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Swiss Gen Z and Millennial Survey 2023

Purpose, flexibility, growth, empowerment: how can
organisations attract, retain and engage young talent?



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Research methodology

The survey in Switzerland was conducted among 1,000 Millennials (1983-1994) and 700 from Generation Z (1995-2004) during the first two weeks of March 2023. The respondents were representative regarding gender and region (German, French and Italian speaking parts of Switzerland). The EU data is based on the Deloitte Global 2023 Gen Z & Millennial Survey conducted in December 2022 with over 8,000 participants from EU countries.

The following countries from the EU participated: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden. For this report, those countries are referred to as “EU”.

Numbers in the charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.



A woman with long black braids and a yellow headband is looking intently at a whiteboard. The whiteboard is covered in mathematical formulas and diagrams. In the background, a man in a suit is also looking at the whiteboard. The scene is set in a classroom or meeting room.

Key take-aways

Key trends from our 2023 research

Sense of identity

Work alone does not define Millennials and Gen Z - friends and family are even more important when it comes to defining their sense of identity.

Flexible working

Millennials tend to see more advantages than Gen Z regarding working remotely, whereas Gen Z has a higher preference for being present onsite. Nevertheless, both generations very much want to be able to choose where they work from.

Reasons to quit

The number one reason in Switzerland for both generations to quit their current role was that the work was not fulfilling or meaningful. A lack of competitive pay was also a significant driver of decision-making by Swiss employees when compared to the European average.

Full-time return to the office

45% of Swiss Gen Z currently working hybrid or remotely would look for a new job if they had to work full-time on site.

Employer loyalty

Gen Z has a shorter term horizon when it comes to their current employer than Millennials. Almost 1 in 2 in Gen Z plans to quit their job within the next two years while 1 in 3 Millennials are planning to stay for more than 5 years.

Concerns

The rising cost of living and climate change are the top concerns for Gen Z and Millennials in Switzerland as well as more broadly across Europe.

Work/ life balance

These generations value balance. 1 in 3 likes the idea of reduced working weeks, and sabbatical programmes are of particular interest to Gen Z and Millennials here in Switzerland.



Our 4 key takeaways for Swiss business leaders



Be purpose driven

People aspire to meaning. With meaningful work being top of the agenda for Gen Z and Millennials, your organisation's purpose and values need to be clear and at the heart of what you do to attract talent. Otherwise you risk missing out.



Embed flexibility into your working practices

Gen Z and Millennials want flexibility and Covid has also accelerated this desire across all generations in the workforce. It is critical for Swiss employers to strike the right balance when it comes to key topics such as hybrid working and the holistic workforce ecosystem.



Provide tangible growth opportunities

To engage and retain Gen Z and Millennials, there need to be clear opportunities for growth and development. Lack of career development or learning opportunities is one of the main reasons that these generations get itchy feet.



Empower your workforce

Gen Z and Millennials are driven to act. They need to be able to make a tangible impact, be heard and be part of the solution. Ensure your leaders understand the needs of the younger generations in their workforce in order to maximise the potential of their team.

SURVIVE

Remain viable in the marketplace

- Seek to have a strong alignment between an organisation's and individual's purpose
- Embed this alignment within your employer brand to be sure you attract the right talent

- Actively explore realistic hybrid working policies that reflect the evolving expectations of your workforce and the realities of the working environment, industry and work

- While compensation remains a key factor for Gen Z and Millennials in Switzerland, ensure you benchmark your rewards approach against key competitors for talent

- Provide basic channels for feedback and input into topics that are considered important by your workforce (e.g. working practices, sustainability, Diversity-Equity-Inclusion etc.)

THRIVE

Differentiate to gain competitive advantage

- Build a compelling and unique employee value proposition (EVP) to meet worker expectations
- Ensure your EVP reflects the lived reality for your workforce to inspire authenticity

- Ensure workplaces are designed to enable valuable social and developmental interactions
- Explore how to embed flexibility for those unable to work in a hybrid way (e.g. flexible work hours)

- Proactively communicate compelling career and/or development pathways
- Offer tangible mobility options to provide key talent with exposure to different roles or projects

- Build new leadership skills to drive proactive workforce engagement (e.g. empathy, emotional intelligence etc.)
- Embed employee engagement feedback into performance management practices

DRIVE

Lead the market through innovation

- Elevate your EVP to make an explicit link to your organisation's ESG strategy
- Proactively engage your workforce to enable them to set and affect sustainability targets

- Gather real-time workforce insights and feedback from your workforce
- Establish regular reviews of policies, workplaces and infrastructure to react to evolving needs

- Launch an 'opportunity marketplace' to match talent to projects using a skills-based approach
- Build a high-level of transparency and democracy in access to growth and project opportunities

