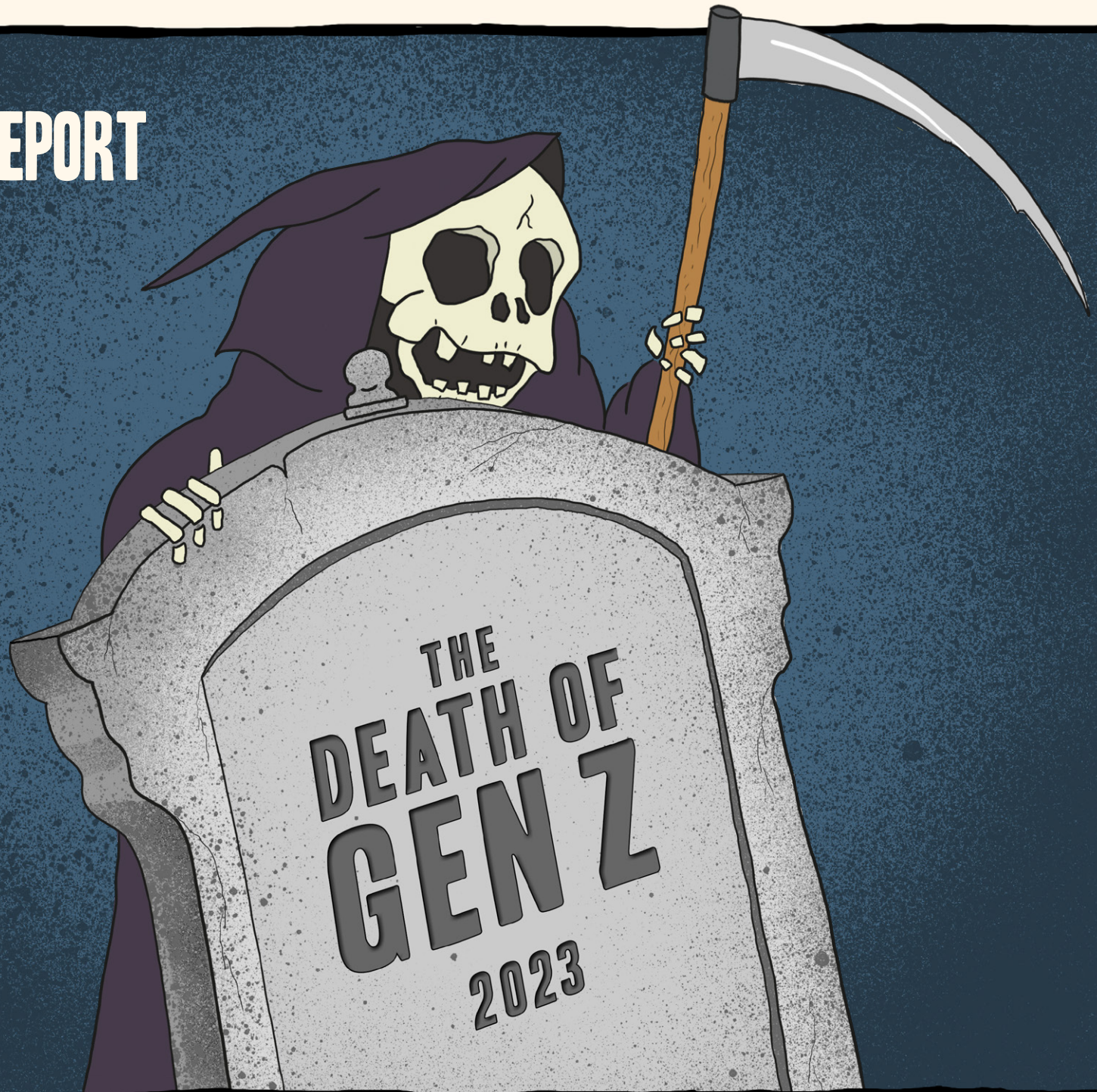


RESEARCH REPORT



fivebyfive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When it comes to Gen Z, stereotypes and sensationalist headlines abound, from “mentally un-resilient” slackers to “hyper-woke” activists hell-bent on changing the world.

But do the stereotypes stand true?

As they move from adolescence to adulthood, it will become even more important that marketers understand them. So, we set out to develop a more nuanced and more accurate view of this generation.

We partnered with Flume to conduct research with over 500 UK members of Gen Z and found that the truth behind their attitudes, behaviours, and buying habits is more complex than you might think.

In the following report, we argue that this generation is not as special as purported by mainstream media and can barely be said to exist at all as an all-encompassing category, finding that:

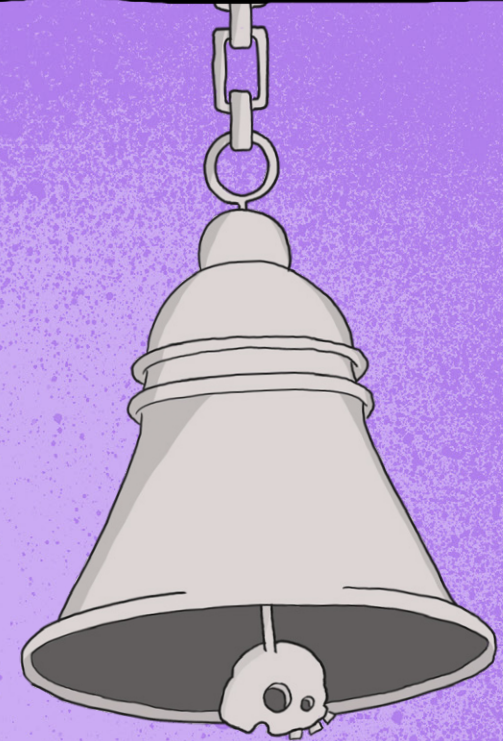
 **AS WITH THE GENERATIONS THAT CAME OF AGE BEFORE THEM, MONEY IS A BIG CONCERN, SO IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT GEN Z'S #1 AMBITION OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS IS THE SIMPLE YEARNING FOR FINANCIAL STABILITY**

 **THIS CONCERN ABOUT FINANCES MEANS THAT THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO MAKE PURCHASE DECISIONS BASED PURELY ON THEIR VALUES, WITH COST BEING THE BIGGEST FACTOR WHEN PURCHASING PRODUCTS**

 **AND WHILST THEY SEE CLIMATE CHANGE AS AN ISSUE IT IS TRUMPED BY MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS ABOUT POVERTY AND WAR.**

We conclude that there isn't a strong set of characteristics that mean marketers can instantly grab the attention of this entire generation.

So, it might just be time to sound the death knell...



