

A photograph of three young adults (two women and one man) smiling and standing in a modern office environment. The man on the left is wearing a brown corduroy shirt. The woman in the middle is wearing a dark green turtleneck. The woman on the right is wearing a yellow blouse and a blue denim skirt, holding a yellow marker. A blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the image, containing the title and subtitle.

Understanding China's Gen Z in the Workplace

Strategies for Effective Cross-Generational Management

A Report by the Research Center of Leadership,
Behavioral Science & Inclusivity,
Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business



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Foreword



It is widely recognized that in China each generation has its own unique values, preferences, and work styles, and Generation Z (Gen Z) is no exception. As such, it is critical for organizations to develop management practices that are tailored to the unique needs and preferences of Gen Z in the workplace. However, first it is important to consider how Gen Z is defined, how they are different from other generations in the workplace, whether these differences are generation-specific, and what management strategies are most effective when managing Gen Z employees. Through this research I hope to paint a clear picture of Gen Z employees in China to managers, in the hope that it will inspire them to improve their management strategies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented challenges for both corporations and employees. From the perspective of companies, there are greater difficulties in recruiting, training, and retaining a younger generation of employees due to increasingly complex internal and external factors. From an employee perspective, job opportunities have hit a 10-year low in China. Under such circumstances, it is crucial for corporate leaders to understand the factors that make Gen Z employees thrive in the workplace.

My research team and I designed a survey, in which we gathered 16,914 valid responses across China with nearly 2.95 million data points covering all age groups. In the survey we define Gen Z as young people aged between 18-25 years old (born between 1996 and 2003) who have been working for less than 3 years by the time they took part in this study in September 2021.

The report offers a comprehensive analysis of Gen Z, and covers various aspects such as their value preferences, career choices and psychological status, alignment between personal interests and jobs, resilience spread, and intergenerational differences.

When analyzing intergenerational differences, we tried not to overemphasize those differences as defining labels of each generation. Regarding our methodology, we recognize that there were certain limitations. For instance, we were unable to compare individuals from different generations who were the same age, such as those in their 20s who were born in the 1980s and 1990s.

What remains true in terms of managing Gen Z (and even younger generations) is to use a flexible approach and to prioritize their well-rounded and lifelong development. By doing so, we can join hands with the young and vibrant generation to create a more positive and dynamic working environment.

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June 2023

*This report was produced based on selected data of CKGSB Research Centre of Leadership, Behavioral Science & Inclusivity on Gen Z (Z世代职业发展与职场心理状态专题调研) conducted during September 2021 to October 2021. It also cross-referenced the results of research on "Psychological Resilience Before and After Work Resumption during COVID-19" conducted by the same research center during February to April in 2020.

A Glimpse of the Key Findings

1 Support for Gen Z's mental health is vital.

2 Gen Z's priorities extend beyond financial rewards.

3 Gen Z are more loyal than previously thought.

4 Gen Z is the least satisfied generation in the workplace.

5 Resilience needs to be channeled throughout an organization.

6 Gen Z's values do not diverge significantly from other generations.



1. Support for Gen Z's mental health is vital

Gen Z values both their physical and psychological health equally to other generations. However, Gen Z exhibits the lowest levels of resilience and the highest levels of depression and anxiety in the workplace. As a result, it is important for management to prioritize Gen Z mental health support.

2. Gen Z's priorities extend beyond financial rewards

While Gen Z do prioritize wealth accumulation, they also value personal fulfillment and having new experiences. Salary increases and promotions can be effective incentives, but it's also important for companies to offer opportunities for growth and development. Moreover, Gen Z places a greater emphasis on finding jobs that align with their interests compared to other generations.

3. Gen Z are more loyal than previously thought

Gen Z employees are said to be quick to quit when things get tough in the workplace, but this assumption is not entirely accurate. However, when compared to other generations, Gen Z generally spends less time in their current job.

4. Gen Z is the least satisfied generation in the workplace

Gen Z employees generally report lower satisfaction levels with their jobs compared to other generations on aspects including their salaries, working environment, sense of fulfillment, and job stability. Addressing these concerns can help companies attract and retain top talent.

5. Resilience needs to be channeled throughout an organization

Besides building up Gen Z's own resilience, effective leaders can cultivate resilience and motivate team members by promoting consensus decision-making and empathy.

6. Gen Z's values do not diverge significantly from other generations

While Gen Z tends to exhibit distinct traits in the workplace, in general their value preferences do not diverge significantly from those of other generations. Therefore, it is important for managers to avoid overemphasizing the differences between Gen Z and other generations.



01

Value Preferences

What are Gen Z's Values?



Confident **Dynamic**
Outstanding
Optimistic **Motivated**
Intelligent **Creative**
Diligent **Serious** **Young**
Passionate **Hard-working**
Cheerful **Courageous**

Gen Z's comments on their own generation

Flexible **Intelligent**
Lazy **Aggressive**
Independent **Passionate**
Selfish **Up-for-anything** **Cheerful**
Innovative **Energetic**
Creative **Courageous** **Young**
Capricious **Positive**

Comments from other generations on Gen Z

We asked our 16,914 respondents¹ "what do people born in 1995 look like to you?" and got 12,050 valid answers, among which 2,136 were from Gen Z and 9,914 from other generations. Our text analysis, visualized through word clouds above, provides an interesting insight into Gen Z. Overall, Gen Z respondents were positive in their self-assessment, describing themselves as confident, dynamic, diligent, courageous, and hard-working. Meanwhile, other generations had more negative views on Gen Z, perceiving them as lazy, aggressive and selfish.

Key Findings

- 1 Gen Z places equal value on physical and psychological health as other generations.
- 2 Accumulating wealth and having new experiences are key motivators for Gen Z.
- 3 Unlike other generations, Gen Z's short-term goals (within 3 years) do not closely align with their mid-term goals (within 5-10 years).



¹ Among the respondents, the 31-40 age group made up 40.57% of the respondents (6,862 people). 23.86% are between 26-30 years old (4,035 people), 21.3% are Gen Z (3,603 people), and 14.27% are 41 and older (2,414 people).

1

What are the five most important things to Gen Z in life?

Values and life philosophies shape the needs and choices of a generation, influencing their behaviors and attitudes towards life.² To gain an insight into the values of each generation in China, we conducted a survey asking respondents to rank the five most important things to them in life. Graph 1 reveals that for Gen Z, as with other generations, maintaining physical and psychological health is their top priority.

Gen Z (aged 18–25 years old) selected health, wealth, enriching experiences, self-improvement and happiness as the five most important things in life. A closer examination reveals that Gen Z's priorities were more varied than those in their late 20s. This shows that they are still exploring life and are still deciding on what matters in life, compared with people in other age groups.

Our findings in Graph 1 and 2 also highlight that different age groups have distinct priorities and values. Compared to other age groups Gen Z places a higher priority on gaining more enriching, eye-opening experiences.

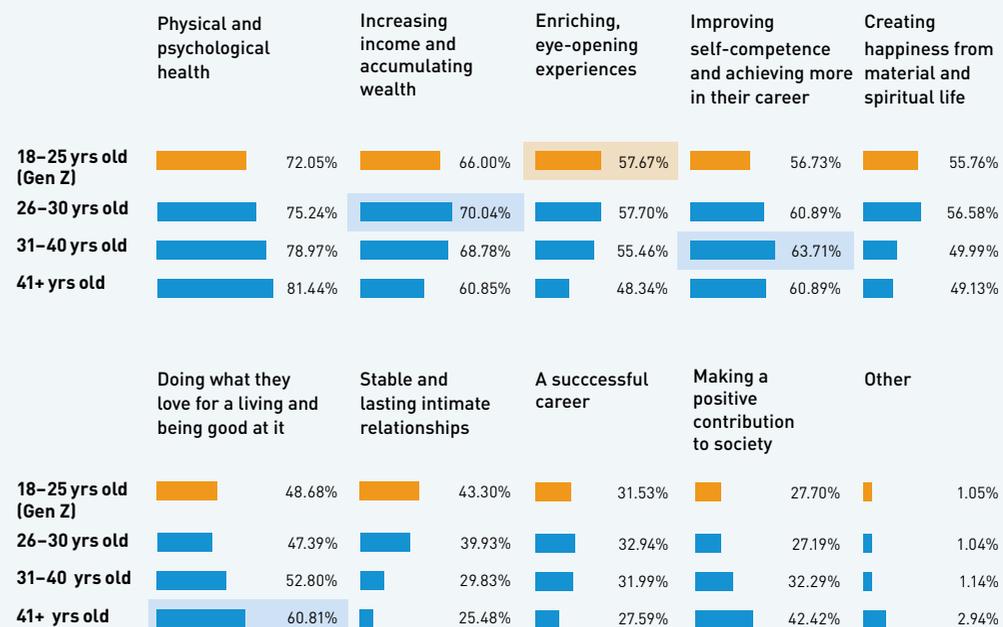
- Those aged 31–40 prioritize self-improvement and achieving more in their career, at 63.71%. For those aged 41 and above, 60.81% chose doing what they love and being good at it as important. This age group also saw the lowest percentages of people prioritizing wealth accumulation (60.85%) and happiness from material and spiritual life (49.13%), compared to other generations.



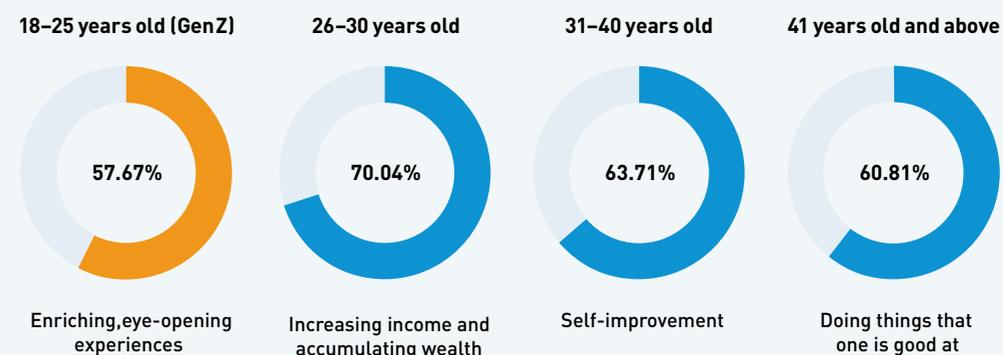
Gen Z's priorities were more varied than those in their late 20s.

² American psychologist Abraham Maslow brought forward the idea of hierarchy of human needs. They are from the lowest order to the highest order: "physiological needs", "safety needs", "belongingness and love needs", "esteem needs", "self-actualization", "cognitive needs", "aesthetic needs", and "self-transcendence needs". He believes that lower-level needs must be met and fulfilled before entering higher-level pursuits. Maslow believed that a need will only be addressed after the need on a lower level is satisfied. Based on Maslow's theories, we designed our questions on values and hoped to find out how the Gen Z who grew up in the internet era differs from other generations. We also wondered if the Gen Z would focus on needs on the higher end of the hierarchy, such as on "self-actualization". Thus we designed the multiple-choice question "what are the most important things to you in life?" and asked the respondents to choose up to 5 answers.

