



Mental health today

A deep dive based on the 2023
Gen Z and Millennial survey

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Introduction

The 2023 Deloitte Global Gen Z and Millennial survey gathered the views of over 22,000 people in 44 countries. This is the 12th year that this survey has been conducted, and the fourth year that it has included extensive questions on mental health.

This year's survey was conducted at a pivotal time. The COVID-19 pandemic has receded as a day-to-day concern for many people, but its legacy has embedded undeniable shifts in personal priorities and in expectations around ways of working.

Meanwhile, other major events have brought new challenges or heightened existing ones—with respondents' top three societal concerns this year being cost of living, unemployment, and climate change. These cumulative issues are impacting the daily lives of Gen Zs and millennials, making their future more uncertain, and placing their mental well-being under continuous strain. In fact, among Gen Zs, the mental health of their generation ranks as their fourth top societal concern.

Over the past three years, this survey has provided valuable insight into the mental health of these generations. Our 2020 report, which was fielded in December 2019, painted a stark picture: one of high levels of stress and anxiety, even before the onset of the pandemic. This theme has continued ever since.

In 2023 we see little change when it comes to levels of stress and anxiety. Nearly half of Gen Zs and four in 10 millennials feel stressed or anxious all or most of the time, with women and other under-represented groups most impacted.

The survey findings enable us to better understand the intersection of mental health and work—shining a light on work-specific factors and burnout, as well as the support people receive from employers. In line with the 2022 findings, stigma around mental health clearly remains. While there is a general recognition that employers are improving their support, many employees are still not using the resources offered in their workplaces, and many are still not disclosing when they take time off work for mental health reasons.

This year's data again highlights the importance of mental health to Gen Zs and millennials. It shows that employers are taking some steps to provide the support and environment needed, but there remains much to do.

Heightened levels of stress persist



The last three years have prompted many to reevaluate the role work plays in their lives and led to a continued push for better work/life balance and more flexible ways of working. Now, even with many workplaces reopened, organizations are continuing to enable hybrid work in an effort to provide the level of flexibility that is now expected by many. The pandemic also brought conversations about mental health at work to the fore, prompting some organizations to provide additional support for their employees.

These positive changes are, however, set against a backdrop of deepening awareness of inequalities in society and the workplace, the impact of climate change, new geopolitical tensions, and economic concerns—all of which continue to contribute to heightened stress and anxiety.

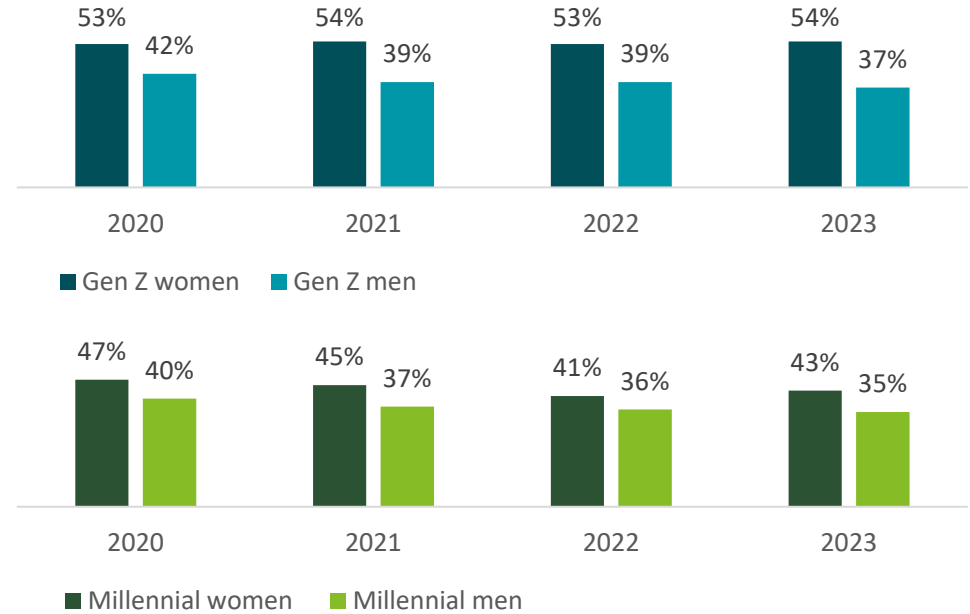


Stress and anxiety levels remain high—with under-represented groups most affected

This year sees almost no change to the worryingly high levels of stress and anxiety seen in previous years, with close to half of Gen Zs (46%) and four in 10 millennials (39%) reporting that they feel stressed or anxious all or most of the time.

We also see a continuation in the trend of women reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety than men in both generations (54% versus 37% in Gen Zs, and 43% versus 35% in millennials). This trend is becoming increasingly pronounced among Gen Zs, with the gender gap growing from an 11 to a 17-point difference over the last three years. In contrast, the gender gap in millennial stress levels has remained relatively stable since 2020.

Those who feel stressed all or most of the time:





Almost half of Gen Zs say they feel stressed all or most of the time

Women are more affected than men and those with a disability indicate higher stress levels

Percentage who feel anxious or stressed:

