In support of

HeForShe

UN Women Solidarity Movement
for Gender Equality

NEW RULES

How Is Gen Z Changing the World of Work

MAY 2021

LEWIS

GEN

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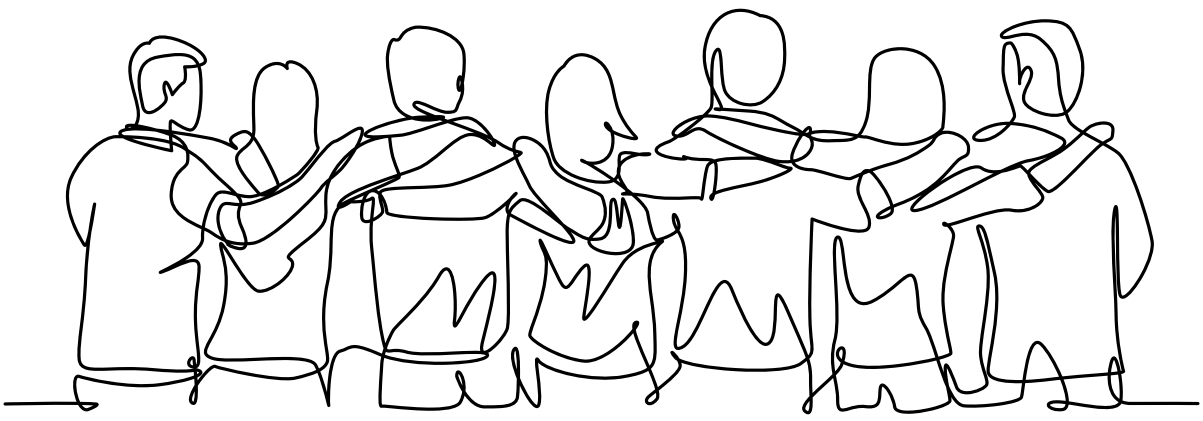


ONE

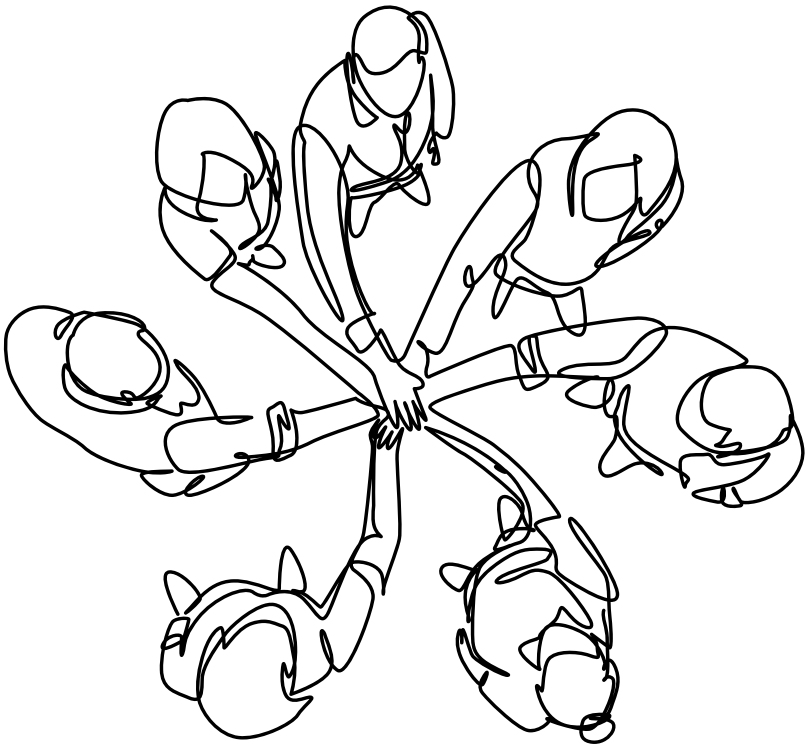
Introduction

New kids on the block

Generation Z is growing up fast. Roughly described as anyone born after the turn of the new millennium, the generation often referred to as 'zoomers' represents the future of the employee workforce. As millennials settle into adulthood and reach the height of their careers, tomorrow belongs to Gen Z. As the oldest among the zoomers start taking the first steps down their career path, how must current policymakers and business leaders evolve to the meet the needs and expectations of this rising generation?

