



ENGAGING GEN Z

THE CONSUMER
THE FARMER / RANCHER
THE WORKFORCE

Research-Based Communication
Approaches to Earn Trust

January 2023



THE CENTER FOR
FOOD INTEGRITY™

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GEN Z IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Ready or not, here they come.

Generation Z is poised to change the face of the food industry. Born between 1997 and 2012, this emerging consumer segment brings a distinct set of values, behaviors and purchasing power. And their decisions about food are influenced by their perceptions of the values of people and companies involved, their approaches, and the impact on people, animals and the planet.

Accounting for [20.67% of U.S. consumers](#) and nearly one-third of the global population, Gen Z's economic power is the [fastest growing](#) across all generations. Their income is predicted to increase fivefold to \$33 trillion by 2030 and surpass Millennials' incomes by 2031.

Gen Z is the most [racially and ethnically diverse](#) generation, too. According to [Pew research](#), Gen Z represents the leading edge of the country's changing racial and ethnic makeup – with 52% non-Hispanic White, 25% Hispanic, 14% Black, 6% Asian and 5% a different race or two or more races. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2026, the majority of this generation will be non-White.

Gen Zs set themselves apart from others by craving immersive experiences and demanding transparency and the ability to engage. They view food as a form of self-expression and identity, are cause-driven and want to make a difference. And they look to solutions and products that are also purpose-driven.

Gen Z Snapshot

- **98% worldwide have a smartphone¹**
- **Have an 8-second attention span²**
- **Nearly half of Gen Z adults spend more than 3 hours on social media each day³**
- **52% use messaging apps for more than 3 hours per day⁴**
- **42% spend 3 or more hours daily playing games⁵**
- **Less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to be enrolled in college⁵**
- **35% shop online for groceries at least once a week and more than half are label readers⁶**
- **53% say they find food inspiration on TikTok⁷**

1. [GlobalWebIndex Report](#)
2. [IAB UK](#)
3. [Insider Intelligence](#)
4. [Think with Google](#)
5. [Pew Research](#)
6. [IFIC 2022 Food and Health Survey](#)
7. [Progressive Grocer](#)

With Gen Z, food goes beyond basic sustenance, enjoyment and tradition. They tie what they eat directly to their identities. According to 2022 research from [Cassandra](#), more than half of the Gen Z respondents believe what they eat is indicative of who they are as a person. In other words, the food they buy is part of their personal brand, much like wearing certain clothing labels or carrying designer purses.

Gen Z consumers put a greater emphasis on a holistic approach to food, as well. According to the [International Food Information Council \(IFIC\) 2022 Food and Health Survey](#), they seek out foods and beverages to increase energy, and improve sleep, emotional/mental health and digestive health.

They tend to link food with the environment. The IFIC survey shows that 73% believe they have a greater concern about the environmental impact of their food choices than other generations. One in three say climate change has a major impact on their everyday food and beverage behaviors and 75% agree the world is at a tipping point.

[Morning Consult](#) research shows that the Gen Z generation is “notably less trusting of the average brand” and indicates young Americans are more likely to prioritize ethical matters when considering which brands to trust.

Additionally, [Forbes research](#) shows that Gen Z is less brand loyal than other consumer segments. While around half of all consumers surveyed are brand loyal, only 37% of Gen Z fell into the loyalist category.

Perhaps not surprisingly, because nearly all Gen Zs worldwide own a smartphone, they view technology and innovation as drivers of solutions to pressing problems. That’s a bonus for the food industry where technological advancements equate to food that’s produced more sustainably.

FOOD AS A PERSONAL BRAND

68% of Gen Z say the products they buy are a reflection of their personality, values and beliefs.

That compares with just 43% of Baby Boomers.

In other words, younger generations are more likely to tie a brand or company’s impact on society to their shopping decisions.

[Forbes Agency Council Shopper Influence Research](#)

ENGAGING GEN Z

So how do those in food and agriculture engage this complex and powerful generation?

It'll take a village to ensure the needs of Gen Z are considered.

This guide details approaches to engage the Gen Z consumer, the Gen Z farmer/rancher and the Gen Z workforce.

It's a 360° look at this influential group that equips the broader food industry with the research and resources necessary to reach Gen Z consumers, prepare young leaders in agriculture, and attract and integrate this unique generation into today's multigenerational workforce.

Specifically, we look at the results of a unique initiative that brought two types of Gen Z influencers together, Gen Z consumers and Gen Z farmers, for an immersive on-farm experience.

We also highlight the latest research that paints a comprehensive picture of Gen Z and, finally, detail specific actions to meaningfully connect with Gen Z consumers, farmers/ranchers and workforce.

Ready or not? We prefer “ready”

and this resource helps you prepare by better understanding a powerful generation looking to make its mark and providing trust-earning strategies to engage.



GEN Z MEET GEN Z

Engaging Gen Z consumers and Gen Z farmers / ranchers to uncover shared values, build relationships and showcase the truths of today's food system

Like many in the previous generations, Gen Z has a heightened interest in food, yet understands very little about the system from which it comes. Conversely, those in the food and agriculture industries often lack direct engagement with Gen Z consumers regarding food production concerns.

Both sides have access to endless channels of information from a multitude of sources, yet there's a disconnect - a lack of shared understanding and appreciation for what's going on in the interdependent worlds of food consumption and food production.

To bridge that gap, [The Center for Food Integrity \(CFI\)](#) brought together three Gen Z food consumer influencers and three Gen Z farmer influencers for an immersive experience in and around San Antonio, Texas, that explored beef sustainability - both production and nutrition.

The Best Food Facts TASTE TOUR 2022 gave Gen Z consumer influencers an opportunity

to dive into topics of interest with experts including cattle ranchers, a registered dietitian, a veterinarian and a chef.

They were given a backstage pass to experience what's happening on the ranch, at the meat counter and in the grocery store, ultimately having many "aha" moments and building important relationships along the way.

The tour helped Gen Z farmers gain an appreciation for Gen Z consumer concerns. It also showcased the importance of authentic conversations regarding the values both farmers and consumers share about food production, which is the key to earning trust.

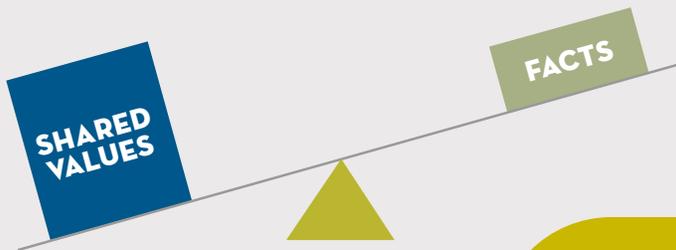


2022 Best Food Facts
TASTE TOUR



WHY DO VALUES MATTER?

Yes, science and data are important, but we must first establish shared values.



“I CAN TELL THIS IS A TOPIC THAT’S IMPORTANT TO YOU AND IT’S IMPORTANT TO ME, TOO.”

