

● **FRUITFUL** Insights

In partnership with



# Gen Z – Shaping the Future of UK Workplaces

Business Insights Report 2023

## Introduction

Finding and keeping employees is proving increasingly difficult for UK companies today. Many employers moot that the lure of better pay and packages from rival firms is what leads to staff attrition but is it really just about money?

In this paper we share some of the Gen Z insights we have identified through our analysis of our UK employee population data and how that correlates with other Gen Z research. We explore how Gen Z behaviours vary when compared to other cohorts and consider whether these differences are simply a function of age and experience or if there are other factors at play that are impacting Gen Z's attitude to work and wellbeing. We'll also look at what employers need to think about when managing Gen Z as they become the mainstay of the UK workforce.

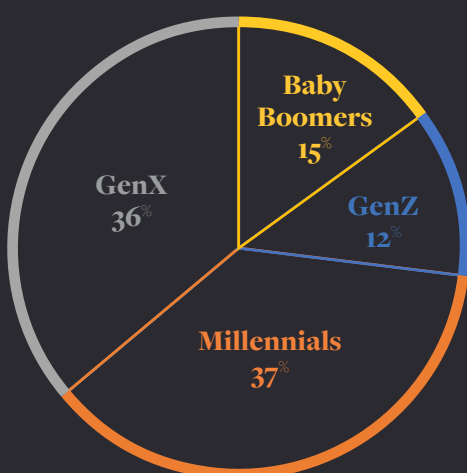
## 1. Understanding The Different Generations

When thinking about the generational groups context is an important consideration. Baby boomers, born from 1946 to 1964, saw a booming economy after World War II, with a belief that you could have a job for life. Generation X, born from 1965 to 1980, were the first to grow up with technology. Millennials, born from 1981 to 1996, bridge the gap between analogue and digital technology and embraced digital technology as their new normal.

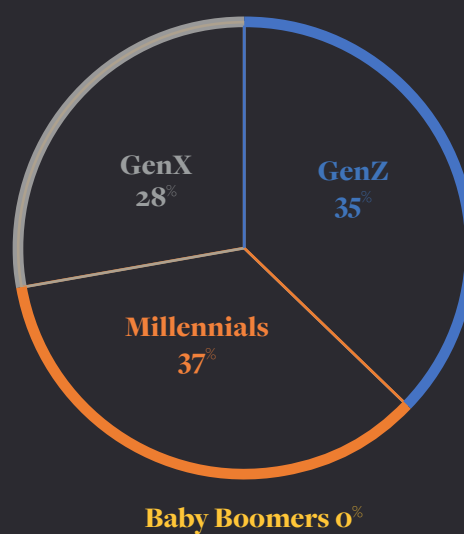
Gen Z, born from 1997 to 2012, are the first true digital natives – they are the Internet generation.

If we look 10 years hence, baby boomers will have left the work force and an increasing number of Gen X will be contemplating their retirement. Gen Z, along with their millennial peers, will sit at the heart of UK business and commerce. It's worth noting that Gen Z as a population cohort is significantly smaller than their elder peers. This means retaining employees and minimising staff attrition due to impaired wellbeing will hold even greater significance in the coming decades.

Working Population 2023



Working Population 2033

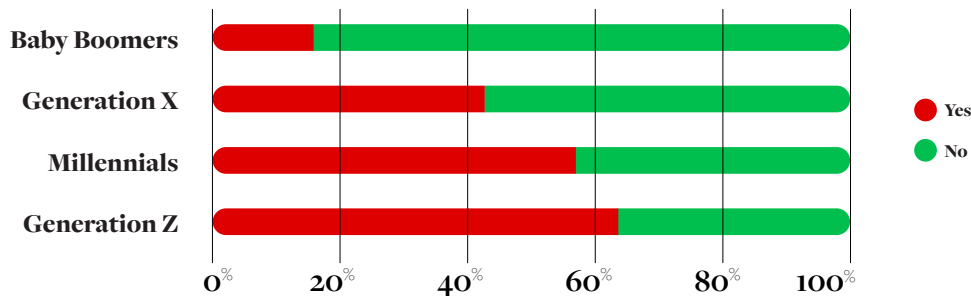


## How likely are Gen Z to leave their employer?



Unlike their elders in the Boomer group, this cohort is the least likely to expect to have a job for life. When we asked Gen Z whether they had suffered any major life events over the last 12 months job loss comes as the number one life issue impacting this group.

