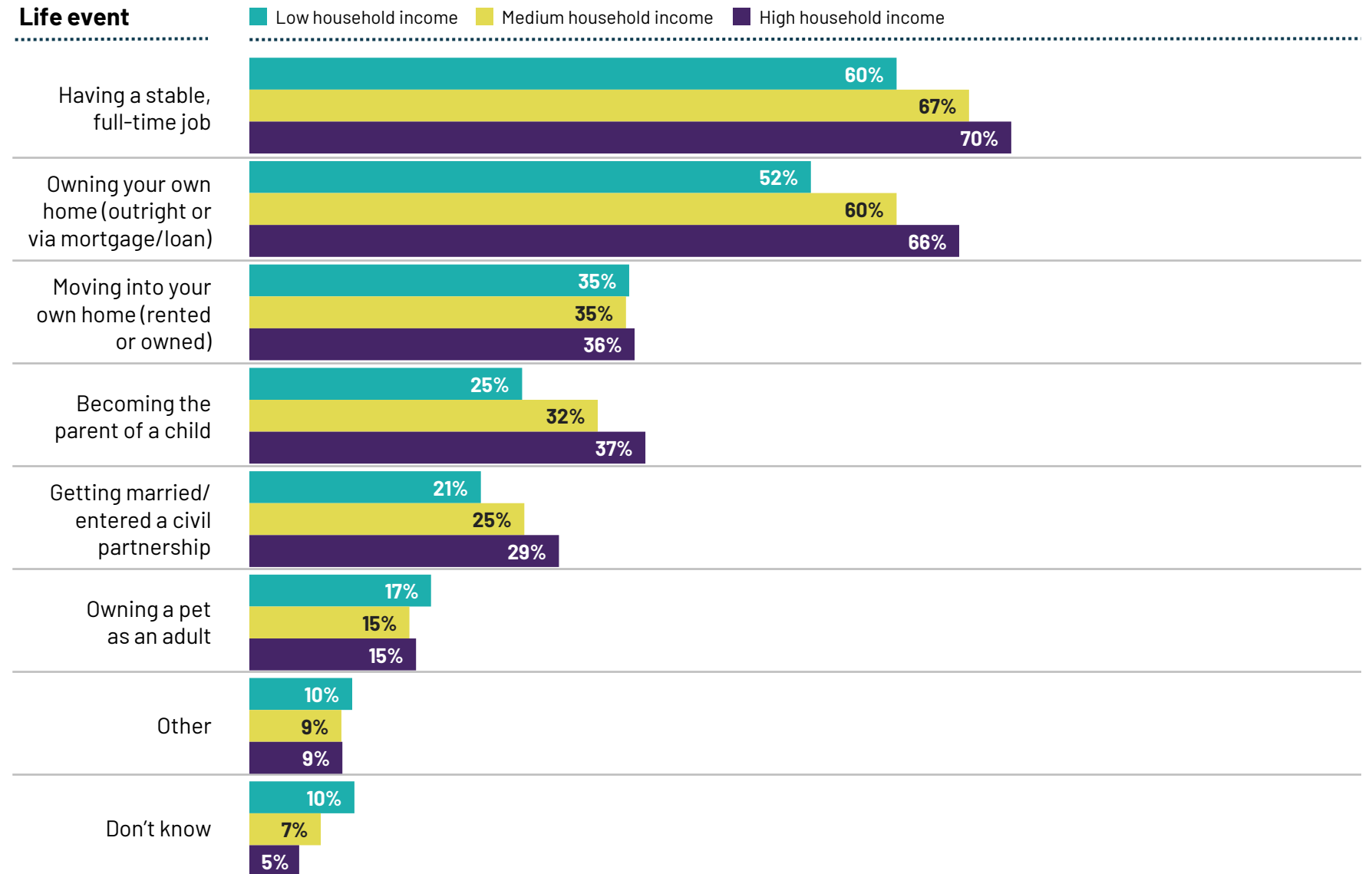


Households on higher incomes are more likely to place importance on all life events surveyed.