Graph 1: The Most Important Things for People in Different Age Groups



Graph 2: Passions and Purposes for People in Different Age Groups



- Gen Z contrasts to those aged 26–30, who tend to focus on increasing and accumulating wealth, and the 31–40 age group, who strive to improve self-competence and achieve more in their career. Meanwhile, those aged 41 and above tended to focus on self-awareness and valued doing what they love for a living and being good at it.

It is worth noting that among Gen Z respondents, intimate interpersonal relationships are much more valued than older generations. Making contributions to society becomes more important for older respondents. 27.7% of Gen Z and 42.42% of people aged 41 and above would commit to making society better.

Stable and lasting intimate relationships	18–25 yrs old (Gen Z)	26–30 yrs old	31–40 yrs old	41+ yrs old
	43.30%	39.93%	29.83%	25.48%

Note: Gen Z respondents value intimate interpersonal relationships much more than older generations.



Gen Z places a higher priority on gaining more enriching, eye-opening experiences.

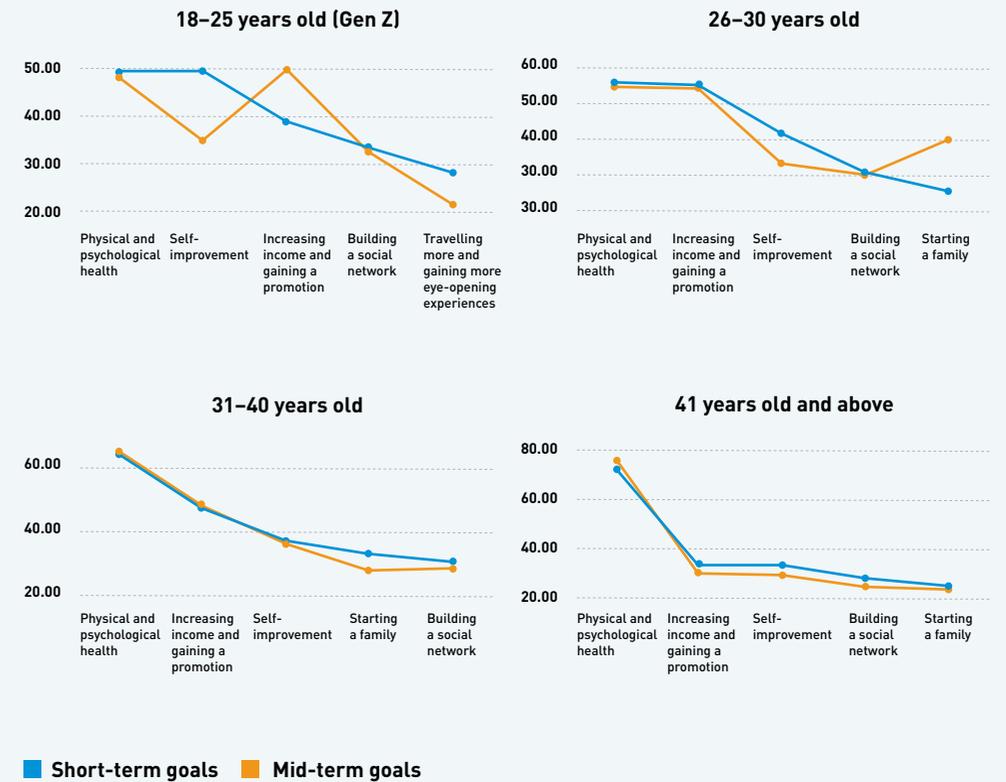


2

Gen Z's short-term goals and mid-term goals are very different

Graph 3 shows the different short-term goals valued by the four age groups, which reveals an insight into how people's priorities change as they progress through different stages of life. Compared with other age groups, Gen Z had the least convergence between their short-term goals and mid-term goals with all percentages being less than 50%.

Graph 3: Top 5 Short-term Goals (within 3 years) and Mid-term Goals (within 5–10 years) of All Age Groups



Note: The numbers refer to percentages of survey respondents.



As people get older and gain more life and work experience they become more sure of what they are looking for in the short- and mid-term, which is reflected in the more consistent alignment between their short-term and mid-term goals. Gen Z's top short-term priorities in the next three years are physical and psychological health as well as self-improvement through learning and further education, with nearly 50% of respondents selecting both as important goals. Over the mid-term (in 5-10 years), Gen Z's priorities shift towards increasing income, with almost half of the respondents stating it as their goal. Health remains a high priority in the mid-term.

- Individuals aged 26–30 prioritize physical and psychological health and wealth accumulation in the short-to-mid-term, but family responsibilities become more important in the mid-term.

Those aged 31–40 prioritize physical and psychological health, wealth accumulation, and self-improvement in the short-to-mid-term, with family becoming increasingly important in the mid-to-long-term.



Gen Z's top short-term priorities in the next three years are physical and psychological health as well as self-improvement through learning and further education.

3

Summary and Implications for Management

Like other generations, physical and psychological health tops Gen Z's priorities. Companies should address this by prioritizing the physical and psychological health of their employees of Gen Z and offering various means of support such as flexible working hours, training, and a focus on work-life balance.

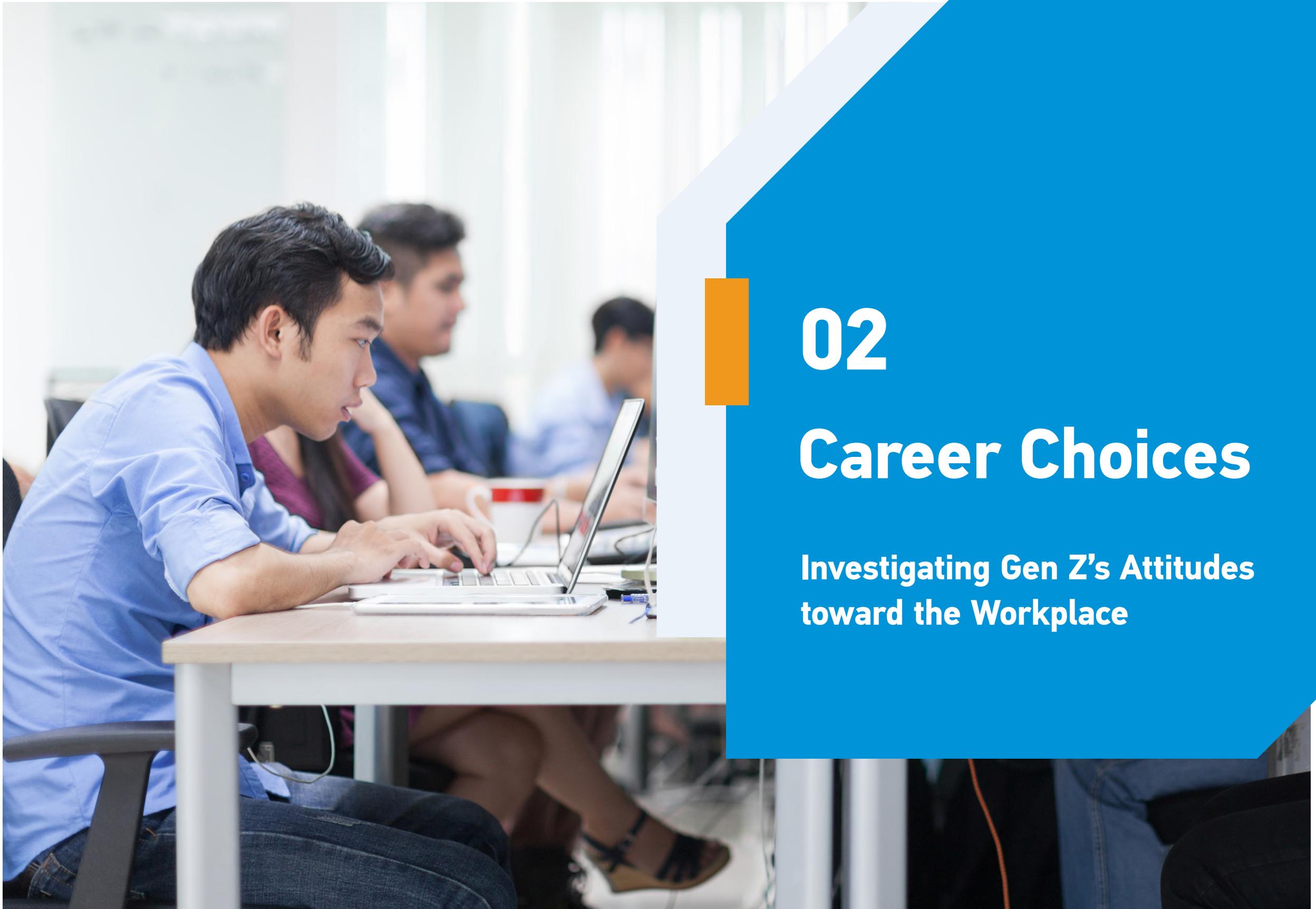
Wealth accumulation is a key concern for Gen Z with 66% viewing it as an important life goal. To retain Gen Z talents, companies should provide clear career paths and opportunities for development in the mid-to-long-term.

57.67% of Gen Z respondents viewed having new experiences (such as travelling or experience more in life) as important. Thus, companies should focus on offering Gen Z employees more opportunities to grow outside of their traditional job roles.

As employees age, their priorities shift from wealth and happiness towards those such as physical and psychological health, doing a job they like and being good at it, and giving back to society. Companies can draw on these findings to adjust their motivation strategies and career development paths for employees.

The values, short- and mid-term goals of Gen Z do not differ from other generations as prominently as previously assumed.





02

Career Choices

**Investigating Gen Z's Attitudes
toward the Workplace**



Key Findings

- 1** Gen Z's satisfaction across salary, working environment, self-fulfillment, and job stability is comparatively lower than other generations.
- 2** Gen Z do not resign imprudently as previously thought. Their most popular response to job dissatisfaction at work is to change the mentality and continue to work hard.
- 3** If Gen Z's jobs align with their interests, they are less likely to resign after 3–6 months (even without a pay raise or promotion).
- 4** Improving management skills is the most significant incentive for Gen Z to take on additional work.

1

Which Industries does Gen Z Work in?