Gen Zs

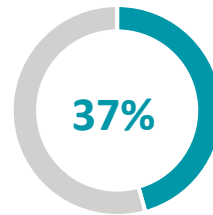


Millennials

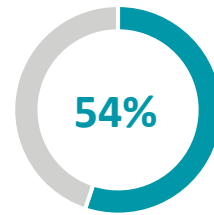


■ All the time ■ Most of the time ■ Not very often or never

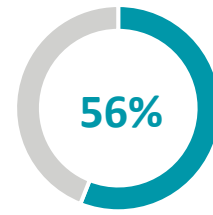
Gen Zs



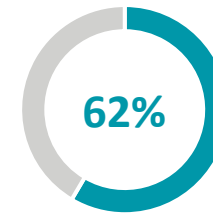
Male



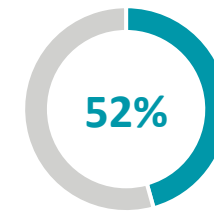
Female



LGBT+

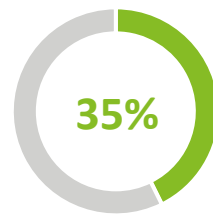


Disability

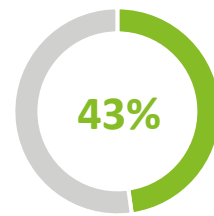


Minority ethnic groups

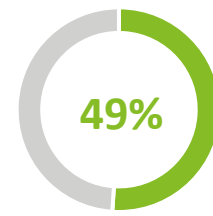
Millennials



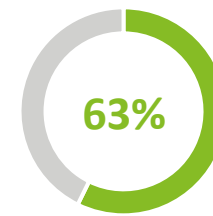
Male



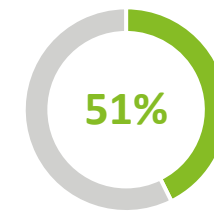
Female



LGBT+



Disability



Minority ethnic groups

Respondents in under-represented groups also report heightened levels of stress and anxiety. For example, 56% of LGBT+ Gen Zs and 49% of LGBT+ millennials report that they feel stressed or anxious all or most of the time, along with 52% of Gen Zs and 51% of millennials who are part of an ethnic minority group, and 62% of Gen Zs and 63% of millennials who have a disability. This is significantly higher than the overall respondent base (46% for Gen Z and 39% for millennials).



Stress drivers: the mental health “feedback loop” and work-related factors

When considering stress and anxiety, it is important to understand the concerns that may be driving it. Finances and the welfare of their families continue to be the top stress drivers for both generations. As with previous years, concerns about their own mental health also rank highly—with 79% of Gen Zs and 73% of millennials saying that those concerns contribute to their stress levels, creating a worrying “feedback loop”.

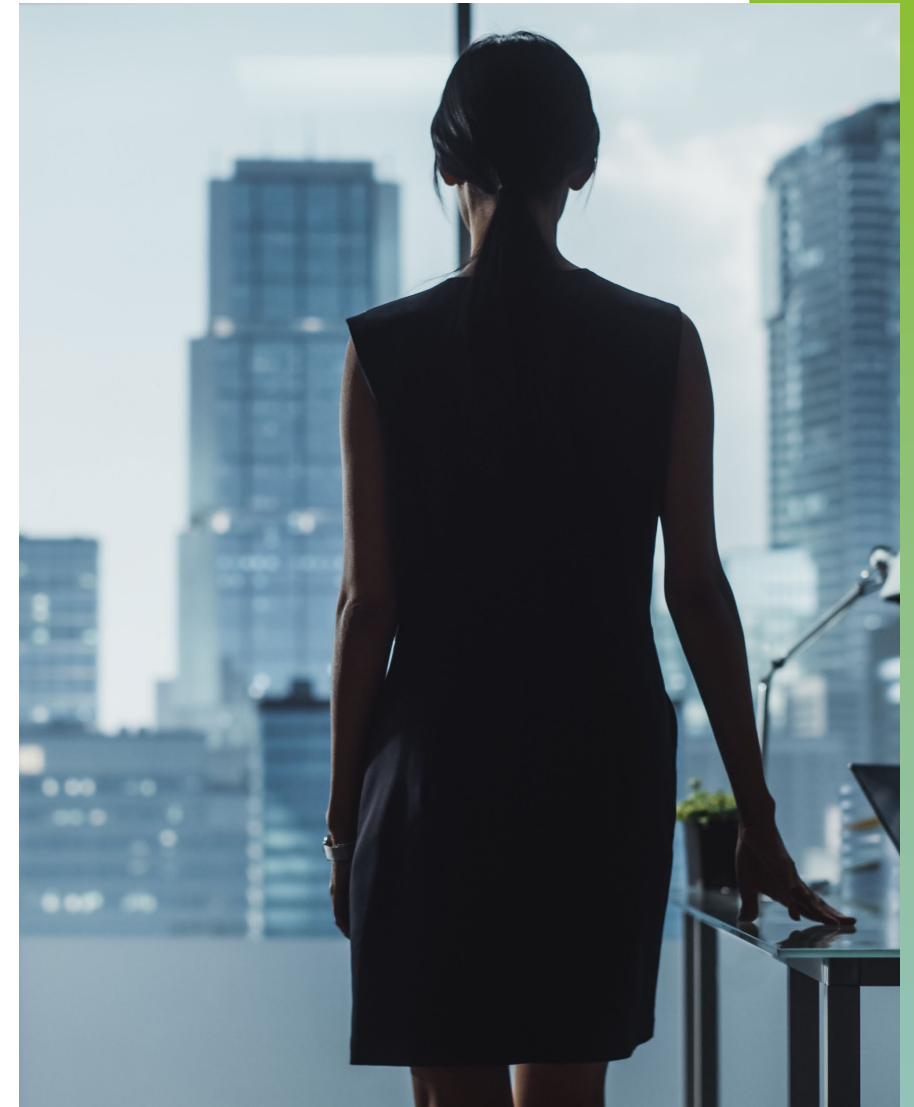
Beyond their personal mental health, Gen Zs also cite the mental health of their generation among their top societal concerns. This is particularly true among Gen Z women, with around a quarter of them citing this in their top three, compared to about one in six Gen Z men and millennial women, and 12% of millennial men.


A number of factors contributing to stress levels are directly work-related, such as heavy workload, poor work/life balance, unhealthy team cultures, and inability to be their authentic self at work. Indeed, over 60% of respondents cite these factors as contributing to their stress and anxiety levels. People are also struggling to disconnect from work, with 23% of Gen Zs and 30% of millennials saying that they answer work emails outside of business hours at least five days a week.



Three-quarters say concerns about their mental health contribute to anxiety or stress and work is also a consistent challenge

Percentage who say the following contributes to their feelings of anxiety or stress:



 **Generational elements are also contributing to poor mental health**

For the first time, this year’s survey also examines how some generational factors may be driving poor mental health in Gen Zs and millennials.

