Principled Pragmatists:

The truth about Gen Z in the workplace

Foreword

The loneliest generation, the digital generation, generation sensible, the generation of the 'great resignation', the activist generation – lots of descriptions are used about today's young people, AKA Generation Z.

Gen Z describes people born between 1997 and 2012, which means that members of this cohort are anywhere between 10 and 25 years old today.

To emphasise this range, someone from Gen Z born in 1997 could have come into the world to the strains of Aqua's inimitable 'Barbie Girl', which spent (a frankly mind-blowing) four weeks at number 1. Fast forward to 2012, and David Guetta's UK number 1 single, 'Titanium (ft. Sia)', is a full musical universe away.

So there's a necessary caveat about trying to generalise across a whole generation with its intricacies, inherent multiplicity, and differences in social norms and cultural context. Stereotypes can sometimes be useful shorthand, but they're rarely very accurate.

Where Gen Z is concerned, any stereotype based on media coverage would probably be unfavourable: 'lazy', 'spoilt', 'unrealistic', 'precious', 'anti-social', 'self-centred'. The list could go on, but it wouldn't get any more kind – or any more accurate.

But if you really want to understand the 18 to 25 year olds who are now moving into the world of work, rather than rely on tired stereotypes, isn't it better to ask them?

So that's what we did. 3,846 different times, to be precise. What follows in this report is a detailed examination of the views of current Gen Z students and graduates who are entering or about to enter the workplace: their worries, desires, issues, career aspirations, who they look up to, what makes them tick and more.

This matters because the better employers can understand Gen Z, the better able they are to attract and retain the very best Gen Z talent.

From the big debates of our times, such as climate change and diversity and inclusion, through to the four-day working week and the rise of the side-hustle, via the place of alcohol at work socials and friends and romantic relationships at work, this research is a fresh look at Gen Z's views and how they play out in the workplace. The results are likely to surprise you.

At Bright Network, we have been working alongside students and young graduates since 2013 to help them enter the world of graduate employment and kickstart fulfilling careers.

We've always recognised the immense contribution new graduates make to their workplaces and how much they are valued by employers. In a time of great uncertainty and change, businesses and their employees must take great care not to fall back on Gen Z stereotypes. To do so risks missing out on the skills, ideas and new perspectives today's young people have to offer the workplace.

I hope this report will be illuminating, surprising and inspiring in equal measure. It's intended to spark new conversations and ideas – and hopefully lead to healthier, more productive working lives for Gen Z and the rest of us.

Ben Triggs
Director
Bright Network

Executive summary

Over the last five years, the world of work has undergone a radical shift. Where remote and flexible working were once notional or niche practices, they are now commonplace, and most commentators agree that changes in the way we work and what we expect from the workplace have shifted forever.

Previous generations are experiencing these shifts as changes. For the cohort of graduates and students entering the workforce now and into the coming years, blending remote and in-person working, flexible hours and using technological tools to meet virtually are all part of the norm.

Lazy, unrealistic, snowflakes: it's easy to stereotype each generation, and these are some of the negative terms used to describe today's young people. But with over 700,000 student and graduate members, we at Bright Network don't recognise these common criticisms, and crucially nor do our students and graduates.

Our research shows that Gen Z – the generation born from 1997 onwards – have high expectations for their careers, are willing to work hard and have an ability to flex which we feel could transform the way we all work.

Today's young people are both principled and pragmatic.

A massive **79%** of our respondents want a side hustle (work outside of work), and **46%** told us it's so they can earn extra money.

Three quarters of young people are in favour of a four-day working week, and **48%** believe it will become common practice during their career.

Our survey of 3,846 students shows that the current economic climate is changing how the vast majority (83%) of this cohort is thinking about salaries. And while they're confident about applying for and securing graduate level work, around two-thirds (64%) believe the economy will make securing their next step – whether further study or a new job – more difficult.

But growing up through a series of economic shocks, beginning with the financial crash of 2007/2008 through to the present day has also made Gen Z uniquely resourceful: a massive 79% of our respondents want a side hustle (work outside of work), and 46% told us it's so they can earn extra money.

So often characterised as eco-warriors or 'woke' activists, Gen Z's students and graduates are definitely principled, but they also realise the value of putting their own wellbeing first. This applies in financial terms but also around their mental and emotional health. Three quarters of young people are in favour of a four-day working week, and 48% believe it will become common practice during their career. However, they also recognise that this could come at a cost in terms of workload, stress and expectations around delivery.

Finally, we know them to be focused – 45% told us alcohol shouldn't play a role in workplace socialising now or in the future. But far from being killjoys, they want to socialise. 89% say it's valuable to have friends at work, and most are keen to be in the office between three and five days per week.

So, do you still think you know all about Gen Z? Our survey reveals the truth about this often misunderstood generation, and it's not the stereotype we might expect. We believe our research can help employers to understand the expectations and desires of the upcoming graduate cohort, and more than that, that Gen Z can be the catalyst which changes work for us all.

1. The Gen Z shift

The workplace is not what it once was. The days of a reliable nine-to-five at a desk in an office are well and truly over – flexible and compressed hours, remote working and working from home, technological tools such as Slack, Microsoft Teams and Zoom and the rise of the side hustle have changed the workplace landscape permanently.

