



Gen Z ✨ Trends, Truth and Trust

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Introduction

Young audiences are at the heart of Channel 4's past, present and future.

Understanding Gen Z – along with the forces shaping their world – is vital for knowing how to speak to them. This is a generation deeply influenced by the UK's economic instability, delayed milestones, and a culture merging digital and real worlds.

Working with research agency Craft, our three-stage series debunked myths about Gen Z in the first phase, **Beyond Z** (2022), revealing a far more diverse generation than conventional narratives suggest. The second phase, **Too Much To Watch** (2023), revealed that self-selected video viewing fosters joy, while algorithmic consumption can create a sense of purposefulness.

Our latest study, **Gen Z: Trends, Truth and Trust**, identifies the macro themes shaping young people's experiences today. We explore their

emotions, the challenges they face and – crucially – who they trust. Building on our original findings that Gen Z is far from homogenous, we now look at identity, interests, and worldviews to shed light on these differences.

In this report, we examine how young people navigate content online, and how they think and feel about the world – offering insights that help us and the wider industry to better connect with, represent, and build trust among this complex generation.



Our goal is to help Gen Z develop the tools and confidence to sort fact from fiction – and to believe that **truth still matters**, for them and for society.



We feature six key Gen Z mindsets – distinct worldviews that capture this cohort’s diversity, societal expectations, and shifting cultural norms. Each underscores the importance of nuanced, tailored approaches to storytelling and engagement.

Truth, trust, and a fragmented world

Our research shows that for Gen Z, ‘truth’ is no longer a given. Confronted with a fragmented information ecosystem, Gen Z often take a ‘magpie’ approach, building their interpretation of the world from diverse, sometimes contradictory, sources.

While this allows for creativity and self-expression, it also raises urgent questions: if trust in established institutions continues to erode, what does that mean for civic engagement, democracy, and social cohesion?

As a public service media organisation, Channel 4 believes we share a responsibility to champion factual, balanced content and ensure it reaches all generations and all demographics of the UK. Our goal is to help Gen Z develop the tools and confidence to sort fact from fiction – and to believe that truth still matters, for them and for society.

Traditional milestones are shifting

Our research also reveals how economic pressures and delayed adulthood are reshaping traditional milestones. Yet while this creates uncertainty, it also offers opportunities for experimentation and self-discovery as Gen Z redefines adulthood on their own terms. This

redefinition extends to how they interact with the media and whom they believe. Their willingness to embrace less-traditional institutions fuels a demand for authenticity, nuance, and multi-perspective storytelling – especially at a time when ‘the truth’ is hotly contested.

A call to action

Gen Z’s perspectives, passions, and insistence on authenticity have profound implications for the future of media and democracy.

If we value a society built on shared facts and open debate, we must adapt now – meeting young people in the spaces they inhabit, championing trustworthy content, and evolving how we tell stories. We cannot rely on old habits or traditional gatekeepers; Gen Z won’t simply revert to past models of news and engagement.

Gen Z voices will shape the future. We have a responsibility, as public service media, to lead and to act, to restore bonds between young people and reliable sources of information. If not now, then when? And if not us, then who?

Alex Mahon
Chief Executive, Channel 4



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Macro themes impacting Gen Z

Macro themes impacting Gen Z

While this generation is anything but homogenous, macro themes highlight the societal, cultural, and economic forces shaping Gen Z's experiences. Rather than imposing one-size-fits-all labels, these themes identify key challenges and shared values, while leaving room for individual interpretations.

These themes, which are intersectional and can often overlap, reveal a generation grappling with an increasingly uncertain future – and rewriting the rulebook as they do so, from rethinking traditional milestones to curating personal 'truths' in a fragmented media environment.

Drawing on both desk and primary research, we identified eight key macro themes:

- *Declining Happiness*
- *The Lost Boys*
- *A Growing Gender Divergence*
- *Who Can You Trust?*
- *A Political Reframing*
- *A Confused Generation*
- *The Winner Takes It All*
- *The Triumph of The Self*



Declining happiness

Gen Z's happiness presents a paradox. Although 71% report feeling broadly happy, deeper insights reveal³ growing mental health struggles, loneliness, and economic stress. These are driving a decline in happiness, and are reshaping young people's life outlook and future aspirations. A sense of control and fairness – both central to happiness – now feel increasingly out of reach.

Historically, happiness followed a U-shape: we start out content, this dips in middle age, and rebounds later. Today, however, young Britons report higher levels of unhappiness than older generations⁴. Only 60% of 13–27-year-olds feel in control of major aspects of their lives, and their belief in social mobility is waning: **55% of 13-27s say wealth at birth matters more for success than hard work** (versus 41% of 45-65s⁵).

Socioeconomic pressures have reshaped traditional milestones: many young people stay in the family home longer and delay marriage, parenthood, and homeownership^{6,7}. The pandemic further compounded this 'delayed adulthood', creating a void of coming-