## Volume of Gen Z that have experienced job loss.

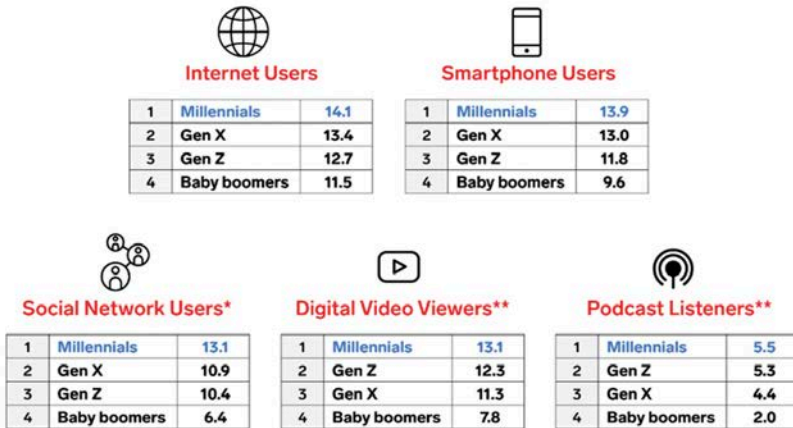


## 2. Gen Z: The True Digital Natives

Gen Z were born into a world of smartphones and the world wide web where everything is a click away. This defines how they engage with the world – how they consume media, build and maintain relationships and view the world. They are the first of the 'always on' generation. How this impacts their overall wellbeing remains to be seen as this group mature but there are indications that the use of digital technology maybe inadvertently leading to some less healthy outcomes which could also be impacting millennials and Gen X. Surprisingly Gen Z aren't the biggest group of digital users – but many have not yet entered the workforce. In a recent report from Insider Intelligence it was millennials that sit in the top spot. From a wellbeing perspective, a recent analysis published by Nature magazine indicated that high screen media use was associated with a 28% increase in the odds of depression based on data from seven longitudinal and 12 cross-sectional studies. This is an important factor when we consider wellbeing across all groups - but especially important for Gen Z.

## Key Question: Which generations are the most digital right now, and how might the landscape change in the coming years?

### UK Digital Users and User Ranking, by Generation, 2023 millions and ranking



Note: users perform each activity or access each device at least once per month; both video and podcasts include streaming and downloads; podcasts are audio-first serialized episodes and include those accessed via video platforms like YouTube. \*\*Nov 2022 pub date; \*\*Feb 2023 pub date  
Methodology: Estimates are based on the analysis of survey and web traffic data from research firms and regulatory agencies, the growth trajectory of major video sites, historical trends, internet and mobile adoption trends, and demographic adoption trends.  
Source: eMarketer, March 2023

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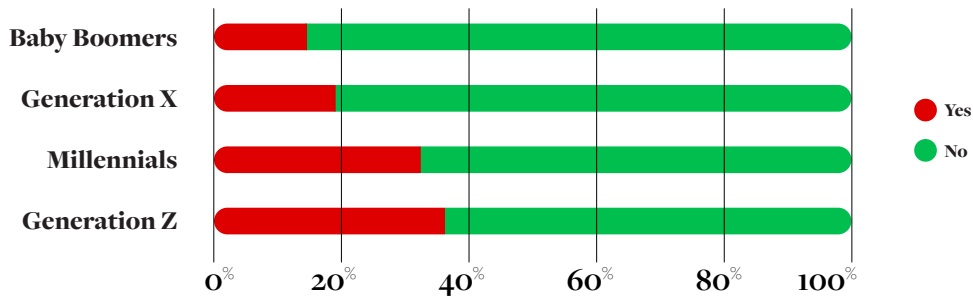
<https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/uk-digital-habits-by-generation-2023#page-report>