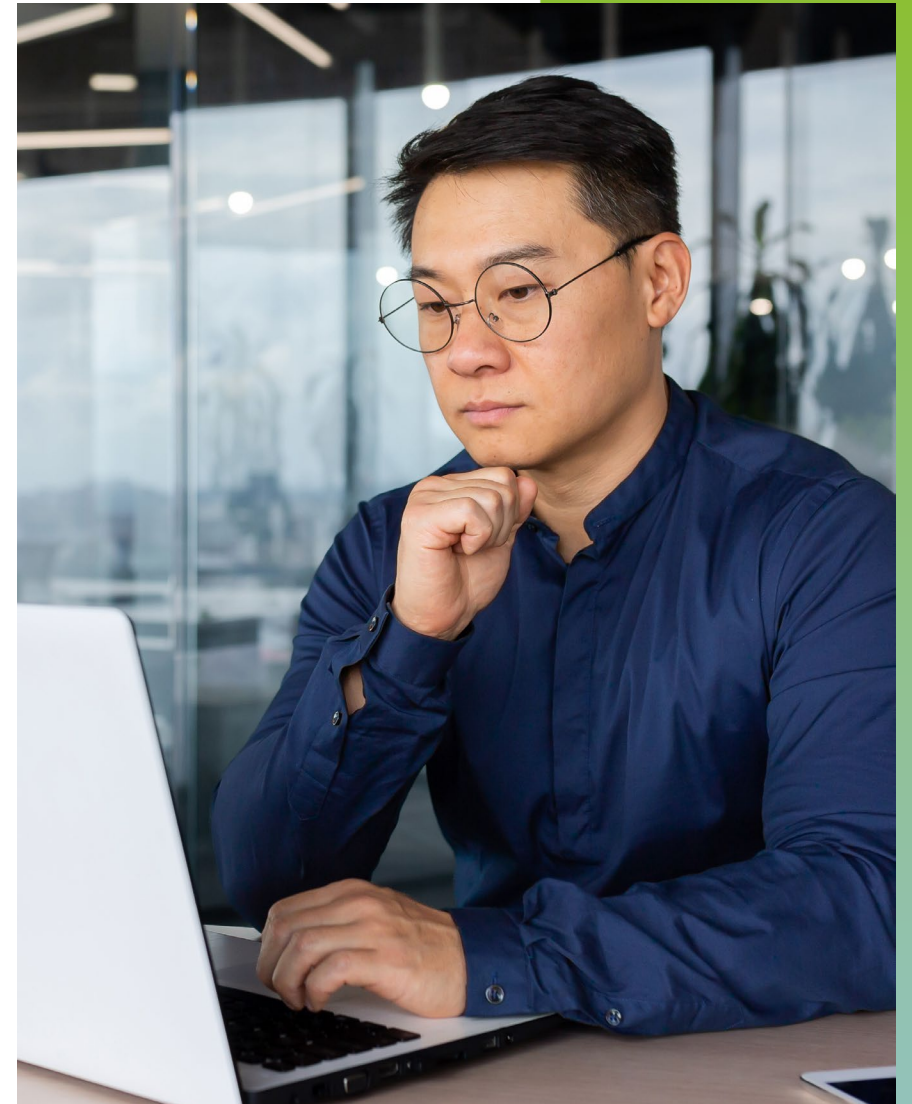
Millennials, and to a slightly lesser extent Gen Zs, are reaching an age where they are more likely to have increased caretaking responsibilities. Just over a third of Gen Zs and about four in 10 millennials have daily or periodic caregiving responsibilities for both children and parents or elderly relatives. Among respondents with caretaking responsibilities, over 40% say it significantly impacts their mental health.

The use of social media by younger generations could also be having an effect. Perhaps surprisingly, almost half of Gen Zs (48%) and millennials (49%) think social media has a positive impact on their mental health—yet 46% of Gen Zs say social media makes them feel lonely and inadequate and 45% say that they feel under pressure to have an online presence.

With one in five (20%) Gen Zs spending five hours or more a day on video platforms alone, the struggle to disconnect goes well beyond the workplace.



Addressing mental health needs in the workplace



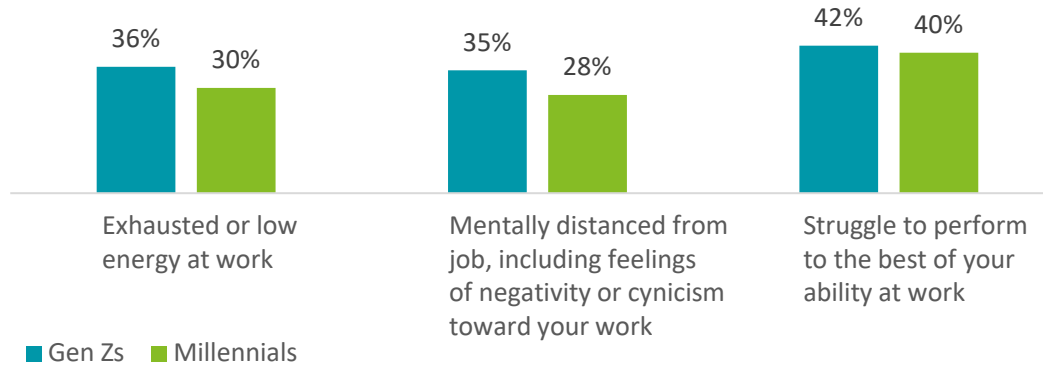


Burnout on the rise

Linked to the results around work-related stress drivers, this year’s survey finds increasingly high levels of burnout due to work pressures in Gen Zs (52% this year versus 46% in 2022) and millennials alike (49% versus 45%).

Using the World Health Organization’s criteria for burnout, the survey this year asked respondents about specific feelings they experience while working. It found that 36% of Gen Zs feel exhausted all or most of the time, 35% feel mentally distanced from their work, and 42% often struggle to perform to the best of their ability. The numbers are nearly as high among millennials (respectively 30%, 28% and 40%).

Those who feel stressed all or most of the time:



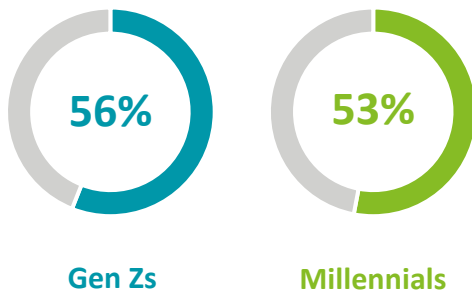
These figures represent a wake-up call for business leaders to act decisively to mitigate burnout and its causes.