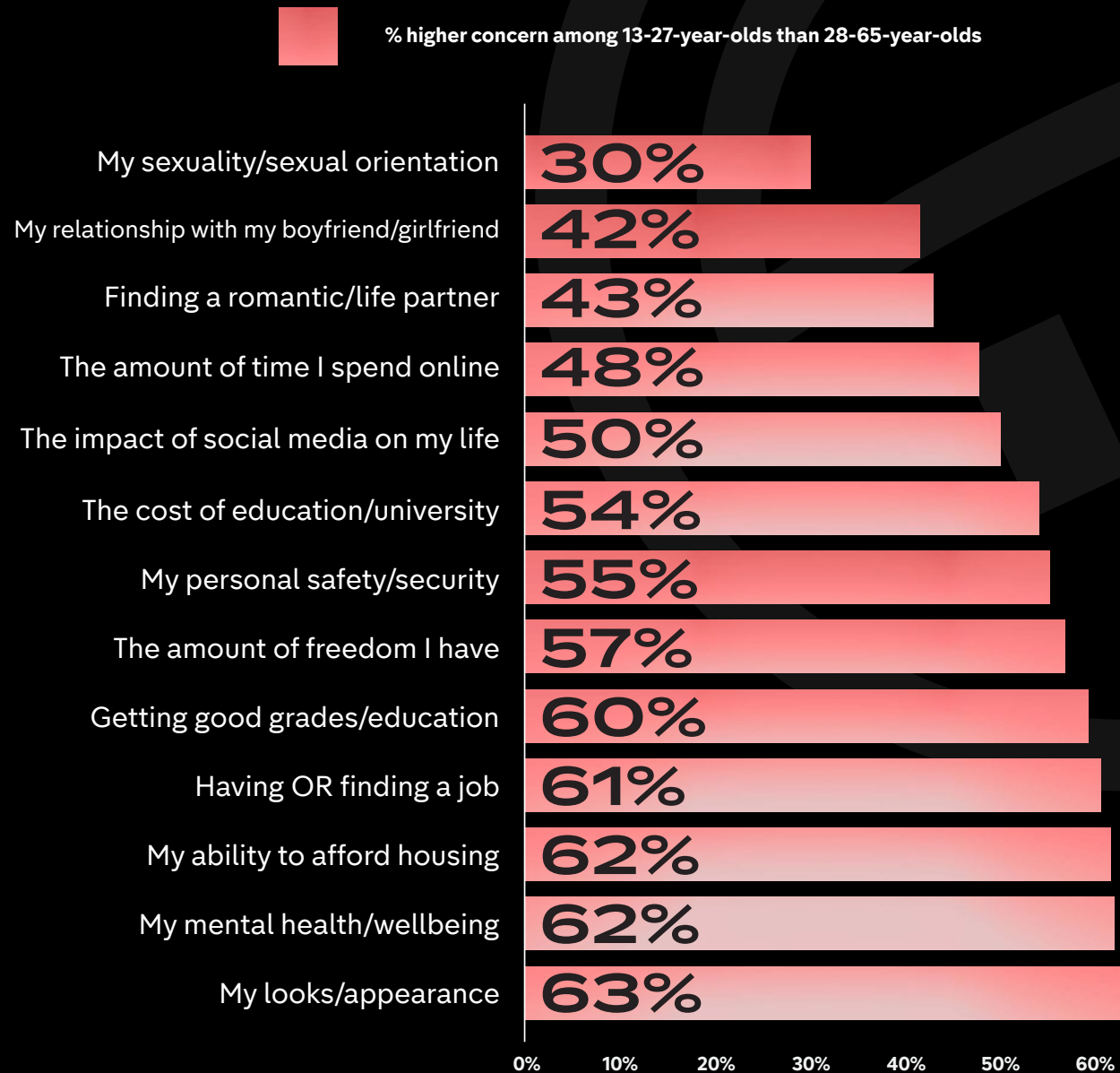
of-age experiences that exacerbate feelings of unfairness and a lack of control. However, some see a silver lining – this new life stage offers a new window for self-discovery and exploration.

Amid these shifts, it is no surprise that young people's concerns have turned inward: material issues (cost of living, financial stability, education) and personal wellbeing (mental health, personal relationships, day-to-day stability), overshadow bigger societal concerns, such as climate change or immigration⁸.

A sense of control and fairness – both central to happiness – now feel increasingly out of reach.



Key issues: How much more concerned are Gen Z than older people?





I definitely feel like life is an uphill struggle. You're getting the pickaxe out and just struggling to get to the top and all the while you're getting kicked down by older people going, 'Oh, you're not working hard enough.'

26, Male, Norwich



It's this constant pressure to always be evolving, always doing more. You can work so hard, but you don't actually reap any of the benefits. It's a very toxic culture. I prefer more slow living, and to be able to have more satisfaction in what you're doing and not just 'being okay'.

25, Female, Cardiff



Only

60%

of 13-27s feel totally in control of the big things in their lives (*falling to 55% of 18-22s*)

62%

of 13-27s believe that there is one law for the rich and one for the poor (*rising to 69% of 45-65s*)

55%

of 13-27s feel that the UK is a country where being born into wealth is more important in getting ahead than hard work, skills and talent (*vs. 41% of 45-65s*)

The lost boys

An emerging attainment crisis among some young men is gaining attention. Across education, employment, and income, a gap is growing between men and women. By age 19, 54% of women are in higher education versus 40% of men⁹, a trend then echoed in the labour force, where young women aged 20-24 have higher employment rates (3-percentage point gap¹⁰) and out-earn young men on average.

White working-class men are hardest-hit: only 14.6% entered higher education in 2021, the lowest of any ethnic or socioeconomic group¹¹. One in three is economically inactive – a figure that has doubled since the early 1990s – leaving nearly two million young men out of work. This leaves many struggling to find their place in the world.

Young women now overtaking men in employment for first time

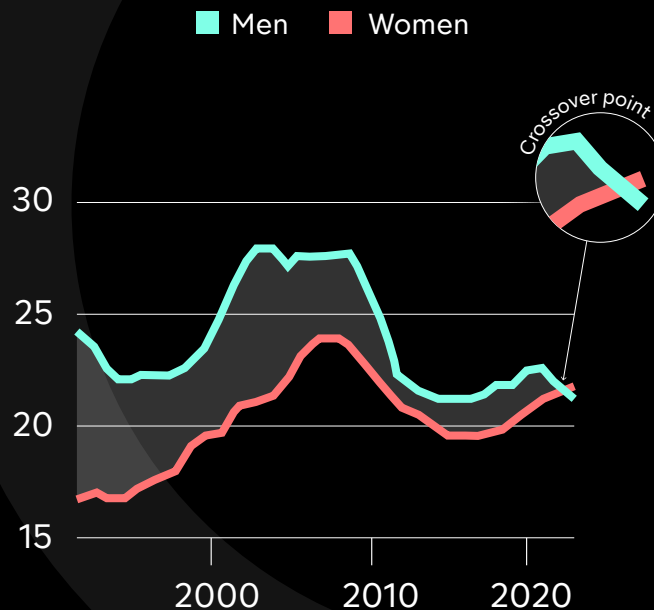
% 20-24-year-olds in employment (UK)



Source: Financial Times (2024)

Young women now overtaking men in income for first time

Real median income (£000s) for 21-26-year-olds (UK)



Source: Financial Times (2024)



There's a silent crisis brewing among boys and men in our classrooms, workplaces and communities.