EARNING TRUST

In food-related conversations with consumers, shared values are 3-to-5x more important to earning trust than simply sharing facts.

The Center for Food Integrity [peer-reviewed and published trust model](#) demonstrates that value similarity is key to earning trust. In fact, finding common ground through shared values is 3-to-5 times more important to earning trust than talking about science or demonstrating technical skills and expertise.

Simply sharing science and facts can galvanize opposing viewpoints and make it harder to connect.

Consumers simply want to know that those involved agriculture and food production share their values for topics like safe food, high standards of animal care and environmental stewardship.



Ultimately, the two-day tour gave Gen Z consumer influencers a better understanding of farming and the food system, and Gen Z farmers and other experts an appreciation for consumer concerns and desires around farming and food production.

It also resulted in positive influencer content pushed through their channels and tour highlight videos promoted at [BestFoodFacts.org](https://www.bestfoodfacts.org), CFI's consumer-facing website that leverages third-party experts to answer consumer food-related questions.



“My favorite thing to witness were the light bulb moments like ‘I’ve been contributing to the misinformation’ and ‘What is my role as an influencer or as a farmer to take the information I’ve learned and disseminate it in a factual manner?’”

TESSA NGUYEN, MEd, RD, LDN, CHEF
Taste Nutrition Counseling



“I love to see farmers and consumers having an open dialogue where questions can be answered. It’s also enlightening for the farmer and rancher as well because we learn from the consumers about what they really care about.”

DR. LEAH DORMAN
Ohio Veterinarian



CONNECTS FOOD SYSTEM EXPERTS TO CONSUMERS WITH AN AUDIENCE OF MORE THAN 1.1 MILLION VISITORS ANNUALLY.



“I just have a greater appreciation for farmers and ranchers.”

COURTNEY PAIGE
@A Paige of Positivity | Michigan



“A lot of myths that I’ve heard were debunked on the trip. I now know so much more and can share with my followers.”

MADDISON PEEL
@Maddison’s Kitchen | Kentucky



“I want consumers to know that farmers are just like them. We’re just trying our best. We’re very passionate about what we do.”

ZOE KENT
@Farm with Zoe | Ohio



“It was really neat to meet other people who are doing what I’m doing. There’s not a ton of them out there, so being able to connect with someone that’s in the ag industry was a lot of fun.”

TYLAR OQUIN
@Ty the Texan | Texas

IOWA TOUR

A similar, smaller tour was conducted in Iowa with two food influencers touring both livestock and crop farms in the Cedar Rapids area.

“I had no idea that there was this much technology. When I envisioned a farm, it wasn’t this. I think it’s extremely important to continue innovating. I wish everyone could come have this experience.”

BROOK CARSON, BROOKLYN’S BITES

We’ve been fed over and over again to be scared of the way our food is farmed and raised, and I just don’t think that I believe that anymore. I have a much more well-rounded idea of what farming is and have a lot more trust in the food system and in farming.”

LAUREN GRANT, ZESTFUL KITCHEN

LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR JOURNEY IN EASTERN IOWA AT BestFoodFacts.org.



MOVING THE NEEDLE

Surveys taken by Gen Z participants before and after the Texas tour demonstrate how hands-on experiences and authentic, values-based conversations can help earn trust and shift opinions.

Participants were presented with statements to rate on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree. Here is a sample of pre- and post-survey responses. (Note: Three influencers had farm backgrounds so may have had pre-survey responses that were generally more supportive of agriculture.)



STATEMENT	PRE-SURVEY	POST-SURVEY
Beef is sustainability produced	6.8	8.6
Beef is a healthy, sustainable option for my diet.	7.8	8.8
Farmers care and implement sustainable practices on their farms.	7	9

In addition, influencers were asked, “How sustainable are today’s farms?” Rating their opinion on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely unsustainable and 10 is extremely sustainable:

- **Pre-Survey: 5.25**
- **Post-Survey: 8.6**

What are two or three things you learned during the experience that you wish your peers knew?

“I wish people not involved in ag could have access to better information about where their food comes from. I also want people to see that farmers and ranchers truly do care about producing healthy, nutritious food.”

“Grain-fed beef is equally as nutritious as grass fed and that all cows are technically grass fed in some way.”

“Antibiotics only stay in a cow’s system for up to 30 days and no meat sold is allowed to have traces of antibiotics.”

“I wish I could dump all of the information I absorbed during the tour into my audience's brains. It was so informative.”

“I was really impressed with all of the USDA-regulated checks and balances that this industry has.”

“Everything that is fed to cattle is a byproduct of another industry - corn, hay, cotton, etc. Cattle eat a variety of things; they have requirements just like humans. They have doctors and nutritionists (just like humans) that determine what their needs are for their bodies.”

“Beef producers use so much tech to care for their animals.”

In addition to the direct impact on participants, each blogger created blogs, photos and videos that were shared with more than 687,000 loyal - and likely Gen Z - followers, amplifying the positive things happening on farms and in food production today.

ENGAGING GEN Z CONSUMERS

This up-and-coming generation is like no other. They want to know more about their food, where it comes from, how it will impact their health and the planet, and how it aligns with their values. The following provides guidance on how to engage and meet the needs of Gen Z consumers.

Offer What They Crave

The CFI 2022 Gen Z Illuminate™ Digital Cultural Insights report tells us a great deal about this young consumer segment, including five trends in eating habits that can help inform product and marketing strategy for food companies. Those that can meet needs in these niches will appeal to Gen Z.

1. SMART INDULGENCES

Core Belief: They can make their snacks and desserts fit into a healthier lifestyle by prioritizing vitamin-rich ingredients and practicing portion control.

2. BUILDING A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

Core Belief: Intuitive and mindful eating will help them build a healthier relationship with food that is free of stress and guilt.

3. BALANCED NUTRITION

Core Belief: They can optimize nutrition by developing a habit of eating a wide variety of foods, especially plant-based, rather than restricting their diet.

4. CLEAN EATING

Core Belief: Eating for long-term health means ditching processed ingredients and food high in sugar, salt and unhealthy fats, while increasing intake of simple, whole foods.

5. SUSTAINABLE EATING HABITS

Core Belief: They should do what they can to reduce their carbon footprint by minimizing meat consumption and buying local ingredients.



2022 Gen Z Illuminate™ Report

CFI's Gen Z Illuminate™ Digital Cultural Insights report leveraged innovative digital ethnography research methodology to instantly observe millions of online Gen Z interactions - revealing demographics, values, attitudes, fears, motivators, behaviors and more around food. Find comprehensive Gen Z report results in the Appendix.



Highlight Technology That Resonates

Technology allows the broader food industry to produce better food, more sustainably. But without trust, the innovation needed may not be accepted.

Gen Z values and champions technology, having been immersed in it since birth and seeing it as a path to solving some of the most pressing challenges in our world.

Communicate about the technology used to produce food and innovations on the horizon that will provide the taste, quality, health and sustainability attributes that appeal to them.