INTRODUCING YOUR PALLBEARERS

Hello and thank you for downloading our research report on the Death of Gen Z.

We're Five by Five, an independent creative and innovation agency.

We have been partnering with a number of our clients to understand and engage this increasingly important audience.

And because of the sheer number of broad assumptions and generalisations out there, we decided to undertake some research of our own in order to improve engagement and build trust with younger audiences.

We partnered with Flume, an award-winning independent research agency based in the West Midlands.

Their goal is to help make brands easier to think of, buy and use - because that's what makes brands grow.

Founded 20 years ago, Flume has since grown to work with some of the UK and the world's favourite brands.

fivebyfive



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INTRODUCTION

Myths are hard to kill. Over a century ago, Mark Twain wrote that “a lie can get halfway around the world before the truth has got its boots on”.

In 2023, a myth can travel around the world, host a podcast, get invited to every talk show in the land, and take root deep in the public consciousness before the truth even finishes dreaming.

And that's exactly what has happened with **Generation Z**. Over the past few years a cluster of misleading studies and sensationalist headlines have combined to warp our collective understanding of an entire generation. From “mentally un-resilient” slackers to “hyper-woke”

activists hell-bent on changing the world, it's hard to move two inches online without bumping into some kind of generalised criticism aimed at anyone born between about 1997 and 2006. Oh, and let's not forget how they're responsible for killing Facebook, happy hours, hookup culture, and vintage fashion amongst countless other victims on their disreputable charge sheet.

With so much noise, it's difficult to figure out who **Gen Zers** actually are and what - if anything - defines them.

For marketers, this is a problem. A big one. Because we're entering an era where **Gen Z** is leaving home, entering the workforce, and starting families.



By 2025, every single Gen Zer will be an adult. They'll be making independent buying decisions using their own disposable income. And when that point does arrive, their spending power is going to increase sharply.

In other words, they are about to become the people brands need to communicate with.

👤 But do marketers even know who they are?

It's now - while we still have the chance - that brands need to take this opportunity to get to the fact behind the fiction of Gen Z. So, we partnered with Flume to conduct research consisting of in-depth interviews and surveys from over 500 Gen Z respondents around the UK.

We aimed to answer the following questions:

👤 Is Gen Z often quick to give up difficult tasks, as the stereotype suggests, or more likely to show remarkable resilience?

👤 Do they dream of reshaping the world, as we're so often told, or are they simply looking for a way to get by within it?

👤 Are they going to kill off brands they deem insufficiently 'woke', or are they actually making pragmatic purchasing decisions?

👤 And are Gen Zers tech-obsessed shut-ins rendered antisocial by the pandemic, or are they in fact searching for authentic real-world connections?

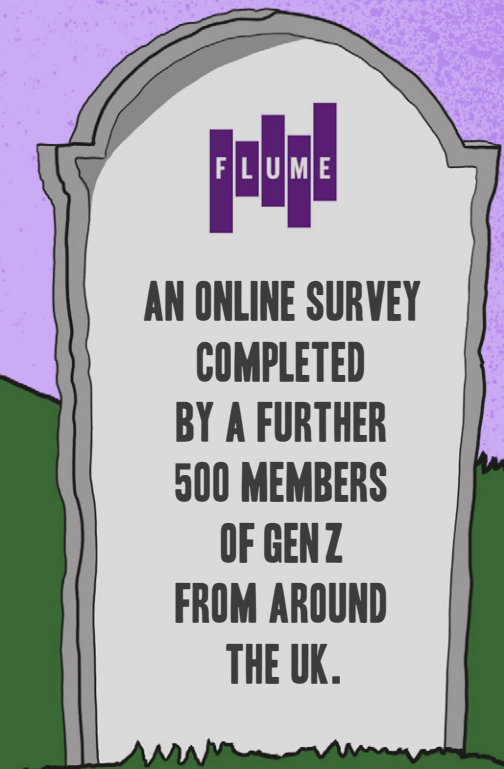
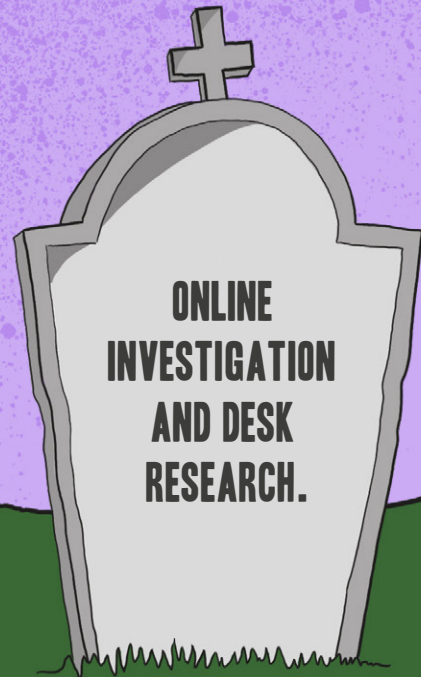
Over the following 25 pages, we will explore these different dimensions and find that Gen Z is much more multifaceted than is so often made out. We will argue that there isn't a strong set of characteristics that mean marketers can instantly grab the attention of this entire generation.

So, it might just be time to declare...