## Feeling Life's Pressures

# 1 in 3 Gen Z are reporting a mental health problem.

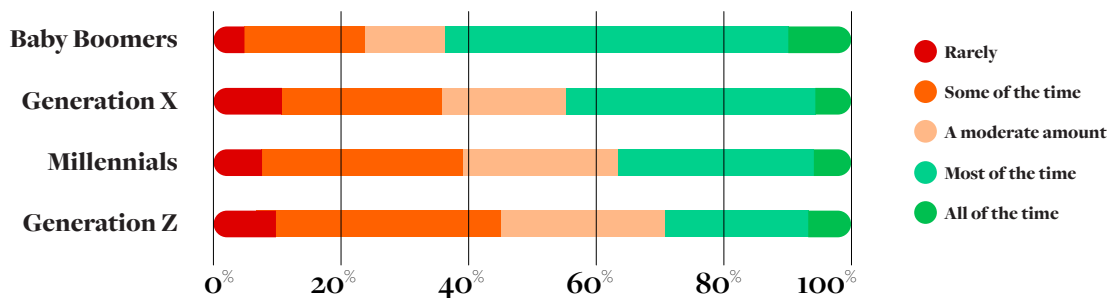
In the most recent Fruitful research, one of the most significant and concerning findings we identified was that Gen Z reported having experienced more mental health issues related to stress, anxiety and depression than any other cohort in the last 12 months. This could be simply related to their life stage or symptomatic of Gen Z's greater awareness and understanding of their own mental health and a greater willingness to reach out for help.

**Anxiety, stress, depression etc in the last 12 months.**



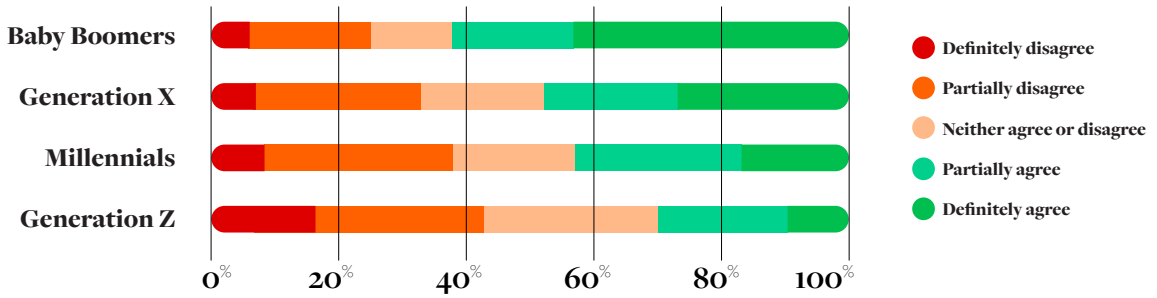
Broader social research (GWI) has also indicated that Gen Z exposure to COVID, the Ukrainian War, recession and climate change worries have left them fatigued by the steady stream of negative issues that dominate media news channels. This could be partially reflected in their outlook on life which is also more negative than any of the other generations with 45% of participants saying they rarely or sometimes have a positive outlook.

**I have a positive outlook on my life.**



Gen Z are not visiting and relying on traditional media channels for their news, they are heavily invested in social media. They get their news from social media channels and talk to friends online. When we consider how important communication is in the workplace and the impact it can have on wellbeing and culture – embracing social media as a core strand of business communication with this group could be crucial. Delivering positive messaging and wellbeing support services through integrated communications strategies that reach this group will require many corporations to fundamentally rethink how they use social media.

**Feeling fulfilled.**

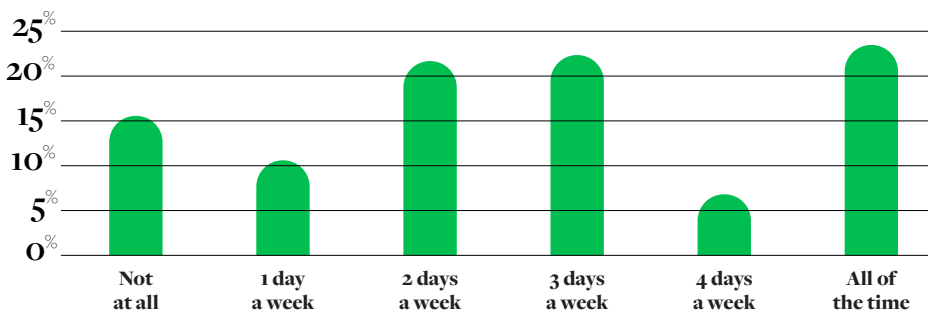


Business has the opportunity to play an important role in supporting the wellbeing of Gen Z by providing greater purpose and community to this group which is highlighted by the fact that 70% say they are lacking a sense of fulfilment in their lives.

**What Makes Gen Z Tick – Change Makers**

Gen Z may be the biggest disruptors of the workplace in the last 80 years - many Gen Zs entered the workforce during the pandemic and as such do not have the same views on the rigid work patterns that every other generation in recent history has taken for granted. Gen Z have adapted to more flexible working and their views highlight this.