Research from CFI on [why consumers accept or reject technology](#) in food shows how to engage to earn trust.

When communicating about technology in food, like gene editing, primary messages should include key drivers of trust:

- Food safety
- Sustainability
- Perceived benefits
- Naturalness of the technology
- Making information readily available and easy to understand

When possible, provide resources like independent research (particularly on food safety) and third-party verification, and make information on which food products include gene-edited or other technology readily available and easily accessible. Additional information on the trusted avenues for information can be found in the Appendix.

GEN Z & TRUST IN AG TECH

Why consumers accept or reject technology

See the Appendix for comprehensive research findings.

[Click here](#) to learn more and download our Building Trust in Ag Tech strategic roadmap and communication guide.

Naturalness

For example, describing gene editing in plants as a natural evolution of earlier plant-breeding techniques.

1 in 4

consumers watch a video made by a brand each month
[GWI 2022 Study](#)

Meet Them Where They Are

A Harris poll conducted in the U.S. on behalf of [Sprout Social](#) shows that 66% of Gen Z say social media is an essential part of their lives. Leverage it in creative ways:

- Create campaigns on top social channels: YouTube leads the pack, followed by TikTok and Instagram.
- Lead with entertaining and trending content that sparks two-way interactions while remaining authentic and transparent.
- Partner with Gen Z influencers to create content that promotes how specific foods align with the lifestyle and health goals Gen Z wants to attain.
- Use video as often as possible – and not just short videos; research shows longer-form videos are appealing to Gen Z, too.
- Offer experiential engagement opportunities like the Best Food Facts TASTE Tour in Texas, giving Gen Z a backstage pass to how food is grown, raised and produced, and an opportunity to share with their online audiences.

Gen Z are just as likely to be watching 20+-minute videos as they are <4-minute videos – with an affinity for how-to videos and vlogs.

[GWI 2022 Study](#)

Gen Z prefers to build connections with their existing community and people like influencers, whose buying advice they trust over brands. In fact, 79% of Gen Z consumers say they would purchase after seeing an influencer recommendation on social media.

[Sprout Social](#)

97% of all Gen Z learn about new products from social media

[Influencer Marketing Factory](#)

PREFERRED CHANNELS USED AT LEAST ONCE A DAY



75%



59%



59%



48%



43%



34%

July 2022 by [Statista](#)

[See Appendix for additional information on social media preferences.]

Engage Trusted, Authentic Spokespeople

One of the most effective ways to foster trust in technology is engaging trusted spokespeople who are relatable, show integrity and share values. Credentialed individuals who fit the bill are even more influential, as Gen Z values third-party objectivity.

Focus on a Cause

As we've learned, Gen Zs are more likely to choose one brand over another based on ethics and values. As a company, do you operate on a distinct set of principles and do you amplify them? What causes do you support? Gen Z wants to know, so make sure your message is clear.

The segment is particularly interested in sustainability and climate change is on their minds. One in three say climate change has a major impact on their everyday food and beverage behaviors and 75% agree the world is at a tipping point.



32% of Gen Zs say climate change has a major impact on their everyday food and beverage behaviors.

That compares to only 17% for Baby Boomers and 22% for the general adult population

[2022 Research from Morning Consult](#)

[Additional information in the Appendix]

75% of Gen Zs agree the world is at a tipping point regarding climate change.

68% say they've been personally impacted by severe weather events.

[Deloitte Global 2022](#)

[Gen Z Survey](#)

[Additional information in the Appendix]

ENGAGING GEN Z FARMERS / RANCHERS

Food and agriculture organizations looking to engage this up-and-coming generation should consider the following recommendations.

Highlight Gen Z's unique roles, contributions and values to agriculture - to help them drive interest for the industry.

- Society's interest in and focus on diversity, equity and inclusion is seen as a pathway to broader thinking, innovation development and stronger relationships. Engage Gen Z farmers/ranchers by asking about their unique journeys and experiences to reinforce the important roles they can play in the advancement of the industry.

Foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture.

- Provide staff training and resources to emphasize that individuals of all ages, genders, races and cultures are to be valued and respected - each bringing unique experiences and ideas to the organization, and benefitting decision-making at all levels.

Ask Gen Z farmers/ranchers what they want and need.

- The best way to gauge the value you're providing is to conduct periodic member surveys to understand the concerns, needs and types of support that would be helpful to members (training, mentorship programs, etc).

Address potential obstacles.

- Based on input from Gen Z farmers/ranchers, assess whether the structure of your organization welcomes Gen Z farmer/rancher involvement. There may be barriers that are simple to remove, but simply haven't been identified. Shorter meetings, going virtual and different forms of communication may all empower engagement.

Involve Gen Z early and often.

- Provide opportunities to involve Gen Z and easy avenues to share their ideas so they feel connected and that they can have an impact.

Establish programs that empower networking and mentorship opportunities between generations of farmers.

- Work with more experienced farmers/ranchers to be more open to trying new things and hearing new ideas.
- Encourage non-Gen Z farmers/ranchers to consider that the passion and energy that Gen Z farmers/ranchers bring should be embraced.
- Remind older leaders of the value of leveraging the excitement of younger farmers/ranchers - and their willingness to take risks, and spend time and energy seeking new solutions to long-standing and future challenges.

- Create or partner to implement a mentor program to encourage younger women to become involved in leadership positions.

Showcase technology.

- Because Gen Z sees technology as an answer to many of the world's problems, encourage them to showcase technology and innovation in agriculture with hands-on experiences if possible, and opportunities to explore the latest innovations that can help farmers produce food more sustainably.
- Challenge them to come up with creative ways to showcase how technology is used to support consumers' end-goals. For example, highlight how technology is used to increase sustainability by precisely applying water needed to grow plants. Show how feed and temperature monitors ensure animal nutrition

and comfort. Demonstrate how in-tractor monitors and GPS track year-over-year data on soil composition and deliver the exact nutrients to keep plants healthy.

Offer development opportunities to empower engagement outside of agriculture.

- To increase comfort with engaging in uncomfortable conversations, offer training to equip them. Specifically prioritize training that addresses the importance of inclusion and diversity.
- Offer training that encourages Gen Z farmers/ranchers to represent the positive stories of agriculture as they are involved in other groups, industries, hobbies, community organizations and especially online communities.



ENGAGING THE GEN Z WORKFORCE

For those in the food system looking to hire, Gen Z employees have a specific set of expectations that should change the way you recruit, hire and retain. Among our recommendations:

Give them a voice.

- Because they want to speak up, be heard and impact change, empower them to have a voice in the workplace. It gives them a sense of belonging and a feeling that they can impact change – and will likely improve longevity.
- Offering opportunities to grow through training and promotions is valuable, too – particularly offering them leadership roles when applicable.

Gen Z wants meaningful mission-driven work that makes a difference, ranking job duties and responsibilities higher than any other generation when it comes to accepting or rejecting a job offer.