*Richard Reeves, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and author of **Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters and What to Do About It***

A growing gender divergence

For the first time, gender is emerging as a sharp dividing line in young people's political ideology. While young men remain more liberal than conservative, young women are becoming significantly more progressive, particularly on issues like immigration and racial justice¹².

This divergence is most pronounced on gender-specific matters. While only 36% of 16-29-year-old men agree that 'feminism has done more good than harm'¹³, a concerning minority (20-30%) feel threatened by female equality. Nearly half (45%) believe that efforts to promote women's equality have gone so far that men are now discriminated against¹⁴.

Controversial prominent online figures amplify these concerns, with 47% of Gen Z men agreeing that 'masculinity is under attack'¹⁵. Even liberal or moderate young men sometimes relate to messages about hard work, discipline, and self-improvement embedded in this type of rhetoric.

As gender roles shift, young men seek motivational figures to navigate modern masculinity. The need for relatable, constructive role models is clear.

44%

of Gen Z men agree that 'when it comes to giving women equal rights, things have gone far enough'

45%

of men believe that 'we have gone so far in promoting women's equality that we are discriminating against men'



Who can you trust?

Gen Z has come of age amid information overload, and they have flatter hierarchies of trust across media^{16,17}. Young people are far more likely to trust social media – posts from friends, brands, advertising, influencers – yet they generally hold mainstream media in similar regard. Older people, by contrast, exhibit clearer trust preferences, placing more confidence in established outlets¹⁸.

Young people often cite 'bias' and 'agendas' in the news, though this isn't unique to Gen Z. Their confusion is more philosophical: if everyone has some bias, can anyone truly 'know' anything? Uncertain where bias ends, they grow increasingly confused.

Gen Z have a flatter hierarchy of confidence between 'traditional' and alternative media sources. In response, they curate eclectic 'playlists' of truth, drawing from diverse, often contradictory sources. It's not uncommon for them to hold broadly left-wing values but still agree with some more right-leaning ideas.

Although these habits reflect a thirst for nuance, multi-perspective storytelling and honesty, they won't automatically seek duly impartial and regulated mainstream media coverage – a challenge the industry must address.



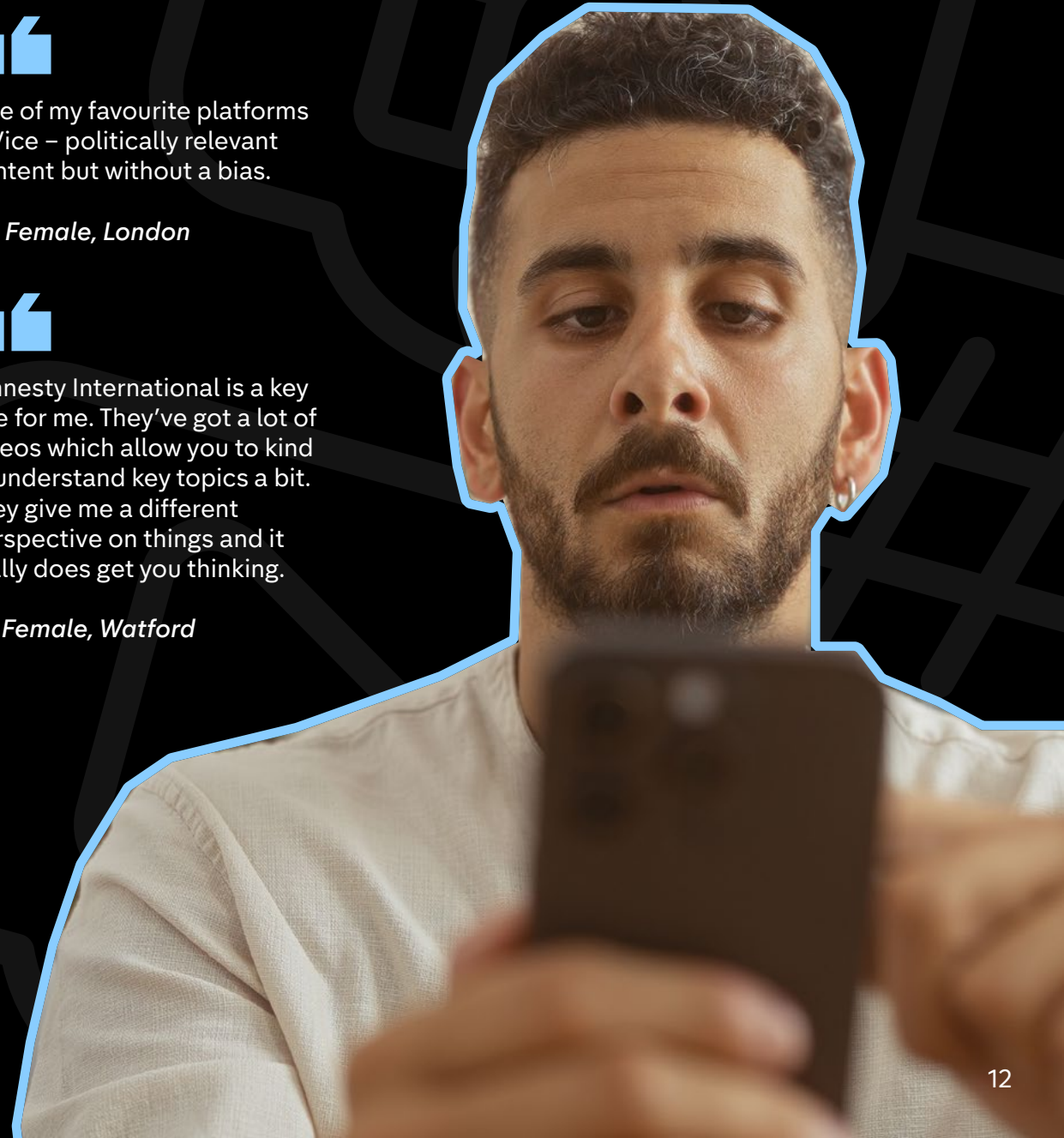
One of my favourite platforms is Vice – politically relevant content but without a bias.