While employers are still adjusting to the brave new world of work, Gen Z students are graduating, applying for jobs and beginning to enter it – and even shape it to fit their own preferences.

"Covid has forced an accelerated technological shift to meet the needs of Gen Z."

Sara, KCL, Chemistry

Unlike the preconceived ideas about work the generations before have held, Gen Z comes with a different set of expectations and a unique alacrity in the digital age. When coupled with the major shifts currently taking place in workplace practice, the gulf between this cohort and the existing workforce can seem wider than ever.

"Some companies have managed to adapt, but it's clear that others haven't been able to yet."
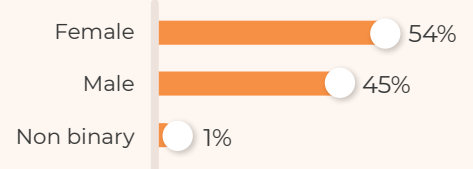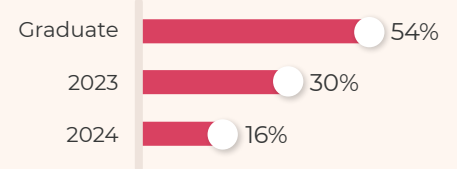
Joana, Kings College London, Neuroscience

A cross-section of Bright Network's Gen Z community
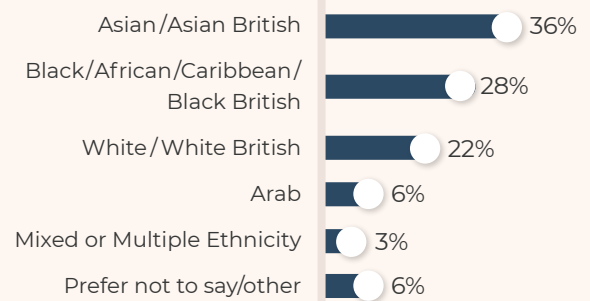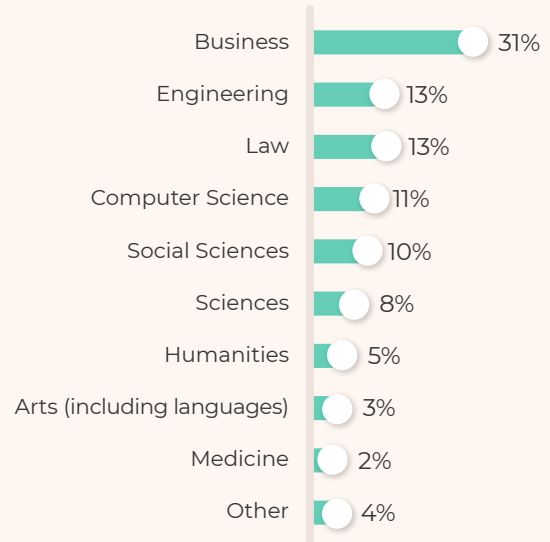
3,846 members surveyed

Gender

Female	54%
Male	45%
Non binary	1%

Graduation year

Graduate	54%
2023	30%
2024	16%

Ethnicity

Asian/Asian British	36%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	28%
White/White British	22%
Arab	6%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnicity	3%
Prefer not to say/other	6%

Faculty

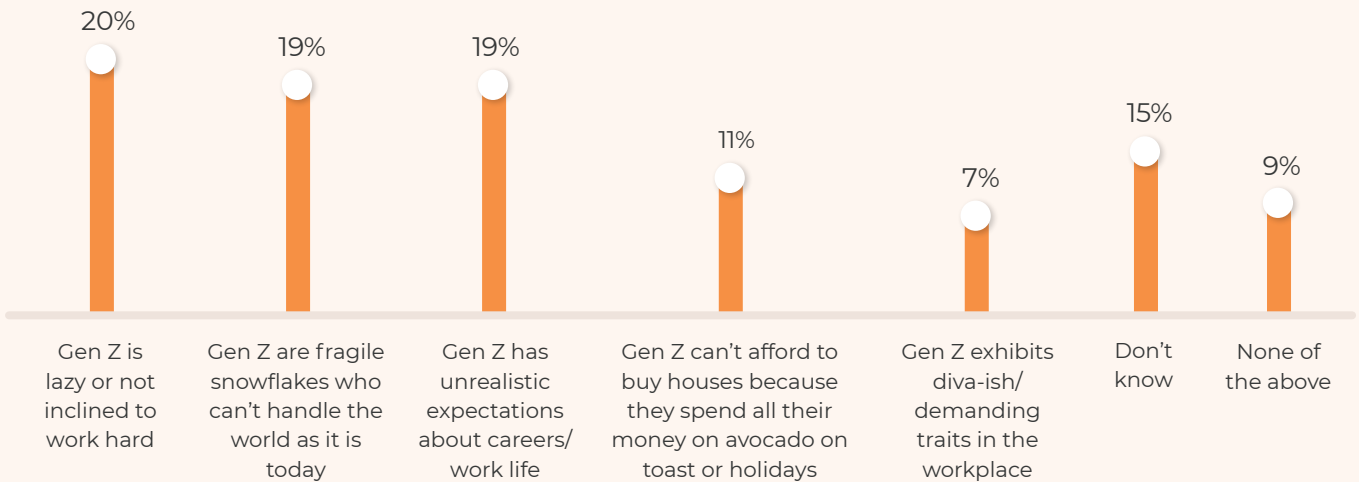|	
Business	31%
Engineering	13%
Law	13%
Computer Science	11%
Social Sciences	10%
Sciences	8%
Humanities	5%
Arts (including languages)	3%
Medicine	2%
Other	4%