[Yello Talent Acquisition Platform](#)

Those who feel they're being heard are more loyal with 66% saying they'd stay beyond five years. That compares with 24% who don't feel heard.

[Deloitte Global 2022](#)

[Gen Z Survey](#)

[Additional information in the Appendix]



Showcase your values.

- Gen Z is drawn to companies and organizations that take a stand on social issues. What do you believe in and are you communicating that vision? Which social issues and causes are most important to your company? Communicate them transparently on your social channels, website, job postings and during the recruitment process.
- Empower your employees to get involved and positively contribute to these causes.
- Demonstrate to employees that you're committed to the causes and taking steps to impact change.

Focus on mental health.

- Take mental health seriously by valuing well-being and offering resources, which include supportive leadership, educational resources and employee assistance programs that offer counseling.
- Create a work environment where employees feel comfortable speaking up about their needs without fear of being judged.
- Educate leaders and managers on how to recognize signs of mental health struggles. Build empathy skills and teach the importance of setting boundaries to reduce stress and anxiety levels.

BRANDS AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

“I don't know if I can work for a company that doesn't have an animal welfare strategy.”

Quote from prospective employee for national quick service hamburger chain.

ETHICS MATTER

37% of Gen Zs said they have rejected a job and/or assignment based on personal ethics.

[Deloitte Global 2022](#)

[Gen Z Survey](#)

STRESSED GEN Z

Gen Z is more stressed than other generations.

- **46% say they're stressed most of the time, compared with 36% of Millennials.**
- **1 in 5 Gen Zs don't believe their employer takes burnout seriously or is taking steps to address it.**

[Deloitte Global 2022](#)

[Gen Z Survey](#)

Allow flexibility.

- As much as possible, allow for flexible work schedules, including remote and hybrid work, to allow for a good work/life balance. The COVID-19 pandemic proved these models can work.
- Provide opportunities for connection for those who work remotely to keep them fully engaged in the workplace. This can include one-on-one video conference calls with supervisors and team calls for employees to simply catch up.

TOP 5 PRIORITIES

- 1. Salary**
- 2. Work-Life Balance**
- 3. Job Duties**
- 4. Location**
- 5. Career Growth Opportunities**

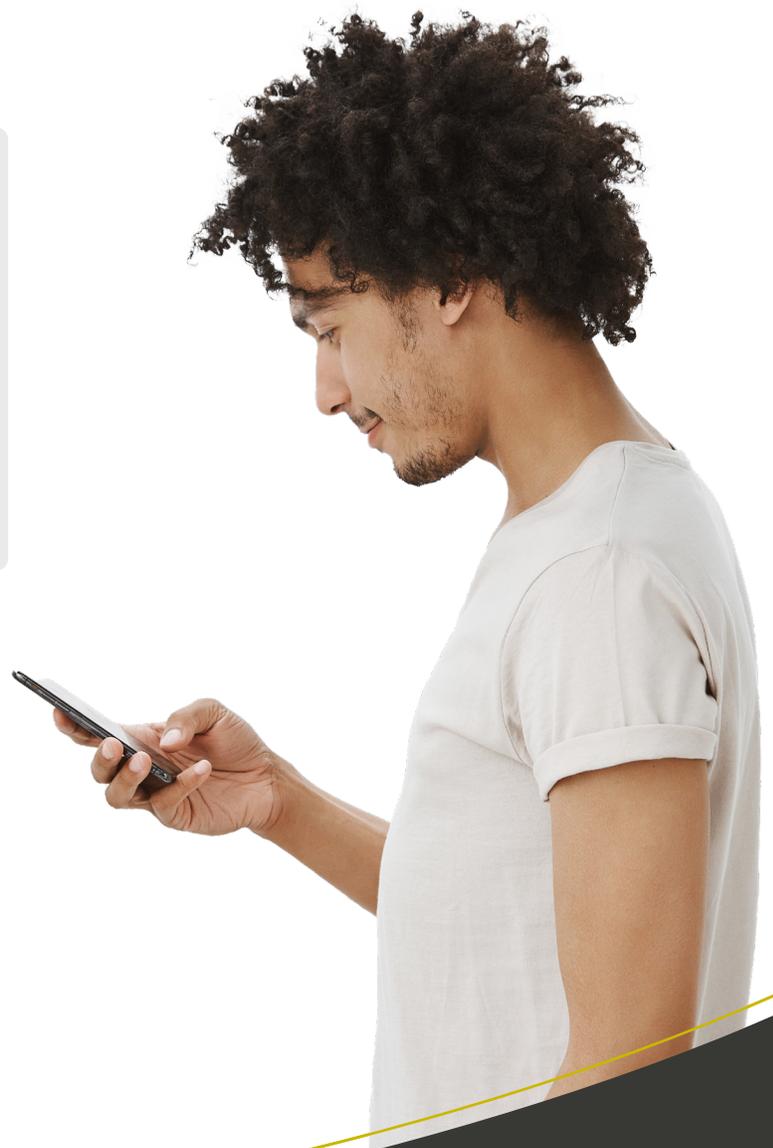
[Yello Talent Acquisition Platform](#)

Communicate sustainability commitments.

- With sustainability and climate change top of mind for many Gen Zs, they expect companies to do their part to impact change. As a company, communicate your commitment to a more sustainable world and inspire employees to take part.
- Consider short-term strategies like recycling drives and reducing single-use plastics in the workplace, or longer-term strategies like sustainable sourcing from suppliers and educating employees and customers about making sustainable choices.

Provide technology.

- If possible, provide the latest technology to enable Gen Zs to complete their jobs. That includes hardware, software and platforms that allow them to work efficiently and communicate effectively.



Seek out a diverse workforce.

- Diversity in the workplace matters. According to a survey from [Monster](#), 83% of Gen Z candidates said a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion is important when choosing an employer.
- Furthermore, according to [McKinsey and Co.](#) research, the most diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform less diverse peers on profitability. So it's not only important to Gen Z, it's important to company viability.
- Initially, standing up cross-functional teams will ensure various perspectives are considered. In the future, ensuring that hiring considers parameters to include diversity of thought, experience and perspective will be necessary.

Tailor your recruitment process.

- Keeping in mind the above recommendations, equip recruiters and managers with the resources to tailor job descriptions and discussions with Gen Z prospects.

For more information on Gen Z research and engagement approaches, contact The Center for Food Integrity

learnmore@foodintegrity.org
(816)-880-5360



APPENDIX

ILLUMINATE DIGITAL CULTURAL INSIGHTS

[CFI's Illuminate™ Digital Cultural Insights](#)

leverages innovative digital ethnography research methodology to instantly observe millions of online interactions related to any trend, topic or product, revealing consumer demographics, values, attitudes, fears, motivators, behaviors and more.



A 2022 Gen Z Illuminate™ report tells us a great deal about this young consumer segment.

Four overarching observations include...