**Generation Z work from home preference.**



Gen Z want to work differently to their Gen X parents, many of which will have worked long hours, some with poor work life balance. Gen Z have an expectation of greater flexibility when it comes to home working with nearly 45% saying they would like to work from home 2-3 days per week. This is very similar to their millennial peers – they want a balance between office and home environments.

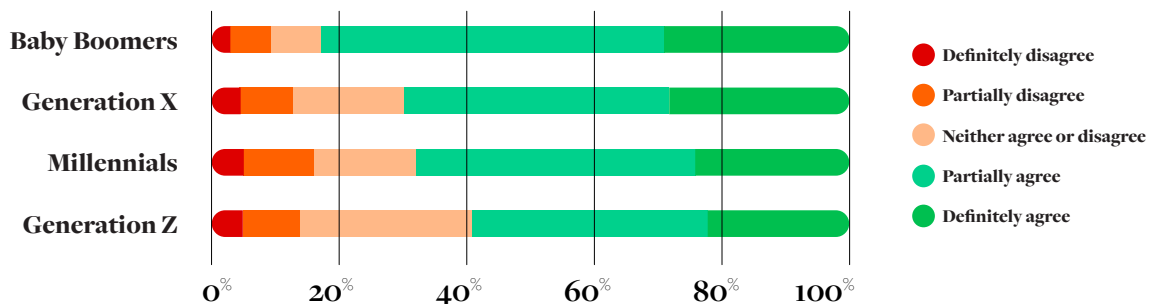
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## Gender Matters

This is a generation which has very different views on gender. In the UK's 2021 census, Gen Z were more than twice as likely to identify as LGBTQ+ than other generations.

Again, this has important implications for diversity and inclusion in the workplace. In the Fruitful research we asked participants whether they felt the company treats everyone fairly irrespective of gender, race or ethnicity. 41% of Gen Z either strongly disagreed, disagreed or were neutral on this point, which provides a strong indication that employers need to work much harder to ensure workplaces feel truly inclusive.

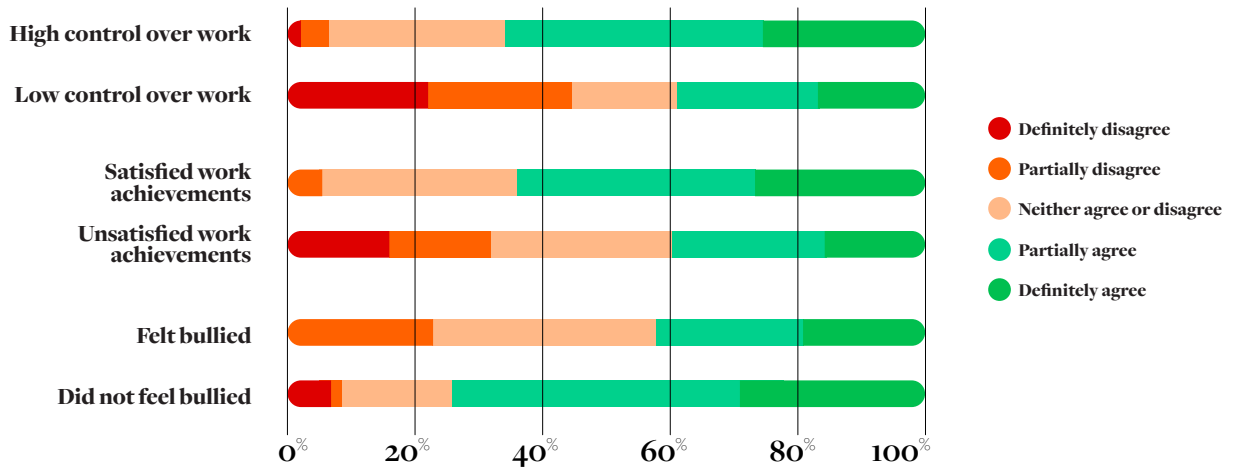
**When considering inequality and fairness in the workplace we asked employees if their company is fair and treats everyone equally irrespective of gender, race or sexuality.**



When we compare fair treatment vs job satisfaction, the level of control individuals have over their work and how bullying the culture is a series of themes emerge. Those with low control were more likely to feel the culture was unfair, along with those lacking a sense of achievement and those feeling more bullied. These are clearly important areas for businesses to focus on in order to retain Gen Z.