...*THE DEATH OF GEN Z*



METHODOLOGY



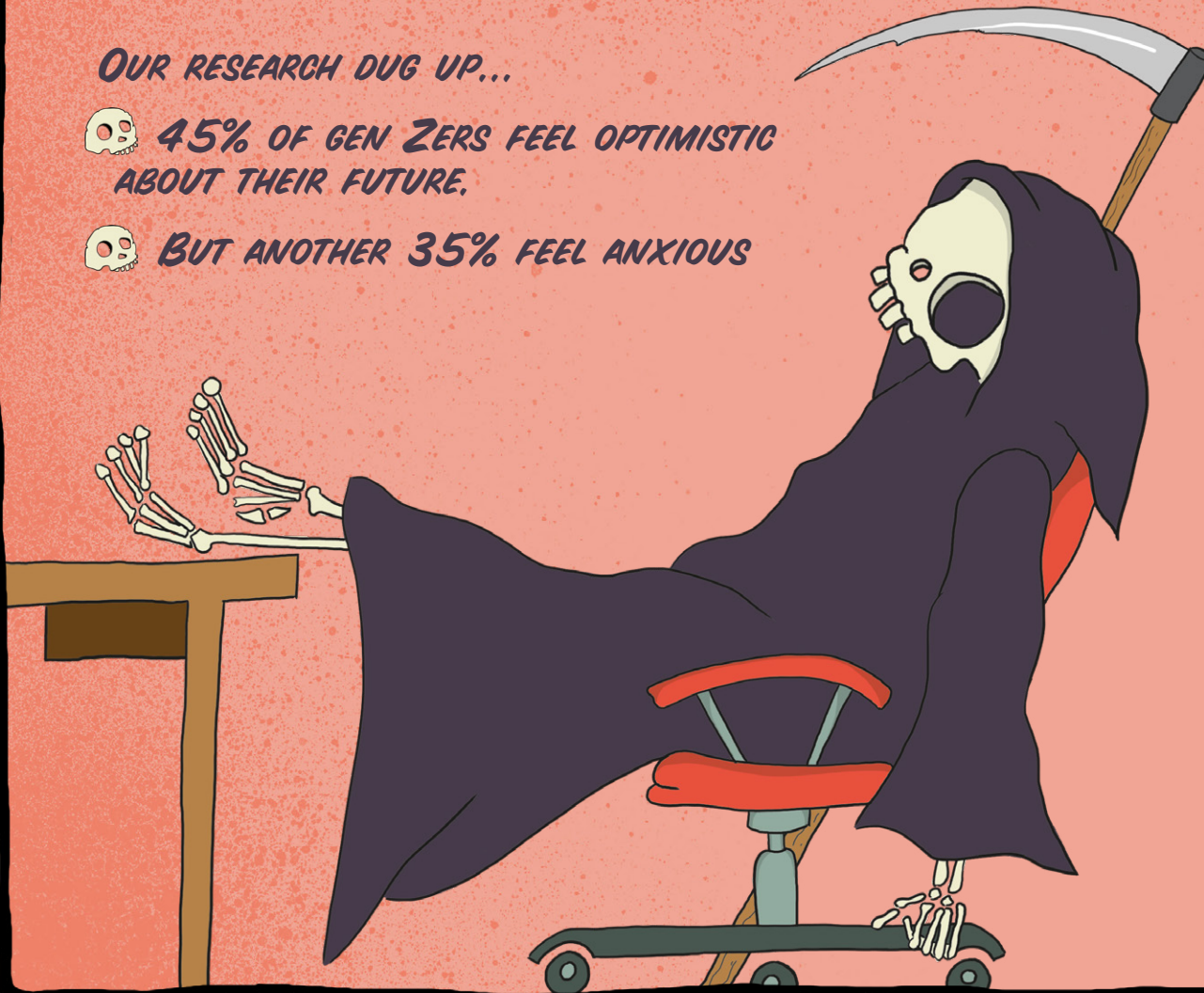
For the purposes of this report, we defined Gen Z as those in the UK born between 1997 and 2006. All fieldwork took place in October and November 2022.

WEAK OR RESILIENT?

OUR RESEARCH DUG UP...

👤 *45% OF GEN ZERS FEEL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.*

👤 *BUT ANOTHER 35% FEEL ANXIOUS*



Brrr, is it chilly in here? If you're surrounded by Millennials then you may be feeling colder than usual. After all, Millennials were dubbed the 'snowflake' generation not that long ago.

In 2016, the term snowflake entered the contemporary lexicon to represent supposed Millennial traits like egotism, emotionalism, and a tendency to get offended easily.

Now it's the turn of Gen Z to bear the brunt of cultural ire. On his podcast, *The Diary of a CEO*, the entrepreneur Steven Bartlett called Gen Z the "the least resilient generation I have ever seen" while his interviewee, the author Simon Sinek, said: "This young generation seems less capable to deal with stress than previous generations".

As they enter the workforce, this characterisation of Gen Z as weak is starting to set into the public consciousness. It's said that, not satisfied with the working culture of the old world, they're looking for better benefits, greater flexibility, and more meaningful work too.

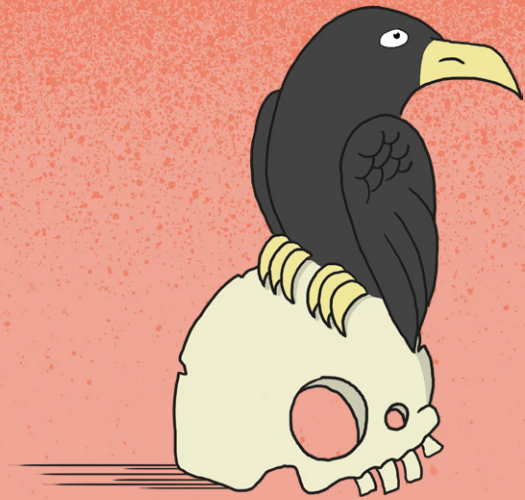
Some sections of the media are welcoming the changes Gen Z demands, seeing it as likely to benefit working culture at large, while others are quick to diagnose Gen Z with a lack of work ethic that's making them complicit in their own financial adversity.



Recent workplace trends like 'quiet quitting' and 'bare minimum Monday' are also, supposedly, all down to Gen Z not wanting to put in the hours and the effort to get things done.

We do know one thing for certain about Gen Z: they struggle with their mental health. NHS data states that 22% of 17-to-24-year-olds in England have a 'probable mental health disorder' while evidence also suggests that the rates of mental health conditions are on the rise among that age group too.

Yet setbacks don't seem to have stopped or slowed down a generation whose moniker, Zoomers, is now homonymous with a different kind of 'Zooming' thanks to the months and years they spent in front of their computer screens for education, entertainment, work, and relationships throughout the pandemic.



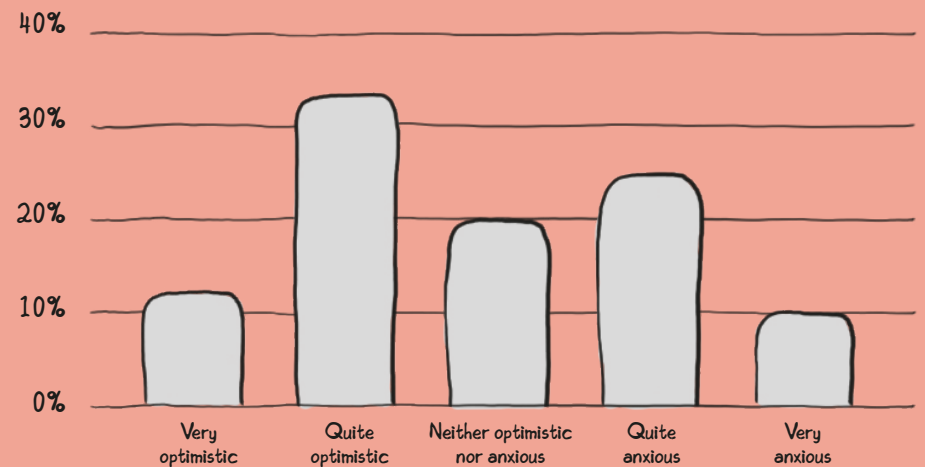
A NEW KIND OF RESILIENCE

We spoke to Georgia, 24, who is keenly aware of the difficulties facing her generation, telling us: "It feels like our whole lives have been unprecedented times".