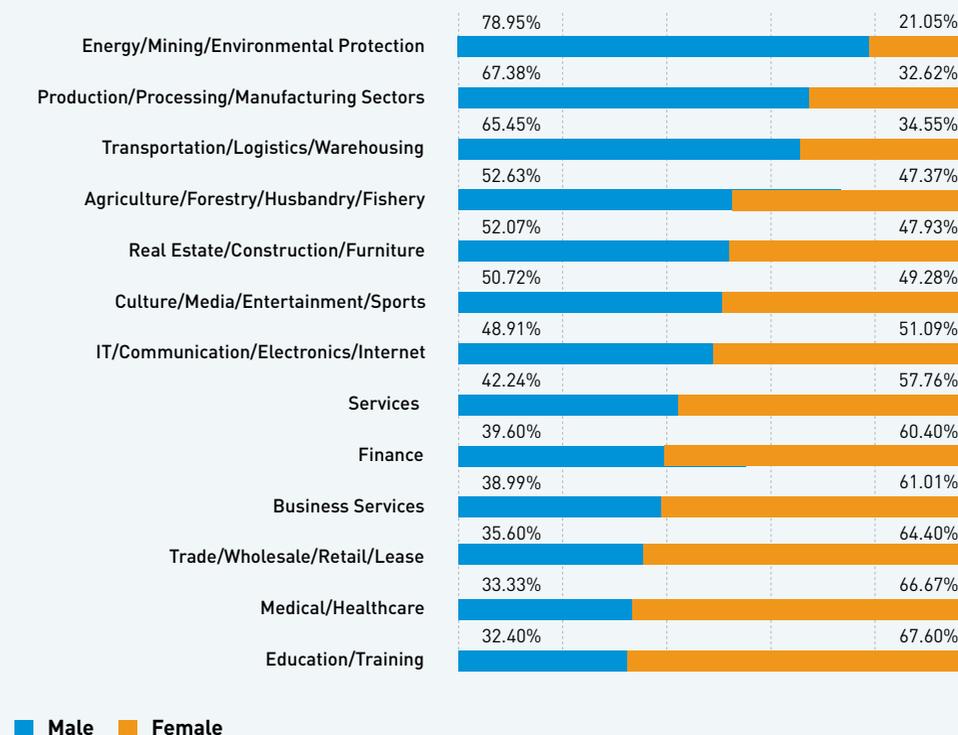
In chapter one, we found that Gen Z value income and wealth more than self-improvement. In this chapter, we will see that these values also apply when Gen Z choose their careers. Despite being known for their tendency to leave jobs when dissatisfied, we will examine the extent to which this reputation holds true. Additionally, we will explore what Gen Z seeks in a job and how companies can attract and retain Gen Z talent.

Respondents from the overall sample work in the service sector, trade/wholesale/retail/lease sectors, IT/communication/electronics/Internet sectors, production/processing/manufacturing sectors and business services sectors (such as legal, consulting, etc.).

Most Gen Z respondents in the sample work in IT/Communications/Electronics/Internet sectors, the services sector/trade/wholesale/retail/leasing sectors, culture/media, entertainment, sports sectors and finance sector.



Graph 4: Industries that Gen Z Work in by Gender



Gen Z is more willing to work for private companies than older generations

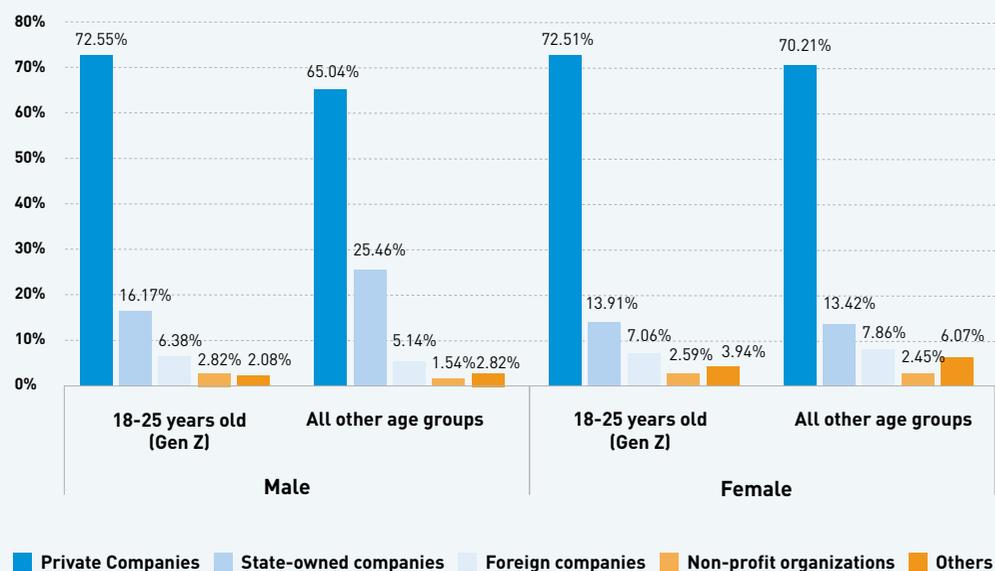
Gen Z is more willing to work for private companies than older generations and is less interested in working for state-owned enterprises.³ This preference for private enterprises can be attributed to their dynamic environment, career opportunities, as well as their potential for higher income. State-owned enterprises, while often known for their stability, tend to offer lower starting salaries, a slower career path, and limited career possibilities.

- In the survey, 69.2% of the respondents are from private enterprises, 17.16% from state-owned enterprises, 6.86% from foreign companies, 2.24% from non-profit organizations and 4.45% from other types of enterprises.



Gen Z is more willing to work for private companies than older generations.

Graph 5: Types of Companies that Gen Z and Other Generations Work for



³ The pandemic relapse between March and June 2022 had a greater impact on China's economy. The Internet companies originally favored by young people had large layoffs. More college students chose majors that are easier to land them a stable job in the postgraduate entrance examination in 2022. All these may indicate that job seekers might have been prioritizing stability in the job market since 2022.

2

Career Choices

Our findings indicate that Gen Z tends to prioritize jobs with a high salary, good career prospects, and a positive working environment.

- As respondents reach their thirties, their focus shifts from salary and prospects towards job stability.

Graph 6: Top Five Factors that Each Age Group Considers when Choosing a Career



3

Career Satisfaction

Gen Z is the least satisfied generation in the workplace

On average, Gen Z scored the lowest in terms of their satisfaction on salary expectations, working environment, self-improvement and work-life balance. Graph 7 shows that Gen Z was the most dissatisfied with their salary, with less than half being satisfied (48.5%). This dissatisfaction can be attributed to the disparity between their relatively low salaries in the early stages of their careers and their ambitious expectations for high financial returns.

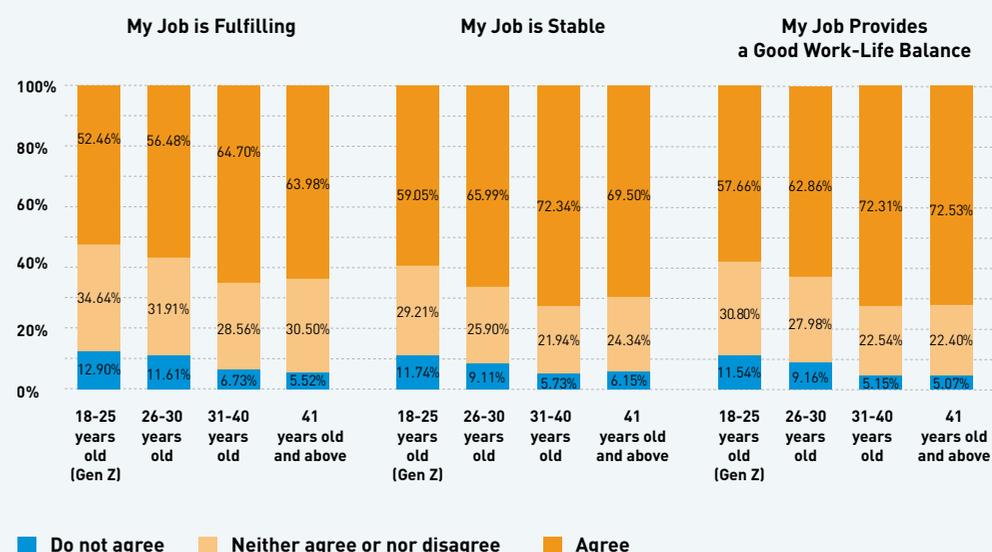
- The 31–40 age group had the highest salary satisfaction, as well as the highest scores for working environment (67.17%) and career development paths (58.03%). However, for those aged 41 and above, salary satisfaction dropped due to competition from younger workers, making it harder for them to gain a higher position or pay increase.

Graph 8 below shows that compared to other age groups, Gen Z reported the lowest satisfaction with job fulfillment, stability and work-life balance. Overall, the 31–40 age group were the most satisfied with their jobs.

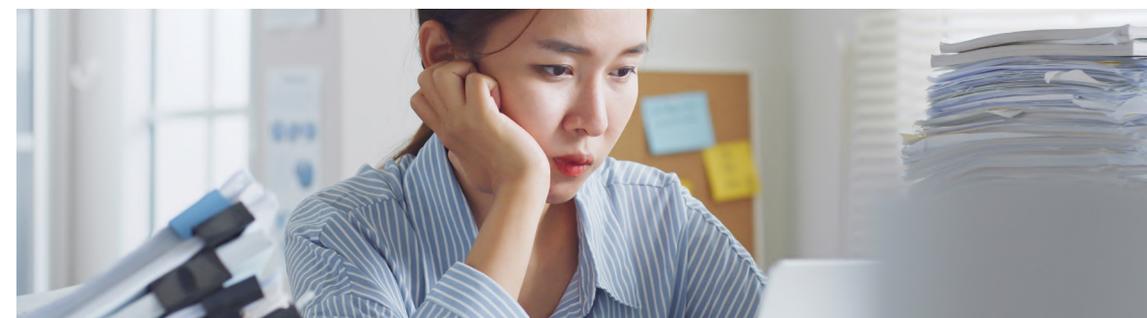
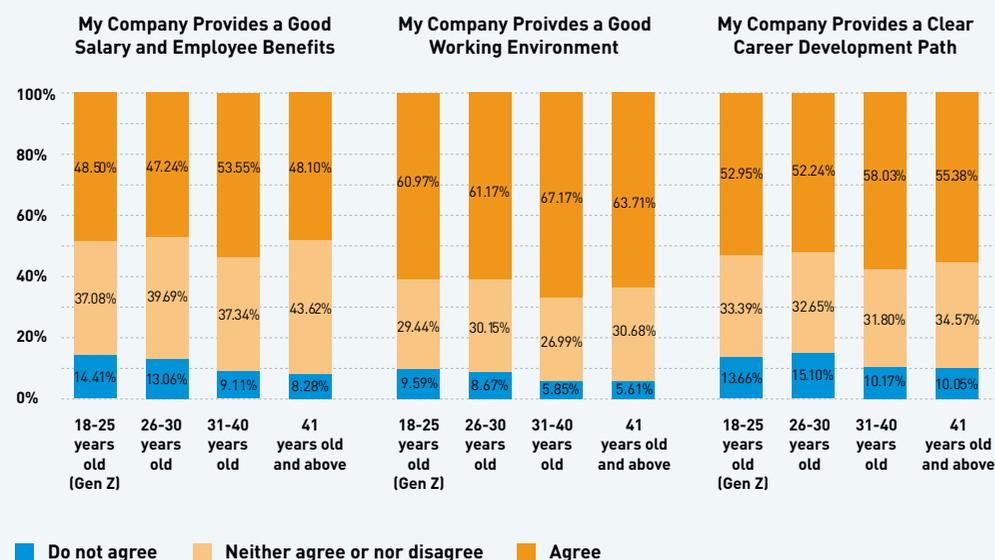


On average Gen Z scored the lowest in their satisfaction on salary expectations, working environment, self-improvement and work-life balance.