<p>They want to prove they can express their true selves no matter the cost.</p> <p>They are driven by the belief that being open about their true emotions is a reflection of their individuality and they seek to express themselves even if others don't like it. To them, suppressing feelings is unhealthy, contributing to health problems like stress, anxiety, depression and even premature death.</p>	<p>They value creativity.</p> <p>They see creativity as the act of using unconventional thoughts and ideas to identify and leverage solutions for recurring problems, both in life and society.</p>
<p>They believe it's important to explore future possibilities, versus maintaining the status quo.</p> <p>Wanting to make an impact, they like to explore new opportunities and are willing to put the status quo to the test for the sake of a better future.</p>	<p>They fear not having access to advanced scientific solutions.</p> <p>They fear not having the most advanced scientific information, especially when it comes to health and nutrition. They fear premature aging, weight gain, muscle loss and mortality. More generally, they fear not knowing how to prevent or delay these processes.</p>

Gen Z Eating Habits: Five Trends

The Illuminate™ research also uncovered five entrenched perspectives related to eating habits.

1. Smart Indulgences

Core Belief: They can make their snacks and desserts fit into a healthier lifestyle by prioritizing vitamin-rich ingredients and practicing portion control. They ...

- Look for snacks that add health-boosting ingredients, like salty and sweet treats that include fruit, nuts, vegetables or raw, dark chocolate because they're chockful of valuable vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents.
- Consider low-sugar, low-fat, low-calorie and non-perishable snacks, as well as baked snacks, with simple ingredients.
- Use sweets free of artificial flavors, additives and preservatives as an alibi to indulge.
- Satisfy real sugar cravings by strictly controlling their portions. They choose snacks in small packages to prevent overeating.

2. Building a Better Relationship with Food

Core Belief: Intuitive and mindful eating will help them build a healthier relationship with food that is free of stress and guilt. They ...

- Believe rigid, restrictive eating habits, like fad diets and disordered eating, cause mental health issues and physical harm. They understand yo-yo dieting, the pattern of losing weight and then regaining it, can lead to great weight gain in the end and increase the risk of diabetes and depression.

- Try to eat mindfully, paying attention to hunger and satiety cues and choosing foods that satisfy them both physically and mentally.
- Want to reject judgments about food being “good” or “bad.”

3. Balanced Nutrition

Core Belief: They can optimize nutrition by developing a habit of eating a wide variety of foods, especially plant-based, rather than restricting their diet. They ...

- Discuss increasing dietary variety to maximize nutrients without too much effort. They strive to eat the rainbow of fruits and vegetables to get their vitamins and minerals rather than try and track their intake of specific nutrients.
- Are interested in fiber because they see gut health as a nutrition-booster. They share articles about the importance of gut microbiome and how a healthy gut absorbs more nutrients, making proper nutrition easier.
- Worry about getting enough protein, without consuming animal products, to keep skin and hair vibrant. They share articles suggesting it's easy to maintain adequate protein intake without meat, but are worried about deficiencies and look for high-protein whole-food, plant-based hacks, especially if they're trying to bulk up at the gym.
- Sometimes switch to a mostly plant-based diet because they believe it offers higher nutritional density (nutrients per calorie).

4. Clean Eating

Core Belief: Eating for long-term health means ditching processed ingredients and food high in sugar, salt and unhealthy fats, while increasing intake of simple, whole foods. They ...

- Want to eat cleaner by reducing their sugar and salt intake from packaged, processed foods and restaurant dishes. For example, they'll avoid foods with artificial sweeteners, while changing their seasoning by using no-salt seasonings like herbs, hot sauce or lemon.
- Associate clean eating with low-carb and low-fat/healthy-fat food alternatives. They're picking up tricks from keto, paleo and Mediterranean diets like eating more whole fruit and vegetables, and trying "zoodles" made of zucchini instead of using traditional pasta.
- Worry about the high cost of clean eating. They've read that they can cut costs by buying certain ingredients in bulk, joining a food co-op, looking for lower-priced organic products at discount markets and buying straight from local producers when possible.

5 Sustainable Eating Habits

Core Belief: They should do what they can to reduce their carbon footprint by minimizing meat consumption and buying local ingredients. They ...

- Think about the impact of their eating habits on the environment. They read that the world's food system is responsible for a certain percentage of GHG emissions, focusing on "industrial" farming and the processing/shipping process.

- Consider eating less meat and animal products to do their part for the planet. For example, they hear that "industrial-farmed" meat is the least eco-friendly food, and thus try to switch to a more plant-based diet.
- Think organic, local and seasonal produce is more sustainable because it doesn't need to be shipped and packaged as much. They read that eating locally grown foods is possibly the best way to lower the carbon footprint of what they eat, and they believe organic food avoids "environment-harming" pesticides.

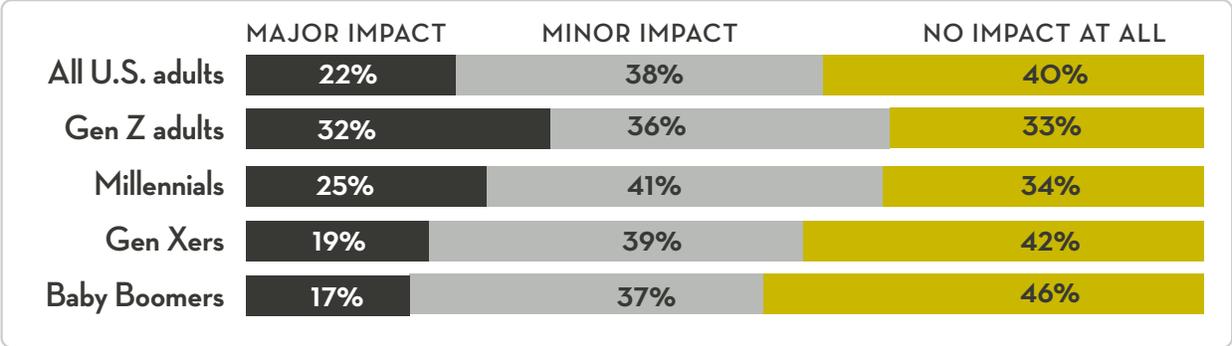
The Illuminate findings regarding climate concerns are echoed in 2022 research by [Deloitte](#), which found that 75% of Gen Zs agree the world is at a tipping point in responding to climate change and the future can go either way. Roughly two-thirds, 68%, say they have already been personally impacted by severe weather events, which emphasizes the urgent need to address climate change. Nine out of 10 say they make the effort to protect the environment, and that includes sourcing locally or organically produced food in the short-term and seeing themselves increasing their civic engagement and bringing sustainability into their large purchases in the long-term.

Additionally, only 15% of Gen Zs strongly agree businesses are taking substantive actions. Almost half, 48%, say they have put pressure on their employer to take action. Those who feel employers are listening and incorporating their feedback are also more loyal, according to Deloitte.