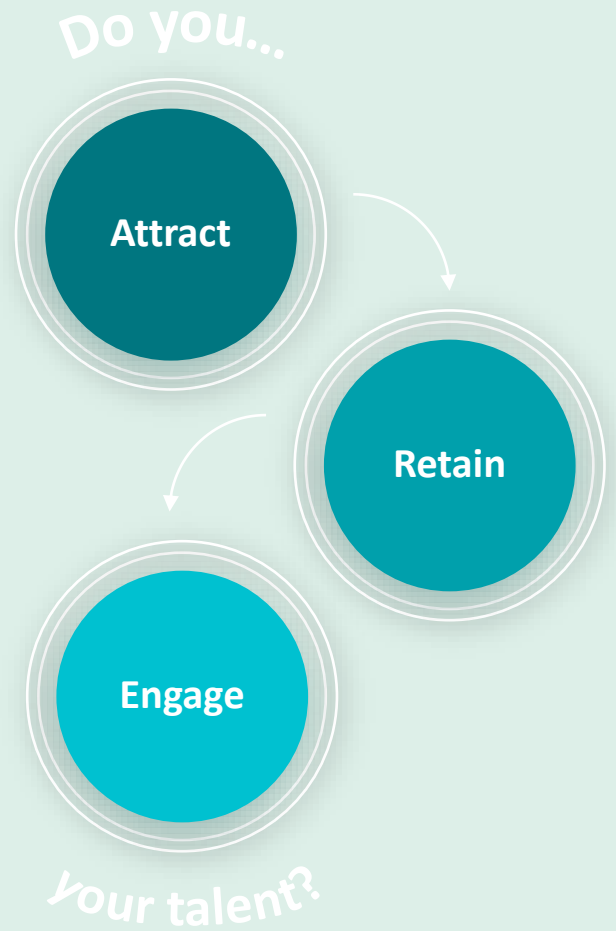
- Establish new tools and mechanisms to ensure the younger generations are represented, including: Junior Advisory Boards; innovative internal communications, or next gen panels

Attract

Retain

Engage

As a Swiss business leader, what should you ask yourself?



Attract

Do you offer a compelling career experience to Swiss Millennials/Gen Z, especially now in the tough fight for talent?

- Do you understand their uniqueness and what they want in detail, not assuming everyone is the same?
- Have you built a compelling EVP, reflected in a proactively managed employer brand?
- Have you successfully embedded flexibility into working practices (not just a "policy")?

Retain

Do you know why Swiss Millennials and Gen Z are leaving your organisation and are you doing enough to keep them?

- Do you have an established and robust retention strategy?
- Are you offering clear, compelling and flexible growth and development pathways?
- Do you provide varied project experiences and exposure, based on skills?

Engage

Do you maximise the potential of Gen Z and Millennials within your organisation by leveraging their strengths and engaging with them in the right way?

- Is your organisation's purpose aligned with that of your workforce?
- Do you provide a platform for the voice of the Gen Z and Millennial workforce to be heard?
- Have you defined and role-modelled the new leadership expectations?
- Do you provide the right workforce environment for these generations to flourish?



Survey results

Purpose is a driver of career choice and is the reason why organisations may be losing talent



Be purpose driven

- ▶ Despite low economic growth there is a shortage of skilled workers in many areas, increasing the pressure on organisations in the fight for talent, especially in Switzerland. This makes it even more important for employers to understand the needs, concerns and attitudes of the two youngest working generations, Generation Z and Millennials.
- ▶ Retaining talent will be a challenge, especially for the youngest group, Gen Z. As seen in Chart 1, 44% plan to change their job in the next two years. This proportion is half as high among Millennials.
- ▶ Around a third of Millennials and only 21% of Gen Z would like to stay with their current employer for longer than 5 years. This probably has more to do with age and the desire to gain varied experience than with a potential cohort effect.
- ▶ We asked all those who have been with their current employer for less than two years why they left their previous job (see Chart 2). The salary is important: in the EU the most cited reason, in Switzerland the second most. However, the number one reason for quitting in Switzerland for both generations was that the work was not fulfilling or meaningful. Other frequently mentioned reasons from the top five are lack of promotion opportunities, negative impact on mental health, or the emerging risk of burnout.



Money is important but in Switzerland the number one reason for quitting is a lack of purpose. Organisations need to ensure their purpose is clearly articulated and at the heart of their employee value proposition in order to attract and retain younger generation workers. Pay is simply not enough.

Chart 1: How long do you plan to stay with your current employer(s)?

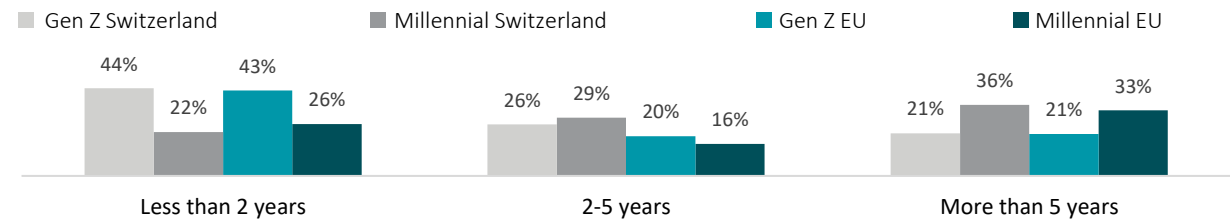


Chart 2: Which of the following best describes why you left your previous role?