22, Female, London



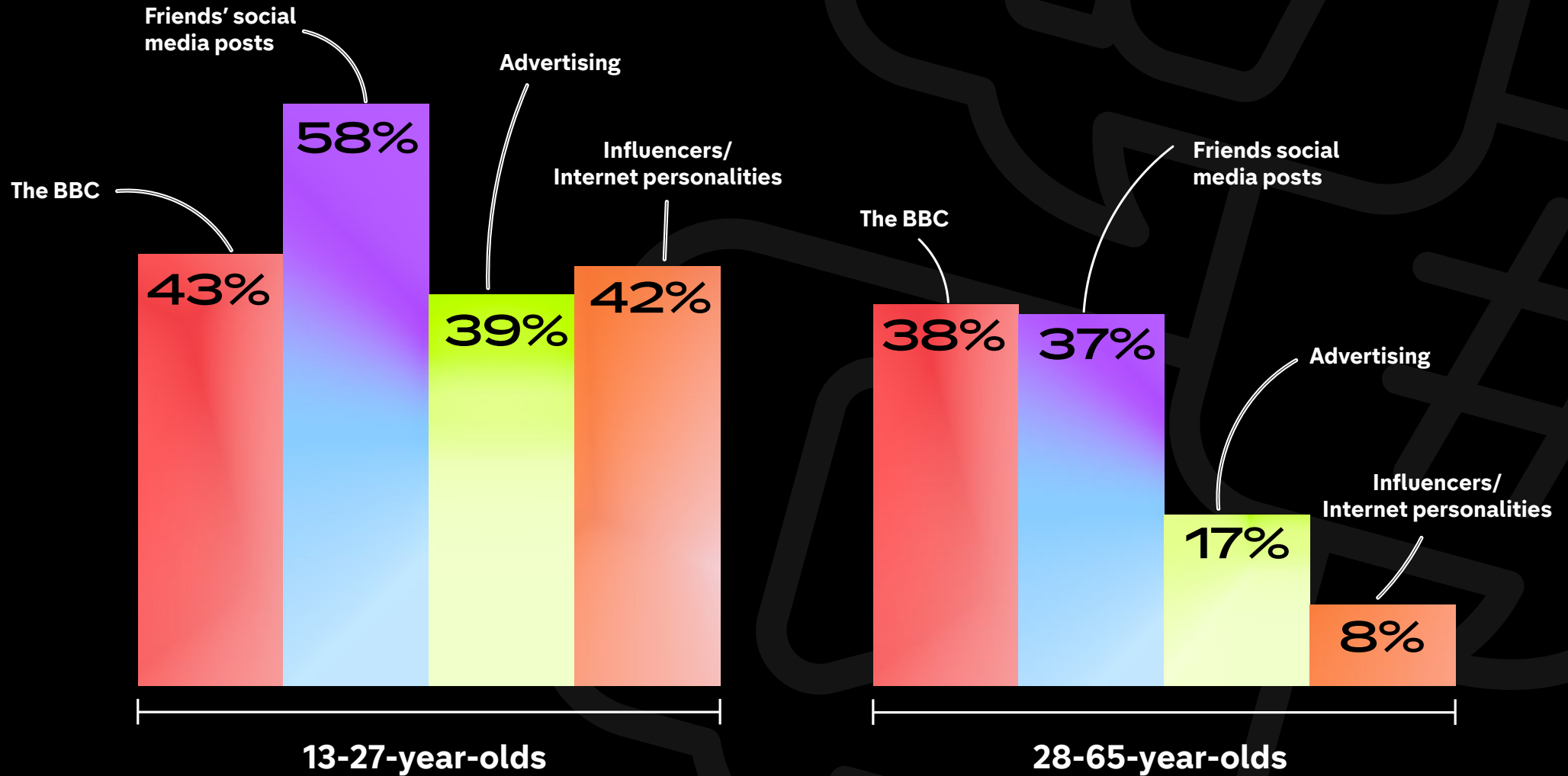
Amnesty International is a key one for me. They've got a lot of videos which allow you to kind of understand key topics a bit. They give me a different perspective on things and it really does get you thinking.

27, Female, Watford



Gen Z have a much flatter hierarchy of trust than older people

% confidence in key groups: Gen Z vs older people



A political reframing

Gen Z is often characterised as a politically engaged generation set to transform politics, but this isn't accurate – at least not yet.

While more politically aware than older generations at the same age – largely due to today's highly politicised environment – Gen Z remains the least politically engaged group. Many are either too young to vote or too disconnected to see the relevance of formal politics^{19,20,21}.

Over the last two decades, Gen Z has shifted slightly to the centre-left, while older generations lean centre-right. Age now emerges as a key factor in voting behaviour – more so than social class, which once dominated.²²

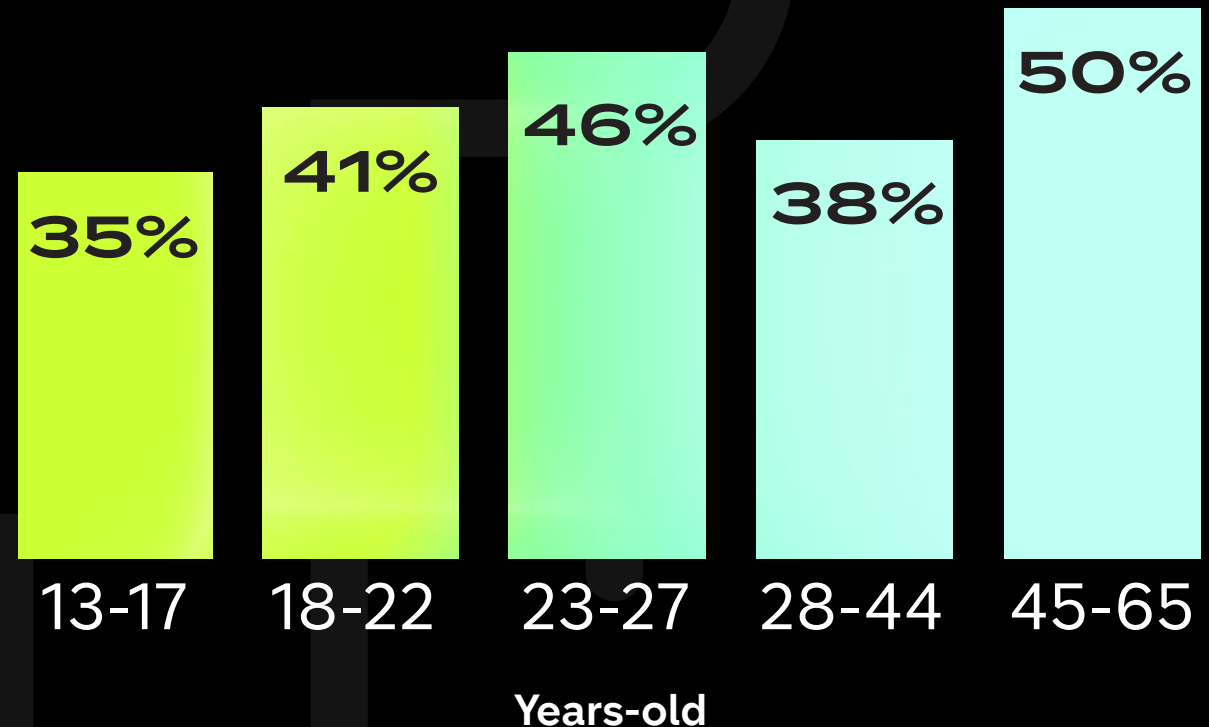
Though Gen Z is more liberal overall, the gap between liberal and authoritarian views within this cohort has narrowed²³. Some value social order over personal autonomy, and some express scepticism about democracy itself. This could be due to this generation having faced a 'polycrisis': they have grown up in an age of heightened concerns about climate change, as well as increased economic, technological and geopolitical turmoil.