This is all the more urgent as more than a third of respondents—a higher proportion than last year—do not believe that their employer is currently taking steps to prevent employee burnout.

↑ Employers are striving to support workplace mental health...

Looking at broader workplace support for mental health, the results are more encouraging, with over half of respondents acknowledging that their leaders are taking mental health seriously. While this is comparable to 2022 findings, a key difference this year lies in the fact that a majority of respondents (56% of Gen Zs/53% of millennials) now feel that this increased focus is resulting in meaningful change.

Those who agree that **an increased focus on mental health at work has resulted in positive changes** within their workplace:



The data also serves to highlight the importance of business leaders continuing these efforts: more than 8 in 10 Gen Zs and millennials now consider mental health support and policies to be important factors in assessing potential employers.

...but mental health and well-being support is still under-utilized and is not addressing stigma

Despite employers' focus on supporting mental health, many respondents are still not comfortable disclosing these challenges. About a third of respondents would not feel comfortable speaking openly with their manager about stress or anxiety. And among those who have taken time off to address mental health challenges, over half did not tell their employer the real reason.

Further, uptake of the resources made available to employees remains disappointingly low.

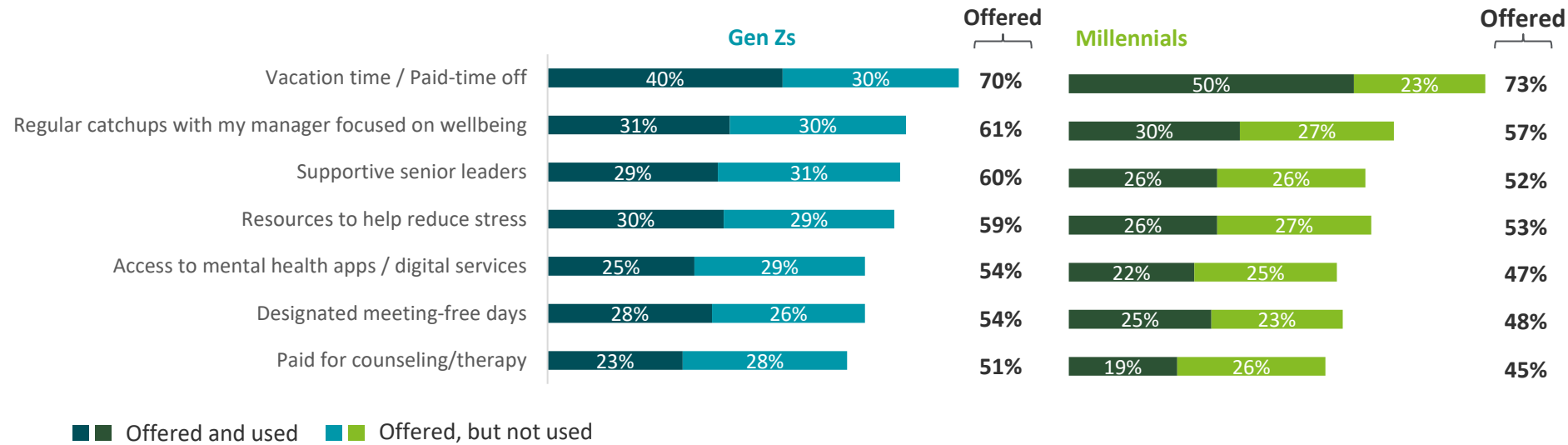
The survey finds that, outside of vacation time, three in 10 millennials or less use sources of support made available to them at work—from therapy to digital apps and from meeting-free days to regular catchups with managers focused on well-being.

Gen Zs seem only slightly more comfortable using these types of resources. For example, less than a third of respondents use informational resources to help reduce stress (30% of Gen Zs versus 26% of millennials), regular catchups with their manager focused on well-being (31% versus 30%) or paid for counselling/therapy (23% of Gen Zs versus 19% of millennials).