We asked UK students and new graduates about their attitudes towards, and expectations of, working life. The responses in this research came from a diverse and career-conscious group of young people with different ethnic and educational backgrounds and from a cross-section of faculty disciplines. Their responses will surprise those who subscribe to generational cliches. Lazy? The Gen Z we know are motivated and focused:

Gen Z finds these cliches (which they feel are untrue) quite annoying. Most annoying is that:

20%	19%	19%	11%	7%	15%	9%
Gen Z is lazy or not inclined to work hard	Gen Z are fragile snowflakes who can't handle the world as it is today	Gen Z has unrealistic expectations about careers/ work life	Gen Z can't afford to buy houses because they spend all their money on avocado on toast or holidays	Gen Z exhibits diva-ish/ demanding traits in the workplace	Don't know	None of the above

77% believe Gen Z has a different communication and work style to previous generations.

In a time when the world of work is changing so radically – and so many of us are benefitting from these changes – Gen Z's vision of working life has much to offer employers and colleagues.

2. Gen Z in the workplace

From the School Strikes for Climate through to Black Lives Matter, Gen Z has been at the forefront of campaigning on causes they believe in, with particular focus on climate change and sustainability, and issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB). They have seen their activism lead to change, and this has empowered them to be forthright about their values and principles in all aspects of their lives.

Gen Z carries its principles into the workplace with a positive attitude to promoting mental health and wellbeing, and clear DEIB initiatives and a commitment to racial equality being two of the top three criteria for this generation when considering a role and employer. Flip this on its head and consider that if a business is not doing these things (and communicating about them), this makes it a less attractive target for new Gen Z talent.

Beyond Diversity and Inclusion

There has been a shift in recent years to recognise implicit bias in the workplace, which has changed the way businesses are invited to think about diversity and inclusion. It's no longer adequate merely to have a diversity and inclusion policy. One of the key measures of whether diversity and inclusion efforts are successful is 'belonging' – requiring employees to feel accepted, valued and connected within their organisation. A sense of equity is another key measure of diversity and inclusion, ensuring all individuals have the same access to opportunities and are treated fairly.

We asked Gen Z to rank the most important/attractive factors when choosing a potential role and employer, where the most important is 1 and the least is 9.

1 Salary and remuneration including benefits and bonuses

2 Positive attitude to promoting mental health and wellbeing

3 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives, commitment to racial equality

4 Flexible working policy (flexible office/working hours)

5 Flexible working policy (flexible location/remote work)

6 Positive stance on environmental issues and climate change

7 4-day working week

8 Reduced hours as a perk (e.g. early finishes on a summer Friday)

9 Positive stance on LGBTQIA+ rights

With Gen Z's principles comes a pragmatism that sees them prioritise their own personal wellbeing over that of the organisation they work for, with the health of their finances coming first – the lead consideration for those we surveyed when choosing a role is salary and remuneration – followed by mental health and emotional balance.

It's notable that climate change is less important to this cohort than pay, diversity and mental wellbeing – perhaps surprisingly, given how Gen Z's young people are often painted as eco-warriors.

There's no doubt this generation cares about this issue – but research from Kings College London[1] suggests they're no more concerned about climate change than the generations preceding them.

[1] https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/who-cares-about-climate-change.pdf
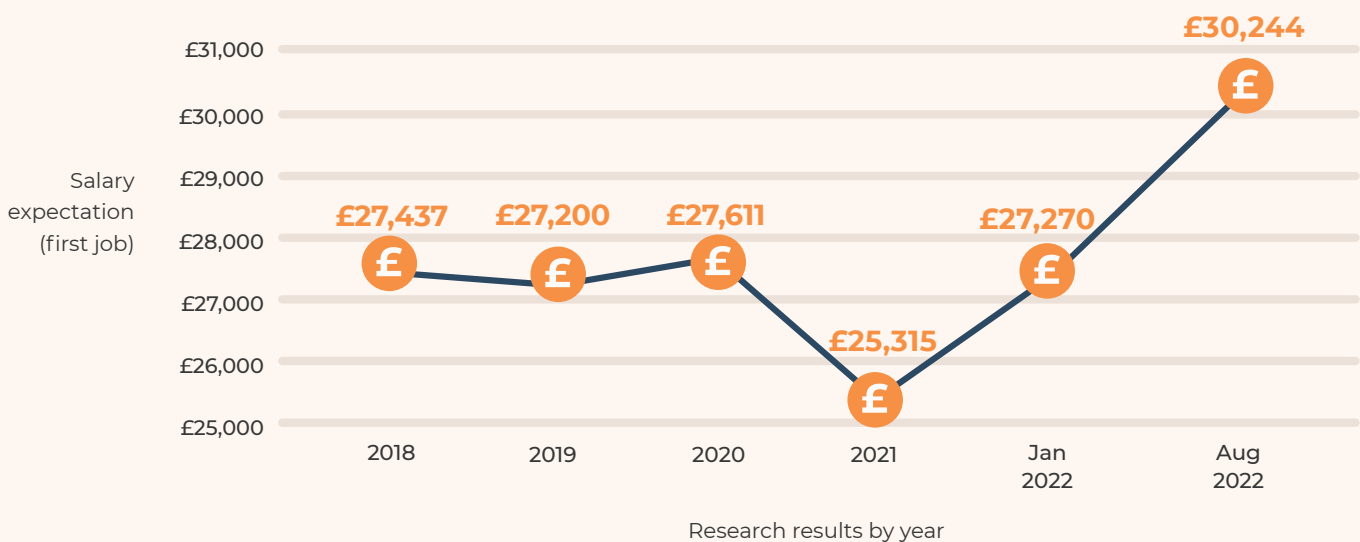
Money on their mind