While it may be hard for millennials and boomers to admit, Gen Z is special. Gen Zers are markedly different than any generation that has ever entered the workforce. They are the first age group who have never lived in a world without digital technology. They are the first cyborgs – partly raised by their iPhones, and taught to code in primary school.

Zoomers are also quite different in their values and attitudes. They are more racially and ethnically diverse and more comfortable using gender-neutral pronouns. They are worried about climate change and racial disparities. They value individual expression and avoid labels. They are also on track to be the most well-educated generation in terms of skills and educational attainment.



Before 2020, members of Gen Z were more likely than older generations to look to government to solve problems, rather than businesses or individuals. But has this changed over the course of a worldwide pandemic that has turned society and the world of work on its head? To answer this question, LEWIS undertook a worldwide survey of 2,600 zoomers in support of HeForShe. We asked them about their unique views, what matters to them, and what they value in a potential workplace. This report collates their unique viewpoints and perspectives, showing how zoomers will transform the workplace and what today's leaders must do to prepare for them.

TWO

Values and Priorities

What's eating Gen Z?

Many zoomers have yet to step into the workplace, but they already have a strong sense of what matters to them and what they value in society. Easy, instantaneous access to the internet and social media keeps them informed while also shaping their opinions. When asked what societal issues are most important to them personally, zoomers globally listed healthcare (33%), followed by climate change (30%), safety (26%), and gender equality (26%). However, the order of these concerns varied substantially between regions.

When asked what one issue people their age care most about, racial equality was the most prevalent issue among Gen Z in the US (30%), while in Europe it is climate change (22%). In Asia (25%) and South America (27%) economic opportunity is the greatest concern – perhaps not too surprising in regions that are rapidly accelerating and industrializing. The results differed considerably when zoomers were asked about their peers' most important issues.

When asked what was most important to people their age, they speculated it was economic opportunity (19%), LGBTQ rights (13%), climate change (12%), and gender equality (11%). Economic opportunity and LGBTQ rights were considered very important in Gen Z culture, but seemed to be less of a priority on a personal, individual level.

Gender Equality

is one of the top four most cared about issues across the world

Societal issues most important to Gen Z personally

1. *Healthcare*
2. *Climate Change*
3. *Safety*
4. *Gender Equality*
5. *Poverty / Homelessness*
6. *Racial Equality*
7. *Economic Opportunity*
8. *Food / Water Security*
9. *Civil Rights*
10. *Government Accountability*
11. *LGBTQ Rights*
12. *War*
13. *Overpopulation*
14. *Immigration / Refugees*
15. *Religious Conflict*

35% UNITED STATES **Racial Equality**

39% EUROPE **Climate Change**

36% ASIA **Healthcare**

38% SOUTH AMERICA **Healthcare**

Gender Equality is the 4th most cared about issue overall

Societal issues Gen Z thinks people their age care about the most

1. *Economic Opportunity*
2. *LGBTQ Rights*
3. *Climate Change*
4. *Gender Equality*
5. *Racial Equality*
6. *Safety*
7. *Healthcare*
8. *Civil Rights*
9. *Poverty / Homelessness*
10. *Government Accountability*
11. *Food / Water Security*
12. *Religious Conflict*
13. *Immigration / Refugees*
14. *Overpopulation*
15. *War*