	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen Z	Millennial
#1	I didn't find my work to be fulfilling or meaningful	I didn't find my work to be fulfilling or meaningful	Pay wasn't high enough	Pay wasn't high enough
#2	Pay wasn't high enough	Pay wasn't high enough	I didn't find my work to be fulfilling or meaningful	I was feeling burned out
#3	I felt the job/workplace was detrimental to my mental health	The role didn't offer a positive work/life balance	Lack of career advancement opportunities	Lack of career advancement opportunities
#4	Lack of career advancement opportunities	I was feeling burned out	I felt the job/workplace was detrimental to my mental health	I felt the job/workplace was detrimental to my mental health
#5	I was feeling burned out	I felt the job/workplace was detrimental to my mental health	I didn't feel valued or that my contributions mattered	I didn't feel valued or that my contributions mattered

Note on chart 2: Results from those who have been with their current employer since less than two years

Bringing their true self to work is key



Be purpose driven



When asked which things are most important to their sense of identity, there are interesting differences between Switzerland and the EU average. While work is a very important element for both generations in the EU (57% for Gen Z, 43% for Millennials), it is much less important for both generations in Switzerland.

However, for both generations, in Switzerland and the EU, friends & family are the clear number one for their own sense of identity.

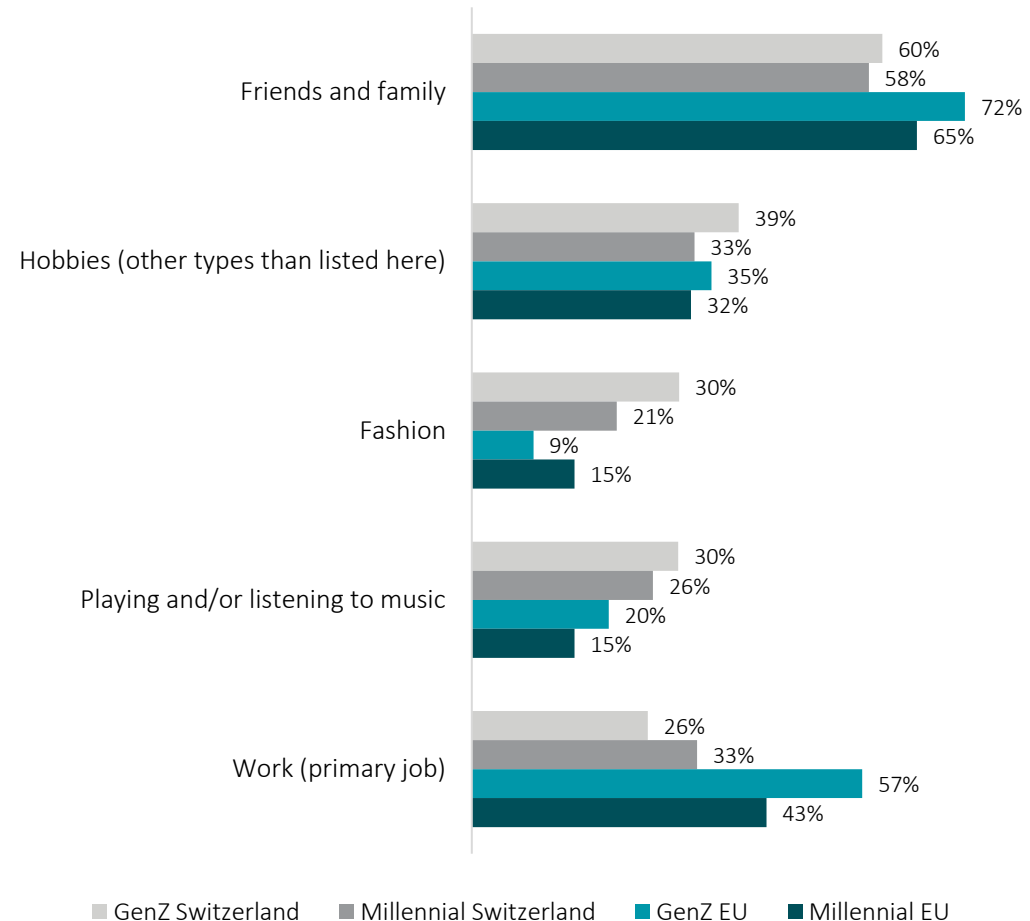


When Swiss Millennials and Gen Z think of the peers they admire, what impresses them most is that they live life on their own terms, without necessarily living up to societal expectations. Hobbies are a core part of their identity and therefore integral to their work/life balance.



Work is still a key factor determining their identity, but their friends and family are the biggest influence. A key challenge for organisations is how to nurture and encourage this authenticity while also pursuing their mission and purpose.

Chart 3: Which of the following are most important to your sense of identity?



Increasing cost of living is a serious concern for young generations



Embed flexibility into your working practises

Overall, the cost of living is currently the biggest concern of young workers, especially in the EU. Climate change and environmental protection follows second, except for Swiss Gen Z for whom it is the top concern. Mental health among one's own generation is in third place among Gen Z in Switzerland and in the EU.



Cost of living, climate change and mental health are key topics which organisations need to consider when it comes to defining and reviewing the way they embed flexibility into their work practises.