Research from [Morning Consult](#) in 2022 shows that 32% of Gen Zs say climate change has a major impact on their everyday food and beverage behaviors. That compares to only

17% for Baby Boomers and 22% for the general adult population.

Impact of climate change on respondents' everyday eating and drinking behaviors



GEN Z: TRUST IN AG TECH RESEARCH

Consumer acceptance plays a critical role in determining whether new technologies will be viable. Market acceptance grants the social license researchers and food companies need to responsibly use new technologies to produce and process food.

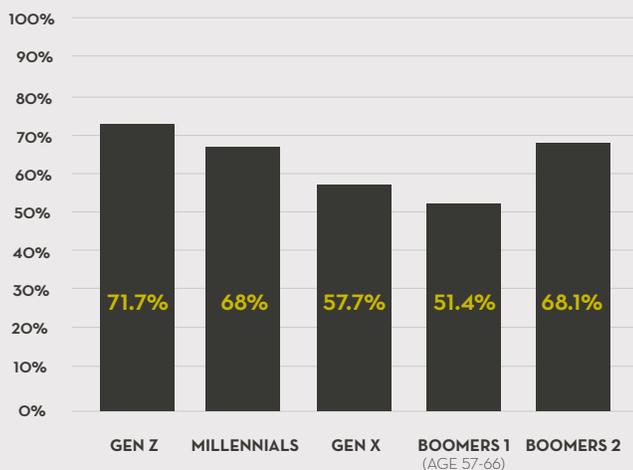
So why do consumers accept some agriculture and food technologies and reject others?

CFI [conducted research](#) among consumers and food companies in 2021 and 2022 to answer that question. The findings revealed clear differences among generations in their food consumption habits, perceptions of ag technology and willingness to accept food produced using technology.

Here's what we learned about Gen Z compared to other generations.

Gen Zs have the most positive impression of the use of technology to grow food in the U.S.

SOMEWHAT POSITIVE / VERY POSITIVE



In general, Gen Zs in the study:

- Have a more positive impression of technology used to grow food.
- Are significantly more likely to believe our food system is headed in the right direction.

GENE-EDITED PLANTS

- Are more trusting if information on which food products include gene-edited plants is readily available to all consumers.
- Gen Zs have leanings toward being more trusting if they have:
 - Information from independent, third-party audits of food companies regarding the potential impact of gene-edited plants on health
 - Access to independent research on the nutritional value of gene-edited plants
 - Access to detailed information about the gene-editing of plants for food production
 - Access to readily available information on which food products include gene-edited plants

GENE-EDITED ANIMALS

- Are more trusting if information is available so they know they're purchasing food produced from gene-edited animals.

- They feel more positive regarding the statement:
 - I feel more strongly that food from naturally grown animals is better than food from animals that have been gene-edited.

Gen Z has a stronger level of agreement regarding the following statements:

- Eating food produced from gene-edited food production animals might be unhealthy for some people.
- Using gene editing in food production animals so they do not produce allergens is beneficial to the human population.
- Humans do not have the right to edit genes of food production animals.
- Information is available so I can know when I am purchasing food produced from gene-edited food production animals.
- The technology for gene editing of animals is available to all farmers and growers.
- Information on food produced from gene-edited food production animals is readily available.
- When scientists developing the gene editing technology share my values, that increases my trust in gene-edited food production animals.

For Gen Z, the following are the factors ranked #1 based on the degree to which the factors would build consumer trust in gene editing of animals.

- Information on which food products include gene-edited food production animals would be readily available to all consumers.
- Independent research on the impact of gene-edited animals on the climate.

PREFERRED SOURCES

Gene-Edited Plants

The research also showed the today's consumers are likely to access information from a variety of sources about gene-edited plants. Gen Z, in particular, was among the most likely groups to access information from the following sources (in rank order):

1. Food product packaging and independent third-party website (tied for first)
2. Government website
3. An app
4. Food company website
5. QR code or other technology on food packaging providing immediate access

Gene-Edited Animals

When it comes to acceptance of gene editing in animals, Gen Z, in particular, was among the most likely groups to access information from the following sources (in rank order):

1. Government website
2. Independent third-party website
3. Food product packaging
4. An app with information on food produced using gene-editing animals
5. Food company website
6. QR code or other technology on food packaging providing immediate access

[Click here](#) to learn more and download our **Building Trust in Ag Tech strategic roadmap and communication guide.**

GEN Z IN THE GROCERY AISLE

According to the IFIC [2022 Food and Health Survey](#), more than one-third, 35%, of Gen Zs shop online for groceries at least once a week and more than half are label readers – saying they always or often pay attention to what’s on food and beverage packaging when online grocery shopping.

Compared to older generations, labels like “natural,” “clean ingredients,” “bioengineered/containing bioengineered ingredients,” “small carbon footprint/carbon neutral,” and “plant-based” were all more likely to influence Gen Z.

FOOD AS A BRAND

With Gen Z, food goes beyond basic sustenance, enjoyment and tradition. They tie what they eat directly to their identities, according to 2022 research that surveyed consumers in the U.S. and UK. From [Cassandra](#), an insights and cultural strategy group, the [survey showed](#) that more than half of the Gen Z respondents believe what they eat is indicative of who they are as a person. In other words, the food they buy is part of their personal brand, much like wearing certain clothing labels or carrying designer purses.

Gen Z consumers put a greater emphasis on a holistic approach to food and use it as a way to express themselves. They are also more likely than ever to consider themselves “foodies” –

searching out new recipes and inspiration online to become at-home chefs. This was particularly true during the pandemic but as the report states: “This trend doesn’t appear to be slowing down anytime soon as Gen Z has found a new way to be authentically themselves and brands and marketers should be taking note.”

They are adventurous eaters seeking unique culinary experiences, with a majority, 53%, saying they find inspiration on TikTok. In addition, 47% of the Gen Z respondents said in the next few years they will prioritize more mental-health focused eating.

FOOD AND HEALTH

A snapshot of Gen Z in the [2022 Food and Health Survey](#) from the International Food Information Council (IFIC) shows that 73% believe they have a greater concern about the environmental impact of their food choices than other generations.

They are more likely to purchase products labeled as “small carbon footprint/carbon neutral” and “plant-based,” compared to Baby Boomers.

The top health benefits sought from food, beverages and nutrients include:

- Energy/Less fatigue
- Improved sleep
- Emotional/Mental health
- Digestive health/Gut health

They are more likely than Baby Boomers to have purchased less-healthy options and fewer fresh foods in order to manage rising food costs.

Seventy-three percent report feeling stressed over the past six months and as a result are more likely to seek out options like therapy, mindfulness or medication for stress reduction, compared to Gen X and Baby Boomers.

Seventy-two percent said they had followed a diet or eating pattern in the past year and are more likely to do so than older generations. The most popular eating patterns were:

- Calorie counting 27%
- Clean eating 26%
- Mindful eating 19%
- Plant-based eating 19%

They are more likely to be motivated to follow a diet or eating pattern to improve their physical appearance, better manage a health condition, improve their relationship with food and follow the federal government’s [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGA) and/or [MyPlate](#) recommendations.