30% UNITED STATES **Racial Equality**

22% EUROPE **Climate Change**

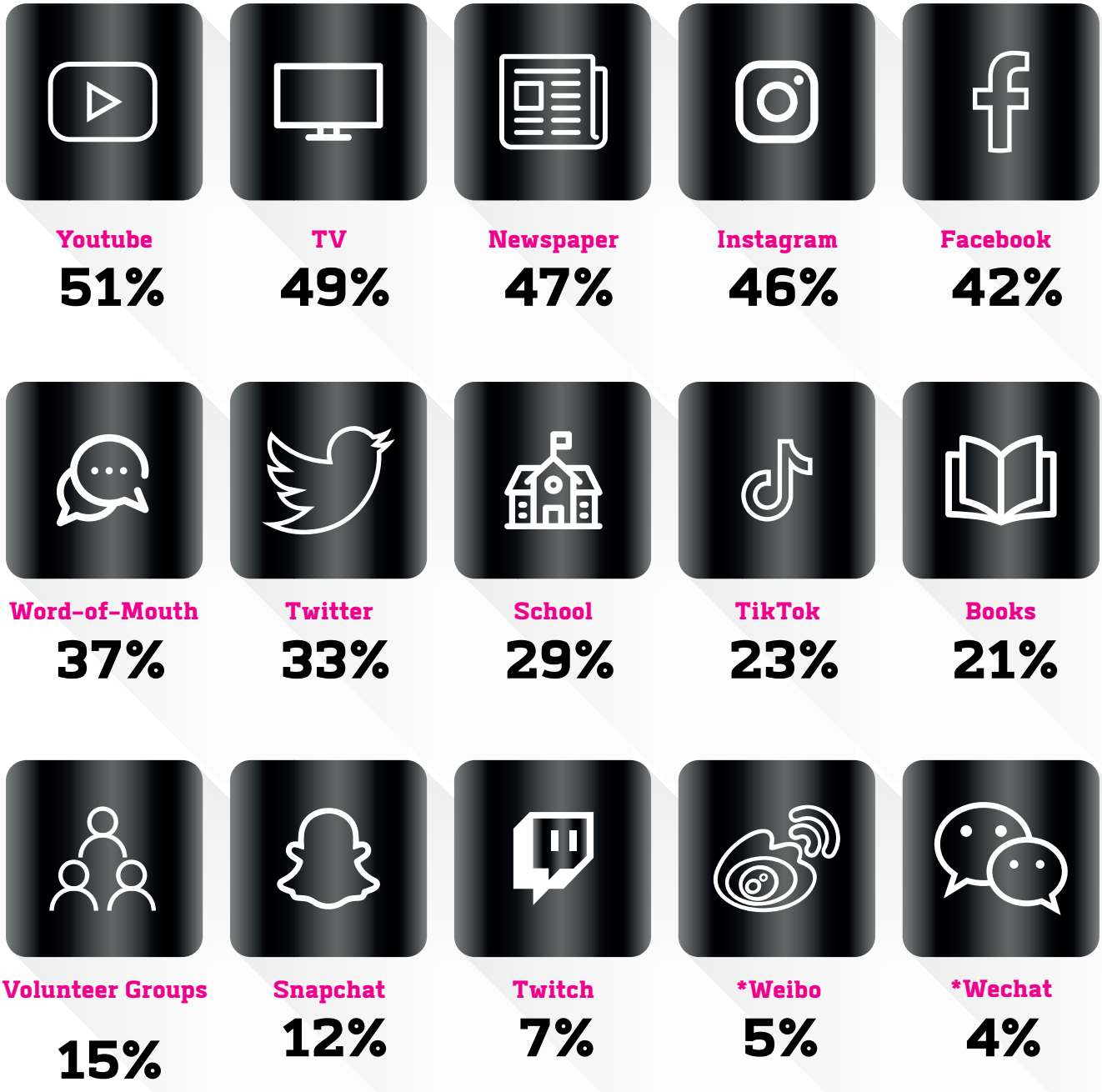
25% ASIA **Economic Opportunity**

27% SOUTH AMERICA **Economic Opportunity**

When it came to who should be responsible for tackling these social issues, zoomers were more likely put their government forward (20%) than companies and NGOs (7%). However, 74% - the vast majority – believed responsibility should be shared between the public, private and third sectors. Furthermore, 96% of zoomers said businesses should be involved in solving social problems, with 60% arguing they should be extremely or very involved. Gen Z clearly appreciates the power of business to achieve social good.