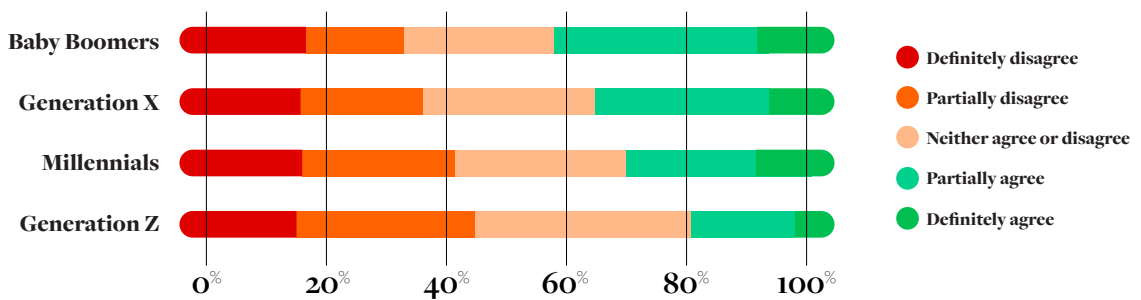
The charts below highlight the cultural differences that emerged when we consider the level of fairness exhibited by the employer vs the employee experience across other areas.



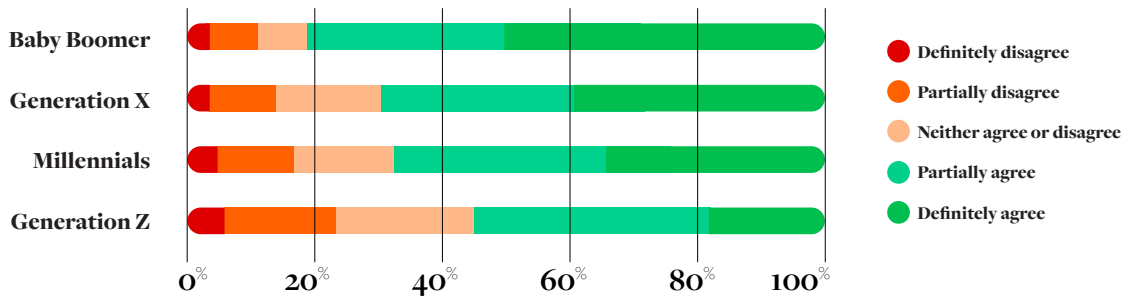
## Working Differently

Although flexible working patterns and a natural affinity for technology may offer many advantages, there may be some negative aspects that are leading Gen Z to feel very disconnected from their communities with fewer people they can depend on. Both of these factors can impact an individual’s overall wellbeing and may denote the sense of isolation that can come from working from home and relying too much on digital connectivity to communicate with friends and family.

### I am connected with my local community.



**There are people in my life that I can depend on to help me.**

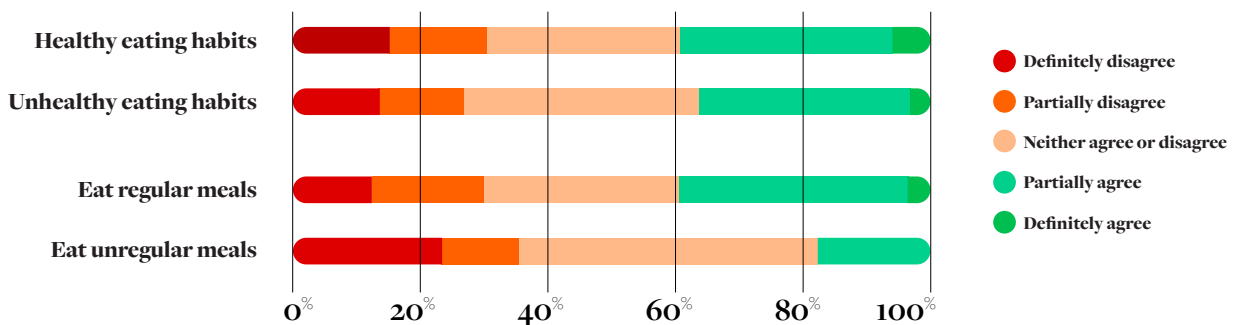


**Living in the moment**

We also noted that Gen Z do not have regular eating habits.