Given the current economic situation, Gen Z's desire to shore up their finances is entirely understandable. Rather than being unrealistic about the world of work, they grew up through austerity caused by the 2007/2008 financial crash, and have witnessed the economic shocks of Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and now Russia's war in Ukraine. Amid so much upheaval, prioritising financial wellbeing feels prudent rather than greedy.

Our research found that 52% of students and graduates would choose a job with a great salary and benefits package over working for a cause they believed in (43%). Only 6% didn't know which way they'd choose.

Salary expectation over time (graduate job)

Salary expectation (first job)

| Year	Salary
2018	£27,437
2019	£27,200
2020	£27,611
2021	£25,315
Jan 2022	£27,270
Aug 2022	£30,244

Research results by year

And their response to current rises in inflation? They expect graduate salaries to rise accordingly.

"In London the average graduate salary is not enough for you to survive – it should be at least £30k for graduates."

Jerry, Brunel University London, Financial Mathematics

"The current economic climate has made me really concerned. I'm realising a lot of graduate salaries are too low, and it's pushing me to look at different career options, such as tech, where there's more security."

Sara, KCL, Chemistry
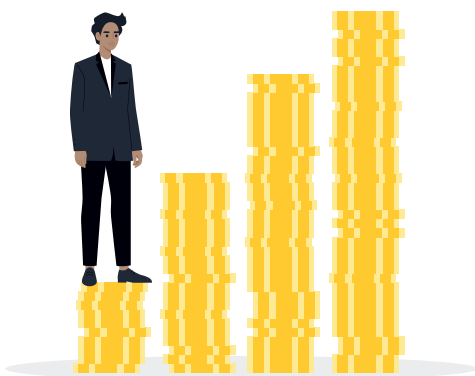
Principled Pragmatists

...are those with clear ideals and values, but who are guided more by practical considerations and what is possible in the way they make their decisions. They put their own wellbeing first, believing that will empower them to work towards principled change more effectively in the long-term.

Far from being snowflakes, we describe Gen Z as principled pragmatists.

Two-fifths (42%) of those we surveyed say they could work for an employer whose views don't align with their own on the climate (46% on sustainability, falling to 38% for DEIB). Nevertheless, their principled approach leads them to expect that their employers will be transparent about salaries and pay bands – 76% want their employers to be up-front about this. Again, this may well be part of a broader trend spreading through the workforce at all levels as workers push for greater salary transparency to ensure fairness.

"I do thorough research of a company, and – in the interview process and through speaking to them – I'm trying to understand their values. I'm looking for transparent bands with each salary and open and honest communication."

Sara, KCL, Chemistry

And while salary might be important to this cohort in the immediate and short term, in the longer term, they're looking for general happiness at work (23%) and meaningful work (17%). They don't expect this to be handed to them on a plate. Gen Z bring ideas about what working life will look like to make this possible – for example, 48% believe the four day week will become widespread during their career, and 74% are in favour of it (provided salaries aren't reduced accordingly).

"Work is a massive part of life, so having a job with meaningful work is important. It makes it easier as it gives you passion, motivation and perseverance."

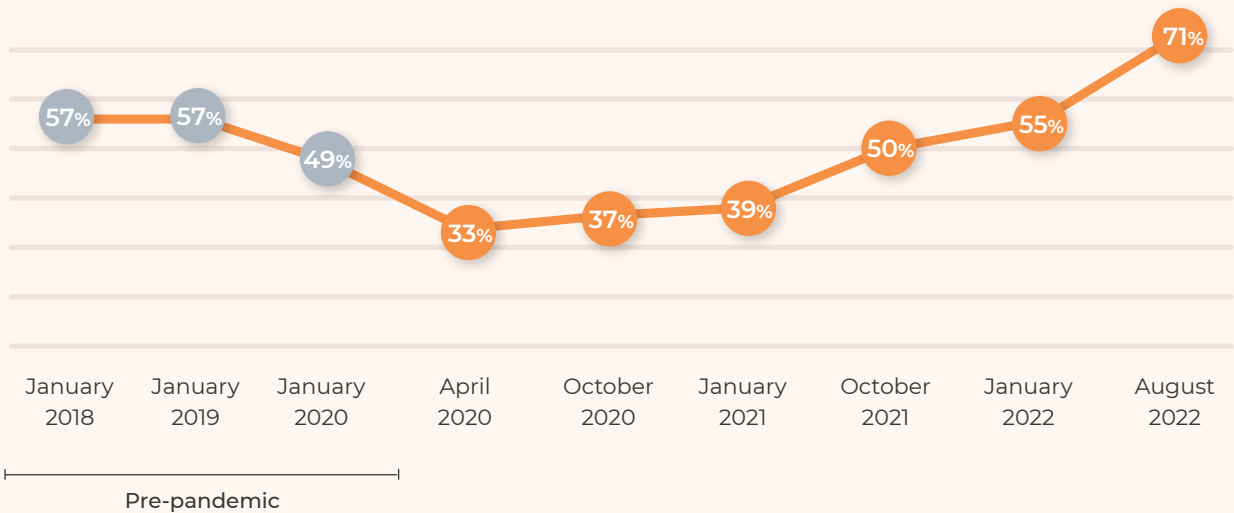Joana, Kings College London, Neuroscience