Gen Z may be connected globally, but their opinions on what's important are still mediated largely by local concerns and traditional media. When asked how they learned about societal issues, more than half (51%) of zoomers said YouTube, closely followed by TV (49%) and newspapers (47%). By contrast, social media was considered a less important source of news and information. Less than half of zoomers get their information from the likes of Instagram (46%), Facebook (42%), Twitter (33%), and TikTok (23%). These newer channels are growing in importance, but they aren't the places where Gen Z is getting most of its information.

How Gen Z learns about societal issues



Other **2%**

Doesn't care about societal issues **3%**

**Weibo and WeChat were only included for respondents in China*

THREE

Security or equality?

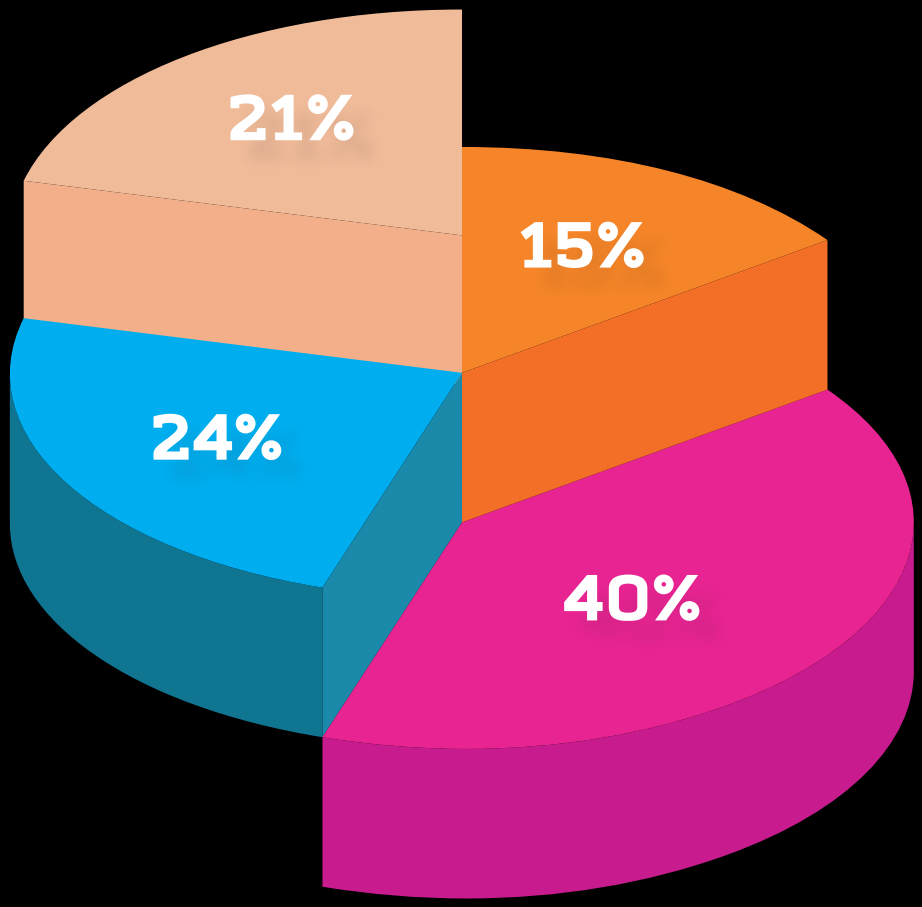
Gen Z in the workplace

Despite their young age, Gen Zers are active in the world and awake to its issues and social problems. Racial, gender and economic equality matter to them on both a personal and group level. To what extent do these ideals determine how they act and, importantly, where they want to work? How far are they willing to compromise for their dream job, and what do they expect from their employer?

Ultimately, there is a tension between their desires and values. Over half (54%) would refuse to work at a company that does not share their values. Yet 19% would be willing to, and 27% are unsure and could potentially be persuaded to. That's as many as 46% of zoomers who could be encouraged to work for a business that goes against their values.

Clearly, personal and economic security are powerful motivators for Gen Zers. When evaluating an employment opportunity, the most important factor is the employer's commitment to providing personal growth opportunities (51%), followed by the company's values (39%) and employee package (38%). What's more, only 15% would be willing to take the risk to work for a start-up, compared to 40% who would prefer to work for an established business.