Gen Z eat on the run and at various times of the day. Financial stress may have a role to play here. They drink a lot less alcohol but eat more takeaways. Healthier foods can be more expensive, and less regular work patterns and routines may elevate the appeal of convenience food. Gen Z have grown up in a world which is dominated by processed foods which can be significantly cheaper and therefore more attractive, especially to low-income families. The added costs of fuel bills may also discourage home cooking for some.

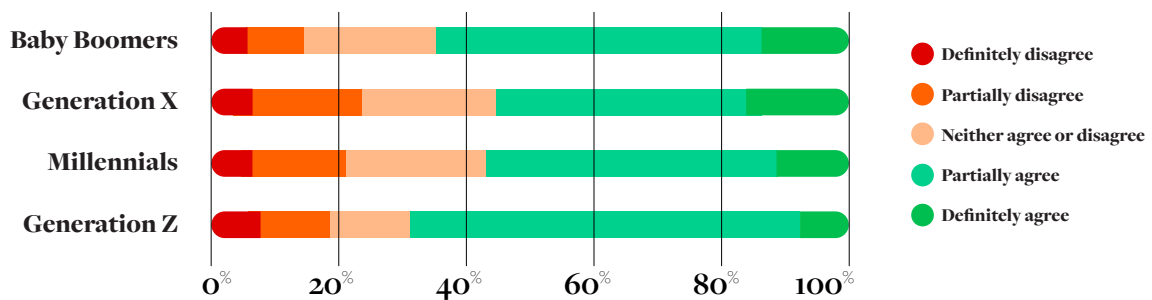
**Do you feel in control of your finances?**



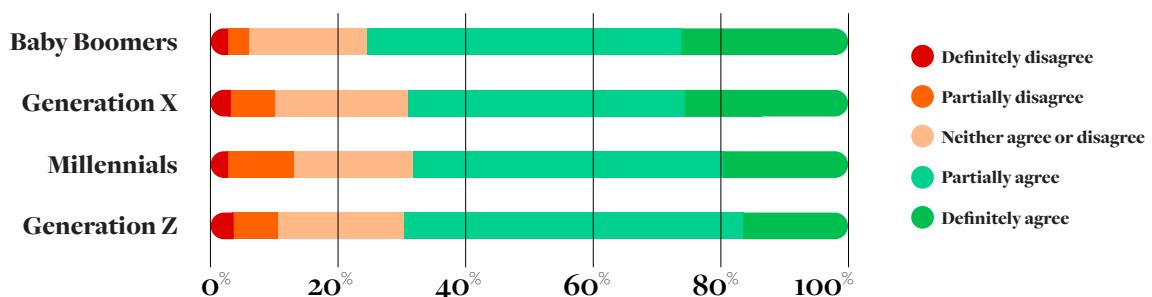
Gen Z are the most financially stressed, they feel the least able to meet their expenditure needs and control their financial situations. It could be argued this is to be expected but there are very real opportunities for employers to help support in this area.

Although Gen Z feel more valued by their bosses than other groups, they think companies need to do better when it comes to treating everyone fairly, no matter their gender, race, or relationship status, they also have confidence in the future of the businesses they work for.

#### I feel valued by the organisation.



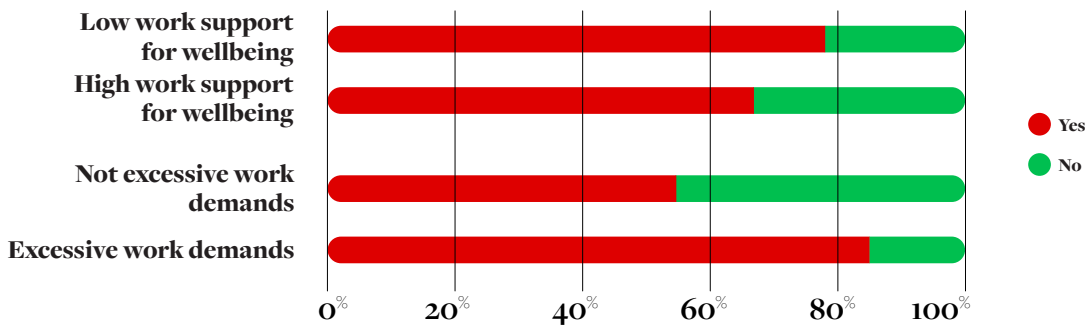
#### Do you feel confident about the future of the company?



What's also encouraging is that despite being the most financially stressed group they don't focus exclusively on money when they decide if they're happy at work. Things like feeling valued at work, caring for wellbeing, confidence in the business and its ethos, and flexibility about how they work at home and in the workplace – all play a big role.