We believe Gen Z's expectations and values will be invaluable in reshaping the workplace for the future. Our research highlighted three important qualities this generation is bringing to work:

Gen Z is confident and hopeful

The pragmatism of Gen Z shows through in that 64% believe job hunting will be challenging in the current climate. Nevertheless, Bright Network has been tracking young people's confidence levels since 2017, and they are the highest they've ever been:

Confidence in securing a graduate role over time (all members)

| January 2018	January 2019	January 2020	April 2020	October 2020	January 2021	October 2021	January 2022	August 2022
57%	57%	49%	33%	37%	39%	50%	55%	71%

Pre-pandemic

82% are confident about going through an application process and **66%** are confident they're prepared for working life.

Gen Z is made up of hardworking hustlers

The upcoming cohort has little expectation that work will be the only outlet for their skills and interests, or that it will fulfil every aspect of their working lives. Almost eight in ten (79%) of those we surveyed told us they want a side hustle, while 46% told us this – spot the pragmatism – was a way to earn extra money.
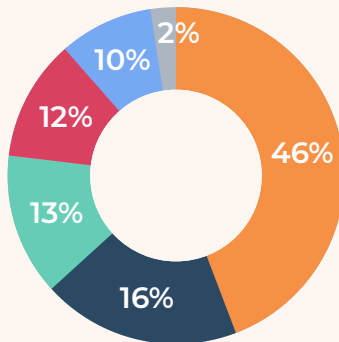
Q. How desirable is it to have a side hustle?

42%
37%
12%
6%
3%
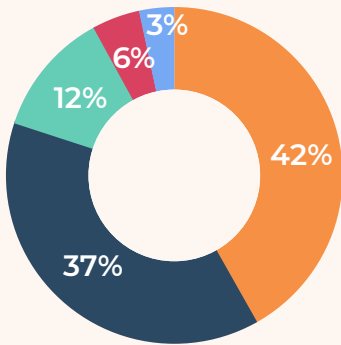
- Extremely desirable
- Somewhat desirable
- Neither desirable nor undesirable
- Somewhat undesirable
- Completely undesirable

79% are keen to have a side hustle
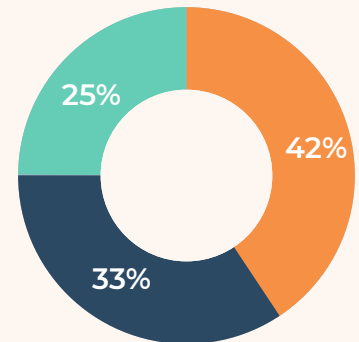
Q. What would be the main reason for you to have a side hustle?

2%
10%
12%
13%
16%
46%

- To make extra money
- As a potential way to start a new main job/career
- For variety outside of my main job
- To achieve status as an entrepreneur
- To further a cause I believe in
- None of the above

Q. Would a side hustle be related to your job?

42%
33%
25%

- It would be completely different
- It would be related to my full time job
- Don't know

"A four-day week provides a better work life balance, but it does increase the pressure on time sensitive projects."

Sara, KCL, Chemistry

"Flexible working depends on the project and job. The four-day week wouldn't work if something was highly time sensitive. It should be flexible – sometimes three days, sometimes four and sometimes five – depending on what the current workload is."

Jerry, Brunel University London, Financial Mathematics

Which bosses Gen Z do (and really don't) want to work for

We also asked our respondents which well-known figures they would most and least like to work for. Some were highly polarising while others struggled to elicit much of an opinion either way. Take Liz Truss, for example: respondents were five times more likely to say she'd be their worst boss (10%) than their best (2%). Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer fared little better, with 5% saying he'd be their worst boss and only 2% picking him as their best option.

Politics may have played a role in their underwhelming performance, but they may take comfort from the fact that they're far from the least popular bosses. That dubious honour goes to Kim Kardashian, with 34% saying she would be their worst boss and only 6% citing her as their best boss from our list. As well as being a celebrity, Kim Kardashian is a wildly successful entrepreneur with a net worth of $1.8bn[2].

Isn't this the portfolio career many young people are supposed to aspire to? Perhaps, but a lawsuit from Kardashian's own female domestic workers alleging poor pay and conditions has eroded her authenticity and therefore her desirability as a boss among Gen Z.

