

Workforce or Workforced?

A study of employees' workplace goals and aspirations across generations.



As we consider the future of work post-pandemic, much debate is taking place when it comes to employee power and preference in the workplace. And especially when it comes to employee's expectations that many consider to vary widely depending on time in the workforce.

So, are these generations really that different?

To find out, United Minds and KRC Research conducted a national survey of 1,049 adults 18 years and older who are employed full- or part-time (not including self-employed) in the United States. Participants were asked their philosophies about work; management aspirations; preferences regarding in-person or remote settings; willingness to go above and beyond a job description; and how they rank things like compensation, professional development, title, impact, flexibility, recognition and benefits.

We spoke to:

135



Gen Z
(18-25)

466



Millennials
(26-41)

294



Gen X
(42-57)

148



Boomers
(58-76)

The answer is no. *Or at least, not exactly ...*

Key findings demonstrate we're not so different after all.

Employees across generations:

1. Have similarly lofty professional goals
2. Are motivated by opportunities and compensation over purpose
3. Prefer working from the couch vs. the office
4. Believe in-person connection should be required at least part of the time
5. Imagine a future that will require at least the same amount if not more work

BUT EACH GENERATION APPROACHES THESE GOALS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENTLY

Aspirations *vs.* effort

Gen Z envisions future leadership roles, but on their own terms.

Gen Z are the most likely to want to climb the corporate ladder.

| CAREER GOAL | GEN Z | MILLENNIALS | GEN X | BOOMERS |
|---------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------|
| CEO of a company | 38% | 31% | 18% | 21% |
| A leader of a small team | 37% | 39% | 42% | 35% |
| An individual contributor | 24% | 29% | 40% | 44% |

3 out of 4 of Gen Zers aspire to leadership positions

While Gen Xers and Boomers are **half** as likely as Gen Z to eye the corner office

AND

Gen Z is also more likely to currently be doing only what they must at work.

| LEVEL OF EFFORT | GEN Z | MILLENNIALS | GEN X | BOOMERS |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------|
| I go above and beyond | 61% | 70% | 84% | 93% |
| I do what I must do and no more | 39% | 30% | 16% | 7% |

To be fair, Boomers (**4 in 5**) and Gen X (**7 in 10**) overwhelmingly believe Gen Z should be working no more than 31 to 40 hours

Paycheck *vs.* purpose

Despite the hype, Gen Z is not the most motivated by impact or meaning at work.

When it comes to making an impact or receiving higher compensation, roughly two thirds of employees across all generations would take the money.

| WOULD RATHER... | GEN Z | MILLENNIALS | GEN X | BOOMERS |
|------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------|
| Make more money | 66% | 64% | 70% | 62% |
| Make more impact | 34% | 36% | 30% | 38% |

The majority of employees across all ages would also prefer to get paid more for less meaningful work than to be paid less for more meaningful work.

| WOULD RATHER... | GEN Z | MILLENNIALS | GEN X | BOOMERS |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|---------|
| Get a 10% salary increase to work on less meaningful work | 65% | 62% | 64% | 55% |
| Take a 10% salary cut to work on more meaningful work | 35% | 38% | 36% | 45% |

However,

Gen Xers are the most motivated by money while Boomers are the most motivated by impact.

Opportunity *vs.* balance

Those building careers seek opportunities, while those on the back half prefer balance.

Beyond monetary rewards, younger generations are more likely to prefer to be shown appreciation in ways that might further their careers, such as development opportunities and higher titles.

Older generations seek personal time in the form of more vacation.



| PREFER TO BE SHOWN APPRECIATION BY... | GEN Z | MILLENNIALS | GEN X | BOOMERS |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|---------|
| Being given an extra week of vacation every year | 41% | 46% | 55% | 58% |
| Being given a unique professional development opportunity | 38% | 35% | 34% | 30% |
| Being given a higher title | 21% | 20% | 11% | 12% |

Flexibility *vs.* facetime

Employers can rest easier knowing that very few employees plan to work from home forever.

All generations expect that the future of work is still in the physical workplace — with nearly seven out of 10 believing in-person connection should be required at least part of the time.

| GOING INTO THE WORKPLACE SHOULD BE... | GEN Z | MILLENNIALS | GEN X | BOOMERS |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------|
| Optional | 28% | 30% | 24% | 29% |
| Required all the time | 35% | 38% | 36% | 40% |
| Required part of the time | 33% | 29% | 36% | 31% |
| Avoided at all costs | 2% | 3% | 3% | 5% |

But Gen Z is most likely to value the flexibility of working from the couch, especially when compared to Boomers.