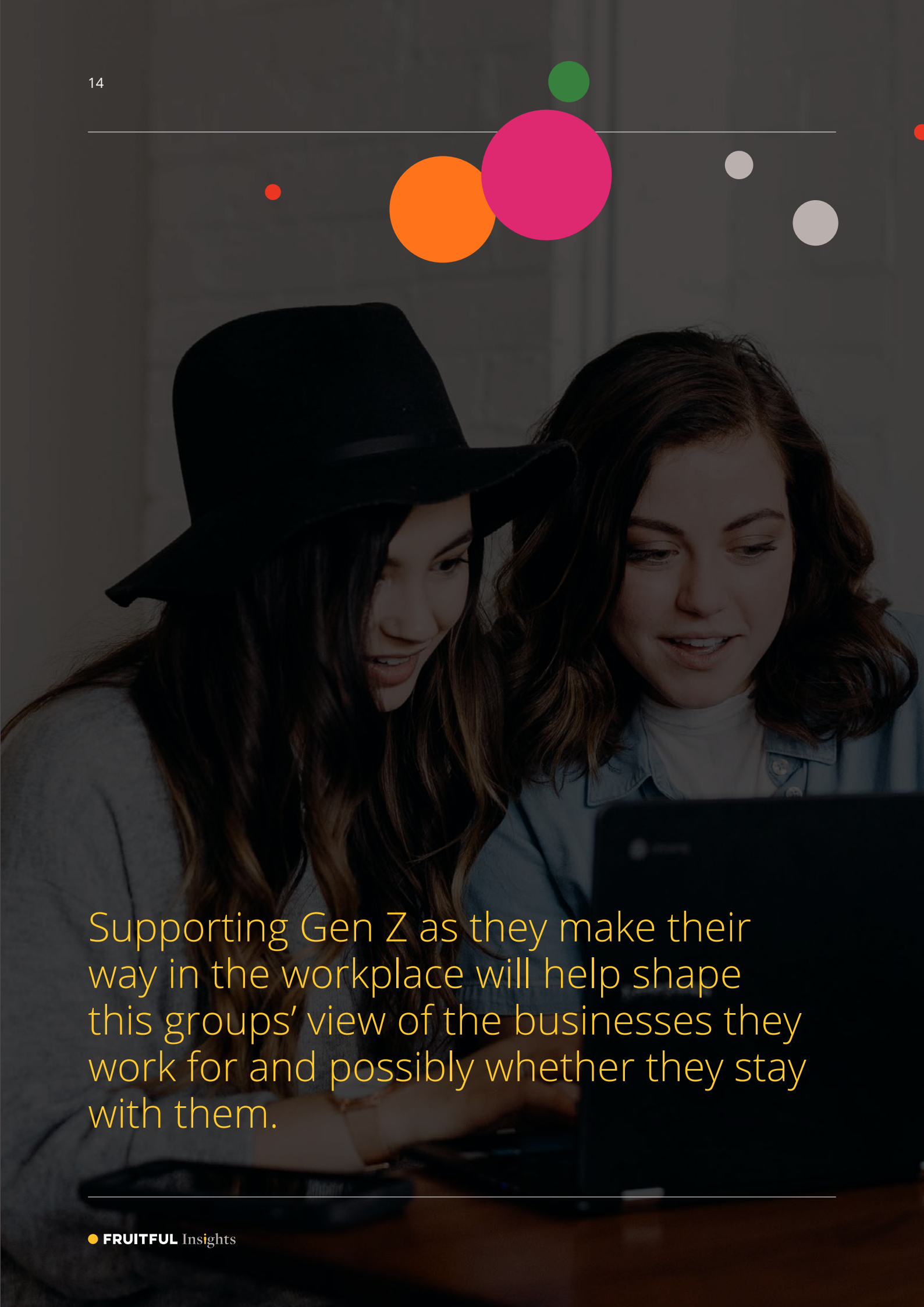
Although there is a really positive aspect to some of Gen Z views on the workplace, where there is a lack of care for the employee, by the company or the manager, the opportunity for presenteeism increases significantly. We looked at Gen Z employees who felt they had worked in the office on a number of occasions when they felt mentally or physically unwell and found a massive 70-80% of people felt they had excessive workloads, or that their manager and company did not care for their wellbeing.