While most support democratic principles, young people are the least positive about Britain's fairness and its democratic systems²⁴.

While most support democratic principles, young people are the least positive about Britain's fairness and its democratic systems.



I closely follow UK politics (% agreeing)



73%

of Gen Z think democracy is a 'very' or 'fairly good' way of governing the UK (vs. just under 90% for older generations)

26%

of Gen Z see the UK as a highly democratic nation (vs. 55% of the pre-war generation)

Source: Policy Institute, King's College London (2023)



13-27-year-olds are more likely than older generations to think that:



The UK would be a better place if a strong leader was in charge who does not have to bother with parliament and elections

13-27



52%

45-65

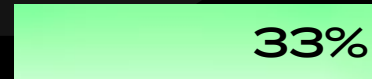


40%



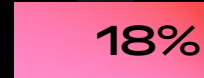
The UK would be a better place if the army was in charge

13-27



33%

45-65

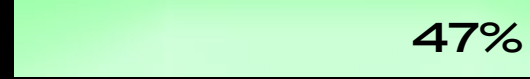


18%



The entire way our society is organised must be radically changed through revolution

13-27



47%

45-65



33%

Source: Channel 4 / Craft (2024)

A confused generation



It's important not to regard Gen Z's values as fully formed and fixed. Young people's views are the most fluid, changing frequently on both major life questions and everyday issues²⁵ – a life-stage rather than generational effect. They're simply figuring it out.

Identity politics, misinformation, media fragmentation, and civil unrest intensify the inherent confusion of coming of age. This environment, challenging even for seasoned adults, becomes even harder to navigate for young people trying to find their place in such a fluid, fragmented world.

They face daily tensions but not all young people are spiralling; many are highly engaged, certain in their positions, and navigating their world with a sense of agency. Others feel lost in an ever-changing reality.

Young people's views are the most fluid, changing frequently on both major life questions and everyday issues.

31%

of Gen Z say they've changed their mind in the past year on which political party they would vote for at a General Election (compared to 13% of Gen X)

24%

of Gen Z say they have changed their mind in the past year on whether the death penalty is justified for some crimes or not (vs 4% of Gen X)

22%

of Gen Z say they have changed their mind in the past year on whether they believe in God or not (vs 2% of Gen X)

The winner takes it all

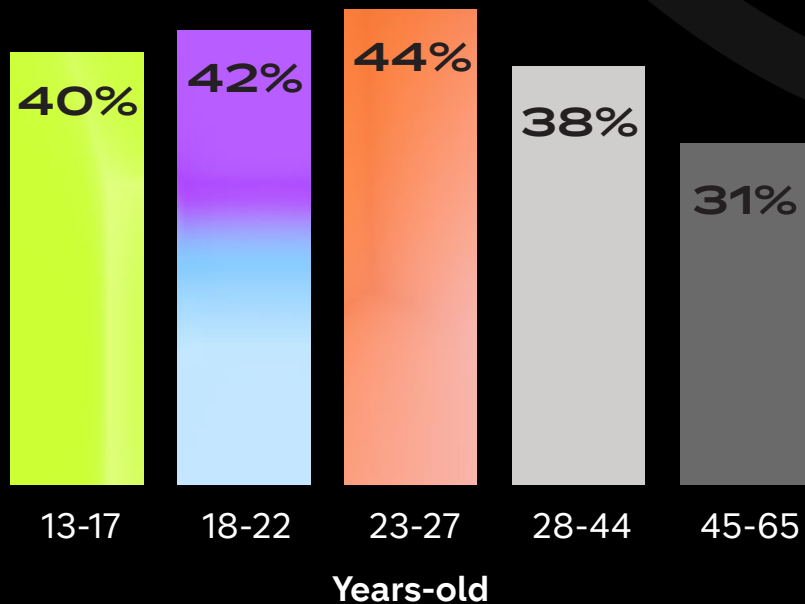
Many young people see life as a zero-sum game – where one group's success means another's loss. Ongoing economic instability, deepening inequalities and societal divides reinforce this mindset, leaving many disillusioned about thriving in a system that feels stacked against them. Some believe they must leave others behind to get ahead²⁶.

Such zero-sum thinking, especially pronounced among 18-27-year-olds and young men, hinders collaborative efforts and pits different communities against one other. Acknowledging where certain groups are left behind – and forging opportunities for collective progression – is critical²⁷.