Graph 8: Satisfaction with Job Fulfillment, Job Stability and Work-Life Balance



Graph 7: Satisfaction with Job Salary, Working Environment, and Career Development Paths



4

Job Turnover

Resigning is not the go-to option for Gen Z when things are not going well in the workplace

Gen Z would spend on average 1–3 years in each job, while older generations would work for an average of 3–5 years on their jobs before looking for other opportunities. However, resigning is not the first option for Gen Z when faced with job dissatisfaction. Graph 4 highlights how Gen Z prefer to “change their mentality and continue to work hard” (32.14%). This is followed by “actively look for something better” (28.34%), “apply for an internal transfer” (15.65%) and “resign and gradually look for a more satisfying job” (9.02%).

Similar to other generations, Gen Z employees are most likely to learn more skills or improve relationships with colleagues and superiors to stay on a job that they do not like

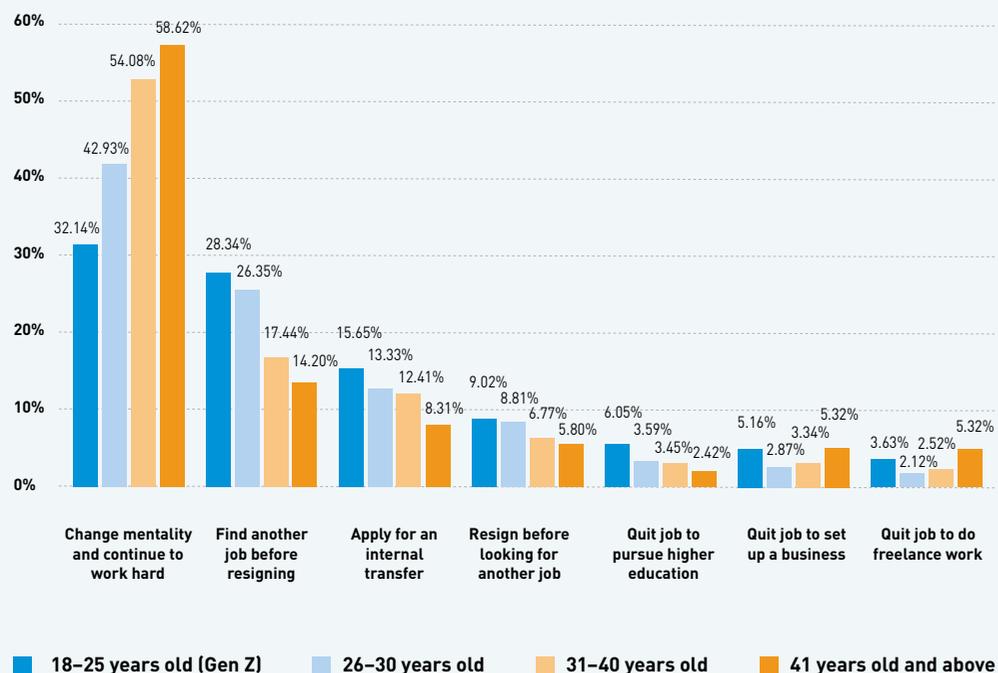
After asking respondents the strategies for staying in jobs they dislike, we found that Gen Z primarily focuses on learning new skills followed by improving relationships with colleagues and superiors and combining jobs with hobbies, respectively.

- When compared with other age groups, Gen Z scored higher on combining jobs with hobbies, searching for other job opportunities, and applying for an internal transfer.

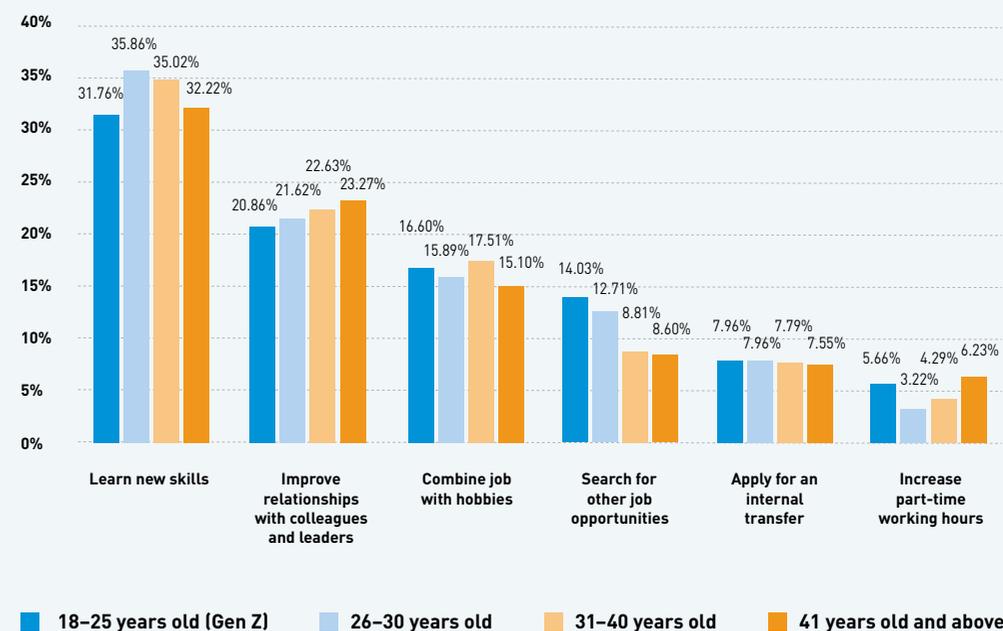


Gen Z would spend 1–3 years, while older generations would work for an average of 3–5 years on their jobs before looking for other opportunities.

Graph 9: How do you react to dissatisfaction with your new job?



Graph 10: What Actions do you take to keep your current job?



5

Incentives to Retain Gen Z Employees

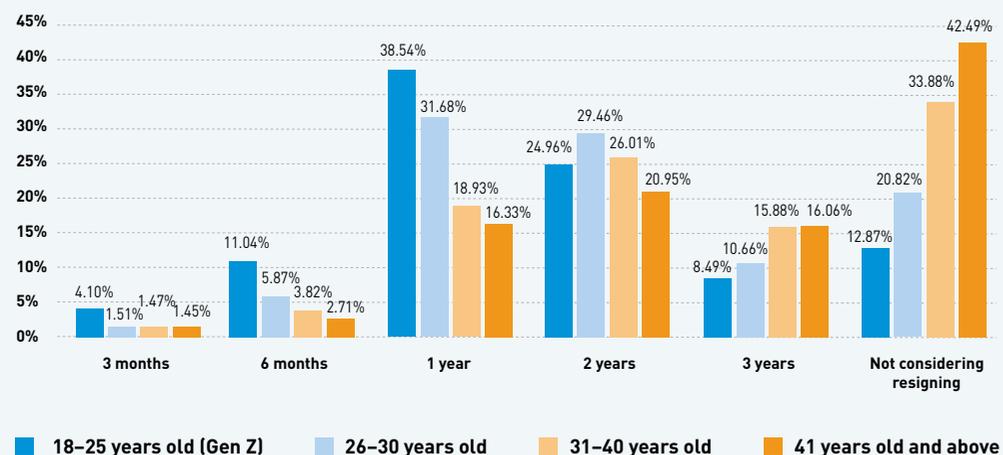
Salary Increases

53.7% of Gen Z employees would resign after not receiving a pay raise in a year

We found that 53.7% of Gen Z respondents would choose to resign within a year if their salaries did not rise. Among them 4.1% would choose to resign after three months, 11.04% after six months and 38.54% within a year. Only 12.87% of Gen Z respondents said they will not resign even if they don't receive a salary increase, a proportion far less than that of other age groups.

- In the 26–30 age group, most respondents selected to resign after one year without a raise (31.68%) or after two years (29.46%). For those aged 31–40, the most frequent response was not to resign (33.88%), followed by resigning after two years (26.01%). The 41+ age group had the lowest proportion of willingness to resign without a pay raise, at 42.49%.

Graph 11: How long does it take each age group to leave their current position without a pay raise?



Most Gen Z demanded a 10–20% salary increase to boost their work morale

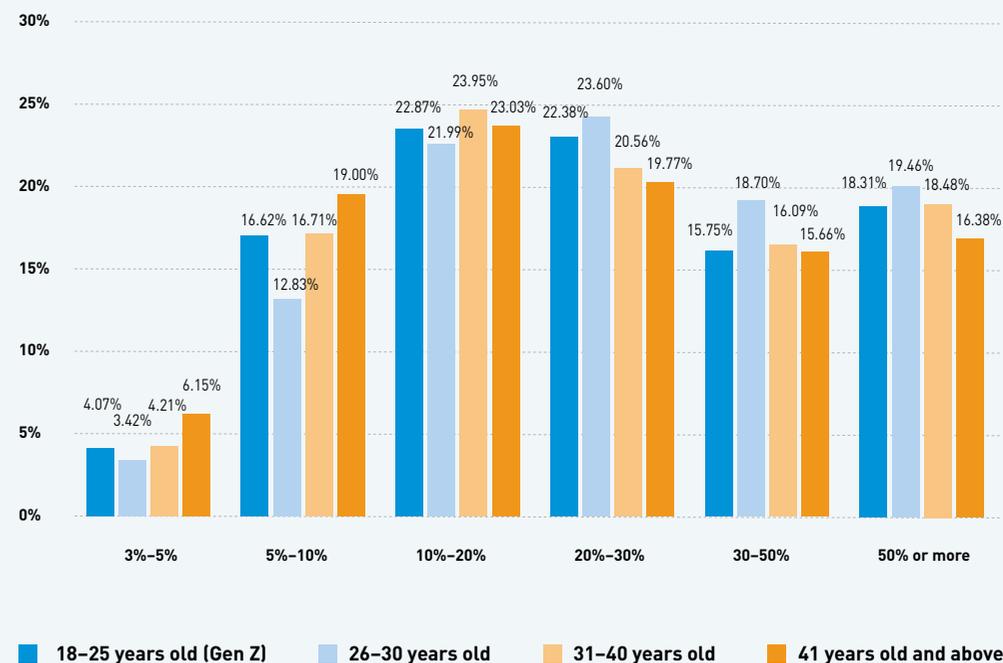
Salary increases can be a motivating factor for Gen Z to take on additional work. Similar to other age groups, a 10–20% salary increase was the preferred range for Gen Z to take on more work.

- A 10–20% salary increase was the preferred choice for all other age groups except for 26–30 years olds, who required a 20–30% pay raise. Interestingly, a 3–5% salary increase did not significantly impact motivation across age groups.



Similar to other age groups, a 10-20% salary increase was the preferred range for Gen Z to take on more work.

Graph 12: To increase your motivation at work, how much would your annual salary need to increase by?



Our findings indicate that when encouraging Gen Z to take on additional work, improving management skills (62.95%) is the most significant factor. This is followed by opportunities for a pay raise and promotion (56.51%), trust and support from leaders (56.26%), and to enhance career development and self motivation (50.68%).

- Interestingly, as people age, economic motivators such as a higher salary, promotion opportunities, bonuses, and personal career goals, became less effective in motivating employees to take on new projects. They were more motivated to take on additional work if they felt supported by management and their team.