Which, if any, of the following would you say are important signs of living a successful life these days? (select all that apply)

30-Country Average
% selecting

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.

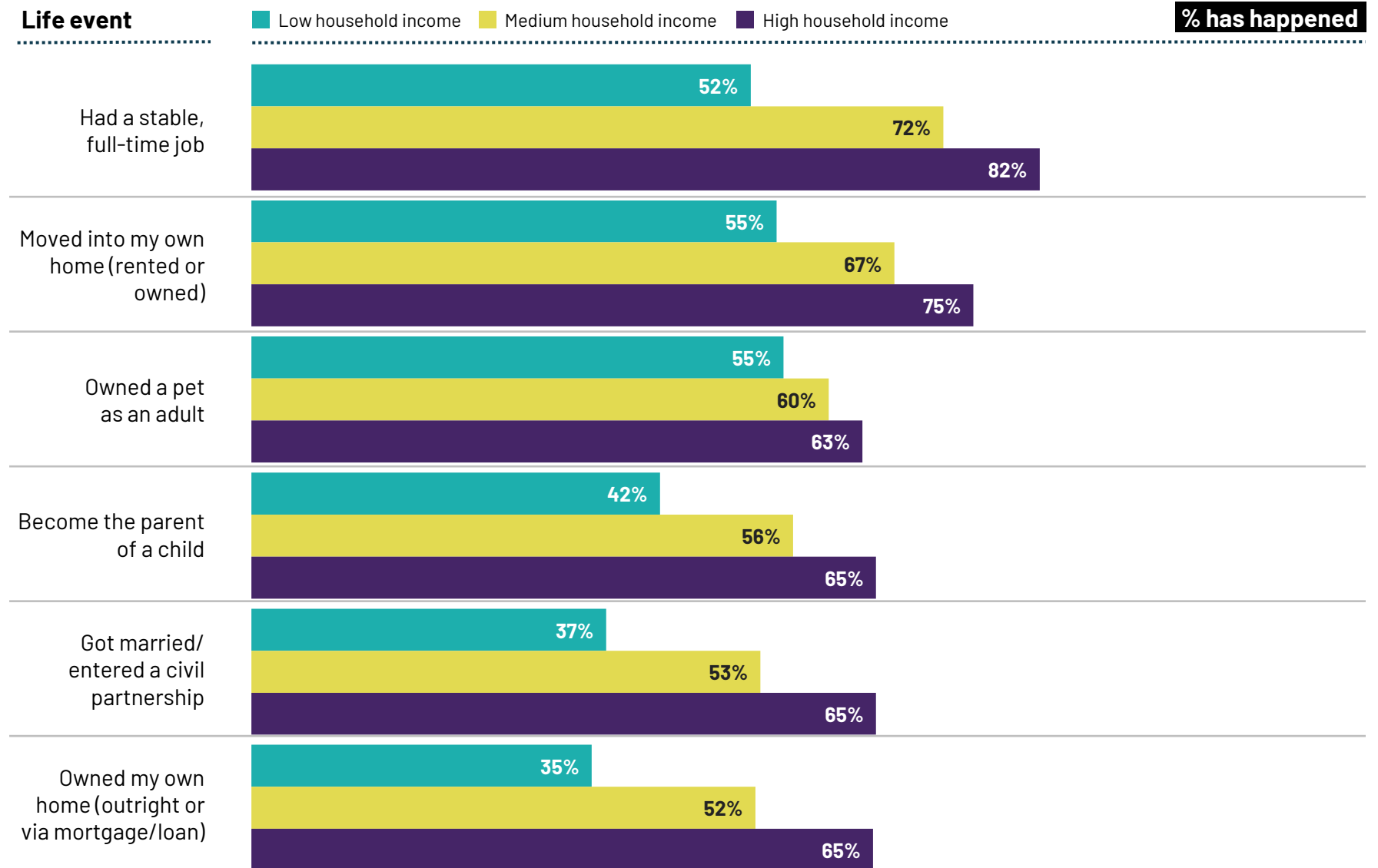


Households on higher incomes are more likely to have already achieved important life events, and if not, to expect they will do in the future.