Chart 5: Top concerns

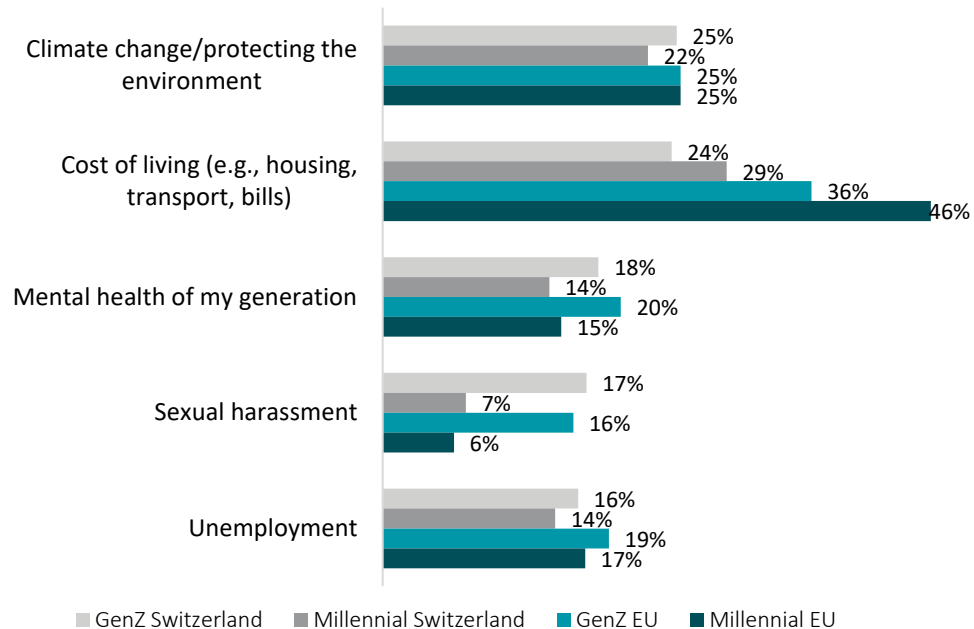


Chart 4: Of the following issues, please rank your top three concerns:

	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen Z	Millennial
#1	Climate change/protecting the environment	Cost of living	Cost of living	Cost of living
#2	Cost of living	Climate change/protecting the environment	Climate change/protecting the environment	Climate change/protecting the environment
#3	Mental health of my generation	Secure retirement/pension funds*	Mental health of my generation	Political instability/wars/conflicts between countries
#4	Sexual harassment	Health care/disease prevention	Unemployment	Health care/disease prevention
#5	Unemployment	Political instability/wars/conflicts between countries	Political instability/wars/conflicts between countries	Unemployment
#6	Terrorism	Unemployment	Sexual harassment	Resource scarcity
#7	Political instability/wars/conflicts between countries	Mental health of my generation	Inequality / discrimination based on personal characteristics	Income inequality/distribution of wealth
#8	Resource scarcity	Resource scarcity	Health care/disease prevention	Mental health of my generation

*Secure retirement/pension funds was an option only in Switzerland

Leveraging flexibility helps to improve financial security



Embed flexibility
into your working
practices

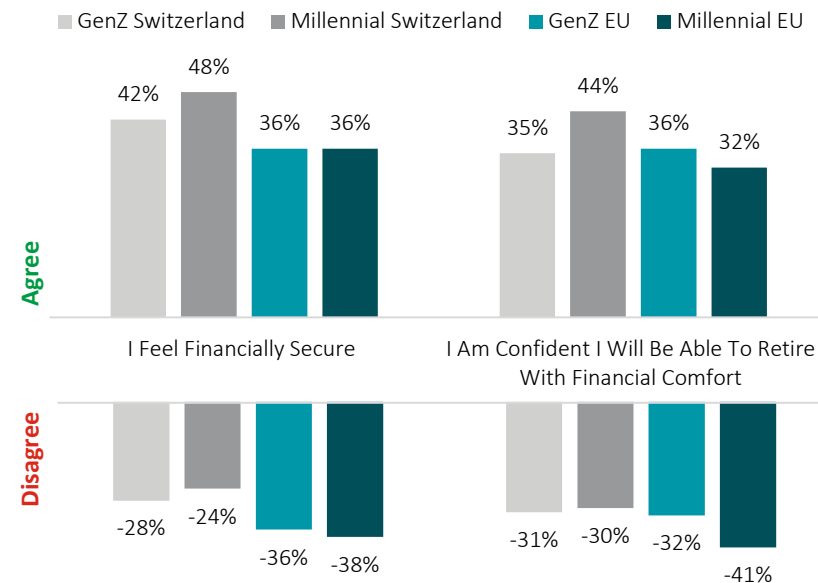
▶ We all notice that daily life is becoming more expensive. For Millennials and Gen Z in Switzerland, this experience is new. The inflation rate has been stable below 2% for the last 25 years, with a brief exception before the financial crisis, and around zero during the last decade.¹ Slightly less than half of Swiss Millennials feels financially secure, compared to 42% of Gen Z. In the EU the figure is only 36% in both age groups.

They are also insecure about their pensions. In Switzerland around 30% worry that they will retire without financial comfort. Among Millennials in the EU as many as 41% face an uncomfortable retirement and as seen in Chart 4, it is ranked as the 3rd biggest concern. This was only an option in the Swiss survey but shows once again, as in the annual “CS Sorgenbarometer”, how important this topic is for the population, and not only for those who will retire soon, but also for Millennials.²



Financial security is clearly a growing concern among these generations. They are therefore seeking ways to reduce their costs and optimise their financial situation, as shown in Chart 10. During the pandemic they increased their disposable income by reducing their travel expenses, for example.