Gen Z's employer preference



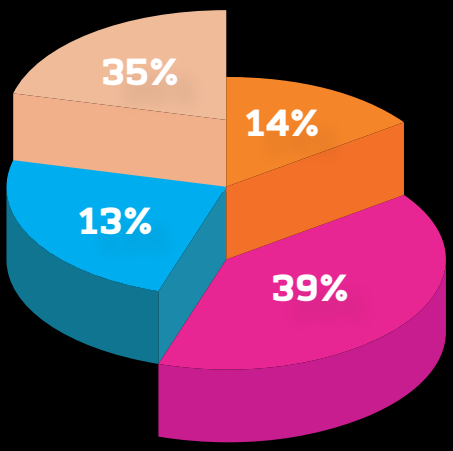
Public sector

Self-employed

Established private sector

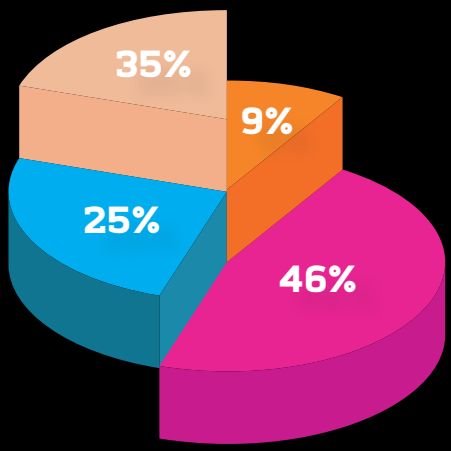
Startup

United States



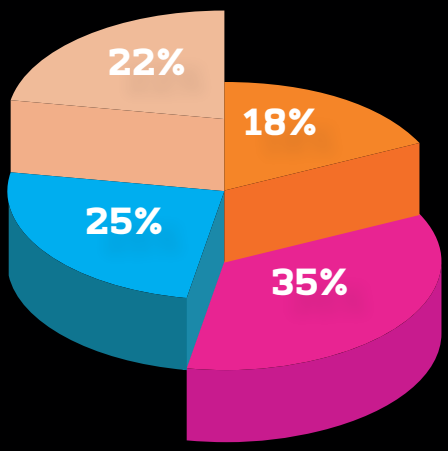
Public sector *Self-employed* *Established private sector* *Startup*

South America



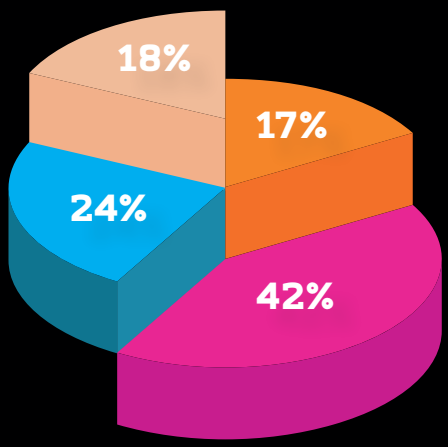
Public sector *Self-employed* *Established private sector* *Startup*

Europe



Public sector *Self-employed* *Established private sector* *Startup*

Asia



Public sector *Self-employed* *Established private sector* *Startup*

This finding is not surprising for a generation that has grown up during the Financial Crisis and years of fiscal austerity, and which has come of age during a global pandemic and economic crisis. This stat corresponds with the general decline of entrepreneurialism among young people due to debt and uncertainty.

In 1996, young American people launched 35% of startups, but by 2014 this number had fallen to 18%. However, it isn't the case that zoomers are entirely risk-averse. According to our research, almost a quarter (21%) desire to be self-employed, joining an ever-increasing number of contractors, freelancers and people starting their own businesses during the pandemic.