And it's true that this is a generation that has seen recessions, Brexit, global wars, environmental disasters, Covid-19, #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and now the cost of living crisis all before the age of 25.

That's a lot of chaos and uncertainty to weather while dealing with the daunting task of becoming an adult and establishing an identity. It may come as no surprise, then, that 35% of those we surveyed said they felt anxious about the future.

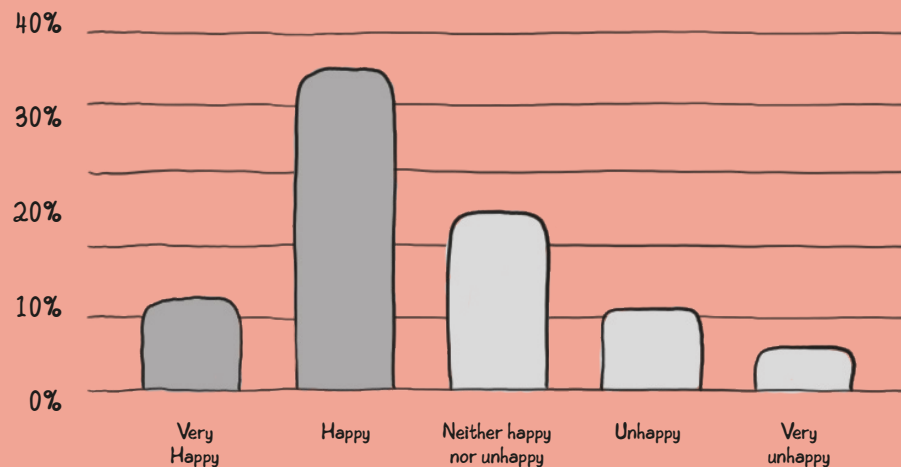
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR FUTURE?



Base: Total (502)

However, another 45% said they were optimistic about what's to come. And they seem broadly happy with their current lives too: 58% reported that they are happy, while only 17% stated that they were unhappy. So it's not all doom and gloom.

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU HAPPY OR UNHAPPY WITH YOUR LIFE AT THE MOMENT?



There's a difference between not being able to deal with the stresses of the world and drawing attention to the continued stresses in an effort to affect change.

Inheritors of the 2008 financial crash, Gen Z is living without the societal and financial stability afforded to previous generations.

Nevertheless, they're pushing forward, even when the world grinds to a halt, conscious that they're the ones who can make a difference to what tomorrow will look like. The truth, then, is that they can't categorically be defined as either weak or resilient. Some of them certainly are struggling with their mental health but there's also a sense that they've been through a lot in their short lives and many of them are coping well amidst the chaos.

Base: Total (502)

WORLD-CHANGING ASPIRATIONS OR MODEST AMBITIONS?

OUR RESEARCH DUG UP...

 *GEN Z'S BIGGEST HOPE FOR
THE FUTURE? FINANCIAL STABILITY.*

If the headlines are to be believed, for Gen Z, the world is not enough. Or at least, the world in its present state is not enough.

Reading the media coverage, it's easy to get a sense of a young cohort ready to revolutionise what they see as an unjust world. They're "primed to save the world", [according to the Atlantic](#). Or ask the BBC, who explained how Gen Zers have been "mobilised into action" in [a much-shared article](#) last year. And this perception is cutting through. A quick Google search for 'Gen Z wants to change the world' throws up 272 million results, in comparison to a paltry 20 million for 'Millennials want to change the world'.



Digging deeper, it seems Gen Z's desire for change doesn't stop at politics and society. In fact, seemingly no topic is safe from this generation's willingness to write a new rulebook. Offices, shopping, the news, dating, restaurants, entertainment, the way we drink, fashion, travel, and, er, cursive handwriting are among the countless topics identified as victims of Gen Z's wanton cultural killing spree. Given all this, it's a wonder how they also find time to, in the words of author Brigitte Gabriel, be "the laziest generation in history".

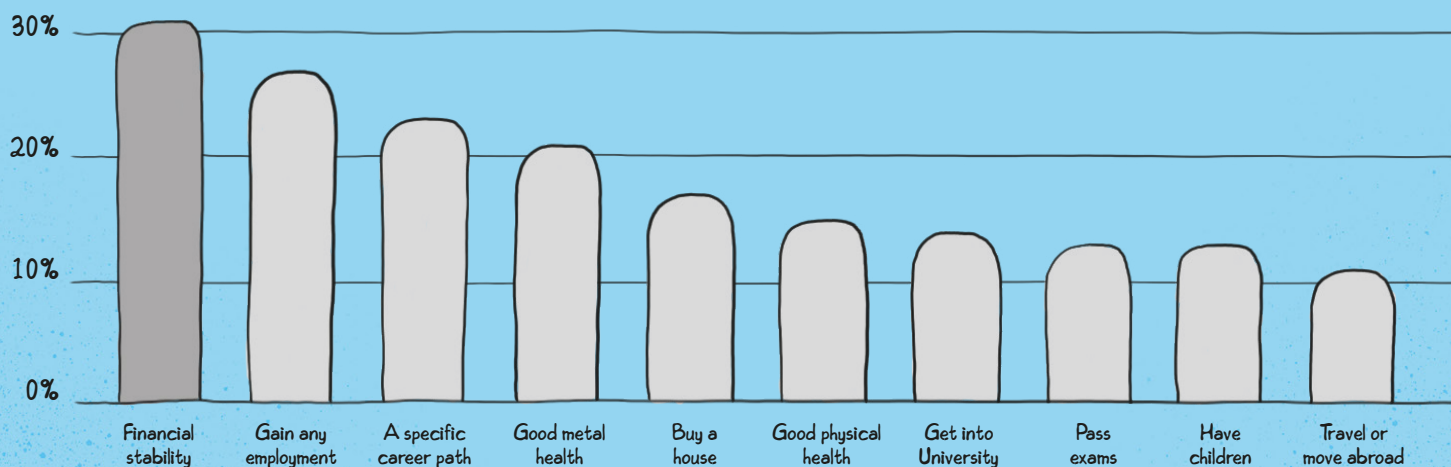
Sarcasm aside, all of this noise is obscuring a much more nuanced - and frankly more interesting - reality.