Similarly, creator and entrepreneur Molly-Mae Hague, the creative director of Pretty Little Thing, has been accused of failing to acknowledge
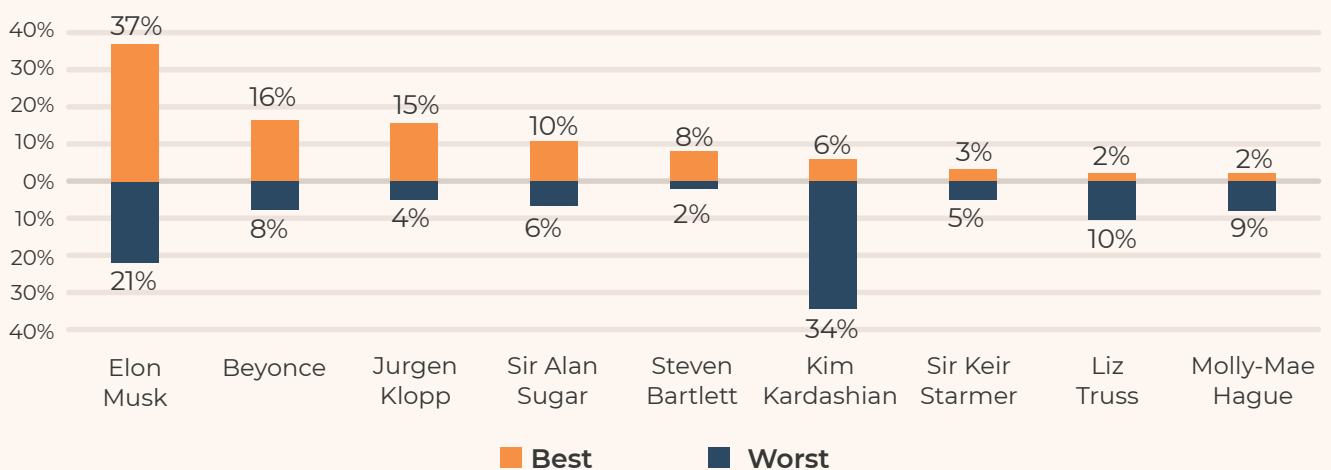
"I think a good manager/leader should be direct and clear regarding priorities and feedback while also being supportive and approachable."

Nell, University of Leeds, Geography

her privilege, compounded by critiques of the brand's environmental impact as a 'fast fashion' producer and alleged poor treatment of workers.

Elon Musk is equally polarising. When you think of Musk as the strict taskmaster who demands 100% commitment and an 'always on' culture, his second highest rating for Gen Z's 'worst boss' (21%) makes complete sense. If you consider Musk the visionary, authentic, and highly motivational leader, that would explain his position as the most popular 'best boss' (37%).

Q. Who would make the best/worst boss or the boss you would most/least like to work for, from this list of well-known people?

	Best	Worst
Elon Musk	37%	21%
Beyonce	16%	8%
Jurgen Klopp	15%	4%
Sir Alan Sugar	10%	6%
Steven Bartlett	8%	2%
Kim Kardashian	6%	34%
Sir Keir Starmer	3%	5%
Liz Truss	2%	10%
Molly-Mae Hague	2%	9%

■ Best   ■ Worst

[1] https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2022/01/28/kim-kardashian-is-600-million-richer-after-shapewear-brand-skims-hits-32-billion-valuation/

Gen Z students and graduates are sociable, flexible and boundaried

As the generation born entirely into a digital age, remote working and using technological tools doesn't just come naturally to Gen Z, it's how they believe the world around them operates. They've never known anything else. We found they're ambivalent about being interviewed for a role in person or virtually, for example; the divide between the two formats doesn't exist for them.

Would you prefer an in-person or virtual interview?

52%
in person

48%
virtual

Being a product of a digital age hasn't made them reclusive. Half of those we surveyed want to come into the office three to five days a week, and only 7% want to work from home all the time.

89% told us it's valuable to have friends at work

Meanwhile, a massive 89% said they think it's valuable or very valuable to have friends at work. This runs counter to some prevalent narratives about Gen Z being more introverted, withdrawn, socially anxious, or even more anti-social than previous generations. Perhaps we are seeing something of a correction following two years of COVID in which many were truly isolated from friends, family and colleagues, and the desire to socialise is rebounding – including at work. It's also worth noting that having friends at work is useful for myriad professional reasons such as increased job satisfaction and reducing stress, so the value of friends at work is not purely social.

But what about workplace friendships which progress into something more? 49% of Gen Z would be concerned about having a romantic relationship in the office, reflecting a shift from previous generations.

[3] https://uk.style.yahoo.com/workplace-romance-decline-dating-122240520.html

On the flipside, 25% reported limited or no concerns about workplace romances. It's worth bearing in mind that the students polled here are likely to have had limited opportunities thus far in their careers to experience workplace romances in a long-term work setting. As such, it is possible that views on this may change over time as Gen Z enter into office culture in their first graduate roles.

Still, this figure is likely lower today than in previous years. Research from Stanford University[3] in 2019 found that only around one in ten couples (11%) now meet at work, compared to nearly one in five (19%) in 1990.

Some commentators have speculated that the 'Me Too' movement has increased caution around romantic relationships at work. The rise of dating apps (Tinder launched in 2012) cannot be overlooked as a major new dynamic in dating, and an alternative method of meeting new partners.

On a potentially-related note, 45% of Gen Z believe alcohol shouldn't play a part in office life – again reflecting changing lifestyles and habits. Meanwhile, over two thirds (69%) told us they'd feel comfortable clearly setting boundaries around working in the evenings and on weekends with their boss, manager or supervisor.