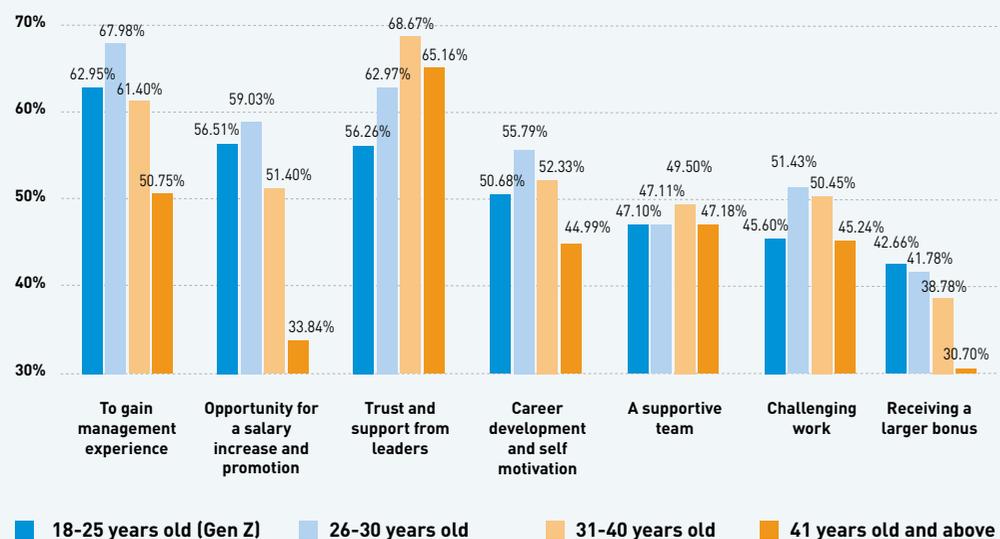
Promotions

66% of Gen Z would quit within two years if they were not promoted

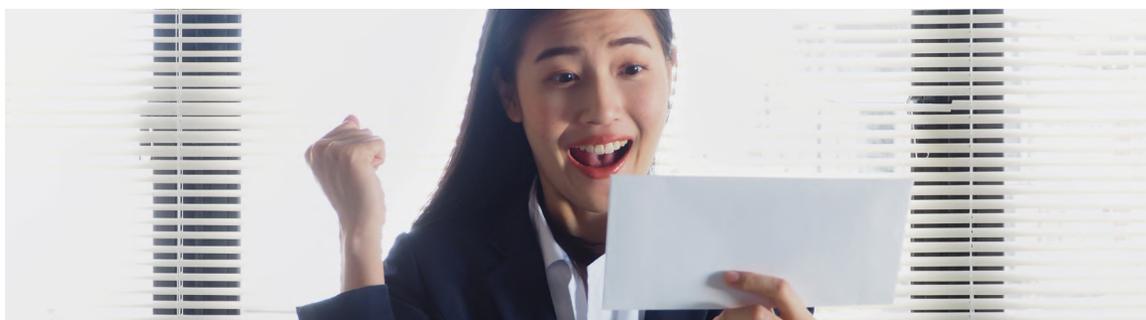
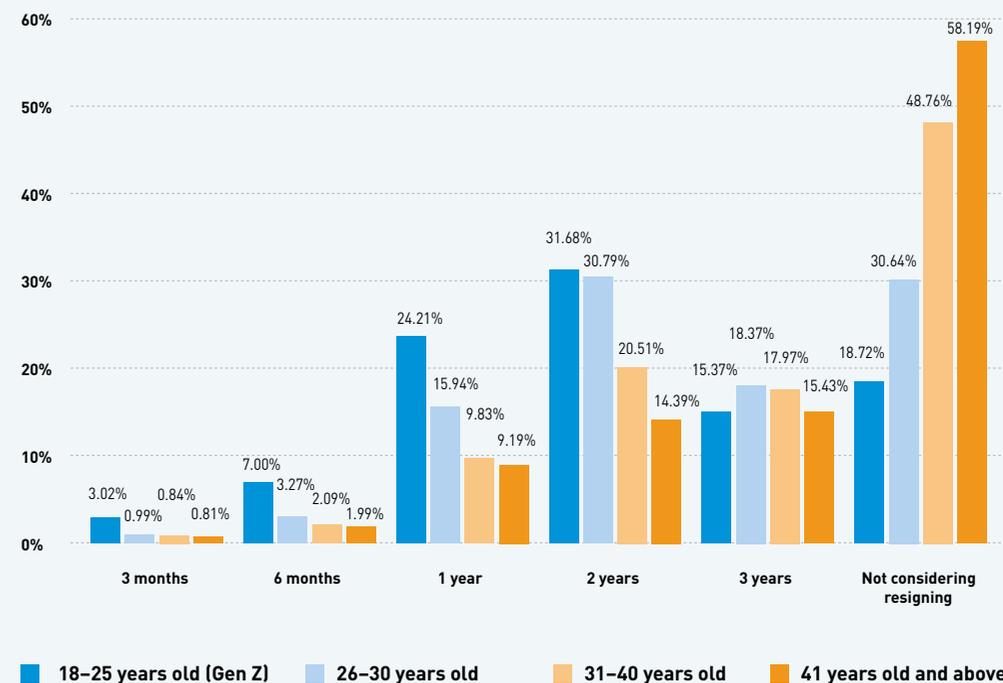
Approximately 66% of Gen Z would choose to leave their jobs if they did not receive a promotion within two years. 3.02% said that they would resign within 3 months, 7% after six months, 24.21% after a year, and 31.68% after two years. These percentages are overall higher than other generations.

- In the 26–30 age group, 30.79% of respondents said they would leave their jobs within two years upon not receiving a promotion, while 30.64% said they would not consider resigning. Conversely, the 31–40 and 41+ age groups had the highest proportions of respondents who reported that they would not consider resigning after being denied a promotion, at 48.76% and 58.19%, respectively.

Graph 13: What Drives Each Generation to Take on Additional Work?



Graph 14: How long does it take each generation to leave their current position without a promotion?



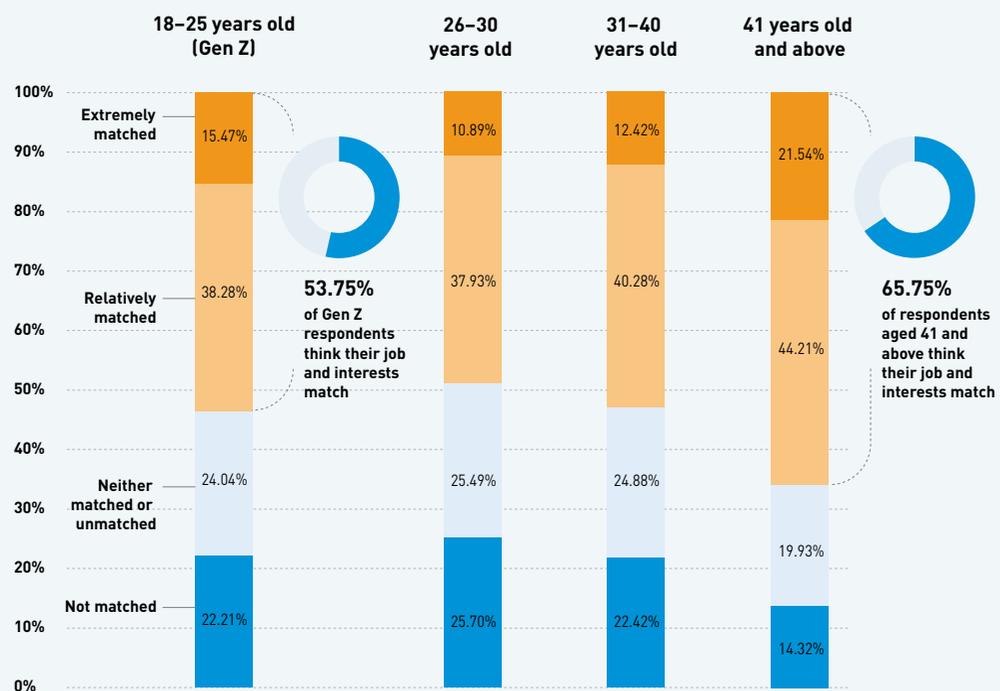
Matching of Jobs and Interests

Around half of Gen Z respondents think their jobs match their interests

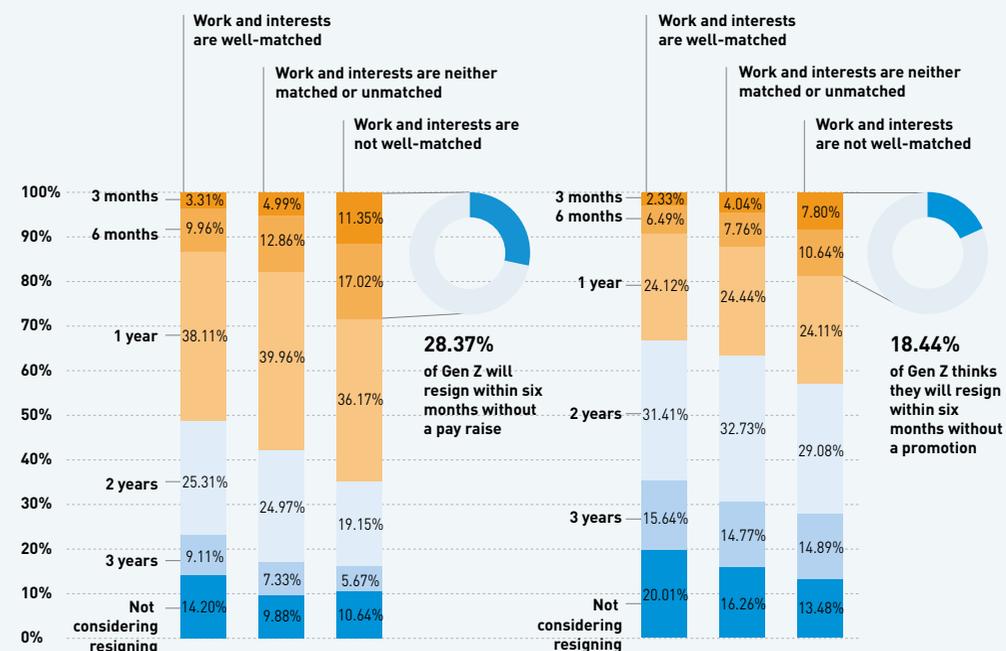
Our results further revealed that job-interest alignment is crucial for the Gen Z workforce. According to our findings, 53.75% of Gen Z respondents viewed their work and their interests are either “extremely matched” and “relatively matched”. This is higher than those aged 26–30 but lower than people aged 41 and above. We also found that if the jobs of Gen Z align with their interests there is a decreased likelihood of them resigning after 3–6 months, even in the absence of a salary increase or promotion.

- Respondents aged 41 and above were the generation that had the greatest degree of matching jobs and interests, at 65.75%. The least optimistic age group was the 26–30 year olds, with only 48.82% of respondents saying that their jobs aligned with their interests.

Graph 15: How well does the job of each generation match their interests?



Graph 16: After how long will Gen Z choose to resign without a salary increase (left) and a promotion (right)?



6

Summary and Implications for Management

Gen Z has the lowest job satisfaction when compared to other age groups, as their expectations for a higher salary and better prospect are often unmet in the workplace.