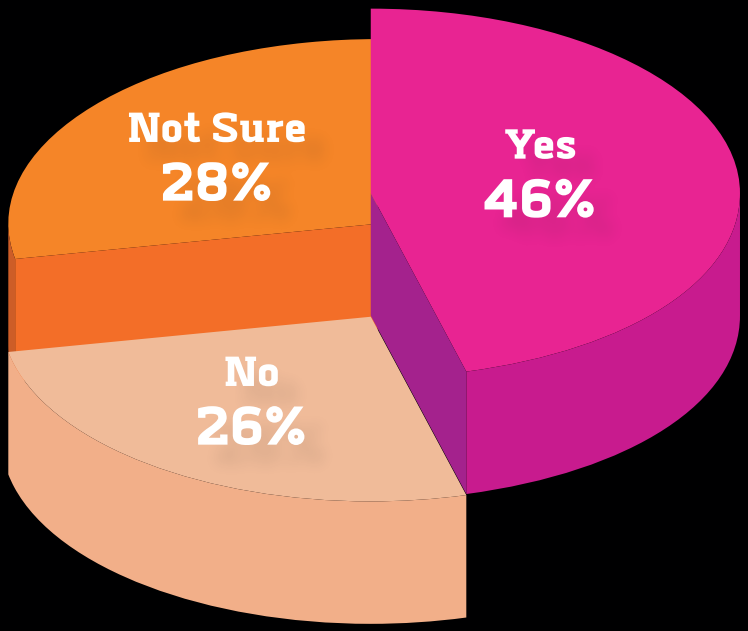
To some extent, Gen Zers are more forgiving of companies that make the effort to support their values, even if the outcome isn't achieved. A large minority (41%) would work for a company that is not gender or racially diverse, but which does have a strong diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) program. For example, if two job candidates have the same qualifications but one is 'diverse' compared to the other, 46% of zoomers would be in favor of them getting the role compared to 26% who wouldn't.

It's crucial, then, for companies to understand what Gen Zers see as important for diversity. To zoomers, diversity means different things in different parts of the world, but overall respondents were split on whether they thought race (45%) or gender (45%) were most important. Diversity of thought was also considered very important by 39% of Gen Zers. When asked who should be responsible for leading DEI efforts in a company, the most popular options were Human Resources (35%) and Senior Management (29%).

What diversity means to Gen Z

1.	*Gender*	45%
2.	*Race*	45%
3.	*Diversity of Thought*	39%
4.	*Inclusion*	30%
5.	*Faith / Religion*	21%
6.	*Age*	18%
7.	*Skills*	18%
8.	*Disability*	15%
9.	*Experience*	15%
10.	*Other*	2%
11.	*I don't know*	3%

Gen Z *favors hiring a diverse candidate over a non-diverse candidate with the same qualifications*



FOUR

Leading from the front

Views on leadership

Zoomers aren't only concerned about company values, diversity and inclusion. They also have a fascination with who will be leading the companies they eventually join. Nearly half (47%) admit to following CEOs, executives and company founders on social media. Business leaders including Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Jack Ma, and Sundar Pichai are the most admired among zoomers.

Given this fascination, it makes sense that Gen Zers have strong views on what it means to lead a company and how leaders should behave. It appears that Gen Zers look up most to the category creators and innovators – the dreamers who expand their industry or create a new one, rather than the managerial-style leaders who keep operations ticking over.

When asked what qualities they thought were most important in a CEO, the most popular option was 'innovative' (37%), followed by 'determination' (35%) and 'empathy' (33%). Two-thirds also believed that it was very valuable for the CEO to be committed to a social cause or issue.

Top three qualities Gen Z values in CEOs

1. **Vision**
2. **Determination**
3. **Empathy**

Top three qualities Gen Z men value in CEOs

1. *Innovative*
2. *Determination*
3. *Creativity*

Top three qualities Gen Z women value in CEOs

1. *Empathy*
2. *Innovative*
3. *Determination & Fairness*

What matters the most?