In short, where perhaps previous generations are feeling a little jaded with the world of work, Gen Z is confident and that brings optimism into the workplace. Far from being the 'stay at home slackers' as often portrayed in the media, Gen Z's young people are highly motivated and want to come into the office to learn, prove their value, engage in a mutually respectful way with their colleagues and managers and build friendships at work.

3. Gen Z and employers
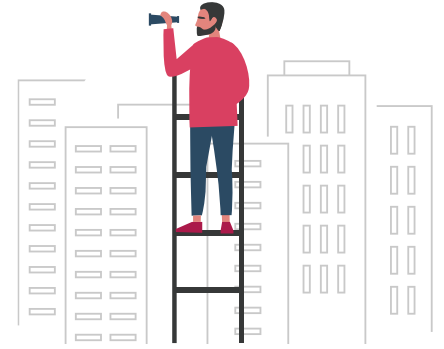
It's clear Gen Z has high expectations of what working life will look like, and it would be easy to dismiss this out of hand. But, we believe their presence in the workforce could bring positive change across the board.

Gen Z expects from their employers only what they hope for and expect from themselves: flexibility (e.g. a four-day working week), clear and healthy work/life boundaries (i.e. over evenings and weekends) and respect and rewards for hard work.

They're keen to find jobs that pay, but they also expect their employers to be **transparent** on pay structure, active on **sustainability**, and **inclusive** in terms of diversity. For example, 76% of young people told us transparency on salaries and pay structure was important to them.

Be transparent – Gen Z comes to work with expectations, but you can be clear on your expectations too. Be upfront about when there might be late nights and evenings, about some of the less exciting elements of the work and why they matter, and about salaries and potential for progression.

> "It's important to establish open communication between employers and employees, and provide clear salary guidelines. Set clear priorities and deadlines. Good communication with your boss is key so you understand their expectations when it comes to flexible working and setting realistic goals for it."

Joana, Kings College London, Neuroscience

Let's not generalise – Gen Z is not a homogenous set. Just as 48% of those we surveyed told us they couldn't work for an employer whose views didn't align with theirs over DEIB issues, plenty of the young people we asked told us they could work for an employer with different values on climate change (42%) and sustainability (46%).

Be authentic – as our research shows, your business's values don't have to align with a young person's for them to want to work for you, but they will expect you to be transparent on your diversity and sustainability goals, and up-front about salaries and benefits.

> "A good boss listens to their employees and takes into account their considerations."

Sara, KCL, Chemistry

When it comes to boundaries, some commentators have suggested[4] that Gen Z's boundary setting is a response to the unrewarded burnout they've witnessed in the lives of those more senior to them in the workplace. Given how highly this cohort prizes mental health and wellbeing, and that happiness and meaningful work are their key markers of career success, employers can keep their new graduate employees engaged by taking this into account. We believe Gen Z is willing to work hard – but not at the expense of their financial or mental wellbeing. And perhaps in the post-COVID era, there is some wisdom in this approach.

Be flexible – offer a mix of working from home and working from the office, and be open to being flexible on hours. If Gen Z has to regularly work late without extra pay, they'll expect time off in lieu. Likewise, Gen Z's passion for a side hustle doesn't have to be seen as a conflict of interests if it's broadening their skillset to your advantage.

> "Flexible working should be on a case-by-case basis. People should be able to work from anywhere if they can."

Jerry, Brunel University London, Financial Mathematics

[4] Disengaged, indifferent, deluded? Why young workers have an image problem https://www.ft.com/content/caf6d4a8-3118-407e-80df-221b3099ade2

Gen Z doesn't expect a job to fulfil all their longings and ambitions, and perhaps this should be a relief for employers. Even the most fulfilling roles can't be expected to scratch all of our many itches. That 33% of respondents told us they'd do a side hustle in line with their full time job shows an admirable focus on their chosen industry, and one which will likely be beneficial to their employer.

For employers, the challenge is identifying the difference between a side hustle that's a lifegiving addition to a young employee, and that which is a sign that they're not engaged, not gaining skills or not paid enough – and then tailoring their responses accordingly.

Be connected – although Gen Z is made up of digital natives, they have experienced isolation during the pandemic which they identify as bad for their mental health and general wellbeing. Being present to this cohort, offering training and opportunities to upskill, as well as actively encouraging them will increase their engagement and commitment to you and your business.

Research[5] also points to Gen Z employees as notorious for 'job-hopping', but the evidence suggests that where this cohort feels well-rewarded for their work, that their time and wellbeing is being respected, and that their employer shares their values, they're less likely to move on – criteria we'd suggest applies to workers from any generation.

"Meaningful work is important to me because it creates a sense of purpose that I find motivating. Happiness at work looks like good work-life balance and good mental health."

Sara, KCL, Chemistry

[5] https://www.axios.com/2022/02/25/gen-z-great-resignation-generation-job-hopping

Conclusion

The key to understanding others is rarely to pigeon-hole or base a judgement on a stereotype, and when it comes to engaging with Gen Z, things are no different. Though many claims are made about the students and graduates of today, our research shows that when these claims are interrogated, few actually stand up to scrutiny. The situation is more complex than that, but the good news is that the solutions for employers don't need to be. So, what should employers be doing to get the best from the Gen Z workforce?

