



PSB Insights

2021 Generations Study

Gen Z

“We are formed by the time in which we live – especially by the experiences of our youth – which determines our lives.”

-Sociologist Dan Woodman paraphrasing Philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset

This report provides a **deep dive into Gen Z** based on the PSB 2021 Generations Study

Survey type	Online
Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gen pop ages 15-75• Total n=3,001*• Gen Z n=510
Language administered	Option of English or Spanish
Sample matches	2019 Census population estimates for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender• Age• Race/ethnicity• Region overall• Generation
Field dates	March 5 – 12, 2021

A complete PSB Generations Report highlighting findings across all generations is also available



*Sample sizes for each generation are on the next page



Our study covers 60 years from ages 15 to 75. We have identified six cohort age groups.



Boomer (n=390)
Years born: 1946-1955
Ages: 66-75



Jones (n=510)
Years born: 1956-1964
Ages: 57-65



Gen X (n=510)
Years born: 1965-1975
Ages: 46-56



Xennial (n=510)
Years born: 1976-1985
Ages: 36-45



Millennial (n=570)
Years born: 1986-1996
Ages: 25-35

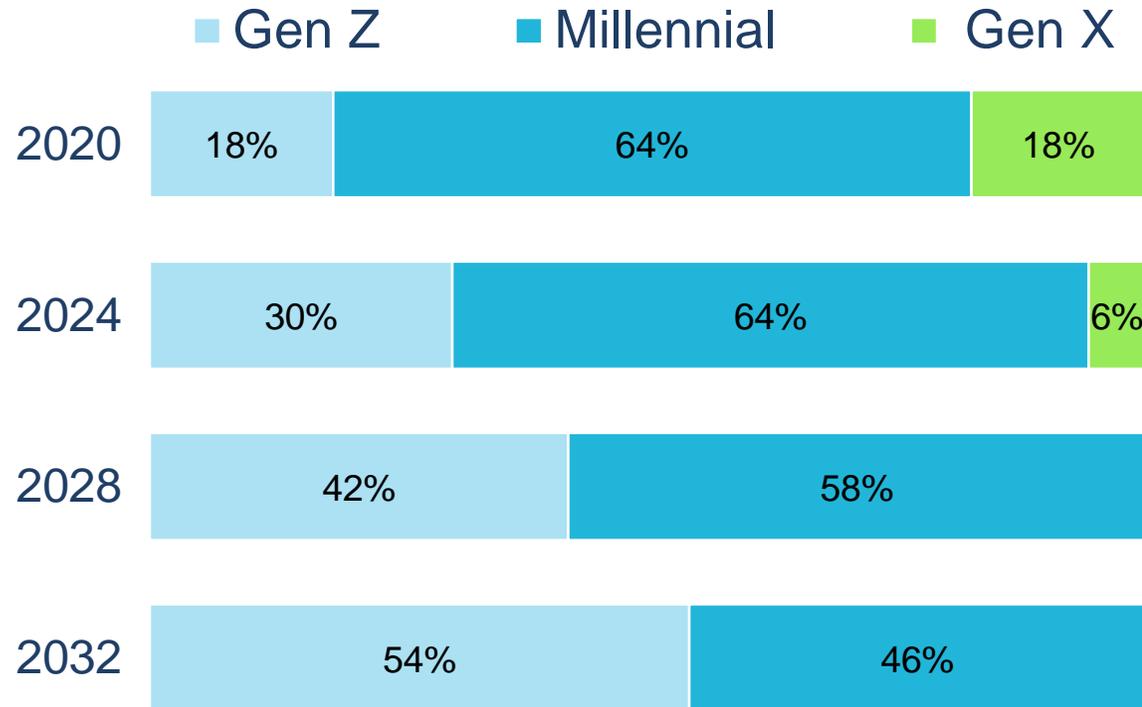


Gen Z (n=510)
Years born: 1997-2006*
Ages: 15-24

*The exact years for Gen Z are still in discussion

Gen Z will be the dominant buying population in next 5-10 years

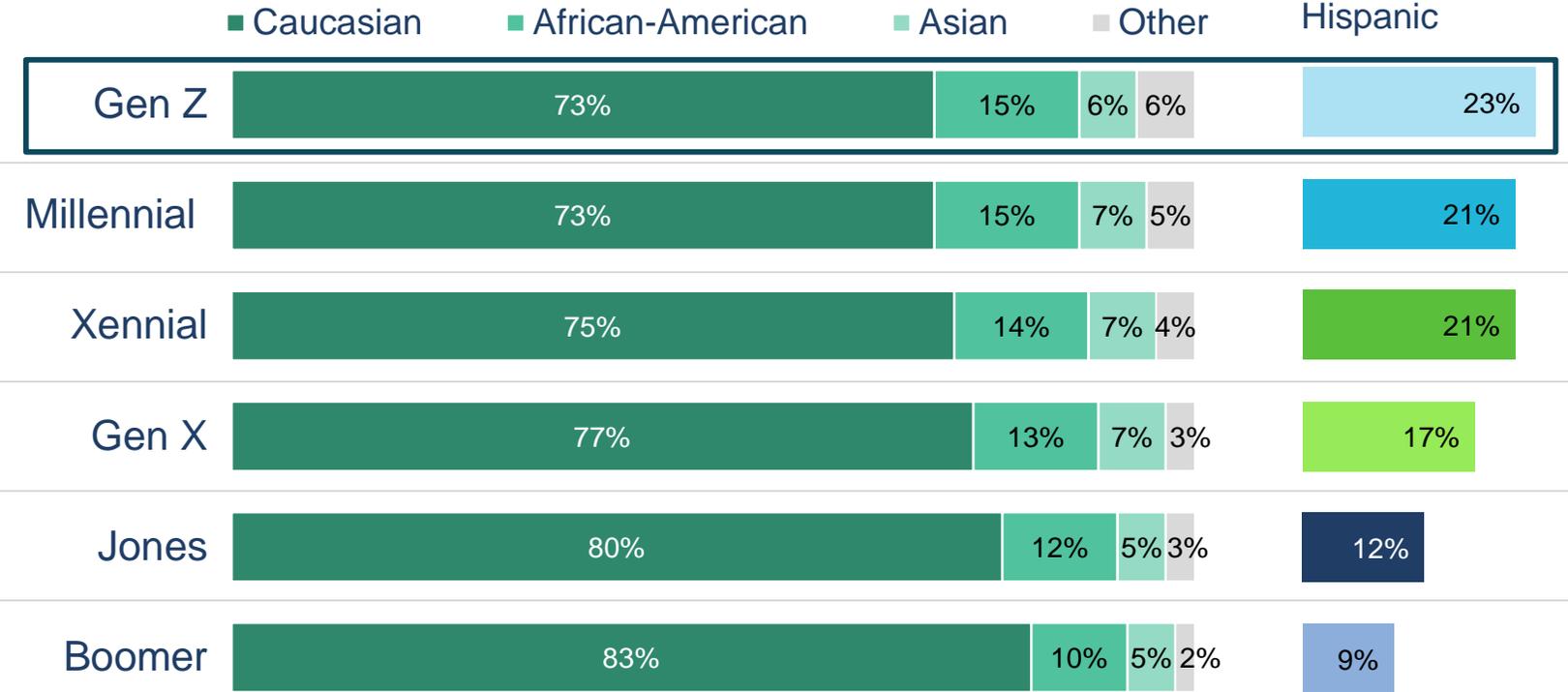
% Who Are 18-49 by Generation



It is estimated that the Gen Z population will be about 1.5 million more than Millennials.

By 2025, Gen Z's spending is expected to surpass that of baby boomers.