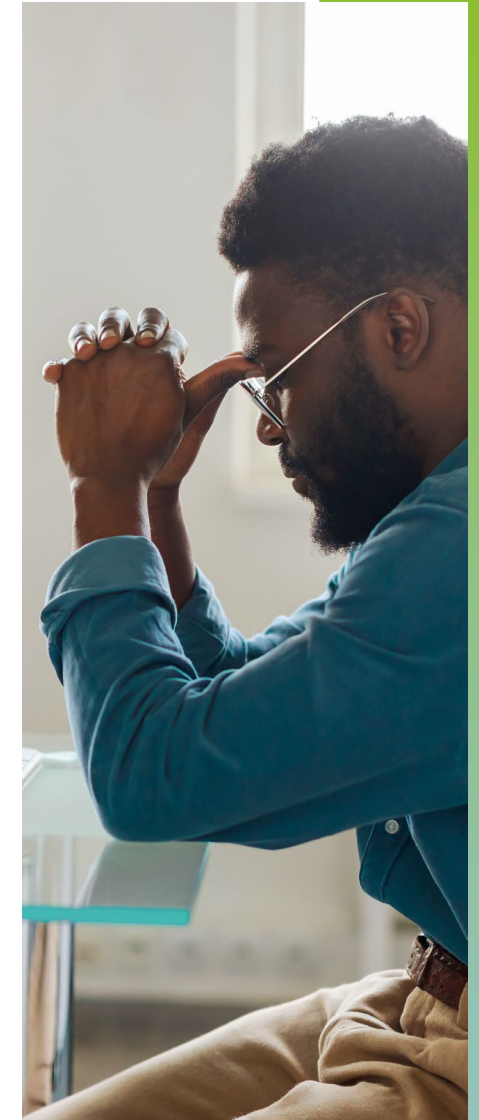


Workplace mental health resources and support are under-utilized

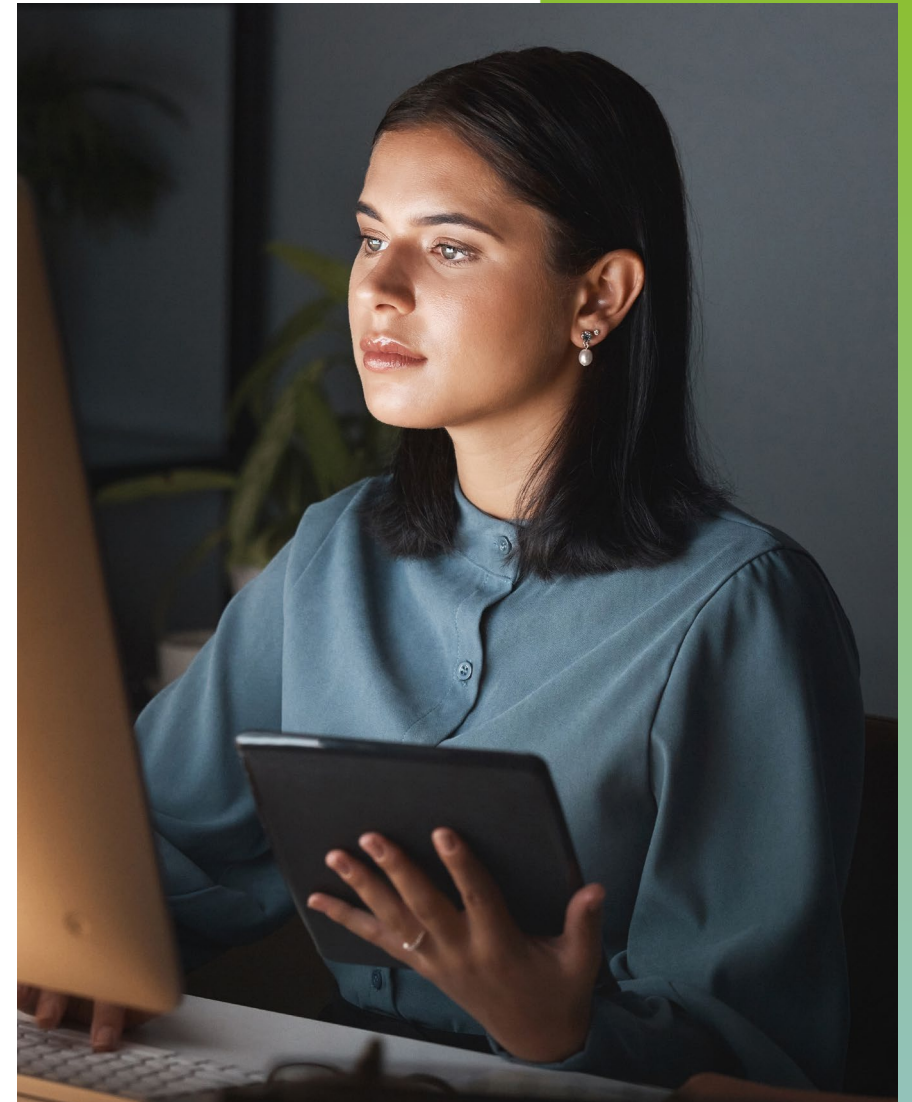


While more employers are providing mental health related support at work, these findings indicate that stigma around openly discussing and addressing mental health issues at work persists. And many employers are either failing to provide support in the first place, or failing to communicate the resources that are available. For example, only around six in 10


say they have access to supportive senior leaders, or sessions with their managers focused on well-being. And even fewer have access to resources such as digital tools or therapy. Three in 10 Gen Zs and just over two in 10 millennials are not offered, or not aware of their access to, paid time off to manage their mental health.



Work/life balance and a culture of respect remain key to well-being



As noted earlier, respondents say a number of work-related factors—such as heavy workload, poor work/life balance, unhealthy team cultures, and inability to be their authentic self at work—contribute to their stress and anxiety levels. This year’s wider survey questions provide critical insight into these factors for Gen Zs and millennials.

 **Achieving the right work/life balance remains a priority for many**

Respondents say that achieving a good work/life balance is the trait they admire most in their peers—they also cite it as the top reason for taking up their current role. Overall, the picture when it comes to their current work/life balance is positive: three quarters of Gen Zs and millennials (76%) are now at least somewhat satisfied with their current work/life balance, and around a third (34% of Gen Zs/31% of millennials) are very satisfied—a marked improvement compared to pre-pandemic indicators (21% and 18% were very satisfied). This is likely due to the fact that, for some people at least, aspirations to recalibrate how—and how much—they work have been realized over the last few years; and employers have had to adapt.

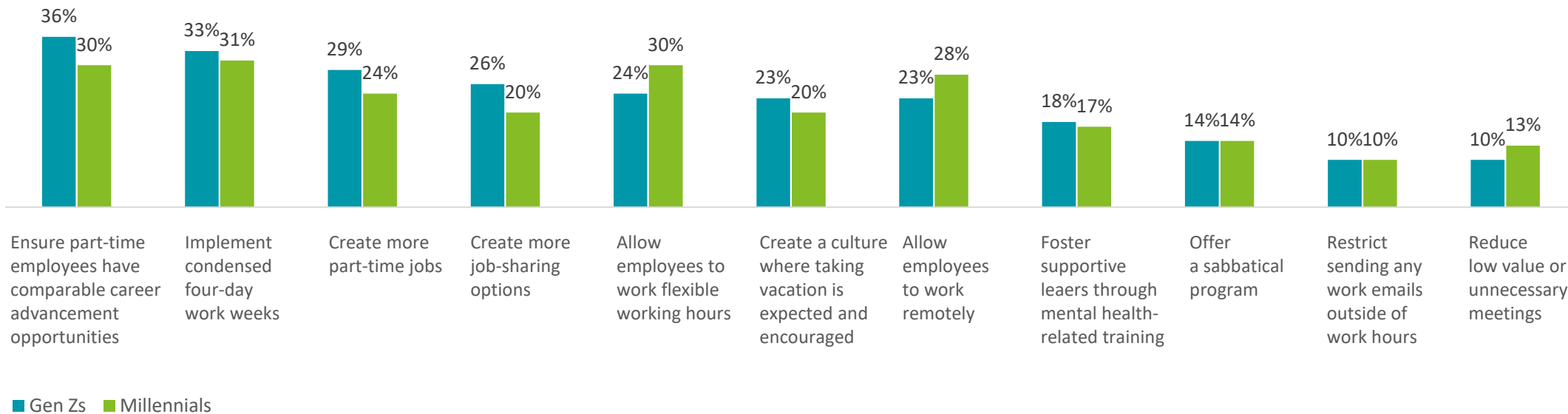
However, respondents are concerned that a stagnating or worsening economy could make it harder for them to reach that balance in the future: about a third believe it will become harder, and another approximately 15% believe it will become impossible, to ask for more flexibility at work or improve their work/life balance if the economic situation does not improve.