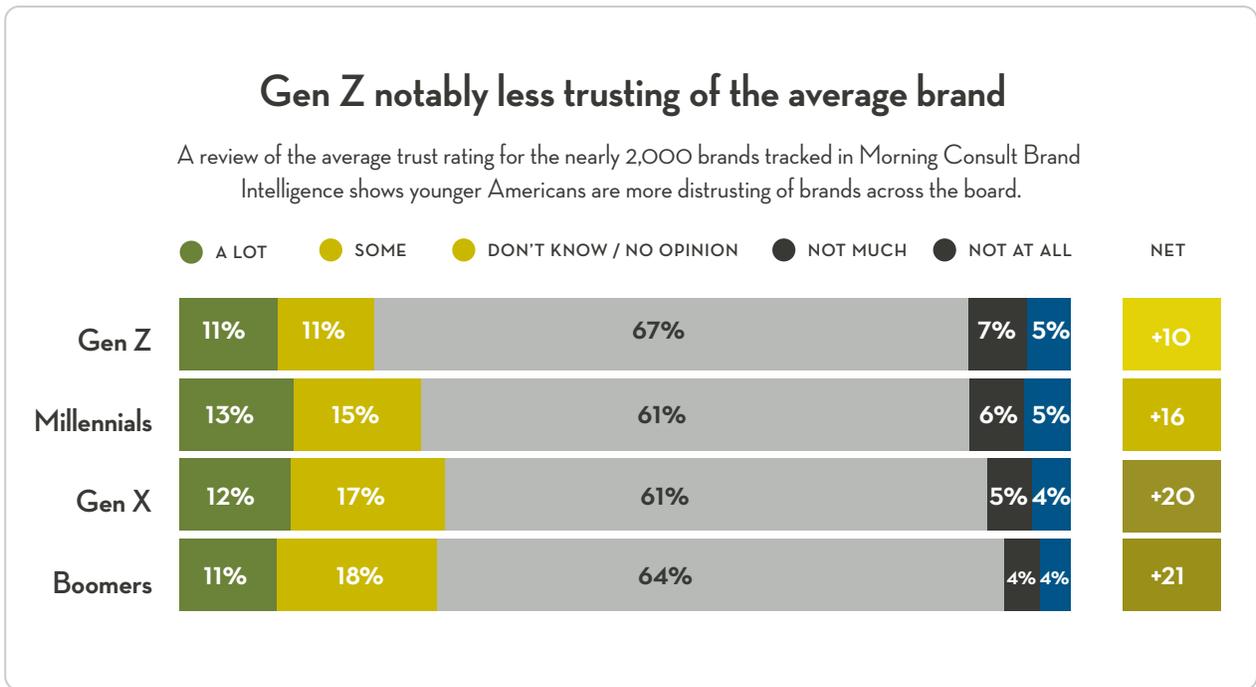
They like to snack, with 77% reporting they do so at least once a day and one-third said they snack twice a day. Just under a third said it’s because they are hungry or thirsty, 27% cite boredom as the reason and one in four say it’s because they need more energy.

They are two times more likely than older generations to say they avoid sugars entirely at 29%.

TRUST IN BRANDS

Research from [Morning Consult](#) shows that the Gen Z generation is “notably less trusting of the average brand.” The firm’s State of Consumer Trust 2022 report also shows that young Americans are more likely to prioritize ethical matters when considering which brands to trust.

GEN Z = LESS TRUSTING OF BRANDS



Morning Consult survey respondents were asked how important a series of factors are when considering whether to trust a brand. The below factors are the ones that most differentiate 18-29 year-olds from all adults. For example, 18-29 year-olds are 5 points more likely than all adults to say it is “very important” a company has strong ethical or political values.

Issues young Americans are more likely to prioritize	Issues young Americans are more likely to not prioritize
They have strong ethical or political values (+5)	They pay the taxes they owe (-14)
They treat employees better than they are required to by law (+5)	They make high quality products (-13)
They produce products in an ethically responsible way (+2)	They protect my personal data (-9)
They treat employees equally, regardless of factors like race or gender (+3)	They provide refunds if its products do not work as advertised (-7)

[Forbes Agency Council Shopper](#) influencer research shows that Gen Z, when it comes to brand loyalty, is less interested than other segments in holding onto the past. While around half of all consumers surveyed are brand loyal, there’s a stark difference with Gen Z. Only 37% fell into the loyalist category, defined as those who bought a product from the same brand they were considering at the start of the shopping journey. This differs from the 56% of Baby Boomers who did so. The research found a steady decline with each generation.

Gen Zs do more research on brands. While Millennials reported using the highest number of sources (23) before making a purchase, Gen Z wasn’t far behind (19).

They shop based on values. Sixty-eight percent of the Gen Zs in the study indicated the products they buy are a reflection of their personality, values and beliefs. That compared to just 43% of Baby Boomers. In other words, younger generations are more likely to tie a brand or company’s impact on society, including in the areas of sustainability and employee treatment, to their shopping decisions.

37% OF GEN Z CONSUMERS IDENTIFY AS BRAND LOYAL.

RACE AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

According to [Pew research](#), Gen Z represents the leading edge of the country's changing racial and ethnic makeup with 52% non-Hispanic White, one-in-four Hispanic, 14% Black, 6% Asian and 5% some other race or two or more races. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2026 the majority of this generation will be non-White.

Diversity in the workplace matters, according to a survey from [Monster](#), an online job search site. Results showed that 83% of Gen Z candidates said a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion is important when choosing an employer.



SOCIAL MEDIA HABITS

Gen Z is the first digitally native generation - meaning they've never known a world without social media and are highly adept with the various platforms.

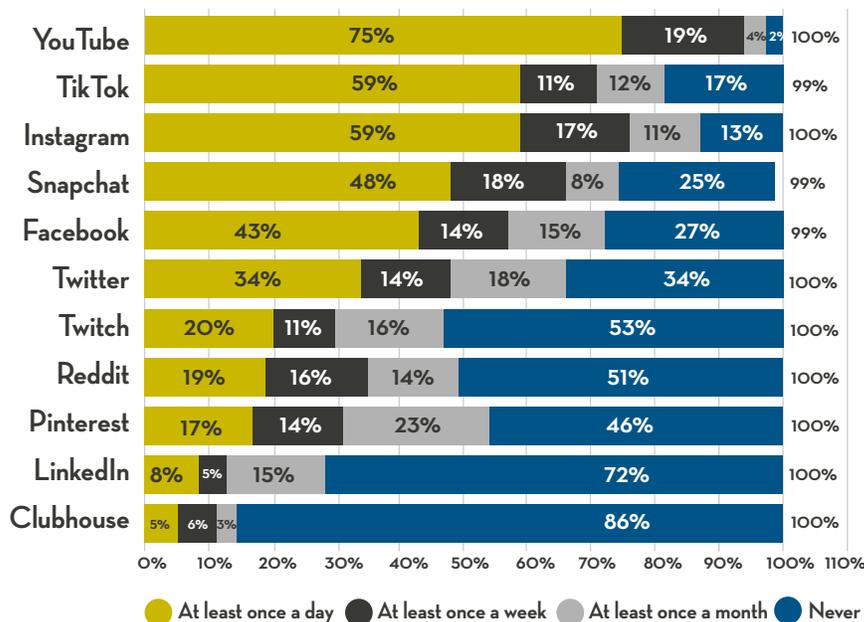
The Best Channels

A Harris poll conducted in the U.S. on behalf of [Sprout Social](#) shows that 66% of Gen Z say social media is an essential part of their lives, with the most common reason for use: killing time. This makes them the only generation to rank killing time above connecting with family and friends.