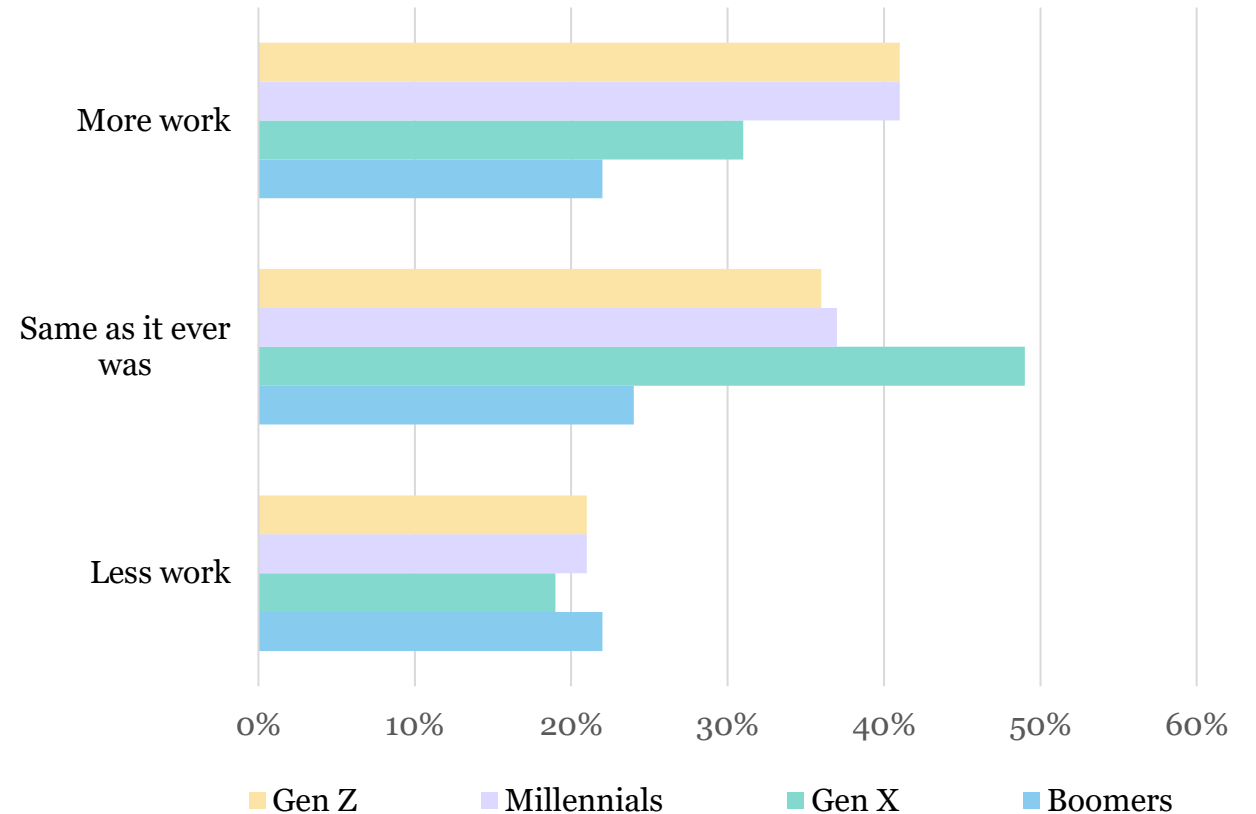
| WOULD RATHER... | GEN Z | MILLENNIALS | GEN X | BOOMERS |
|---------------------|-------|-------------|-------|---------|
| Work from my couch | 58% | 52% | 53% | 44% |
| Get a corner office | 42% | 48% | 47% | 56% |

A future with more work?

Desiring more flexibility does not necessarily mean anticipating less work for Gen Z.

In fact, while Gen Z are the most likely to report doing only what is expected of them today, Gen Z and Millennials are the most likely to imagine that the future of work will require more work vs. less work, whereas status quo is the expectation for both Gen X and Boomers.

Expect a future that is...