The survey also points to some specific measures that employees would like to see embedded in their organizations to promote more flexible ways of working beyond remote or hybrid working—with condensed four-day work weeks and increased opportunities and career advancement for part-time workers ranking particularly high.





In which of the following areas should organizations focus to help foster better work/life balance for their employees?



The acceleration of flexible working practices brought on by the pandemic is mostly seen as a helpful development: more than half of Gen Zs (54%) and millennials (59%) think hybrid work is positive for their mental health.

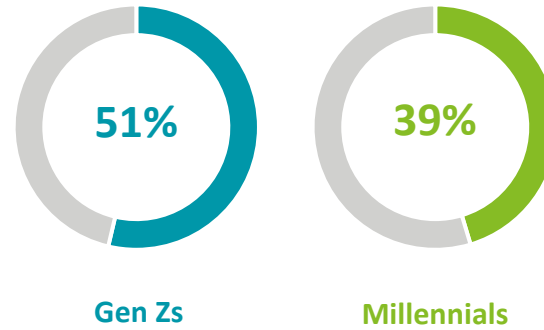
Only 22% of Gen Zs and 16% of millennials believe it has a negative impact, with some respondents citing concerns about proximity bias, challenges connecting with colleagues, and feelings of isolation.



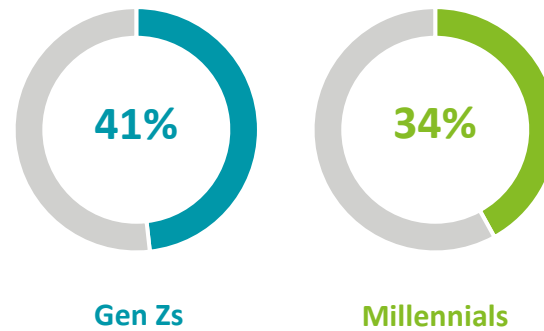
Non-inclusive behaviors are still widespread

Unfortunately, this year's data shows that non-inclusive behaviors at work remain commonplace. An alarming six in 10 Gen Zs (61%) and nearly half of millennials (49%) say they have experienced harassment or microaggressions at work in the year leading to the survey. The most commonly experienced forms of harassment include inappropriate communications or unwanted approaches, while exclusion, being patronized or undermined by managers or senior leaders because of their gender, and unwanted jokes are the most frequent types of microaggressions.

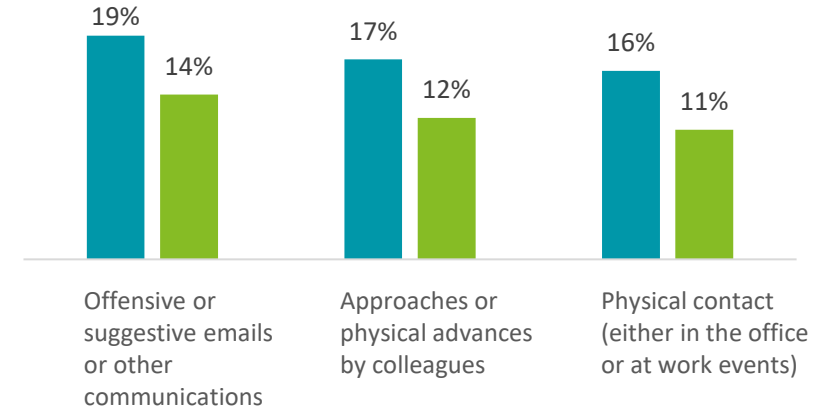
Percentage experienced harassment at work in last 12 months:



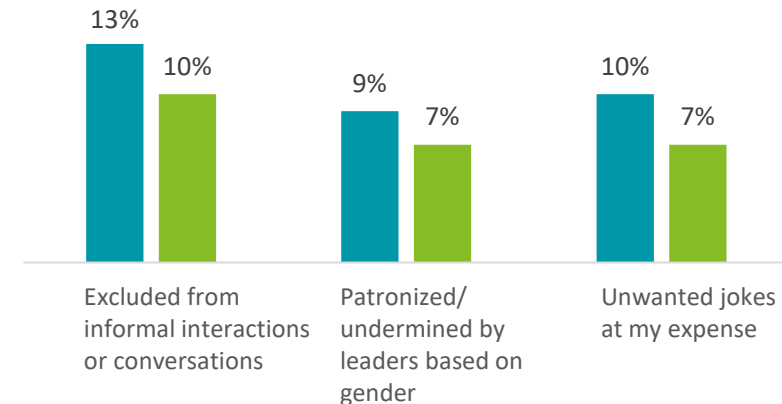
Percentage experienced microaggression at work in last 12 months:



Top harassment behaviors experienced

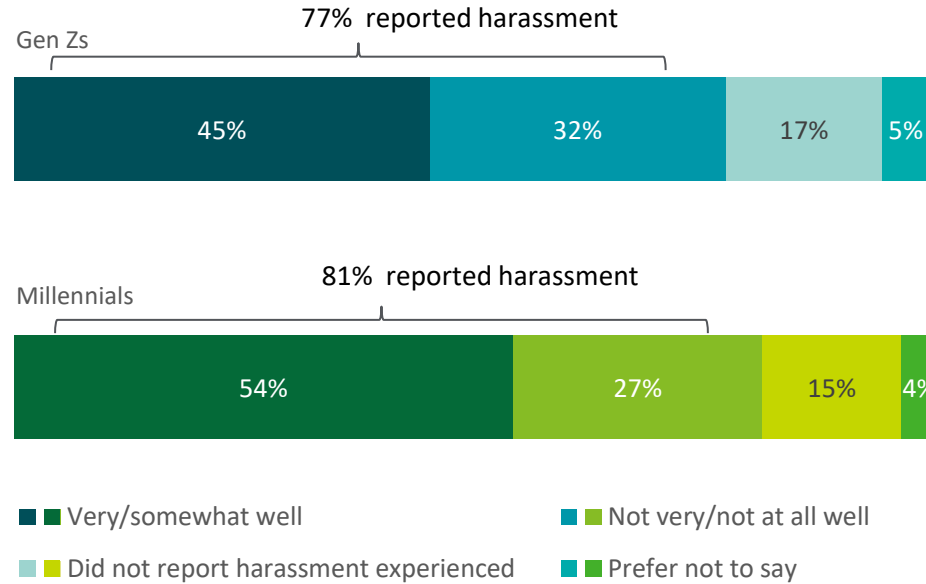


Top microaggressions experienced

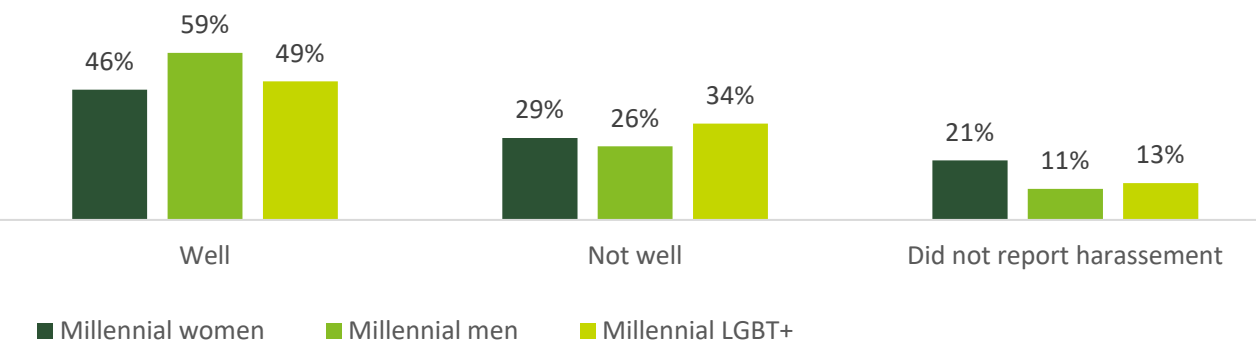
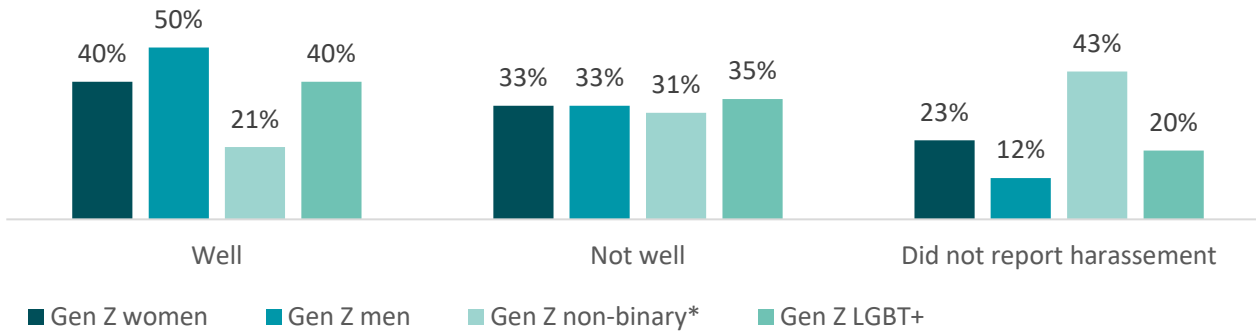


Of those who reported the harassment they experienced, many did not feel the reports were handled well by their employer, and about 15% did not report the behavior at all. Reluctance to disclose issues is more common among women: more than two in 10 women did not report the harassment they experienced and roughly a third of those who did disclose were not satisfied with the way their employer resolved the issue.

How well do you feel your organization handled the issue you reported?



Overall, women, non-binary, and LGBT+ respondents are less likely to report harassment, and even when they do report it, they are also less likely to feel their organization has handled it well.



* Note small base size for Gen Z non-binary (n=68).
Non-binary millennials base size is too small to report (n=8)



Deloitte’s recent [Women @ Work: A Global Outlook](#) and the upcoming [LGBT+ Inclusion @ Work](#) reports shine some light on the reasons for this—from concerns that the behaviors would get worse or that complaints would not be taken seriously, to a lack of confidence in meaningful change happening as a result.

Conclusion



Even with the pandemic receding and a general trend towards more balanced working lives, successive and cumulative challenges continue to undermine the mental well-being of Gen Zs and millennials.

The high cost of living weighs particularly heavily on people’s minds. In addition to financial security being the dominant cause of stress among Gen Zs and millennials, worries about the future of the economy could impact their mental health for some time—and in particular affect their hopes to achieve a healthier work/life balance going forward.

While financial pressures and some of the wider societal factors causing stress, such as inequality and climate change, are not directly within employers’ control, Gen Zs and millennials firmly believe that business has a responsibility to help address these issues and drive positive societal change. Organizations that do not do so risk losing talent, as Gen Zs and millennials make career decisions based on their values.

And this year’s research shows that many stress drivers for Gen Zs and millennials are work-related factors which are directly within employers’ control—such as workload, poor work/life balance, and unhealthy work

environments or team cultures. Furthermore, inappropriate behaviors in the workplace are happening at an unacceptable level, undoubtedly contributing to unhealthy work environments.

These findings indicate that actions by business leaders to promote well-being, while acknowledged by many of our respondents, are yet to buck some worrying trends—from rampant burnout to comparatively high levels of stress and anxiety in younger and under-represented groups, and from continued discomfort in disclosing mental health issues to pervasive stigma in the workplace.

With life looking uncertain and challenging for the foreseeable future for many Gen Zs and millennials, employers should increase their efforts to address stress drivers and create open, stigma-free working environments. ➔



In response to this year’s findings, they should particularly focus on:



Building cultures where mental health is openly discussed, and where people are encouraged to seek adequate support.

This year’s data points to the continued need for employers to create and maintain cultures that not only prevent mental health challenges from arising in the first place, but enable everyone to recognize, address and openly discuss stress, anxiety and burnout. This includes offering tailored tools and policies to support mental health and encouraging people to disclose challenges and use those dedicated resources to alleviate them.