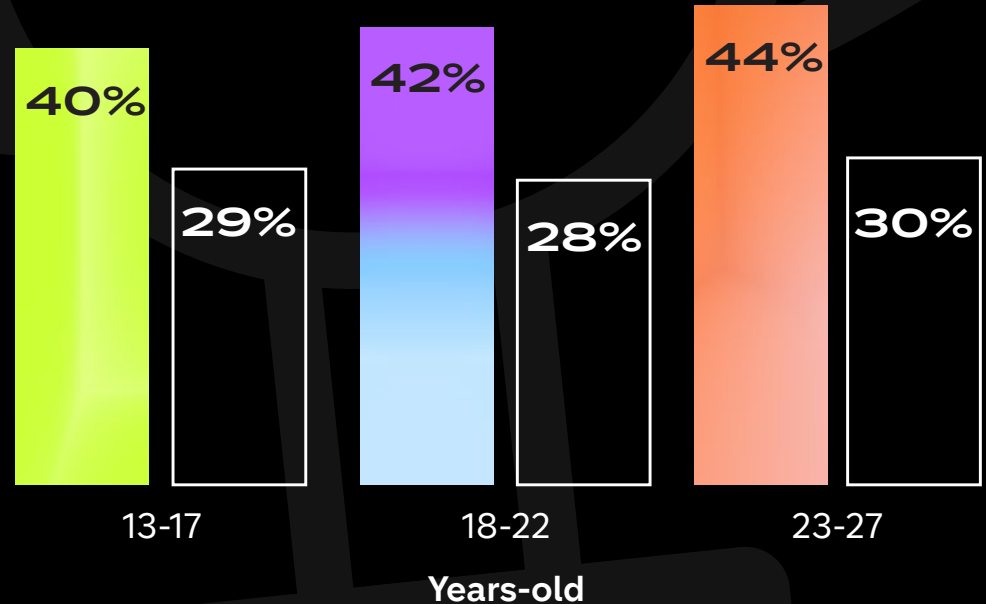
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The rise of the zero-sum thinker

% agreement with 'For one group to succeed in the UK, another has to lose' by age group



% agreement vs % disagreement with 'For one group to succeed in the UK, another has to lose'





The triumph of the self

It's little surprise young people are prioritising an individualistic view of the world. They want to control what they can: themselves.

Confronted with declining happiness, feelings of diminished fairness and control, and zero-sum thinking, it's little surprise young people are prioritising an individualistic view of the world. They want to control what they can: themselves.

This mirrors a wider societal shift towards individualism and increased personal focus. While life stage contributes to individualism (young people often lean that way), the hyper-personalised media culture that Gen Z has grown up with could make this individualistic streak a defining generational trait.

Importantly, Gen Z's individualism is not inherently selfish. It can manifest as positive self-reliance and personal growth. But it can also exacerbate mental and physical health pressures, body-image struggles, or competitive outlooks on success.

Six Gen Z worldviews



Gen Z ✨
Trends, Truth and Trust

Decoding a generation

The worldviews identified in Gen Z: Trends, Trust & Truth offer the clearest way to understand what truly makes this cohort different. These six perspectives decode a generation often mischaracterised as monolithic, revealing instead diverse attitudes, values, and responses to the challenges they face. By emphasising meaningful distinctions rather than stereotypes, these worldviews show how each person's outlook is shaped by a unique mix of identity, environment, and aspiration. A young person can belong to more than one of these worldviews at a time, they are nuanced groups that can intersect.

Gen Z is navigating rapid societal and technological shifts, and these worldviews reflect the strategies they use to thrive. Some groups feel driven to challenge norms or fight for fairness; others grapple with exclusion, frustration, or apathy. Such varied responses underscore the role of individual factors – like gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural exposure – in shaping their mindsets.

These six perspectives decode a generation often mischaracterised as monolithic, revealing instead diverse attitudes, values, and responses to the challenges they face.





Boys can't be boys: Traditional masculinity supporters

Young men and women who feel trapped by shifting gender expectations, struggling to reconcile traditional masculinity with modern societal norms. They often perceive themselves as under attack, feeling alienated and disconnected from progressive narratives.



Fight for rights: Activists, socially conscious

This group is deeply engaged in social justice and equality, prioritising activism and fairness. They are optimistic about their ability to create change and channel their energy into advocating for progressive causes.



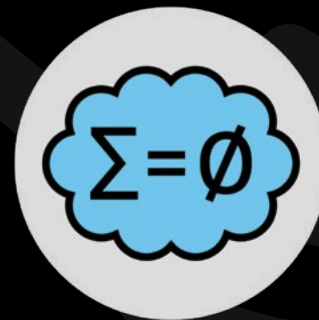
Girl power: Empowered, optimistic young women

Focused on empowerment and self-reliance, these young women drive change through their actions rather than overt activism. They embrace independence and positivity while rejecting stereotypes and barriers to gender equality.



Dice are loaded: Concerned with socioeconomic barriers

Feeling disillusioned and defeated, this group believes societal systems are inherently rigged against them. They face significant unhappiness and lack faith in their ability to overcome systemic challenges.



Zero-sum thinkers: Radical worldview, fearful/feel under attack

Zero-Sum Thinkers see life in stark terms – one group's success means another's loss. They lean toward radical, authoritarian views, valuing hard work while critiquing welfare and shifting societal norms on both sides of the political spectrum.



Blank slates: Neutral, disinterested young men

This disengaged group is particularly young and prioritises hobbies, friendships, and everyday life over societal concerns. They are apolitical, focusing on leisure and personal enjoyment rather than activism or cultural commentary.



Boys can't be boys: Traditional masculinity supporters

PROFILE:

- 2.7 million people
- 14% of the total Gen Z (aged 13–27) population
- Predominantly male (82%)



The 'boys can't be boys' worldview reflects a predominantly male segment (though not exclusively) who feel trapped by shifting societal expectations around masculinity. Numbering around 2.7 million – 14% of Gen Z in the UK – these young men occupy a 'no-man's land' and are uncertain about what it means to be a man today.

They over-index on the belief that traditional masculinity is under attack, finding resonance in figures like Andrew Tate and Jordan Peterson, who seem to validate their sense of marginalisation. Though not outright radical, they feel excluded from the progressive narratives shaping society.

Critically, this group lacks positive role models and safe spaces to explore their identity, leaving them vulnerable to negative influences. They're also often disengaged from broader cultural conversations.