To reduce the turnover rate and increase motivation at work, companies should provide employees with a work-life balance, a better working environment, clear career development paths, and delegate work that aligns with the interests of their employees.

Research revealed that 53.7% of Gen Z employees would resign within a year after not receiving a pay raise. Moreover, the largest proportion of Gen Z respondents believed a 10–20% salary increase would increase their motivation at work. Therefore, companies could consider offering a pay raise to increase Gen Z's motivation in the workplace and retain top talent.

When encouraging Gen Z to take on additional work, improving personal management skills is a more critical factor. Leaders can support Gen Z by delegating more responsibility and providing opportunities to develop their skills.





03

Building Resilience

Exploring the Factors that Affect Gen Z's Resilience in the Workplace



Key Findings

- 1** Gen Z employees generally have the highest levels of depression and anxiety and the lowest levels of psychological resilience, which is prevalent among Gen Z at all job ranks compared to other generations.
- 2** Gen Z founders and CEOs and senior executives show lower resilience than their peers in non-leadership roles.
- 3** Gen Z employees with a higher education tend to experience higher levels of depression and anxiety.
- 4** Gen Z working for non-profit organizations exhibit both the highest levels of resilience and the highest levels of depression and anxiety.
- 5** Gen Z with higher levels of resilience tend to be more loyal employees.

1

Resilience, Depression and Anxiety (RDA) of the Whole Sample

In this chapter we attempt to understand Gen Z's psychological health and resilience⁴ in China today and analyze how organizations can improve the resilience of their employees. The figures in graph 17 show the distribution of resilience, depression, and anxiety scores in the whole sample.



⁴ As defined by the American Psychological Association (APA), resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands.

Graph 17: Distribution of Resilience, Depression and Anxiety Scores Across All Age Groups



Note: Figures inside the bar chart refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively. Figures in the line graph refer to the percentage of respondents.

2

Resilience, Anxiety, and Depression (RDA) in Each Generation

Gen Z is the least resilient and the most depressed and anxious generation

Our study revealed that Gen Z employees in China face significant challenges to their well-being. As shown in graph 18, Gen Z have the lowest average resilience score at 26.13, as well as the highest rates of depression and anxiety among all age groups at 7.31 and 6.57, respectively. The correlation analysis between age and RDA shows that age is positively correlated with psychological resilience and negatively correlated with depression and anxiety. This highlights the need for companies in China to place greater emphasis on the mental health of Gen Z employees.



Gen Z have the lowest average resilience score at 26.13, as well as the highest rates of depression and anxiety among all age groups.

Gen Z women are the least resilient while Gen Z men are the most depressed and anxious

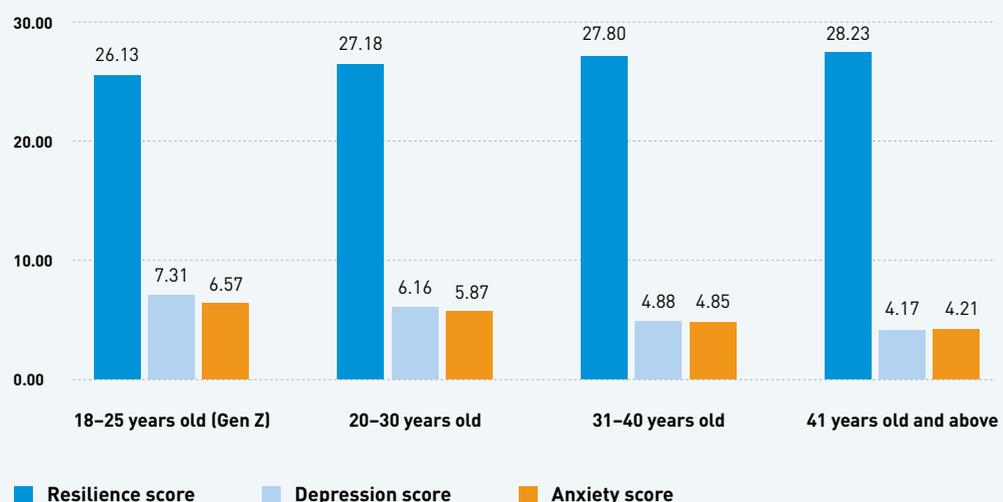
Further analysis, shown in Graph 19, displays the difference in resilience between men and women. On average, men from all generations showed a higher level of psychological resilience than women of the same age.

The Gen Z group had the lowest levels of psychological resilience across both genders (27.20 for men, 25.30 for women) and highest levels of depression (7.57 for men, 7.11 for women) and anxiety (6.61 for men, 6.54 for women).

- It is interesting to note that men and women's resilience levels peak at different stages of life. Men's psychological resilience usually increases with age and reaches a turning point (29.53) at the age of 31-40, before declining. Women's psychological resilience also increases with age, but unlike men, their resilience reaches its peak (27.58) at 41 years old and above.

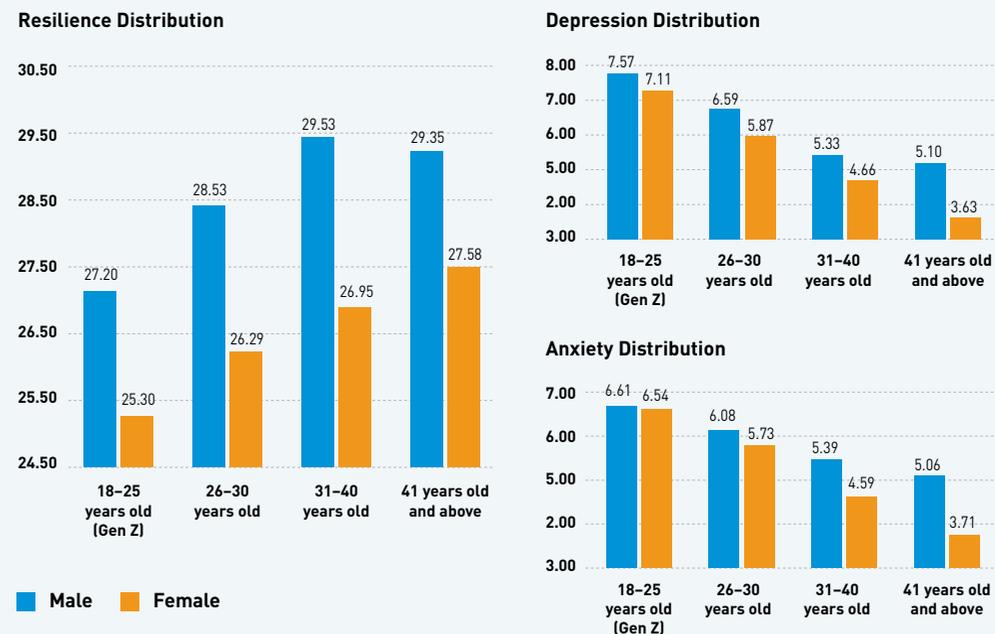
Both men and women experience the lowest levels of depression and anxiety at 41 years old or above (men: 5.10, 5.06; women: 3.63, 3.71).

Graph 18: Average RDA Scores in Different Age Groups



Note: Figures in this graph refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively.

Graph 19: Average RDA Scores in Different Age Groups by Gender



Note: Figures in this graph refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively.

People with a higher educational degree are more depressed and anxious

Our study also highlighted the need for companies to understand the unique challenges and needs of their employees with different educational backgrounds. As seen in graph 20, there is a correlation between academic achievements and psychological well-being. Interestingly, while it might seem that people with higher degrees would be more adept at handling life's challenges, our data shows otherwise.

Gen Z individuals with a secondary technical school or college degree and a bachelor's degree displayed the highest psychological resilience, while those with a master's or doctorate had the lowest. This could be because Gen Z with a master's or higher degree had not graduated by the time of the research. Gen Z individuals with a master's degree or higher also exhibited the highest levels of depression and anxiety.

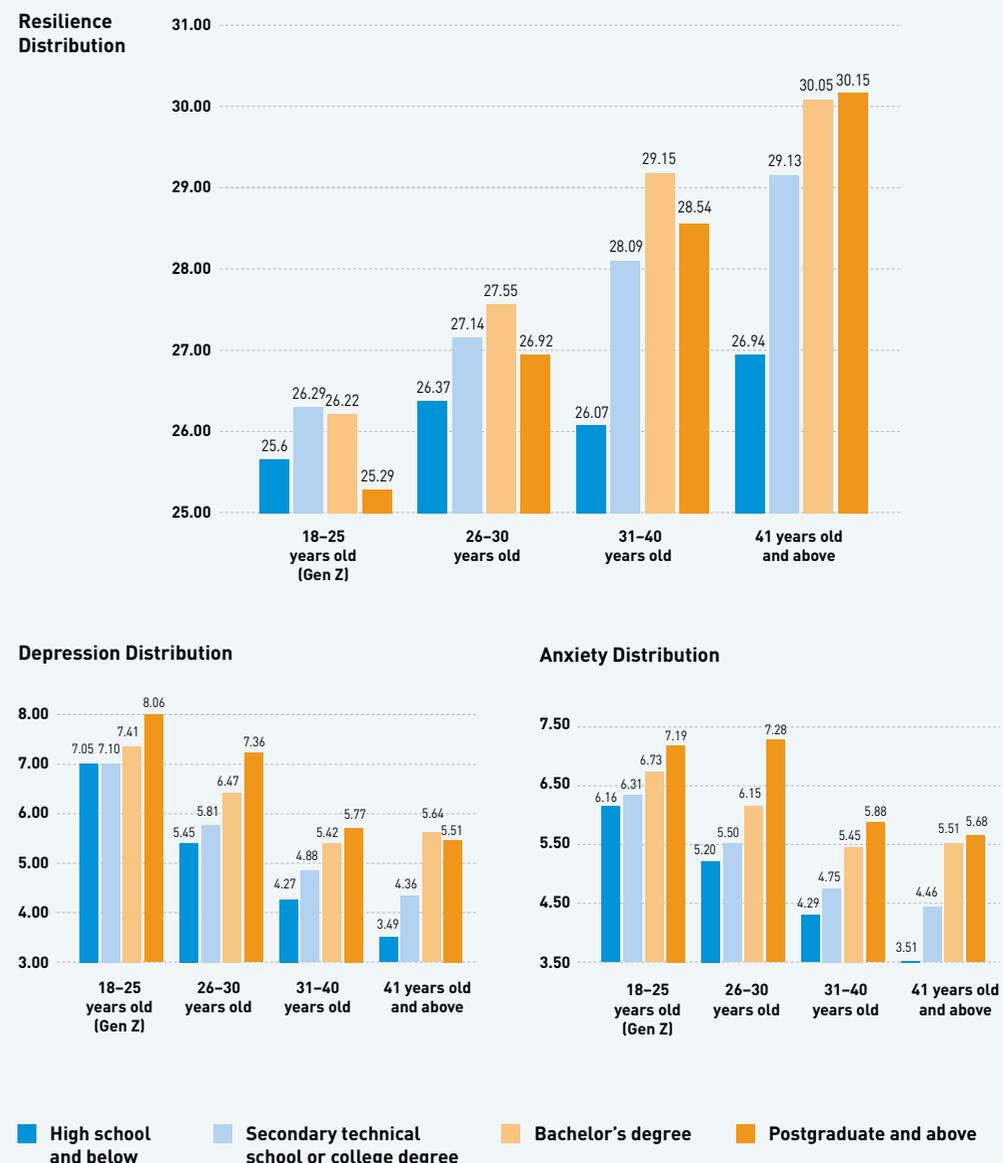
- Respondents under 40 years old with a master's or doctorate degree showed lower resilience than people with an undergraduate degree. This could be due to the fact that the 26–30 and 31–40 age groups would have only just started their careers after receiving their higher education degrees. Among the 26–30 and 31–40-year-olds, employees with an undergraduate degree had the highest psychological resilience.