AMBITIOUS REALISM

Our research found that at least some Gen Zers are ambitious and passionate advocates for change. In the words of Bella, 19, "I seriously believe that our generation is going to change the world for the better".

And the idea, alluded to in the BBC piece, of a sense of anger and frustration also came through during our research. "We've been dropped into it, and we haven't made the mess," said Georgia, 24, referring to the world's socioeconomic conditions. "But we are going to be the ones who deal with it and the very real consequences".

WHAT ARE YOUR THREE BIGGEST AMBITIONS FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS OF YOUR LIFE?



Base: Total (502)

But there's another dimension to all of this. One that might well force marketers to reassess their interpretation of much-used terms such as 'ambition', and 'aspiration'. Because, whilst there's no denying the wish of this generation to make large-scale changes to society and the world they live in, their goals on an individual level are significantly more pragmatic.

In fact, 'financial stability' was the aim mentioned more than any other in our survey. Perhaps that's a reflection of the precarious economic situation across most of the world. But it's also a riposte to the idea that Gen Z is a generation who greedily, in the words of [another BBC](#) piece, "want it all".

Doubling down on this, our research found that Gen Zers don't want to be wealthy simply for the sake of it. Instead, money is seen as the first step to success and is the biggest barrier, mentioned by 25% of respondents in our research, that they think will stop them from achieving their ambitions. For most, money is a means to an end. It's simply something that "will help me stand on my own feet", as one respondent told us.

Marketers should take note. Whilst it's true that brands can cater to Gen Z's desire for positive change in the world, the smartest communications will be mindful of their everyday concerns. Because, while some within this generation have world-changing ambitions, it's also a group getting to adulthood and needing to find their footing in the world.



A stylized illustration on a green background. A Grim Reaper with a skull face and a dark hooded robe is hugging a dead, grey tree trunk. A crow is perched on a branch of the tree.

ECO WARRIORS OR PRAGMATIC PURCHASERS?

OUR RESEARCH DUG UP...

💀 *POVERTY AND WAR AND CONFLICT RANKED HIGHER UP ON GEN Z'S LIST OF GLOBAL CONCERNS THAN CLIMATE CHANGE.*

So far, we've challenged a couple of assumptions held about Gen Z. This one should be fairly self-evident though - all Gen Zers are loud and proud eco warriors... right? Perhaps. Or perhaps this generation's attitudes towards green issues are just as complex and contradictory as everyone else's.

It would appear that there's an undeniable pro-environmentalist streak among this generation, including one of the world's most prominent environmental activists, Greta Thunberg, born in 2003. Some of the Gen Zers we spoke to did share similar climate concerns. Georgia, 24, told us: "I'm genuinely shit-scared about what's going to happen to the planet".

To outsiders, it looks like every Gen Zer ranks green issues as a top concern. But - hang on - something's not quite adding up. Speaking to our survey respondents about the factors influencing their purchasing decisions, only an average of 5% said they consider the environmental impact of their choices.

**I DON'T REALLY
DEAL WITH
CLIMATE CHANGE.
I'VE GOT MY OWN
STUFF GOING ON**

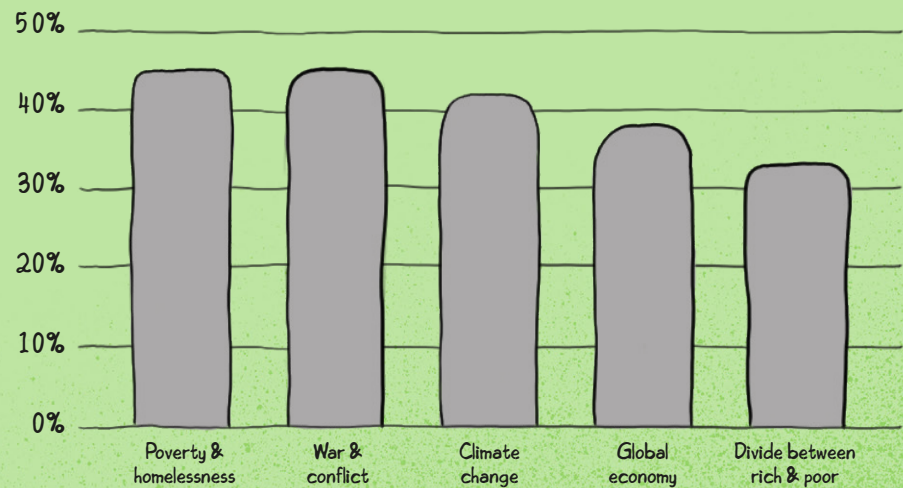
Aiden, 22

A DISTANT ISSUE?

For many of our interviewees, climate change simply feels like a faraway issue. Aiden, 22, said he doesn't "really deal" with climate change, adding: "I've got my own stuff going on". Amy, 21, said she "isn't really reminded of it enough", contrasting the image of Gen Z as a generation doggedly determined when it comes to the climate.

Revealingly, among our respondents both poverty (selected by 45%), and war and conflict (also 45%) ranked slightly higher up on this generation's list of global concerns than climate change (42%), likely because both are prevailing issues prominently discussed by the media, rather than "something 20 years down the line", as Chloe, 23, put it.

WHAT ARE THE FIVE BIGGEST ISSUES FACING THE WORLD RIGHT NOW?



Data displays all issues ranked between 1-5. Base: Total (502)

At least some members of Gen Z appear disillusioned with the idea that individual actions can make a real difference to global and systemic issues. Bella, 19, told us: "I buy loads of stuff on Shein. I know it's not ethical with the sweatshops and it's bad for the environment but other people are going to buy it anyway so why shouldn't I? I won't make any difference by not shopping there". Others drew attention to how complex living an eco-conscious lifestyle is. Alex, 24, told us he tried going vegan but didn't keep it up due to the "mental effort" involved.

THE WAVE OF GREENWASHING

Greenwashing is also an issue. Many brands have jumped on the 'eco' bandwagon in recent years, with words like 'natural', 'clean' and 'green' appearing on product labels and in ad campaigns alike. But Gen Zers seem savvy when it comes to environmental claims: a few of the individuals we spoke to couldn't name a single brand they would consider to be ethical. "I hesitate to call any brands ethical because you never really know", Alex, 24, said.

But the most pressing concern for Gen Z when it comes to making a purchase decision? Price.