I believe the man has to be the provider. And he has to provide for the family. I see in my life around me, a lot of people are just not into that anymore. I personally think that a man has to provide, regardless. Same with women nowadays, I suppose. It's a woman's choice. They shouldn't be discouraged from being a housewife. Nowadays, the pressure with feminism, all the pressure in society, it's quite difficult for a woman to make that decision.

18, Male, Hitchin



I just don't feel like there are as many opportunities as there used to be for guys. And also you've taken back that praise for being a man, you almost don't get that anymore.

26, Male, Norwich



Fight for rights:

Activists, socially conscious

PROFILE

- 2.1 million people
- 12% of the total Gen Z (aged 13–27) population
- Slightly female-skewed (60%), educated and highly engaged with current affairs

This worldview skews slightly female and primarily comprises Gen Zers dedicated to equality, fairness, and social justice. With around 2.1 million individuals – 12% of Gen Z – they're overwhelmingly optimistic about creating meaningful change and often lead or participate in grassroots activism.

They have a strong moral compass tied to fairness across issues like climate change, racial justice, and LGBTQ+ rights. Although they consider themselves broadly happy, they believe the UK is deeply unfair – but believe that progress is both necessary and achievable. They over-index in believing that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor; that socioeconomic status at birth determines success more than effort, and that ordinary working people do not get a fair share. Despite these concerns, they feel happy and in control of their lives.



I want to save all the people living in the UK. People have become a victim to the cost of living crisis, disabled people have been affected by that so much more, especially with government cuts. Then there's people in Palestine, in Lebanon, Sudan, Congo, anywhere, really.

25, Female, Cardiff





Girl power: Empowered, optimistic young women

PROFILE

- 2.7 million people
- 21% of the total Gen Z (aged 13–27) population
- 99% female/non-binary
- 16% identify as LGBTQIA+
- Under-index for zero-sum thinking, especially in regard to gender relations, believing men and women can succeed together

Representing around 2.7 million people (21% of Gen Z), these almost exclusively Gen Z women are empowered, self-reliant, and determined to shape their own futures.

They often reject traditional expectations or limitations without resorting to overt political activism – leading by example through prioritising education, career ambitions, and lifestyle choices that reflect their values. This group thrives in social and cultural spaces, over-indexing for participation in activities that promote connection and community.

While they're overwhelmingly progressive, their focus tends to be on personal goals rather than macro-level politics. They under-index heavily on engagement with UK politics and society.



I'm into 'girl things' like social media, seeing what the latest fashion trends are, going out to different gigs, to eat, the cinema.

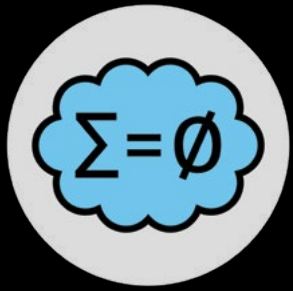
23, Female, Crowthorne



I went to a women's STEM careers event the other day. I feel a lot more optimistic and hopeful that we're building up a female workforce, but there's still changes to be made.

22, Female, London





Zero-sum thinkers: Radical worldview, fearful/ feel under attack

PROFILE

- 2.2 million people
- 18% of the total Gen Z (aged 13-27) population
- Gender-balanced
- Over-index for those towards the higher end of the socio-economic spectrum

This worldview cluster – exclusively Gen Z – accounts for around 2.2 million individuals (18% of Gen Z) and spans all genders. They see the world in black-and-white terms, believing that for one group to succeed, another must fail.

Beyond identity politics, they lean toward authoritarian and radical views on both sides of the political spectrum. They also worry about issues like finding a romantic partner or that their freedoms are threatened.

Even though they're gender balanced, they're more likely to feel that online personalities like Andrew Tate or Jordan Peterson 'have a point' about masculinity being under attack. They also believe that working hard will pay off, and that the welfare system is too soft.



So for me personally, I would say [I'm] economically right wing – somewhere on the more authoritarian side of the rule of law, of politics, society, culture – whichever way you call the arrow on that compass.

25, Male, Penryn





Dice are loaded: Concerned with socioeconomic barriers

PROFILE

- 1.9 million people
- 15% of the total Gen Z (aged 13-27) population
- 68% female
- Represented at both ends of the socio-economic spectrum

Exclusively Gen Z and around two-thirds female, this worldview has about 1.9 million individuals (15% of Gen Z). They feel that society and the economy are rigged against them, and they are unhappy about it.

Feeling left behind, they perceive themselves to lack control over their future, and are worried about finances, employment, housing, mental health, or physical appearance. By no means all come from marginalised or lower-income backgrounds – some are highly educated but still sense older generations hold disproportionate power.

Although they're frustrated, they aren't radical or violent, and they reject the idea that men face unfair treatment. They also oppose rioting.



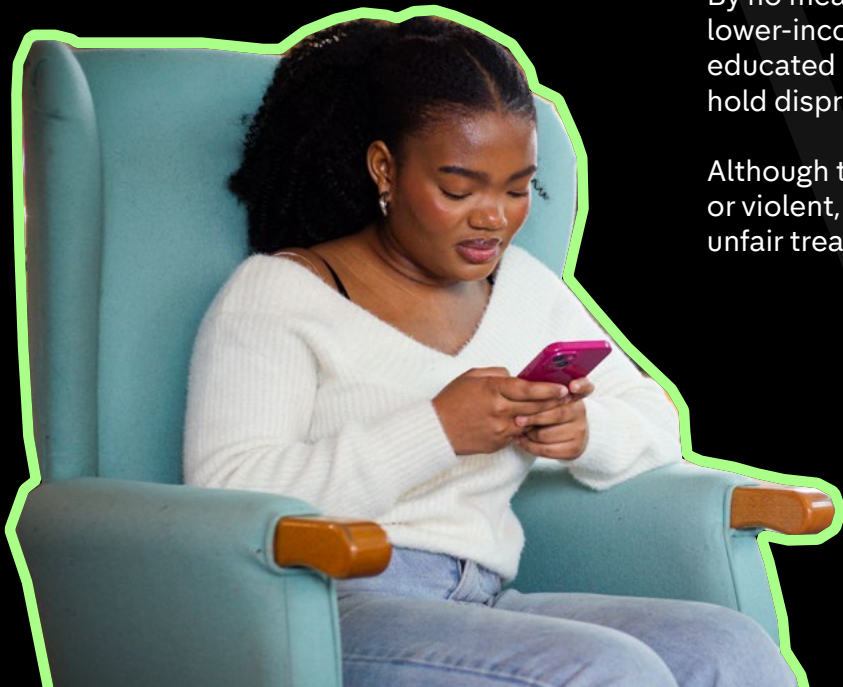
I feel like I'm punished for staying in my home city. There's just a distinct lack of opportunity. I see it with all my friends: really talented people, from actors to illustrators to scientists. They have to move because there's just not opportunity here. It's a real shame, because you lose the brightest and best people.