Gen Z individuals with a secondary technical school or college degree and a bachelor's degree displayed the highest psychological resilience while those with a master's or doctorate had the lowest.



Graph 20: Average RDA Scores of People with Different Education Backgrounds



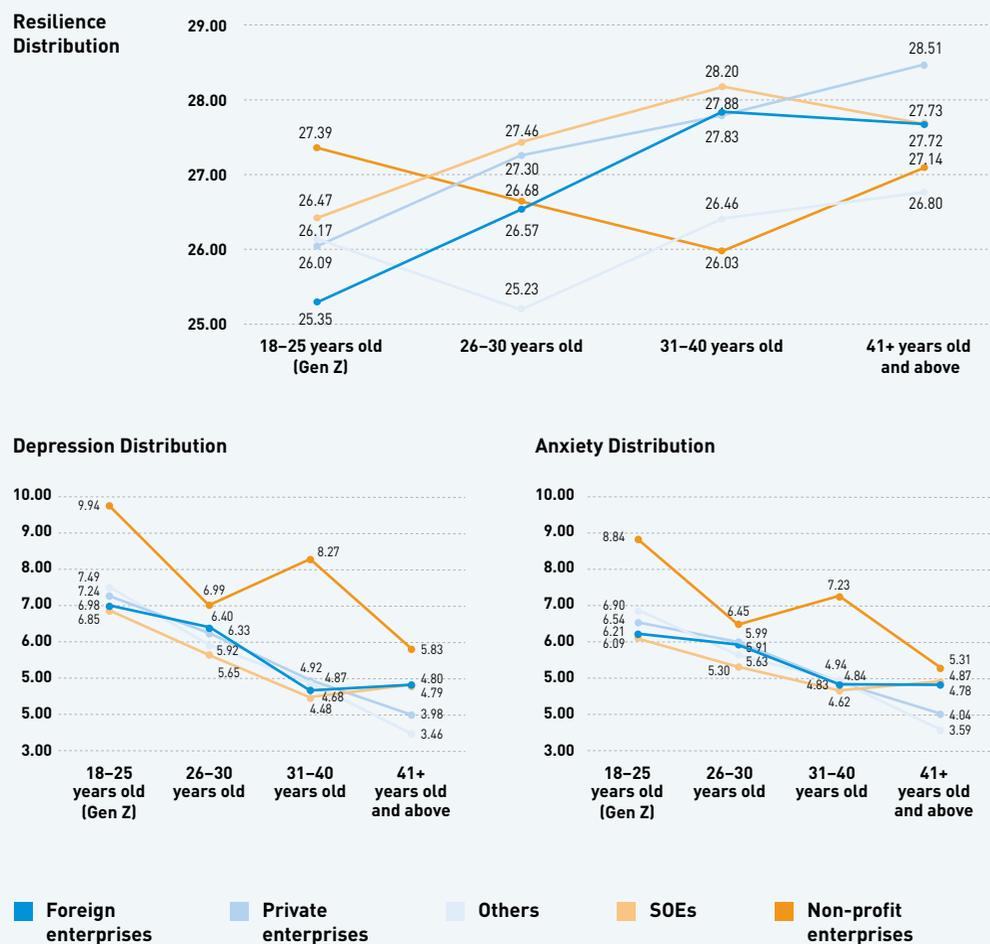
Note: Figures in this graph refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively.

We discovered that the psychological resilience of Gen Z employees varies depending on the type of enterprise they work for. Graph 21 reveals that Gen Z working for non-profit organizations displayed the highest resilience (score: 27.39). This resilience tends to decrease with age among non-profit employees, potentially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, policy regulations, and other uncertainties. Gen Z employees at non-profit organizations showed the highest levels of depression (9.74) and anxiety (8.84). In part, this echoes the fact that non-profits were facing particularly significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gen Z founders and CEOs and senior executives showed lower resilience than people in non-leadership roles

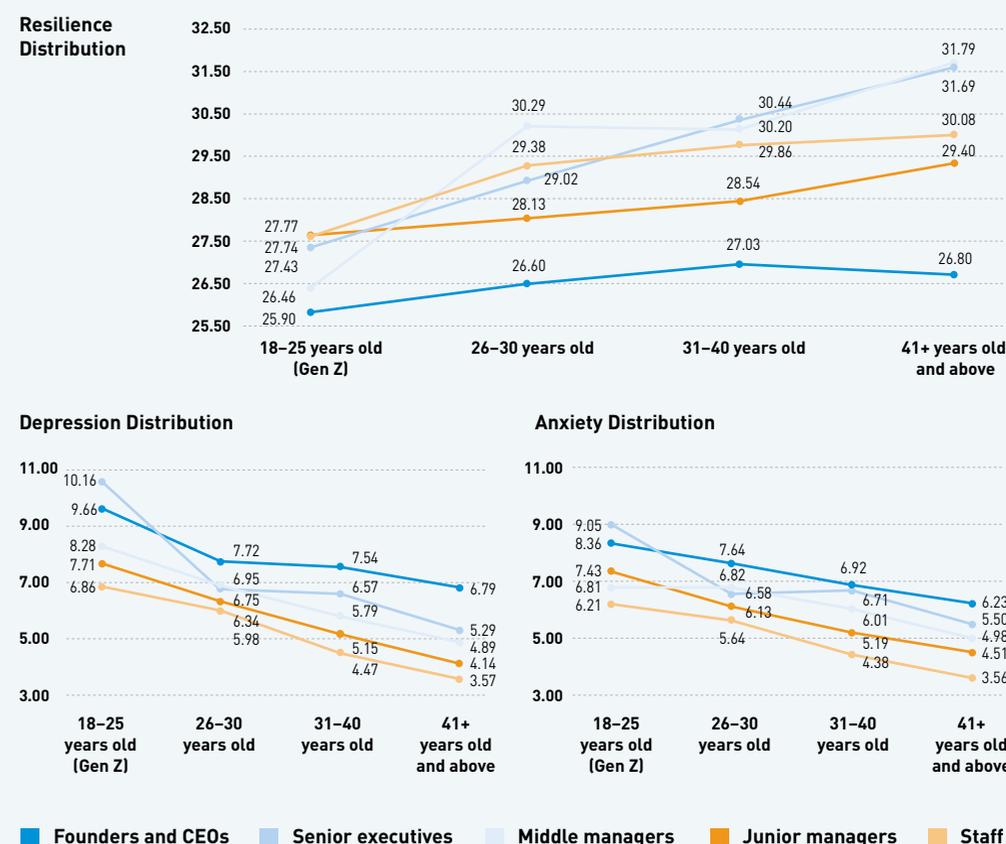
Graph 22 reveals an intriguing correlation between career ranks and psychological resilience. For middle managers and regular employees, their psychological resilience increases as they move up the career ladder. However, Gen Z founders and CEOs exhibited lower psychological resilience (scores: 26.46 and 27.43) compared to their counterparts in middle management (27.77). Gen Z founders and CEOs and senior executives also showed less psychological resilience than those in older age groups. In addition to lower resilience scores, Gen Z founders and CEOs and senior executives also had the highest rates of depression (9.66 for founders and CEOs; 10.60 for senior executives) and anxiety (8.36 for founders and CEOs; 9.05 for senior executives).

Graph 21: Average RDA Scores in Different Types of Organizations



Note: Figures in this graph refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively.

Graph 22: Average RDA Scores at Different Working Ranks



Note: Figures in this graph refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively.



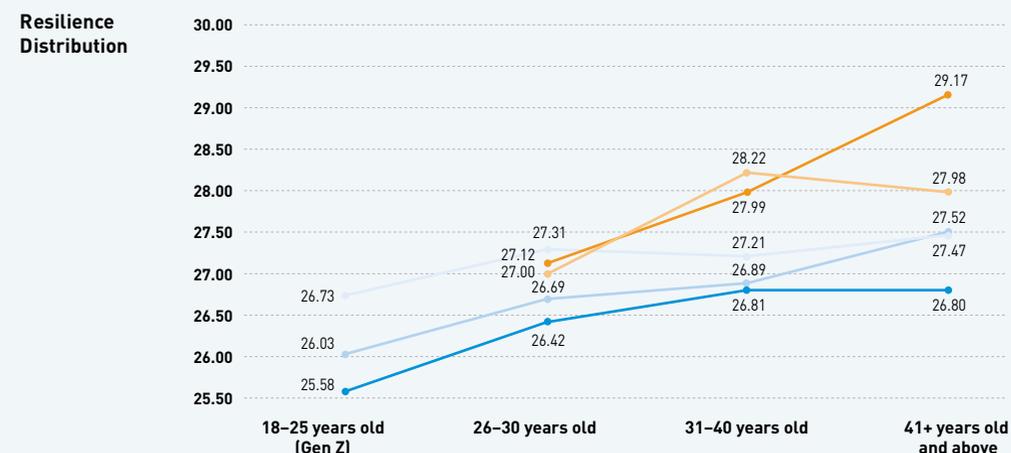
Gen Z founders and CEOs and senior executives also had the highest rates of depression and anxiety compared to other age groups.



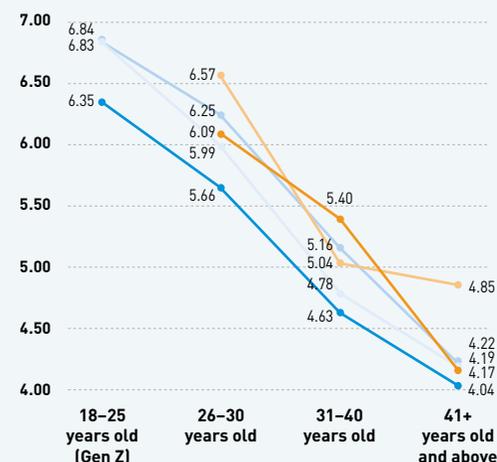
Psychological resilience increases with the number of years worked

Results in graph 23 show that as the number of years of work experience increases, Gen Z's psychological resilience grows stronger. The lowest psychological resilience was found among Gen Z with less than a year of working experience, scoring 25.58.