Chart 6: Financial statements



Note: «Neither agree nor disagree» is not shown

Flexibility goes beyond the workplace



Embed flexibility into your working practises

- Once you get used to remote working, the way back to 100% compulsory attendance at the office is unimaginable for many. About 40% of respondents said they would look for a new job, about the same number would seek talks with their employer, and only a minority would simply accept the change (see Chart 8). This resistance is particularly pronounced among Swiss Gen Z: 15% would immediately look for a new job and only 10% would readily accept the change.
- Companies should take a wide variety of measures to embed flexibility and promote a healthy work/life balance, as seen in Chart 7. The demands range from reduced working weeks, flexible working conditions and part-time jobs to restrictions on emails outside actual working hours. Every third Gen Z from the EU demands the same opportunities for part-time as for full-time employees. In Switzerland, too, this desire is somewhat more pronounced among the younger generation.
- It is noticeable that the Swiss are more demanding overall. This probably reflects their more privileged financial situation and good job prospects. This can be seen, for example, in the demands for a sabbatical -- something that many European peers cannot afford.



Flexibility goes beyond hybrid working policies. It is the when, where, and how to best accomplish work. This is not limited to these generations; we also see this trend across the workforce amid a need to activate the future of the workplace.

Chart 7: In which of the following areas do you feel organisations should focus to help foster a better work/life balance for their employees?



It's all about striking the balance when it comes to flexibility...



Embed flexibility into your working practises

▶ In Switzerland almost twice as many (30%) Gen Z and Millennials would like to work more flexibly than is currently the case (see Chart 9). Gen Z in the EU are almost at the preferred level of remote and hybrid working; Gen Z would even like to work a little less remotely.

☑ If an organisation is not able to offer flexible working when it comes to the workplace, then it must consider how it can embed other flexible working practices, such as working hours.

Chart 8: If your current employer asked you to work full time from the company or client's site, how would this impact you?

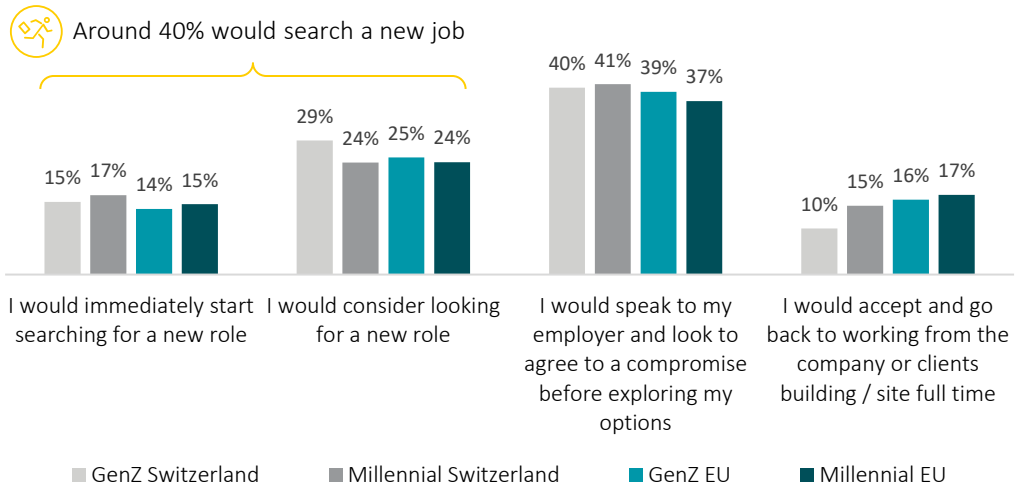
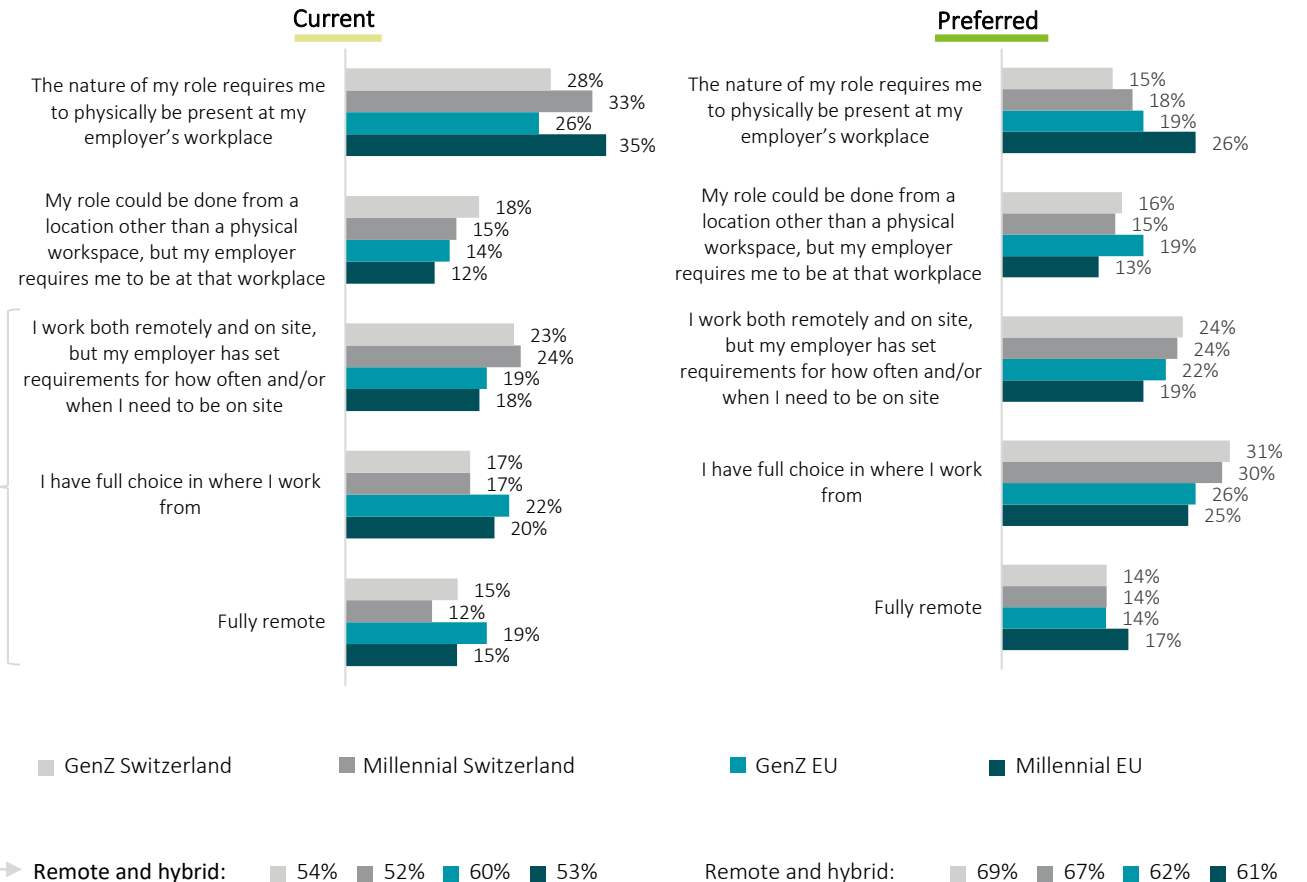