26, Male, Norwich



I feel a bit lost in life. Pretty much all my male friends do. Young people are getting left behind, but young males get left behind as well, creating this vacuum of confused, lost males.

26, Male, Norwich





Blank slates:

Neutral, disinterested young men

PROFILE

- 2.5 million people
- 20% of the total Gen Z (aged 13-27) population
- 100% male
- Socio-economically representative of UK

One of the two youngest-skewing clusters (alongside Girl Power), this exclusively male group of around 2.5 million (20% of Gen Z) prioritise hobbies, friendships, and everyday life over engagement with social or political issues.

They aren't unintelligent or unambitious, but they pay little attention to matters beyond their own, immediate world. While some follow the news, their main focus is on just getting on with life – going to school, working, watching and playing sports, gaming, YouTube, and scrolling social media for entertainment. Ultimately, their goals revolve around tangible, near-term achievements like good grades, getting a good job, buying a house, and starting a family.



I haven't really thought about [any issues]. I'm really focused on passing my exams, that will be used for future jobs and opportunities.

17, Male, Luton



I'm more into drinking, going out, socialising... I'm into football, sports. I've got to get back into the gym soon.

21, Male, Maidenhead



Conclusion

Why this all matters: Trends, truth and trust

Defined by perpetual connectivity and individual feeds, Gen Z is navigating an era where truth feels increasingly elusive, and where trust in traditional institutions has eroded.

Raised in a world of smartphones and social media, this generation has always experienced news through personalised streams, where algorithms amplify outrage and novelty – often at the expense of context or accuracy.

Navigating the fragmented media landscape is second nature for them. They gather their truths like 'information magpies,' yet remain uncertain if anyone can truly 'know anything'. They crave clarity, authenticity, and trustworthy voices in a world of noise.

Unlike older generations, who shared a common pool of media sources, Gen Z's news consumption is fragmented. It's delivered in bite-sized snippets, via platforms like TikTok and YouTube. For many, this continuous flow of information fosters uncertainty over whom and what to believe. In some cases, some are even drawn to authoritarian leadership: 52% of 13-27-year-olds would welcome a strong leader unbound by elections or Parliament.

This environment contributes to declining happiness and rising loneliness. Gen Z are also more individualistic, lacking a unifying cultural touchstone that previous generations once took for granted.

Instead they form subgroups not defined by music or sports, but by how they think and feel about the world they live in – our six worldviews.

Gen Z are more individualistic, lacking a unifying cultural touchstone that previous generations once took for granted.



The stakes are high. Democracy relies on a shared foundation of facts, yet Gen Z's flattened hierarchy of trust means influencers can be as convincing as professional journalists. A relentless cycle of 'ambient' news risks boredom and disengagement – further undermining civil discourse.

This is where public service media has a crucial role to play.

By providing credible, balanced, and contextual information, we can foster an environment where truth stands out amid the noise.

Public service media organisations are uniquely positioned to counter sensationalism with nuance and clarity, bridging divides and restoring faith in shared facts. We must invest in innovative storytelling formats that meet Gen Z where they are – on social platforms – while upholding accuracy and due impartiality.

Ultimately, Gen Z's scepticism reflects legitimate concerns about bias, fairness, and the failures of traditional institutions. But if truth fractures further, the risk to democracy and social cohesion is profound.

Our choices – to champion transparency, foster authenticity, and reduce barriers to trusted content – are crucial to retaining Gen Z's attention. These choices determine whether we remain relevant in shaping tomorrow's cultural and societal landscape. Only by truly knowing this generation can we engage, inspire, and build a foundation of trust.

Democracy relies on a shared foundation of facts, yet Gen Z's flattened hierarchy of trust means influencers can be as convincing as professional journalists.



Methodology

Channel 4 commissioned research agency Craft to develop Gen Z: Trends, Truth & Trust. We used a comprehensive, multi-method approach to uncover the nuanced realities of Gen Z's lives, behaviours, and values. This study combined quantitative and qualitative methods, ensuring depth and breadth in its findings.

Literature review

The research draws on industry-leading UK reports and longitudinal academic data sources – such as the World Values Survey, Social Attitudes Survey, The Policy Institute at King's College London – to contextualise findings and validate broader societal shifts.

Quantitative

A 3,000-strong survey of 13-65-year-olds (broken out into 2,000 13-27-year-olds and 1,000 28-65-year-olds, using a nationally representative sample) provided a broad snapshot, helping to identify key generational trends.

The research looked at people through three lenses; what they do (activities), who they say they are (identity) and how they think and how they feel (worldview). We identified worldviews as the most meaningful way of delineating difference within this generation.

Applying advanced statistical methods to 28 attitudinal statements allowed us to pinpoint the differences between generations, as well as distinctions within Generation Z itself. Principal Components Analysis was used to identify eight key macro themes. These themes were then

used in a cluster analysis to group individuals based on shared patterns of thinking and feeling, incorporating gender and generation data.

This process revealed nine 'Worldview Clusters' that describe the dominant mindsets influencing how people see the world. While individuals may share elements of multiple worldviews, the clusters highlight the most defining perspectives, with six focusing primarily on Gen Z.

Qualitative

A qualitative phase added richness and context through an online field study, which allowed us to observe interactions with digital platforms and how young people engage with and evaluate content in their everyday lives.

As well as ethnographic visits and in-depth interviews with 30 people across the UK, aged 16-27, we explored participants' digital habits, cultural touchpoints, and day-to-day lives, offering a detailed understanding of how Gen Z navigates their online and offline worlds.

These methods revealed not just what young people do, but why they do it, and how their experiences shape their worldviews.

Citations

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