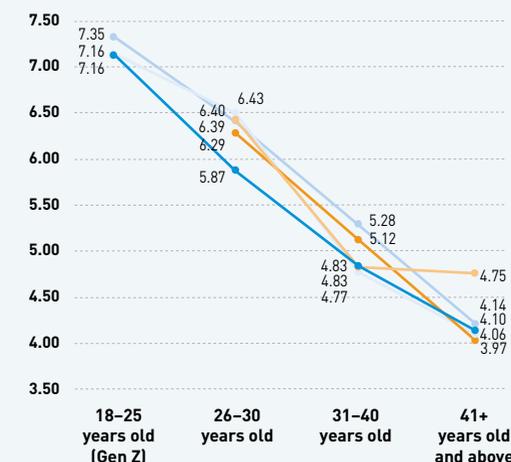
Graph 23: Average RDA Scores Across Different Years of Work Experience



Depression Distribution



Anxiety Distribution



■ 1 year or less ■ 1-3 years ■ 3-5 years ■ 5-10 years ■ 10 years or more

Note: Figures in this graph refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively.

Gen Z's level of depression increases by 31% if their job does not align with their interests

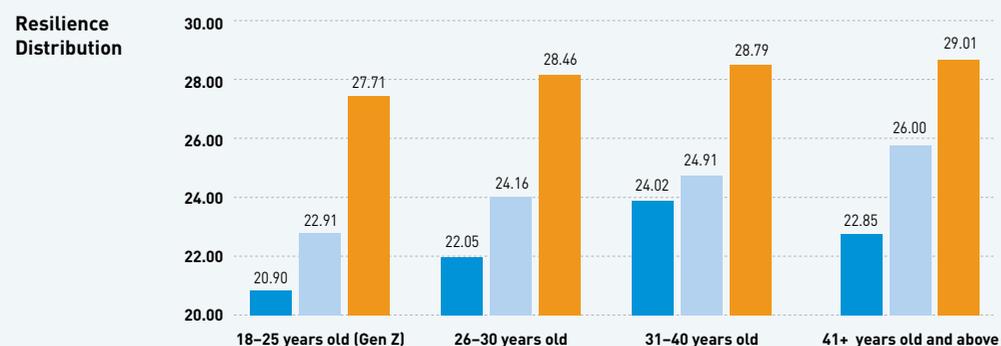
Our analysis in chapter two revealed the connection between the alignment of job and interests and workplace motivation. When adding the factor of psychological resilience (Graph 24), we discover that those who combine their jobs with their interests not only have more motivation at work, but they also possess much higher psychological resilience. Gen Z with jobs that align with their personal interests are 32.6% more resilient than those who do not, as Gen Z whose jobs align with their interests scored 27.71 in terms of resilience, while those whose jobs don't align received 20.9 for resilience. Moreover, the highest levels of depression and anxiety were found among Gen Z whose interests did not align with their job.

Resilient Gen Z employees are more loyal

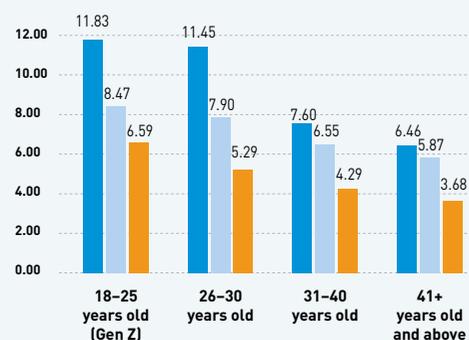
Finally, to gauge the loyalty of the Gen Z workforce, we asked respondents whether they consider leaving their organization if it had to cut salaries in the short-term. We found that Gen Z who possess higher psychological resilience were less likely to consider quitting their jobs. Additionally, those who were more willing to stay at their companies during hard times showed lower levels of depression and anxiety. We also found that Gen Z who would consider quitting their jobs in the event of a pay cut reported the highest levels of depression (9.29) and anxiety (8.18).

■ Employees aged 41 and above who would not consider leaving their jobs exhibited the lowest levels of depression (2.76) and anxiety (2.96).

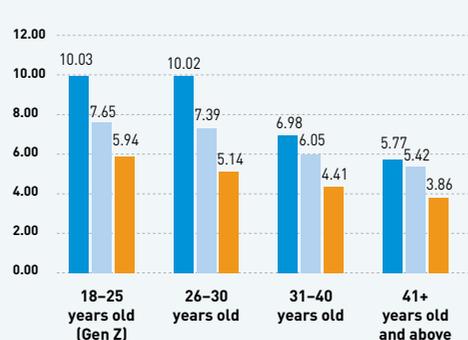
Graph 24: Degree of Alignment Between Jobs and Personal Interests



Depression Distribution



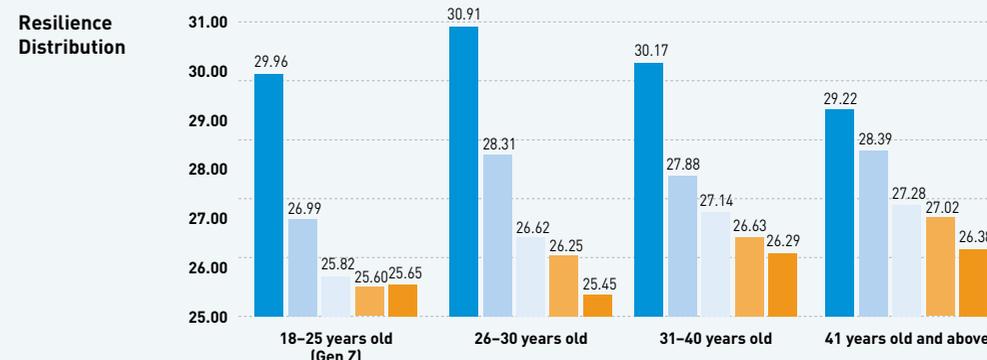
Anxiety Distribution



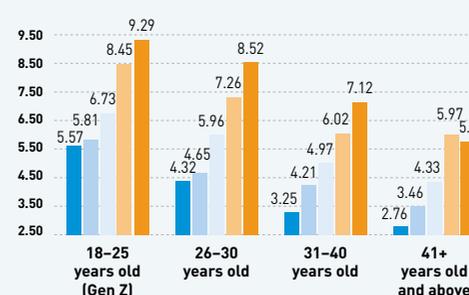
■ Job does not align with personal interests ■ Neutral ■ Job aligns with personal interests

Note: Figures in this graph refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively.

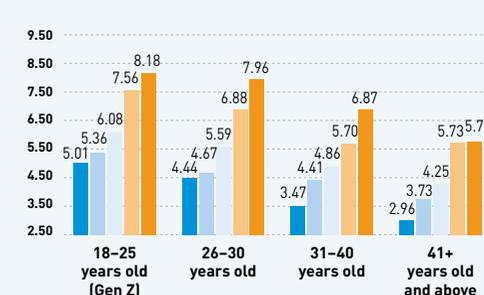
Graph 25: If their company has to cut salaries in a given year due to short-term difficulties, will each age group consider leaving their job?



Depression Distribution



Anxiety Distribution



■ Definitely will not consider leaving ■ Will not consider leaving ■ Not sure ■ Will consider leaving ■ Definitely will consider leaving

Note: Figures in this graph refer to the resilience, depression and anxiety scores of various age groups, respectively.

3

Summary and Implications for Management

It is important to note that this analysis on resilience, depression, and anxiety (RDA) among the Gen Z workforce revealed an interesting finding. We saw an overall decline in resilience, and a rise in depression and anxiety among Gen Z entrepreneurs, managers and employees when compared with the results from our previous survey of 5,835 respondents, which we conducted at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.

Men show higher levels of RDA than women, and those with a higher educational degree tend to experience stronger resilience as they age.

Gen Z have the lowest levels of psychological resilience and the highest levels of anxiety and depression at all job ranks. This highlights the need for extra attention from management to support their well-being. To build a resilient workforce and improve morale in a company, it is important to motivate individuals with high levels of resilience — such as older employees, senior executives and employees with a higher educational background — to support and empower those with lower resilience such as Gen Z.

Companies should build up the sense of value and meaningfulness and enhance their loyalty by providing training and career development opportunities that aligns with their interests. By boosting employee satisfaction and loyalty, organizations will become more flexible and resilient, thus resulting in a more stable workforce.



Conclusion

We hope this report has shed light on the values, working styles and preferences of Gen Z and the need for organizations to tailor their management practices.

Our research revealed that Gen Z is the least satisfied generation in the workplace across various factors including salary, working environment, career development, fulfillment, stability, and work-life balance. A large part of Gen Z's dissatisfaction in the workplaces may arise from their high expectations for financial returns that are not fulfilled, with 53.7% choosing to resign in the absence of pay raise.

The report showed, however, that Gen Z in China today are primarily driven by financial rewards as generations before them. Priorities like health and having new experiences have become increasingly important as Gen Z escape workplace pressure and search for greater fulfillment. Gen Z are also looking for more meaningful work that aligns with their interests.

Contrary to popular belief, our findings further highlighted that Gen Z are not as quick to resign from their jobs. When faced with workplace challenges, many Gen Z respondents chose to change their mentality and learn new skills in the event of dissatisfaction with their job. Additionally, while salary incentives are an effective measure to motivate and retain Gen Z employees, managers also need to prioritize designating more responsibility, trust and support, clear career development paths, a work-life balance, and tasks that align with interests of Gen Z employees.

In terms of psychological well-being, employers should pay extra attention to the alarmingly high levels of depression and anxiety Gen Z are currently experiencing. In fact, many Gen Z employees have chosen to escape the rigid hierarchies, overtime work, and heightened competition in response to such pressure. The Chinese term "tang ping", meaning "lying flat", has come to represent the backlash against the highly pressured and competitive working environment. That considered, companies and relative government institutions should provide mental health support to Gen Z employees. This is particularly important against the backdrop of rising levels of youth unemployment in the country, in addition to the discrepancy between our survey results during and after the pandemic.

Our findings revealed that companies need to factor in the educational background of their Gen Z employees and understand that postgraduates may take longer to adjust to the workplace. Moreover, the fact that Gen Z founders and CEOs showed the lowest levels of psychological resilience highlights the importance for resilience to be spread across the whole organization.

Overall, it is crucial for organizations to understand the values, working styles, and preferences of Gen Z, since they possess unique skills and talents that are invaluable to companies in China. By developing management practices tailored to Gen Z, companies can create a more productive and engaged workforce that thrives with diverse employees, leading to long-term inclusive growth.

Dedication

This report is dedicated to the hardworking and dedicated teams who worked tirelessly to gather and analyze data, provide insights, and write the report. We would like to thank Professor Zhang Xiaomeng and her team at the Research Center of Leadership, Behavioral Science & Inclusivity, Cao Lida and Fu Jingyi. A big thanks to the CKGSB's Global Marketing and Communications team, Ira Zaka, Julie Xuefang Tian, Joseph Duckworth, Jessica Wang and Xuan Liu, who supported in translating and designing the report. We would also like to thank the team at Flow Asia for their creative designs and dedication.

To each member of the team, your unwavering commitment and dedication to this project have been nothing short of outstanding. From the initial brainstorming and planning stages, to the data collection and analysis, to the final report writing and editing, each of you has contributed in a significant way to the success of this project.

Your collaboration, creativity, and diligence have been invaluable throughout the process, and your individual strengths and areas of expertise have complemented each other in a way that has truly brought this report to life.

Last but not least, we would like to acknowledge the support from Maimai Platform and our 16,900+ respondents from CKGSB's alumni companies, who took the time to answer more than 100 questions to the survey questionnaire. This report would not be possible without your input.



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