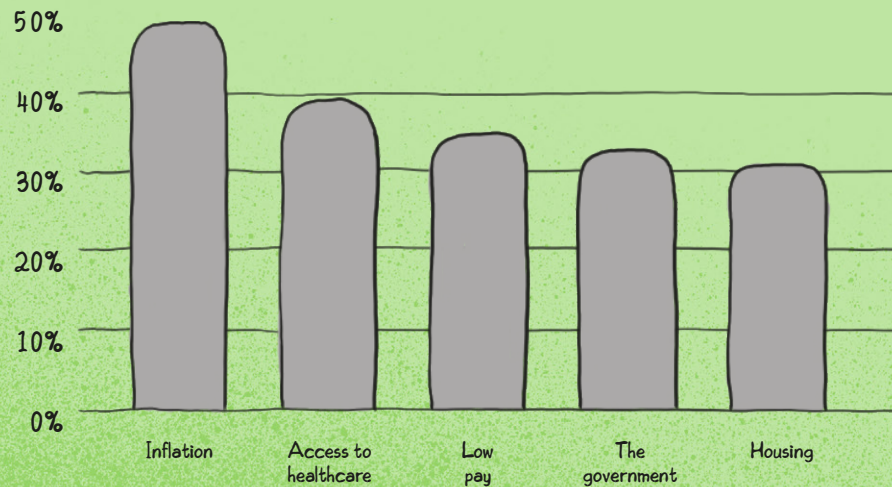


We found that price trumps all other factors, with an average of 19% of our survey respondents citing budget as the most important factor across different product categories. For groceries specifically, the number more than doubled to 41%. Georgia, 24, points out that "there's a certain amount of privilege" in being able to buy eco-friendly products as they do tend to cost more.

On the relatively rare occasion where green products and services are the more cost-effective option, our Gen Zers still seem driven by the price, and the effect on the planet is an afterthought. Alex, 24, owns an electric car but said he chose it to save on congestion charges in the centre of Birmingham. Byron, 17, buys from the second-hand shopping platform Depop because "you can get more for your money".

It's worthwhile considering that we conducted our research at the height of the cost of living crisis in November 2022. Around the time we carried out our research, only 31% of Brits said they were comfortable with their current finances. However the economic situation hasn't improved much since then; as of mid-March 2023, the proportion of people who say they are comfortable has only increased slightly to 33%, according to [YouGov's](#) cost of living tracker.

WHAT ARE THE FIVE BIGGEST ISSUES FACING THE UK RIGHT NOW?



Data displays all issues ranked between 1-5. Base: Total (502)

So it's potentially unsurprising that the Gen Zers we spoke to were hyper-aware of price, with Alex, 24, summarising: "It's all wrapped up in the cost of living crisis now". Overall, nearly half (49%) of our respondents ranked inflation as one of their biggest concerns.

There is, though, a notable split between older and younger Gen Zers. Chloe, 23, told us that she "worries on a daily basis" about money while Bella, 19, is more shielded from financial worries for the time being as she lives at home with her parents, though the future of her finances does concern her.

What we can learn from our findings is that while Gen Z is aware and concerned about environmental issues, they're far less ideologically driven in the face of material reality. That reality is one marked by precariousness (the nickname '[precariat](#)' has been given to the whole generation) and pressure that stretches Gen Z's beliefs in opposing directions.

What can marketers take away from this?

While environmentalism is a genuine concern among this generation (as it is many others), it's essential to be mindful of how businesses and brands fit into Gen Z's lives in a more practical - and more fundamental - way.

TECH-OBSESSED OR REAL-WORLD CONNECTORS?

OUR RESEARCH DUG UP...

 *81% CITED THEIR SOCIAL LIFE AS SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTING THEIR OUTLOOK ON LIFE*

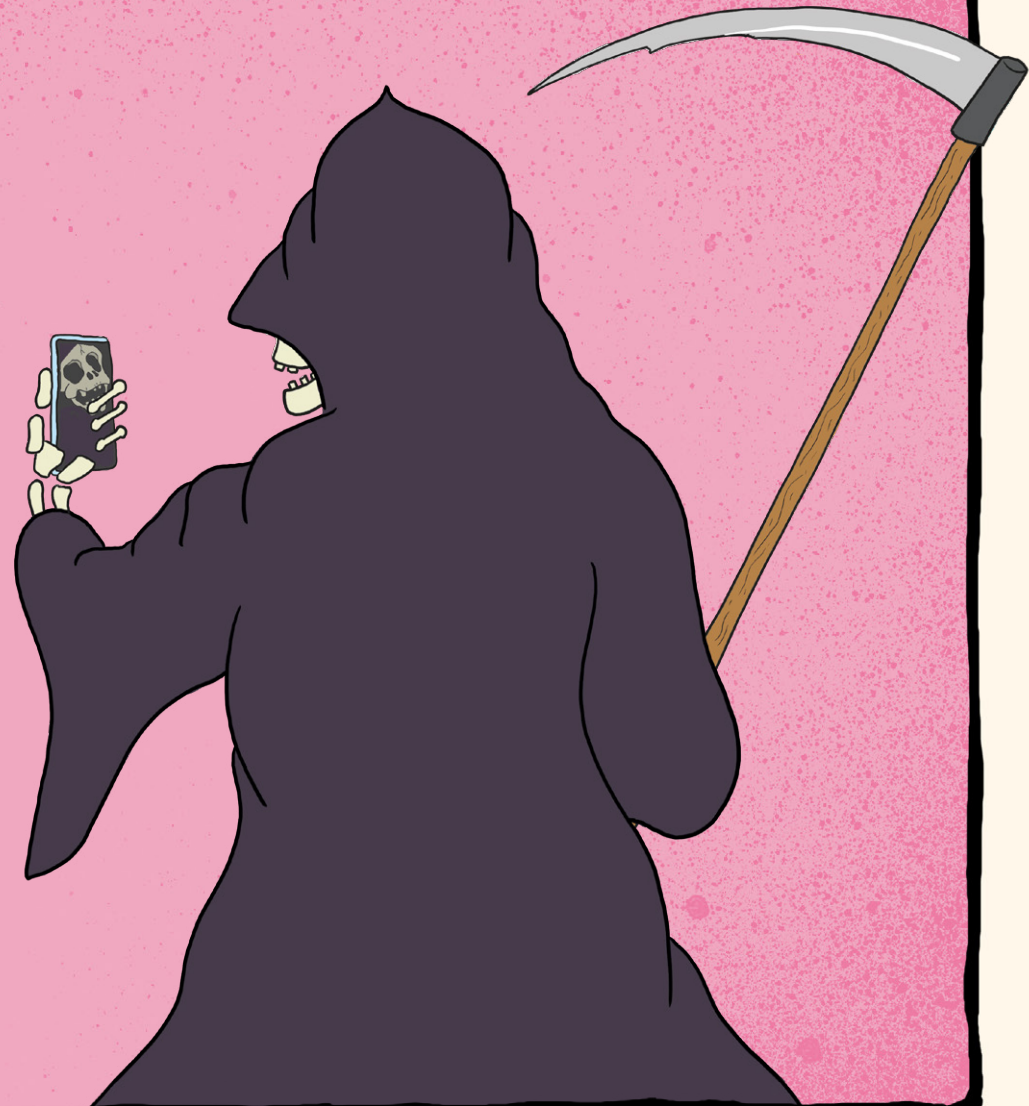
 *AS OPPOSED TO ONLY 53% WHO SAID IT IS AFFECTED BY SOCIAL MEDIA*

Is Gen Z even living in the real world?