For each of the following, please tell me if it has happened to you in your life so far?

30-Country Average
(% has happened)

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.

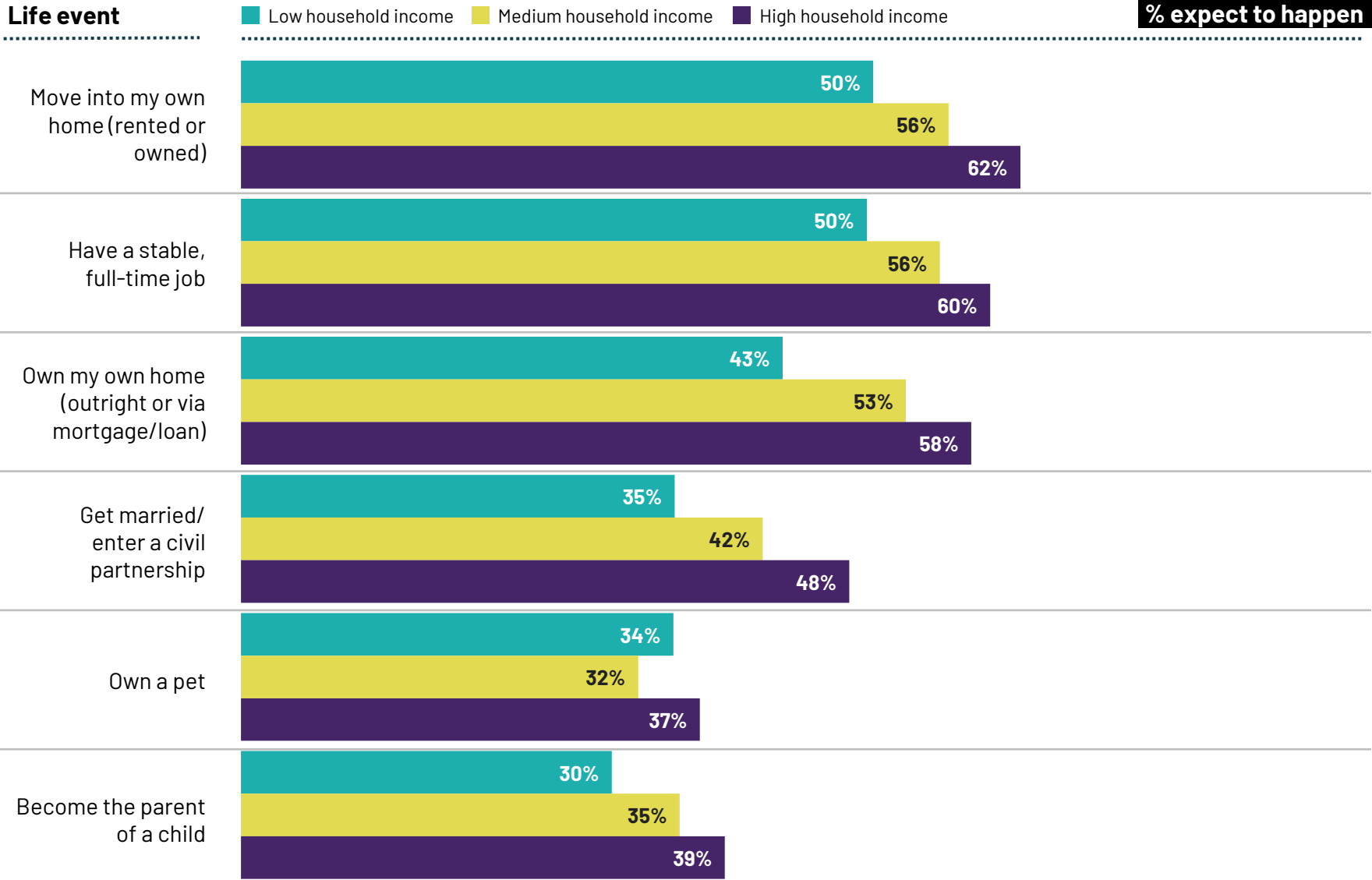


Households on higher incomes are more likely to have already achieved important life events, and if not, to expect they will do in the future.

For each of the following, please indicate if you expect it will happen to you during your lifetime?

30-Country Average
(among those for whom it has not yet happened)
% certain to or likely to happen

Base: 22,693 online adults under the age of 75 across 30 countries, interviewed 20 February and 6 March 2026.

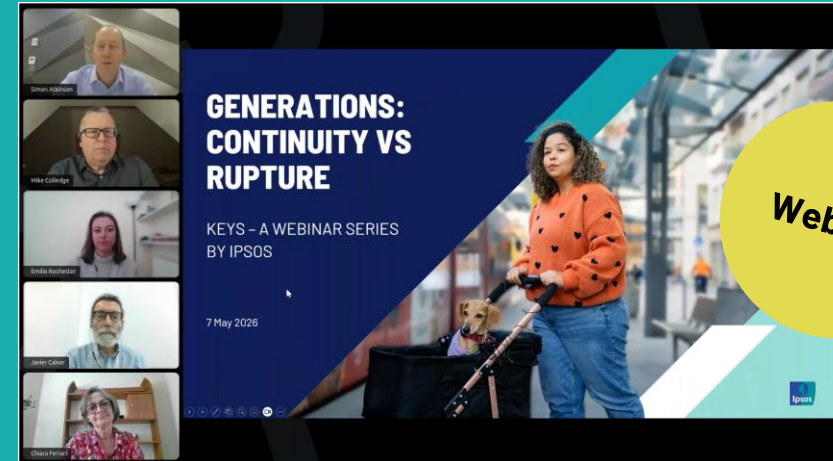


For more on our changing modern milestones



Ipsos Generations Report 2026

Find out how population decline, housing pressures and the cost-of-living crisis are changing when – *and if* – people reach traditional milestones.



Webinar

Ipsos KEYS: Continuity vs Rupture

Watch our experts discuss demographic change, strategies for the endurance economy, and how to adapt to an ageing world.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

These are the results of a 30-country survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform and, in India, on its IndiaBus platform, between Friday, February 20, and Friday, March 6, 2026. For this survey, Ipsos interviewed a total of 22,693 adults aged 18 years and older in India, 18-74 in Canada, Republic of Ireland, Malaysia, South Africa, Türkiye, and the United States, 20-74 in Thailand, 21-74 in Indonesia and Singapore, and 16-74 in all other countries.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals each in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the U.S., and 500 individuals each in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, and Türkiye. The sample

in India consists of approximately 2,200 individuals, of whom approximately 1,800 were interviewed face-to-face and 400 were interviewed online.

Samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the U.S. can be considered representative of their general adult populations under the age of 75. Samples in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, and Türkiye are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these countries should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more “connected” segment of their population.

India’s sample represents a large subset of its urban population – social economic

classes A, B and C in metros and tier 1-3 town classes across all four zones.

The data is weighted so that the composition of each country’s sample best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data. “The Global Country Average” reflects the average result for all the countries and markets in which the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.

When percentages do not sum up to 100 or the ‘difference’ appears to be +/-1 percentage point more/less than the actual result, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of “don’t know” or not stated responses.

The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a

poll where N=1,000 being accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of where N=500 being accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on Ipsos’ use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.

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