Chart 9: Which of the following best describes your current/preferred situation when it comes to your place of work?





... therefore embedding flexibility is not as straightforward as it seems

As seen in Chart 10, remote working is one of the ways Millennials and Gen Z can save money and improve their financial security. However, it seems that remote working can also lead to feeling isolated or excluded, and sometimes even cause a sense of suffering from proximity bias, in which onsite workers are favoured. This links to mental health issues, the third most mentioned concern of Gen Z – in Switzerland as well as in Europe. Employees who have not been with the company for long do not yet have a large internal network and are therefore increasingly dependent on individual meetings. This shows once again that the balance has to be right when working remotely, so that the advantages of both worlds can be enjoyed.

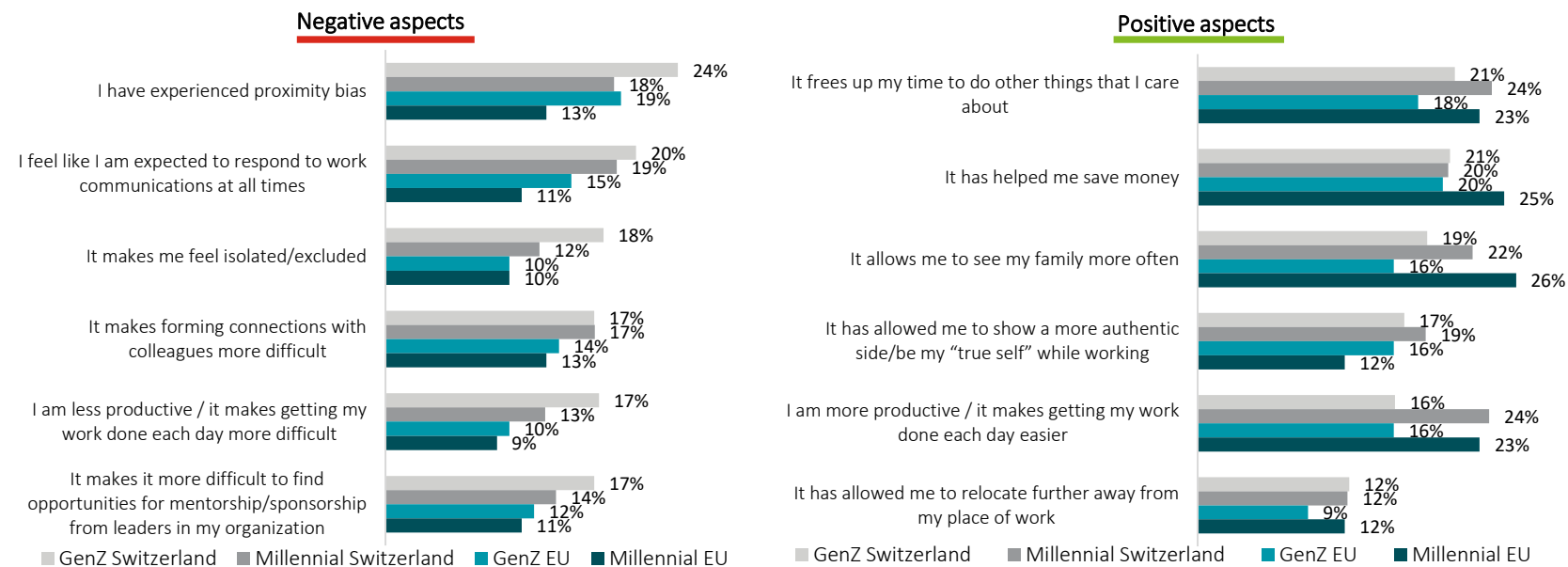


Geographically dispersed teams can affect the motivation, experience and engagement of your workforce, especially Gen Zs.