Company's Values	66%
CEO/Company Leader	19%
Neither	6%
Unsure	8%

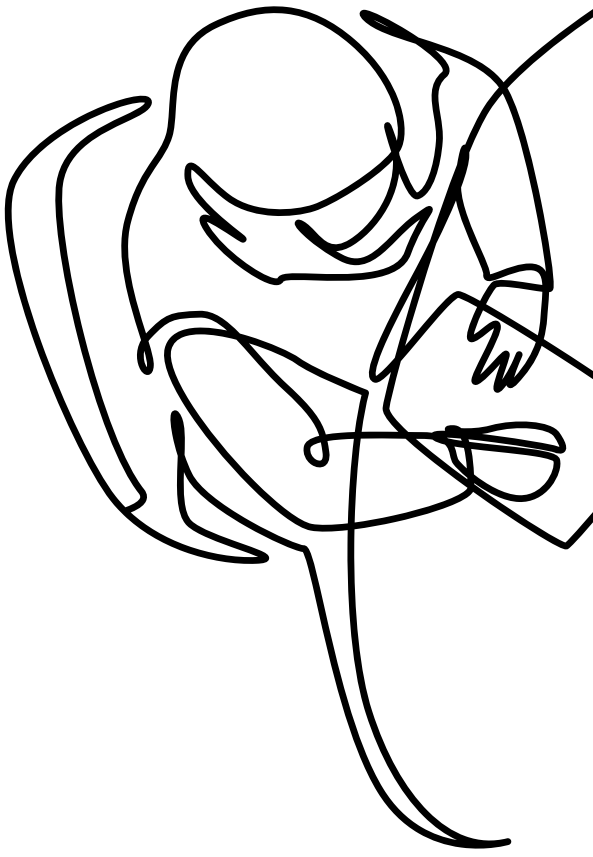
Nearly twice as many men would work at a company that does not share their values