Here are five key takeaways to think about now:

1 Focus on the Gen Z experience and your employer brand

Gen Z are social and connected: they talk to one another; they compare experiences and even salaries. They are vocal with peers and on social media. Defining and improving your employer brand for Gen Z will stand your organisation in good stead for the next decade. Get it wrong, and hiring and retention will be much more difficult.

2 Don't patronise, or pander to biases

Basing a view of Gen Z on speculation or previous biases is risky, if not outright dangerous. It only serves to alienate Gen Z, emphasising distinctions between generations rather than commonalities. Needless to say this is not helpful for building harmonious teams. Perhaps the worst thing an employer could do would be to underestimate Gen Z, or pander to these biases. Our research shows that Gen Z will make ambitious and career-minded employees. They want to build friendships and professional relationships with colleagues, and are looking to their employers to help them build skills that will make their professional lives more meaningful and fulfilling.

3 To attract Gen Z, you might need to start with older workers first

Gen Z is different to previous generations – and our respondents agree as much – but the world of work is also changing. Two years of immense disruption due to COVID have left their mark, with company cultures and working practices upended. Here's the thing: businesses will struggle to provide an environment which appeals to Gen Z if the rest of the workforce is totally burnt out and disengaged. It may seem counterintuitive, but establishing your offer and culture for Gen Z might mean starting with older workers first to ensure they're fully engaged and happy.

4

Gen Z will be setting organisational culture – it's just a question of how soon

It's worth remembering that even if it's not the case in business today, one day Gen Z's working culture will become prevailing practice as they become managers and leaders. So the desires of Gen Z today will either be enacted now, or in the future when they develop into management roles. Their agenda for work is becoming the direction of travel. Some employers will react more quickly than others. Sometimes we choose change, often it is thrust upon us. Organisations have a chance to capitalise on either scenario.

5

Consider what your organisation can learn from Gen Z

Perhaps Gen Z's expectations are the healthy reset workplaces need? We think so. For employers trying to navigate the evolution of the working world, engaging with Gen Z could signpost the way ahead. Employers who embrace Gen Z are taking the opportunity to welcome new ideas, fresh energy and new perspectives into workplaces that can feel scarred by the impact of the pandemic. A desire for flexibility, agility, empathy, and teamwork – combined with seemingly competing values of high performance and accountability – will help build an environment in which all employees have the chance to be fully engaged, demonstrate their value and achieve their career ambitions.

Are Gen Z's values and expectations for working life different to previous generations'?

Undoubtedly. Our research shows Gen Z are calling on employers to rise to the challenge of remaking the workplace, so that it becomes:

Transparent – upfront on expectations, salaries and career progression

Authentic – unapologetic about business values and DEIB

Flexible – accommodating of varying work patterns in return for productivity and engagement
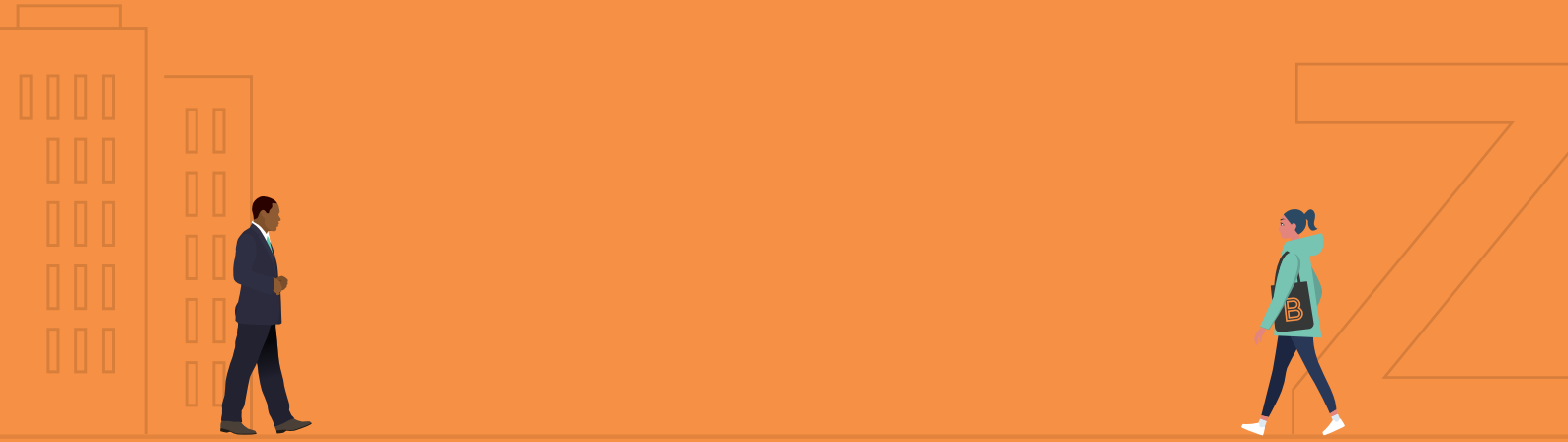
Connected – invested in the skills and mental wellbeing of the workforce

At its core, what today's students and graduates hope for from the workplace is largely what all generations increasingly expect – that it's honest, rewarding, values-led, and flexible to suit their needs.

If engaging with Gen Z leads to this kind of change, surely that's good for all of us.

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To discuss what the findings of this research mean for your organisation, and how employers can attract and retain the best Gen Z talent in 2022 and beyond, please contact **employers@brightnetwork.co.uk**

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