Gen Zers, we're often told, are hopelessly tethered to their smartphones - portals through which they carry out every basic function of life. With such a digital-first worldview, what hope is there for these young people out in the 'real' world?

It's a popular narrative... but it's also tied up in a tangle of misconceptions which are tricky to unpick. Doing so, however, is essential to understanding the truth behind this generation, how they see the world, and what they want from it.

It's true that Gen Z spends a lot of time online. According to [Ofcom](#), 18-to-24-year-olds spend an average of five hours and six minutes online every single day. That's more than any other generation, and one and a half times as much as Baby Boomers.



Looking in particular at stats around the use of social media, it's a similar story. The same Ofcom report shows how, whilst Gen Z makes up 10% of the UK's population, they account for 13% of Instagram users, 21% of TikTok users, and 30% of Snapchat's audience. So, it's easy to see where the idea of Gen Zers being tech-obsessed social media lovers comes from. According to the numbers, they kind of are.

And why shouldn't they be? By the time the oldest member of this cohort was a teenager, the likes of Facebook (founded in 2004) and Twitter (founded in 2006) were already old news and established parts of the media ecosystem. For this generation, the idea of dial-up internet or similarly clunky barriers to connectivity is nothing more than a historical myth.

For Gen Z, seamless connectivity has always been the norm. So, with all this time spent online and across these state-of-the-art platforms, young people must be loving it, right? Are marketers best served by catering to this generation's statistically-confirmed love of online living? Well, not exactly.

THE DRIVE TO DISCONNECT

Those statistics only tell half of this story. Our research offers a different perspective - one in which the prevalence of social media use amongst Gen Z lives in parallel with a recognition of the damage it's causing and a desire to disconnect.

“ I SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON SOCIAL MEDIA. I JUST GET SUCKED IN TOO EASILY ”

Georgia, 24

Georgia, 24, admits that she “spends too much time” on social media and adds that she gets “sucked in too easily”. Expressing a similar sentiment, Alex, 24, told us that scrolling for too long on TikTok had “fried his brain”. A common anecdote across many of our interviewees was that they had tried deleting social media apps, or that they were trying to disconnect in other ways.

At the same time, there was an appetite for real-world connections amongst our survey respondents. Significantly, 81% cited 'social life' as an important factor in relation to their outlook on life, as opposed to just over half - 53% - who said 'social media' was important. To illustrate this point, Josh - one of the younger members of this generation at 16 years old - explicitly told us that he "much prefers to see friends in person" as opposed to online.

For marketers, there's a crucial lesson to be learned here. Surface-level statistics might lead us solely towards communications which celebrate online platforms and culture - but there's a great deal more to Gen Z than what's on their smartphone screens.

There are rewards to be had for the brands that feed Gen Z's desire for real-world connections too. As for humanity's first fully internet-native generation, perhaps it's no coincidence that disconnection is a powerful driver.



BRAND BELIEVERS OR BRAND AGNOSTIC?



OUR RESEARCH DUG UP...

👤 *CHOOSING A BRAND BASED ON ITS VALUES IS ONLY THE 10TH MOST IMPORTANT PURCHASING FACTOR FOR GEN Z*

Brand loyalists or brand lovers. Whatever you want to call them, apparently only Gen Z would queue in all weather conditions to get their hands on the latest drop from their favourite brand or battle bots on their quest for new trainers. The beauty brand Glossier, for example, inspires pilgrimages to its stores while Skims by Kim Kardashian and Fenty by Rihanna have likewise built hordes of devotees. Seemingly no other generation is as dedicated to and fanatical about brands as Gen Z.

A [Meta](#) spokesperson said, "Gen Z wants personalised, direct contact with brands." But is that really true? Or might we be wrong about this generation's habits, feelings, and beliefs about brands?

Some brands came up in conversation more often than others. These tended to be lower-cost fast fashion brands such as Shein and Primark as well as brands that are arguably more embedded in youth culture like Nike, Netflix and Nando's. But, when asked which brands they are willing to pay more for, perhaps surprisingly, the most mentioned brands were grocery goods like Cadbury and Heinz.

It would appear that there's a clear difference in the perceived quality between these brands and supermarket own-label lines. Several of our interviewees say they are unwilling or unhappy about compromising on these products through the cost of living crisis. As Amy, 21, says, "I can't wait for the state of things to change so that I can buy Lurpak instead of Aldi's own-brand butter".

However, revealingly, our research suggests that, overall, Gen Z is just not as engaged with brands as is so often suggested. While some named the brands above when we asked for their favourite, many seemed indifferent.

Josh, 16, said he doesn't "think too much" about the brands he buys, only the price of the product and whether he likes it or not. Amy, 24, says she "shops anywhere".

So, the Gen Zers we spoke to have some preferences but don't seem to think too much about the brands they buy. Or, to put it differently, they're about as engaged as everyone else.

AT FACE VALUE

The suggestion that Gen Zers choose brands based on their values is also less straightforward than it would seem. Sure, some of them do want to make purchasing decisions that align with their values. But a sense of financial precarity means that they often feel they don't have the power to vote with their wallets. And for others, it's not a concern at all. Byron, 17, says he doesn't "buy brands because of their values" and certainly wouldn't seek them out specifically.



When we asked our survey respondents about the factors that influence their purchase decisions across different categories, choosing a brand that reflects their personal values ranked as the 10th most important factor behind cost, quality, familiarity, fame and more.

So what can marketers learn from this? As with other audiences, the suggestion that they love or are stubbornly loyal to brands is a marketing myth. There may be some big brands in their repertoire but the product itself matters, the quality matters, and the price plays a crucial role in winning a share of Gen Zers' wallets.





WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING APPLIED WHEN YOU LAST BOUGHT A PRODUCT?