According to the survey, Gen Z expects culturally relevant and inclusive content that entertains, educates and inspires.

As far as preferred channels in the U.S., video is king for Gen Z. According to a survey conducted in July 2022 by [Statista](#), 75% use YouTube at least once a day, followed by TikTok and Instagram (tied at 59%), Snapchat at 48%, Facebook at 43% and Twitter at 34%. Twitch, Reddit and Pinterest follow with LinkedIn at 8% and Clubhouse at 5%.

Share of Generation Z adults in the United States who used selected social media platforms in July 2022, by frequency



Release date

August 2022

Region

United States

Survey time period

July 27 to 28, 2022

Number of respondents

234 respondents

Special Properties

Gen Z adults, platforms access month

Supplementary notes

Figures may not add up to 100

The Best Channels (continued)

According to a late 2021 study from GWI, a global audience targeting and market research company, Gen Z globally has an affinity for Instagram, reporting that in every quarter since Q2 2019, more 16- to 24-year-olds have visited Instagram than Facebook. It can be explained by social media motivations. While all other generations say finding news is one of their top three reasons for using social media networks, Gen Z places more priority on finding content and seeing what's trending.

While Gen Z is trying to adopt healthier social media habits, like spending less time on channels, American Gen Zs say social platforms are good for society and help them feel connected to others. They average around three hours of social media use per day and see social media as an essential part of their everyday lives. In the U.S., posting about their lives is a top reason for using the networks.

While there's a great deal of focus on shrinking attention spans in general, the study shows that while short videos are the general preference for Gen Z, they are open to watching longer form videos. Part of this is the affinity for how-to videos and vlogs. According to the report, they are "just as likely to be watching 20+-minute videos as they are <4-minute ones." As the report notes, one in four consumers watch a video made by a brand each month.

Overall, Gen Z gravitates toward stories – regardless of the channel. This is not surprising. Stories illustrate values, which we know are important to earning trust. According to GWI, Instagrammers are the most active story creators.

Ninety-seven percent of all Gen Zs learn about new products from social media, according to the [Influencer Marketing Factory](#), a global influencer marketing agency.

Social Media from Influencers

Gen Z prefers to build connections with their existing community and people like influencers, whose buying advice they trust over brands. In fact, [79% of Gen Z consumers](#) say they would purchase after seeing an influencer recommendation on social media.



GEN Z IN THE WORKPLACE

Recruitment and retention for every generation is different. Gen Z is no exception. Among the expectations detailed in research by [Yello](#) talent acquisition platform:

- Gen Z wants meaningful work, ranking job duties and responsibilities higher than any other generation when it comes to accepting or rejecting a job offer.
- Gen Zs are on the move with 55% planning to work for their current employer for less than three years. According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the median tenure for workers from 55 to 64 is 10.1 years, and 2.8 years for those workers aged 25 to 34. Nearly 60% of Gen Z expects to change roles within the same company in less than two years.

They desire mission-driven and enjoyable roles and want to know their work makes a difference. They also want work-life balance with hybrid or remote work and the option to take time off as needed.

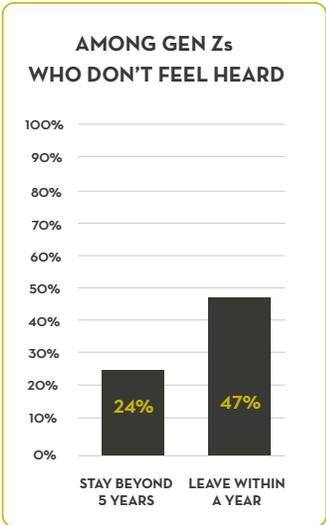
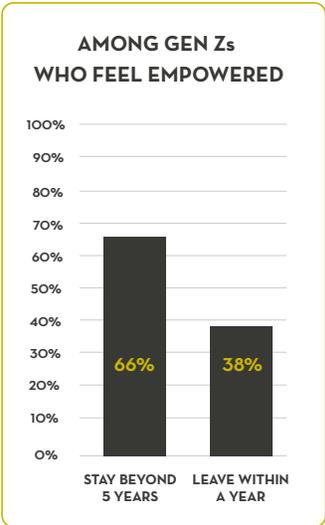
While salary is ranked as the most important factor for Gen Z, work-life balance, job duties, location and career growth opportunities round out the top five in a list of 14 factors.

The top five perks/benefits they value on the job include:

1. Medical insurance
2. Vacation and paid time off
3. 401k or retirement plan
4. Maternity / paternity leave
5. Student loan repayment

According to a Gen Z survey from [Deloitte](#), empowering people to drive change within an organization is key to fostering a sense of belonging and driving loyalty. Gen Zs aren't afraid to speak up; it's important for employers to listen and implement their feedback when appropriate. Results show that 32% of Gen Z say decisions are made from the top down within their organizations and employee feedback is not often acted upon.

Empowering employees promotes a more inclusive environment, according to Deloitte. When people feel their voices are heard, they tend to feel more connected and loyal.



Deloitte says burnout and feeling the workplace was detrimental to their healthcare are the top reasons Gen Zs left their jobs over the last two years. The top three reasons they chose to work for their current organization are good work/life balance, learning and development opportunities, and high salary or other financial benefits.



The Deloitte research echoes other surveys that show purpose is critical. Gen Zs indicated they are willing to turn down jobs and assignments that don't align with their values. In fact, 37% of Gen Zs said they have rejected a job and/or assignment based on personal ethics. The percentage is higher for those in leadership positions, with nearly half (46%) of Gen Zs in senior positions having rejected a job and/or assignment based on personal ethics.

The research goes on to say that while societal and environmental impact, along with a diverse

and inclusive culture, are not always at the top of the priority list when choosing a job, these continue to be critical in terms of retention. Those who are satisfied with their employers' efforts on these fronts are more likely to want to stay with their employer for more than five years.

Gen Z is more stressed than other generations according to Deloitte, with 46% saying they're stressed most of the time. That compares with 36% of Millennials. Despite this, one in five Gen Zs don't believe their employer takes burnout seriously or is taking steps to address it.