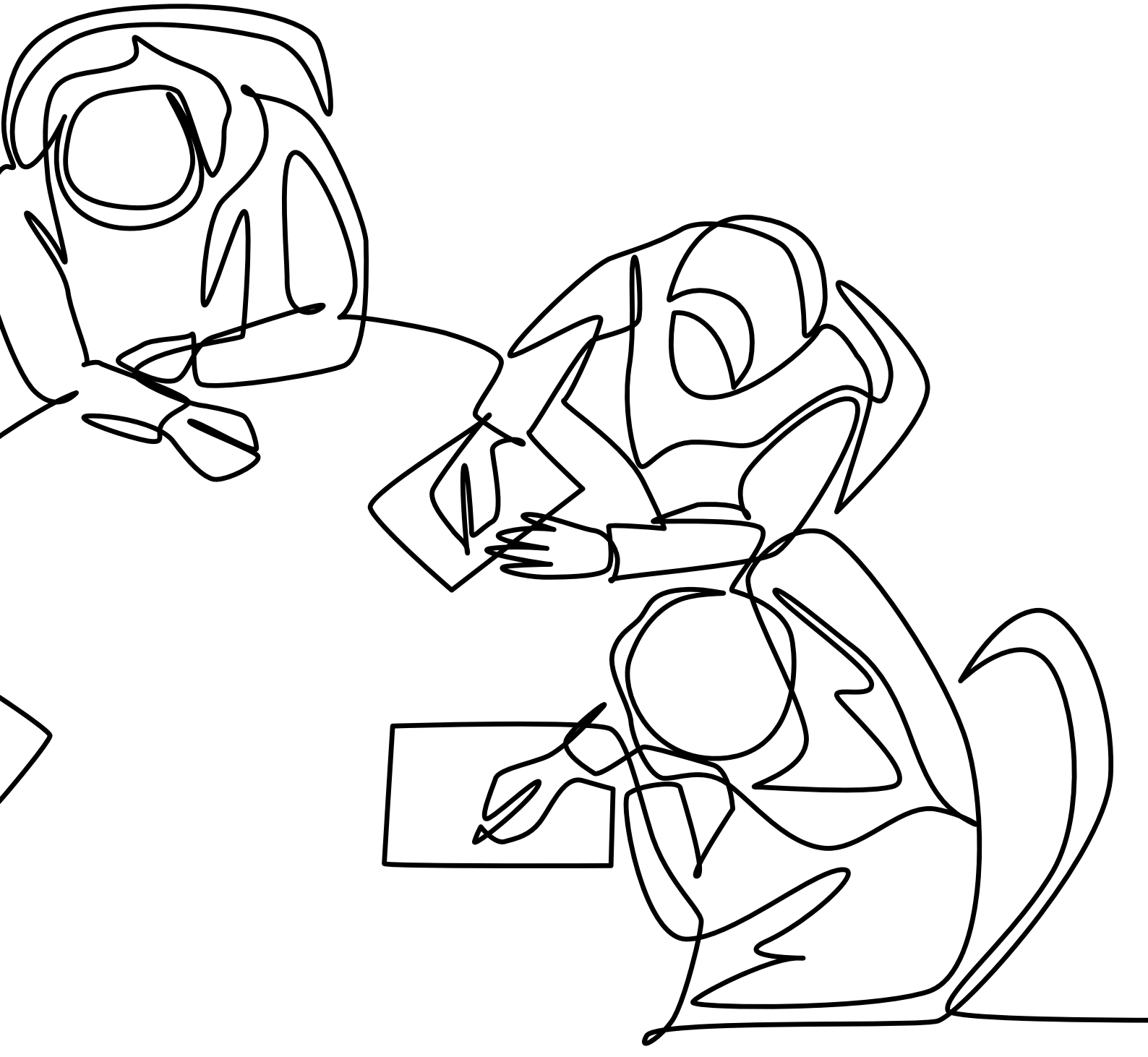
Men 24%

Women 13%

Education in leaders is highly valued by zoomers, with 60% saying it is extremely or very important. Yet that doesn't necessarily translate over to qualifications. An equal number of zoomers thought a CEO should have a master's degree compared to those who believed it didn't matter as long as they can do the job (17% respectively).

Ultimately, zoomers want their leaders to be agents of change, both in industry and society at large. They feel CEOs should be judged by their ability to innovate and be industry leaders (43%). CEO commitment to solving social issues (41%) was a top factor. However, that isn't to say that Gen Zers are ready to submit themselves to one person's vision or way of thinking. A large majority (66%) said that the company's values matter more than those of the CEO. Zoomers also thought CEOs should be removed if they display a lack of ethical behavior (57%), poor financial performance (37%), or a lack of hard work (36%).





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Conclusion

The search for compromise

Generation Z is on the threshold between adolescence and adulthood. With opinions and values formed during a life of unprecedented connectivity and access to information, they enter a world of work that is totally different than anything that has come before. They will have difficult choices to make in terms of what they want to be and who they wish to serve.

The idealism of Gen Zers remains strong, but there are many willing to compromise for the sake of stability and security. At the same time, businesses must also change. Zoomers bring invaluable technical and digital skills to the party. Competition to attract them will be fierce. It is crucial companies show the next generation what the business can offer and what it really believes in. Gen Zers care strongly about their personal development and security, but they also have high expectations for diversity and inclusion, and even stronger opinions on how business leaders should behave.

The businesses most likely to succeed aren't the ones that give Gen Z the option between equality and stability. It's the companies that try to tick all the boxes and meet zoomers halfway. An organization that can marry opportunity with social activism and fairness is the one that will attract and retain the best talent that Gen Z has to offer.

Methodology

Researching Gen Z

This Gen Z Research Study report is based on a survey conducted by the LEWIS Research and Insights team to understand the expectations Gen Z has of their future employers.

The survey was fielded from April 8 – April 19, 2021 and captured responses from older Gen Zers (aged 18-25) located in the United States, China, France, Germany, Brazil, Australia, India, Singapore, United Kingdom, Mexico, Spain, Colombia, and the Netherlands.

A total of 2,600 respondents were captured and the overall margin of error is 1.92% at a 95% Confidence Interval. The respondents were sourced from OpinionRoute.

About

About HeForShe

Created by UN Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, the HeForShe solidarity movement for gender equality provides a systematic approach and targeted platform where a global audience can engage and become change agents for the achievement of gender equality in our lifetime. HeForShe invites people around the world to stand together as equal partners to craft a shared vision of a gender equal world and implement specific, locally relevant solutions for the good of all of humanity.
For more information, visit www.HeForShe.org/en.

About LEWIS

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