**We asked Gen Z employees whether they worked when feeling physically or mentally unwell and then looked at how this correlated to work demands and the level of support for wellbeing.**

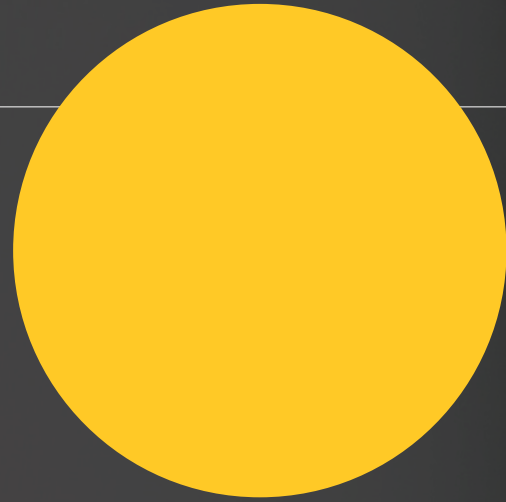


## How Companies Can Help Gen Z Maintain their Wellbeing

Understanding Gen Z is key to the future prosperity of business, but it's important to remember that not everything about them is because they're young. Now is the time to take a step back and consider whether your culture, workplace behaviour is reflective of where this generation want to work.

A photograph of two young women with long hair, one wearing a black hat, looking at a laptop screen. The image is dimmed and overlaid with a dark grey background. In the top right corner, there are several colorful circles (green, orange, pink, white) and a horizontal white line.

Supporting Gen Z as they make their way in the workplace will help shape this groups' view of the businesses they work for and possibly whether they stay with them.



## Quick wins

Based on the insights we have identified there are lots of things employers can consider which could help improve overall wellbeing and engagement.

This means supporting Gen Z across a range of areas including finances, health, social life, and mental wellbeing. When companies do this, workers feel more loyal.

**a) D&I**

Ensuring you have a really well thought out approach to D&I is particularly important to this group and they will likely judge employers on this point. Just saying you have equality in the workplace isn't enough. Are minorities represented in the business, do they have a voice? Is there a stringent zero tolerance policy of any discrimination whatever the minority?

**b) Financial Stress**

Financial stress is affecting every cohort, but Gen Z will frequently be at the bottom of the pay scale based on their experience in the workforce. Offering financial wellbeing advice and solutions could help many people through this difficult period and help build loyalty to the business in the longer term.

**c) Mental wellbeing**

Leverage EAPs, counselling and virtual GPs and encourage active discussion between employees, managers and healthcare professionals as needed. Reconsider your organisation's benefits approach. A more egalitarian approach to group protection life insurances could make an important difference and these are typically at a lower cost for this youthful group.

**d) Flexible working**

There are increasing numbers of large organisations mandating a particular set of days in the office. While this may work for some, a sizeable minority of Gen Z and others will choose their employer based on a range of factors and this may be one of them..

**e) Supporting greater in-person socialising**

Actively encourage or sponsor workplace activities that promote friendships and trust between peers. These could be sports or activity based, or interest based like theatre clubs. Given the importance of purpose to this group community-based volunteering could support team building and improve fulfilment.

**f) Communication!**

Probably one of the greatest areas of weakness within many organisations is the lack of systematic communication. Consider how Gen Z communicate and ensure you are reaching this group through channels that appeal to them. Gen Z are active social media users and often share very direct feedback in social forums – employers should be equally savvy in their willingness to be present and 'appropriately' active where it matters.






## Conclusion

Gen Z are different and are set to become a key pillar in the UK workforce, they have unique ideas and needs.

They grew up with the internet and care about fairness. Businesses need to understand that Gen Z care about more than just money – they want their jobs to have meaning and align with their values.



To keep Gen Z workers happy, companies need to make sure everyone is treated fairly and support their overall wellbeing. As Gen Z and older generations work together, the UK economy can flourish. It's not just a good idea; it's the key to success.

To find out more about how to measure and analyse the wellbeing of your Gen Z employees please contact Fruitful Insights:-

[info@fruitfulinsights.co.uk](mailto:info@fruitfulinsights.co.uk) | [www.fruitfulinsights.co.uk](http://www.fruitfulinsights.co.uk)

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## References

Pedersen, J., Rasmussen, M.G.B., Sørensen, S.O. et al. Effects of limiting digital screen use on well-being, mood, and biomarkers of stress in adults. *npj Mental Health Res* 1, 14 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44184-022-00015-6>

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