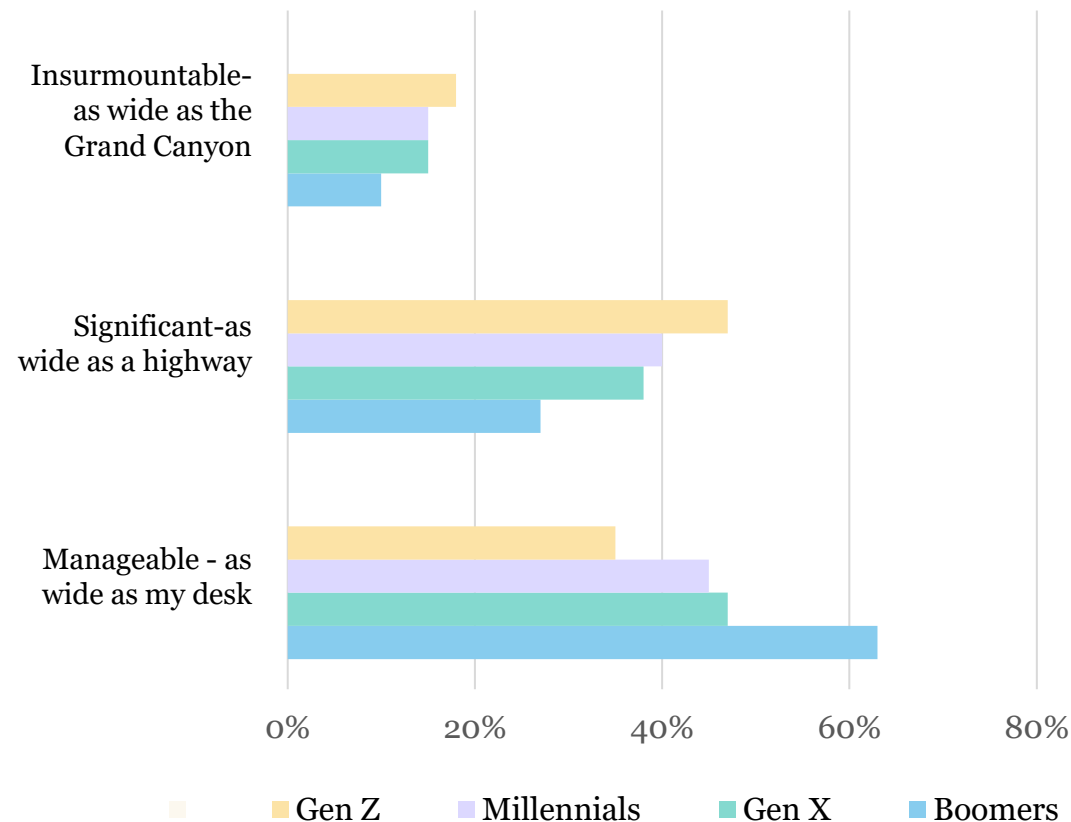
Gen Z: poised to disrupt

This youngest working generation is also the most dissatisfied with work as they know it.

Nearly two-thirds of Gen Z employees see the gap between what they want at work and what they get as either “insurmountable” or “significant.” All other generations see the gap as “manageable.”

Will this dissatisfaction catalyze change? Having entered the workforce doing 9-to-5 jobs without literal 9-to-5 models or expectations, will Gen Z reshape where and when we do work for good?

The gap between what I want from work and what I get is...



Lessons for organizational leaders

Don't fret about a dramatic generational divide and an accompanying revolution. Instead, realize that needs simply change by career stage.

There are no hard generational lines, but rather degrees of difference that map to life stages. Companies must understand where employees are – and what they are and aren't willing to do to meet them.

Leaders who focus on the fundamentals of workplace culture, leadership and keeping employees engaged and connected to the mission, strategy and meaningful work will prevail.





Workplace expectations: Gen Z (18 – 25)

Focused on earning enough money to pay the bills in an inflationary environment and building their social networks after lockdown.

MOST AMBITIOUS

~4 in 10 aspire to be CEO, double the amount of Gen X and Boomers (and least likely to want to be an individual contributor)

LEAST LIKELY TO GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

2.4X / 5.7X likelier than Gen X / Boomers to put in the minimum effort

LEAST ALTRUISTIC

22% less likely than Boomers to take a 10% salary cut to pursue more meaningful work

MOST LIKELY TO VALUE FLEXIBILITY

6 in 10 prefer working from the couch over a corner office (vs. 4.5 in 10 Boomers)

MOST UNSATISFIED

65% say gap between what they want and what they get is significant or insurmountable

Workplace expectations: Millennials (26 – 41)



Increasingly juggling work with child and eldercare are paying greater attention to benefits and insurance coverage.

MOST LIKELY TO GRIND

~**1 in 4** live to work (same as Gen X)

DIMMEST OUTLOOK

~**7 in 10** see a future with more work (same as Gen Z)

TOP WFH CHAMPIONS

7 in 10+ believe some or all of their job can be done remotely



Workplace expectations: Gen X (42 – 57)

Similarly saddled with work and life responsibilities as Millennials.

MOST LIKELY TO GRIND

~**1 in 4** live to work (same as Millennials)

MOST LIKELY TO PREFER MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

42% would rather lead a team vs. be CEO or an individual contributor

MOST DRIVEN BY MONEY

7 in 10 would rather make more money vs. make more impact



Workplace expectations: Boomers (58 – 76)

Nearing the end of their careers and thinking more about satisfaction and fulfillment, enjoyment and happiness.

LEAST AMBITIOUS

4 in 9 prefer to be an individual contributor vs. CEO or manager

MOST LIKELY TO WORK MORE

93% go above and beyond, making them 1.5X more likely to do so than Gen Z

MOST ALTRUISTIC

29% more likely than Gen Z to take a 10% salary cut to pursue more meaningful work

MOST CONTENT

63% say gap between what they want and what they get at work is manageable

BIGGEST OFFICE CHAMPIONS

3 in 4 think they need to go into a workplace at least part-time

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