01.	I had a particular budget and only considered choices that fell within it
02.	My choice is known as a trustworthy, reliable option
03.	I chose an option I'm really familiar with
04.	I paid careful attention to the quality of my choice
05.	I chose a brand that is famous
06.	My choice is popular with my friends and peers
07.	I paid little attention to the brand I was buying, I just wanted the right product
08.	I didn't think about the decision too much and just chose what was easily available at the time
09.	I looked for something special or different that other options didn't offer
10.	MY CHOICE REFLECTED SOMETHING ABOUT MY PERSONAL VALUES
11.	I thought about the environmental impact of my choice
12.	I thought about whether what I was choosing was an ethical choice

Data displays average rank for each factor across multiple product categories. Base: Total (502)

SUMMARY

SO WHAT ABOUT THOSE MYTHS SURROUNDING GEN Z?

-  ARE THEY AN ACTIVIST GENERATION TIED PERMANENTLY TO THEIR PHONES?
-  ARE THEY A COHORT OF QUITTERS?
-  ARE THEY AN AGE GROUP DEFINED BY THEIR EXPECTATION THAT THE ONLY BRANDS WORTH BUYING ARE THOSE WITH A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE?
-  OR ARE THEY NONE OF THE ABOVE?

Throughout this report, we've seen an entirely more nuanced picture emerge of this generation with the help of our research findings. In fact, given the near-constant media noise, perhaps the most remarkable thing about Gen Z is how *unremarkable* they really are.

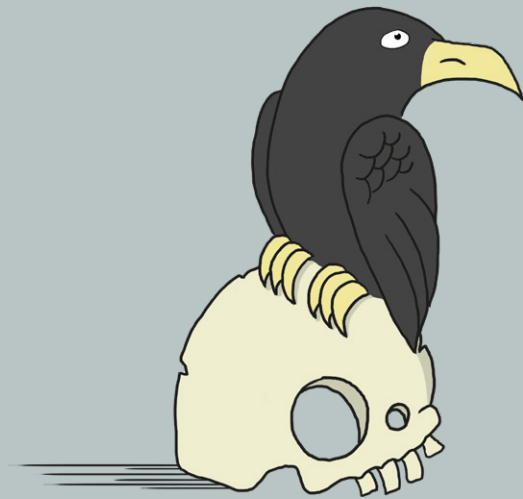
That's not to denigrate them. It's simply to suggest that the priorities and pressures they feel at their age are not so far removed from the others that came before them. We've heard respondents to our surveys mention worries about finances. We've listened to them express their scepticism towards brands who make big promises. And we've seen them acknowledge their own anxieties about the future.

Do these really sound like the concerns of a generation that is so far detached from any other?

As Professor Bobby Duffy argues in his book *Generations*, "We need to carefully unpick the forces that shape us as individuals and societies." One way is by consideration of the Age-Period-Cohort theory, which Duffy discusses in his book. The argument is that there are three factors which explain differences between groups. 'Age' effects are due to individuals changing over the course of their lifetime. 'Period' effects are the societal shifts which affect everyone no matter their age, and 'cohort' refers to specific differences between generations.

SUMMARY CONTINUED

Cohort effects are those that truly define generations. And it's likely that there are some relating to Gen Z. For example, the fact that technology is ingrained in the minds of Gen Z, given that they've never known a world without it.



But we contend that when it comes to Gen Z, demonstrable cohort effects are few and far between, and claims about the distinct and discrete behaviours, attitudes and lifestyles of this generation have been overstated.

Gen Z is multifaceted, complex, and fundamentally human. The reality is that there's not a strong set of characteristics that mean marketers can instantly grab the attention of this entire generation.

So, it's time to drop the stereotypes and disregard the myths and misconceptions. And declare the death of Gen Z.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MARKETERS?

By now you're probably well on your way to being convinced that Gen Z is: a) not as different or special as purported by mainstream media, and b) can barely be said to exist at all as an all-encompassing category.

Sure, they have a preference for particular social platforms that help them express themselves and explore the world but, fundamentally, they're about the same as anyone else at their age.

So, what does this mean for marketers?

For a start, forget about the stereotypes. Don't assume that they're all eco warriors. Don't think they're tech-obsessed. And definitely don't call them slackers.

And then, consider what we do know about them - that the generation formerly known as Gen Z is growing up.

This is a group finding its footing in the world. They're starting college, leaving home, heading off for university, and making their way onto and up the career ladder. Their specific life stages may not conform to stereotypes either but it is likely that they're going through changes.

As Chloe, 19, told us, "There aren't expectations on us to get a partner or to get married anymore but everyone is moving out of their parents' homes. Everything is changing".

So, as marketers, we need to think about how we can support them through this change. Here are four of our recommendations to get you going:

01

SERVE THEIR SPECIFIC NEEDS

Consider how your brand can help this group cope with change. If you can, find a way to package up your product or service to serve their specific needs as they navigate their way through their lives and experience each life event.

Remember that humans are fundamentally self-centred and are mostly (although not always) motivated by self-interest, so focus on personal needs first.

Secondary benefits such as ethical and environmental claims can feel far away from their day-to-day concerns. Include such benefits as part of your messaging, sure - but if you want it to be meaningful, try to focus on what's tangible.

02

BE TRANSPARENT TO EARN TRUST

This is a group emerging from adolescence into adulthood, so they're as smart and engaged as you might expect. Patronising tones must be avoided at all costs. And all claims you make - especially those connected to the environment - need to be backed by evidence.

Building trust with your customer is key and it can only be done through open and honest communication. This generation - and beyond - would rather know that a brand is imperfect and working to make changes than feel lied to about any claims made.

And avoid any jargon or imprecise phrases. No one wants to work too hard to make the right choices.

INVEST IN QUALITY

Our research underlines the fact that the cost of living crisis is still a day-to-day concern. This is certainly the case with this group, many of whom have lower levels of disposable income than the average adult.

There's a delicate balance to be struck between cost and quality. Brands can command a higher price but only when their product or service is perceived as better quality.

If your product or service is second-rate then you've already blown it. So, focus on this first, then turn your attention to communicating quality to help your customers get past price barriers.

04

JUST BE THERE

This is a group that's making many of its purchasing decisions for the first time, whether it's joining a bank, finding a broadband provider, or forking out for a new phone.

As they expand their product repertoire and enter new categories it's essential for brands to be present in their lives.

If you're targeting younger generations then digital and social channels should be a key part of your media strategy to help build mental availability. But remember - physical availability is also key to success and a preference for digital doesn't mean a disregard for anything IRL.

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Thank you for reading our report. If you have any questions regarding the content or you would like to understand how we can support your brand in implementing our recommendations please contact: george.roberts@fivebyfiveglobal.com

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With thanks to Emily Hale and Andrew Jerina at Flume,
& Adam Bennett & Zhenya Tsenzhyk at Little Black Book.





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