But a step change in the uptake of resources and the disclosure of issues cannot happen without a permanent shift in behaviors and attitudes. Inclusive leadership at all levels is needed to foster the trust and empathy that will stop people fearing judgment or discrimination. Employers should build

capability and set expectations for managers to not only hold but also initiate open conversations around mental health; spot signs and proactively offer support; and be vocal advocates for the well-being of their colleagues.



Enabling people to achieve their work/life balance aspirations.

Considering the high levels of stress, anxiety and burnout still experienced by Gen Zs and millennials, it is clear that more needs to be done to satisfy their expectations on work/life balance. With remote or hybrid working becoming common practice, employers should now focus on ‘when’ people work, not just ‘where’. They should look for opportunities to offer models such as condensed work weeks, flexible working hours, and part time roles, and make clear that the careers of those opting for these models will not be penalized.

Leaders should also focus on understanding and addressing generational pressures on Gen Zs and millennials, such as caretaking responsibilities. This could mean introducing

specific policies, but also making flexible working available to everyone—working to remove stigma around needing to adapt working schedules to care for others. Employers can also introduce guidelines to tackle “always on” habits and encourage people to truly disconnect outside of their agreed working hours and set expectations for managers to lead by example.



Halting and reversing worryingly high levels of burnout.

Although burnout is complex and can have multiple causes and dimensions, employers can and should act to help mitigate this epidemic from spreading. With increased understanding around what burnout is and how it manifests at work, more resources are becoming available to help address it at an individual and organizational level. And while most actions to improve mental health can help mitigate the risks of people becoming burnt out, there are specific steps employers can take, such as incorporating the World Health Organization criteria in training and awareness campaigns. ➔

This would help HR and Talent teams, line managers and employees recognize burnout in the first place and encourage people to seek appropriate help at earlier stages.



Stamping out non-inclusive behaviors.

The survey highlights that Gen Zs and millennials continue to be exposed to harassment and microaggressions at work which negatively affect their mental well-being. This emphasizes the need for business leaders to create work environments where reporting issues is encouraged, and inappropriate conduct consistently addressed. Transparency around what constitutes non-inclusive behavior, and trust in the mechanisms available to escalate and resolve issues, are paramount.

Specific attention must be paid to those in under-represented groups who experience more frequent workplace harassment, and yet are less likely to report it.

In parallel, there must be clear messaging—from the most senior levels of leadership down—on the importance of respectful everyday behaviors in creating and maintaining fully inclusive environments where everyone can thrive.



Research methodology for the Deloitte Global 2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey:

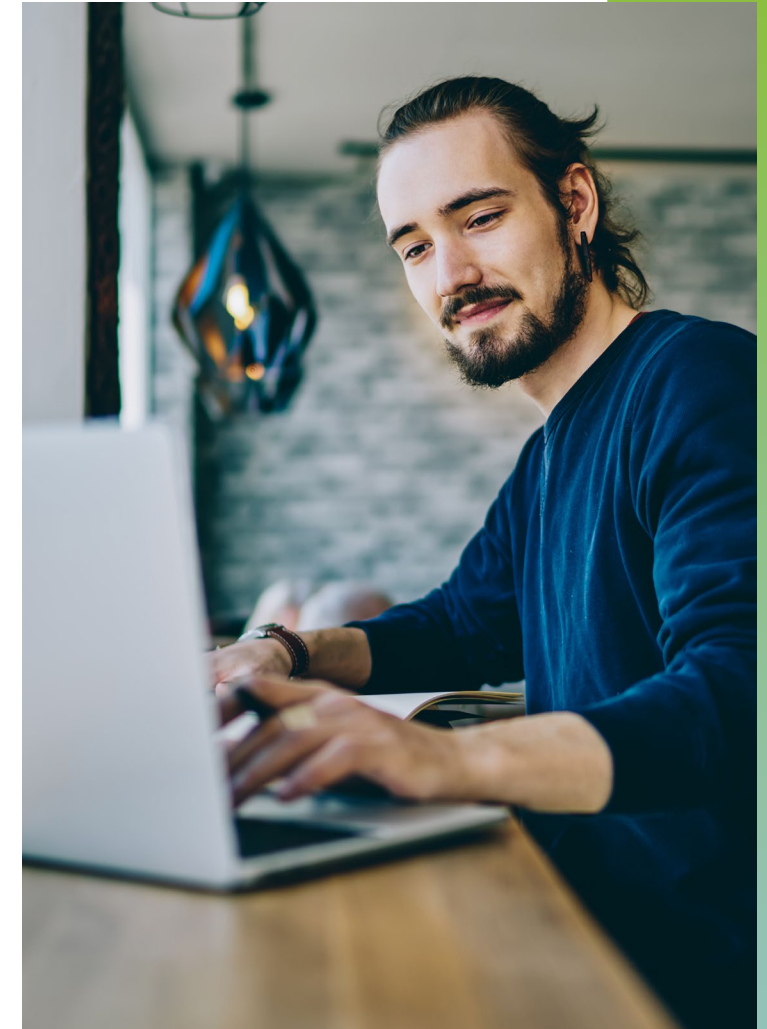
Deloitte's 2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey reflects the responses of 14,483 Generation Zs and 8,373 millennials (22,856 respondents in total), from 44 countries across North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia-Pacific.

This year's sample did not include Ukraine and Russia markets (which were surveyed in previous years) due to the ongoing conflict between the two countries.

The survey was conducted using an online, self-complete-style interview. Fieldwork was completed between 29 November 2022 and 25 December 2022. Additionally, in March 2023, qualitative interviews were conducted with 60 Gen Zs and millennials from Brazil, Germany, India, Japan, the UK, and US.

The report represents a broad range of respondents, from those with executive positions in large organizations to others who are participating in the gig economy, doing unpaid work or are unemployed. Additionally, the Gen Z group includes students who have completed or are pursuing degrees, those who have completed or plan to complete vocational studies, and others who are in secondary school and may or may not pursue higher education.

As defined in the study, Gen Z respondents were born between January 1995 and December 2004, and millennial respondents were born between January 1983 and December 1994.





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