What emerges particularly from our research is some of the negative aspects experienced by younger generations when the right balance is not struck, especially when it comes to in person vs remote working.

Flexibility is all about balance. Understanding the needs of younger generations will help organisations establish the types of flexibility required by the workforce and how to adapt or update talent processes.

Chart 10: In which of the following ways does working remotely, whether all or some of the time, impact your life?



Note: «Neither agree nor disagree» is not shown

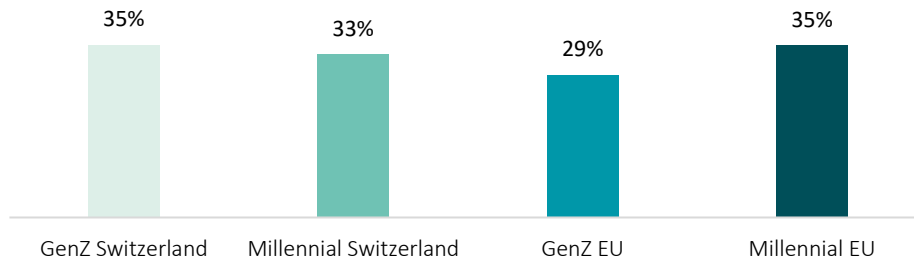
Note: Sample includes only those who work remotely

Seeking growth and career development: learning opportunities top the agenda for Millennials and Gen Z



Provide tangible growth opportunities

Chart 11: Proportion of those who are dissatisfied with their career opportunities with current employers



Besides a good work/life balance and salary, learning and development opportunities are very important to Swiss Gen Z when choosing an employer (see Chart 12). What is striking is that over a third are not satisfied with their current career development opportunities. This seems to be a bigger issue in Switzerland, as the corresponding figure in the EU is six percentage points lower (see Chart 11).



Learning and development is a top reason why Swiss Millennials and Gen Zs would move to another job. They value the opportunity to grow and develop their careers and will also make an organisation their top preference because of this. Millennials and Gen Zs are not scared to act or vote with their feet. 44% of Gen Z and 22% of Millennials plan to change their current job in the next two years. Swiss organisations therefore need to take action and reflect on their offering as a key differentiator to engage and retain talent.

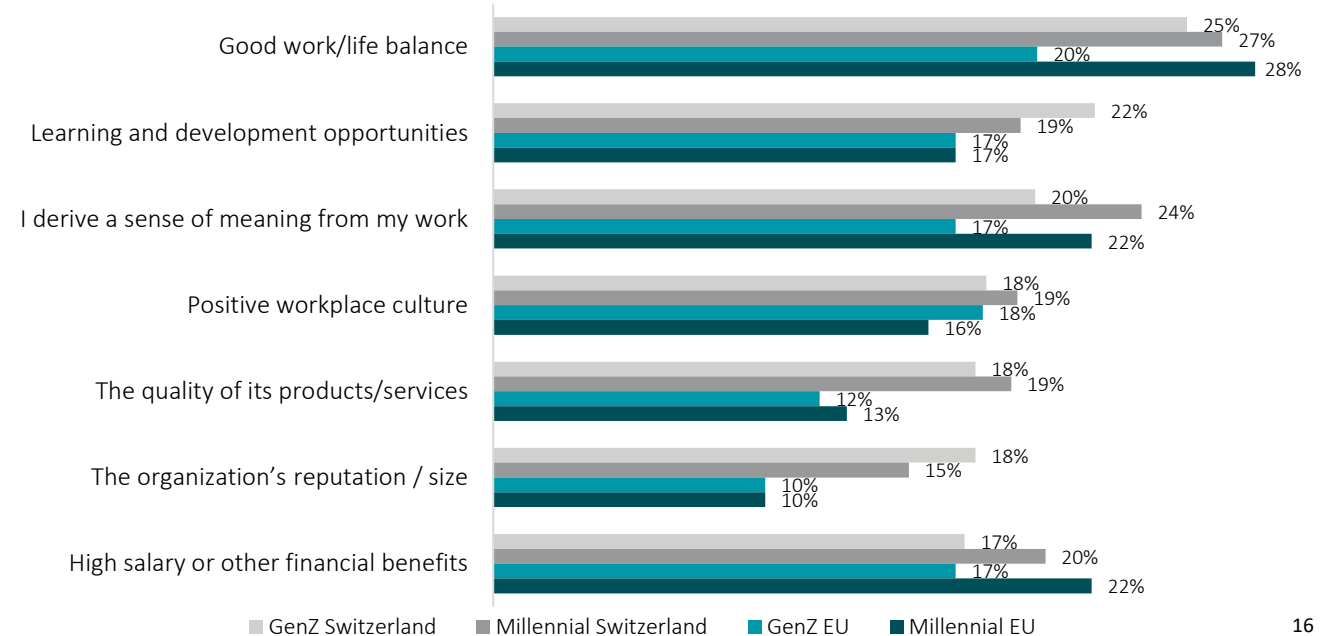
35% of Swiss Gen Z are not satisfied with their opportunities to progress and grow in their career, compared to 29% in the EU



25% of Swiss Millennials are not satisfied with their pay and workplace benefits, compared to 38% in the EU countries



Chart 12: Which of the following are the strongest reasons why you chose to work for your organisation?

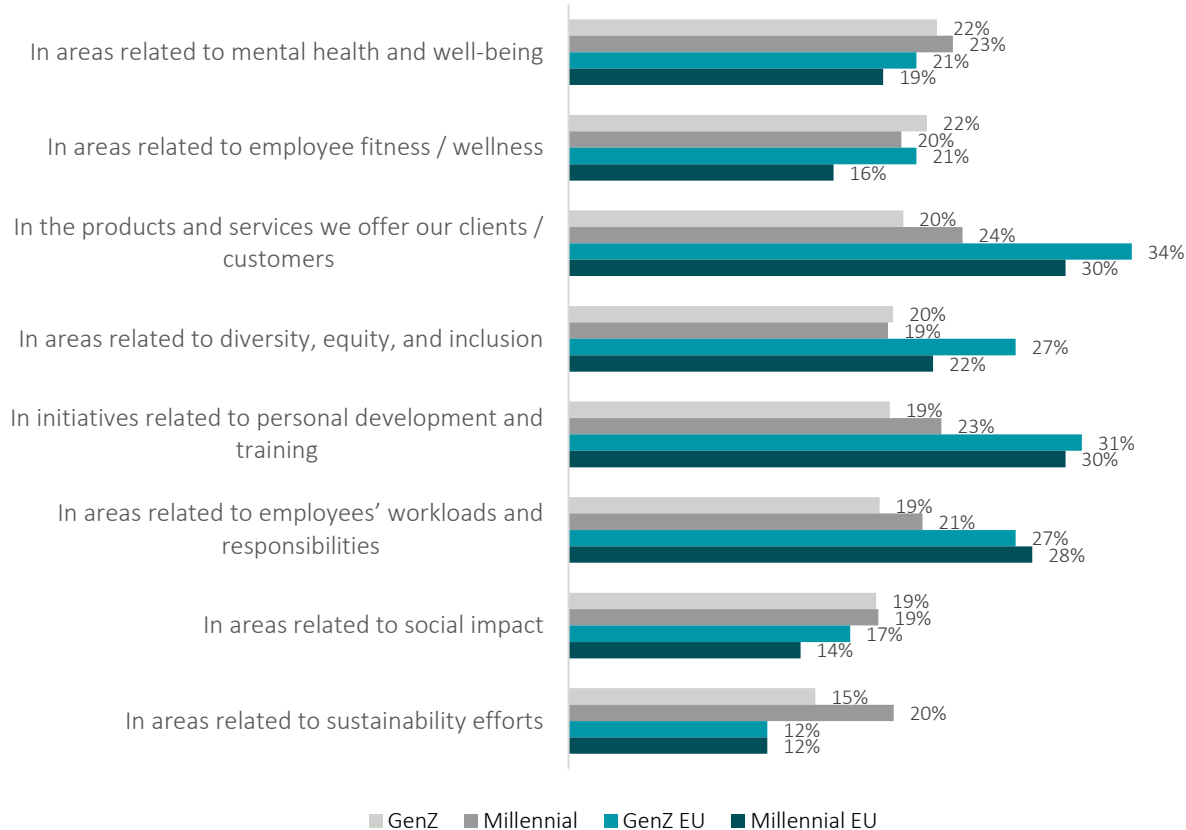


Do you have the power to change?



Empower your workforce

Chart 13: In which ways/areas do you feel you have an opportunity to positively influence your organisation?



There is a wide area of ways in which Millennials and Gen Z feel they have an opportunity to positively influence their organisation. However, as seen in Chart 13, there is no clear tendency: the answers are spread quite evenly in Switzerland. On average, Swiss Millennials feel more empowered than Gen Z.

14% of Swiss Gen Z and **20%** of Swiss Millennials think they have **no opportunity to positively influence** their organisation

- In the EU we see a different picture. Gen Z feels more empowered than Millennials and both generations have more power to positively influence their firm when it comes to its products and services, diversity, personal development and workloads & responsibilities.
- More than two-thirds of Swiss and EU respondents are satisfied with the extent to which their company takes note of their feedback and uses it to improve workplace culture. This also suggests there is still plenty of room for improvement.



Gen Z and Millennials are generations driven to act. They need to be able to make a tangible impact and be heard. The results show that there is a substantial part who lacks this opportunity. In order to capture their ideas and maximise the potential of the full team a new set of leadership behaviours may be needed. It is important to explore different ways to engage with younger workers and ensure they have the platforms and mechanisms to feel valued and that they can contribute and make an impact.

Endnotes

(I) BFS (2023), [Consumer Prices | Federal Statistical Office \(admin.ch\)](https://www.admin.ch/gov/de/inf/spezial/verbraucherpreise)

(II) CS Sorgenbarometer (2022), [Credit Suisse Sorgenbarometer 2022 | gfs.bern \(gfsbern.ch\)](https://www.gfs.bern.ch/)

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