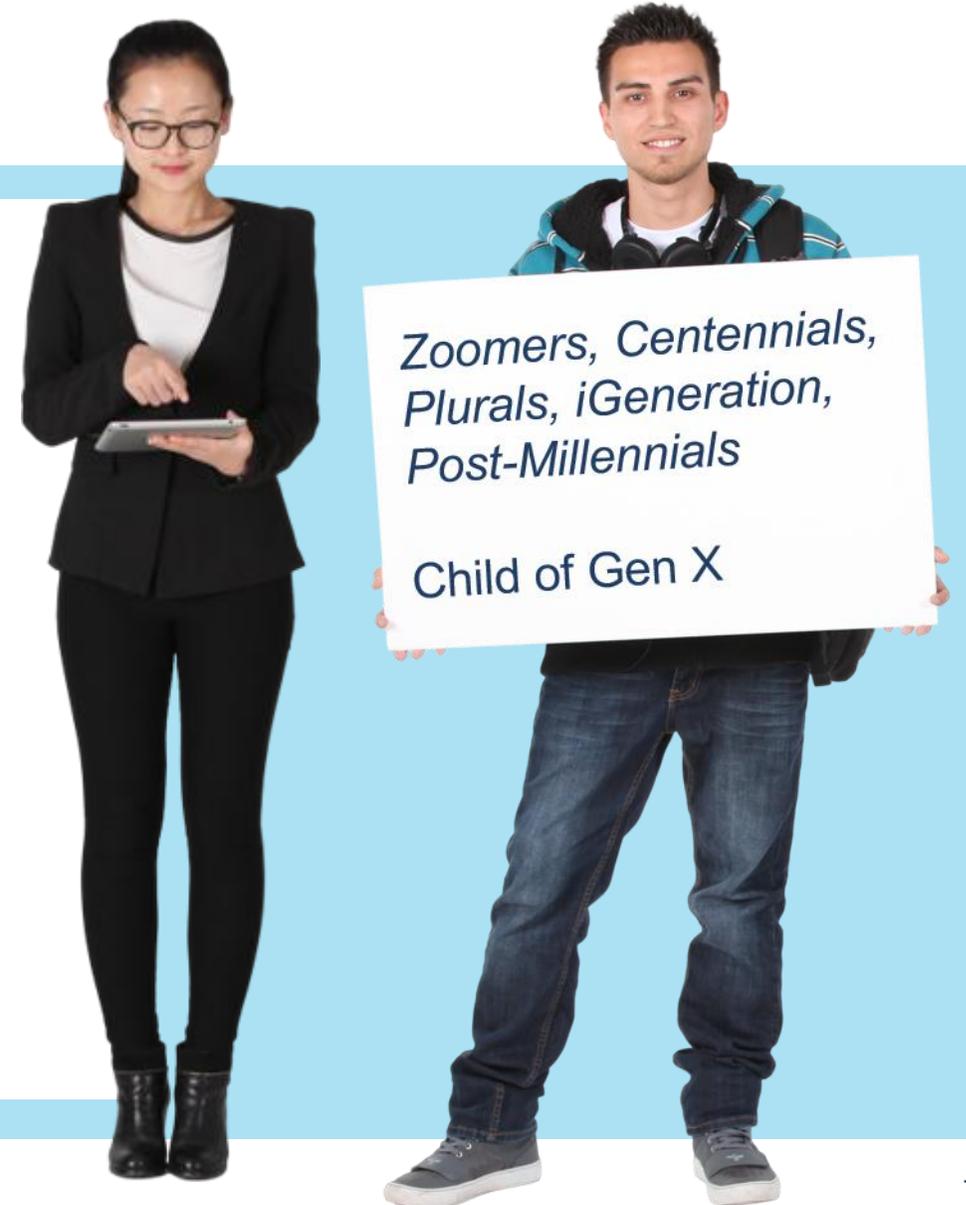
Gen Z is a Generation of Diversity: Gen Z is the most racially/ethnically diverse generation with nearly a quarter identifying as Hispanic.



Gen Z: Don't remember a time without the Internet, school shootings or U.S. at war

Years born: 1997-2006*; Ages: 15-24

- **Childhood:** School lockdown drills; more screen time and less time reading books, impacting attention span and vocabulary (and school grades)
- **Adolescence:** On-demand consumer – options available immediately (Netflix, Amazon); missing/delayed rites of passage due to COVID-19
- **Early Adulthood:** Oldest just entering, but...
 - Remote schooling and working changing how they learn, interact, and establish themselves in their career



What Sets Gen Z Apart From All Other Generations?

Gen Z is a generation that is diverse, global, social, visual, and technological.



They don't settle for what's been given to them – they are willing to create change and make an impact.

- **On-demand** consumers
- **High expectations and low patience**
- Want to do **business with companies that embrace technology** like they do
- In a world of “fake news,” they value being their “**authentic**” **self** and want companies and brands to be authentic too
- **Desire for human connection**, even through technology
- **They are influencers.** 70% of parents turn to their Gen Z kids for help in making a buying decision (Interactions, 2021)
- **With high expectations come pressure.** They are stressed and worry about their mental health more than ever before

Gen Z are not simply “more Millennial.” Their approach to the world, brands, issues, goals, and each other are distinct.

Millennials



- Tech-savvy
- Transparent
- Slacktivists
- Multicultural
- Tolerant of others
- Communicate with text
- Share things
- Now-focused
- Optimists
- Want to be discovered
- Team-orientated

Gen Z



- Tech-innate
- Protective*
- Active volunteers
- Mixed race and gender
- Accepting of others
- Communicate with images*
- Make things
- Future-focused
- Realists
- Want to work for their success
- Collective-conscious

*Note: Protective (e.g. geo-location off), Communicate with images (e.g. emojis)

Gen Z

Attitudes and Values

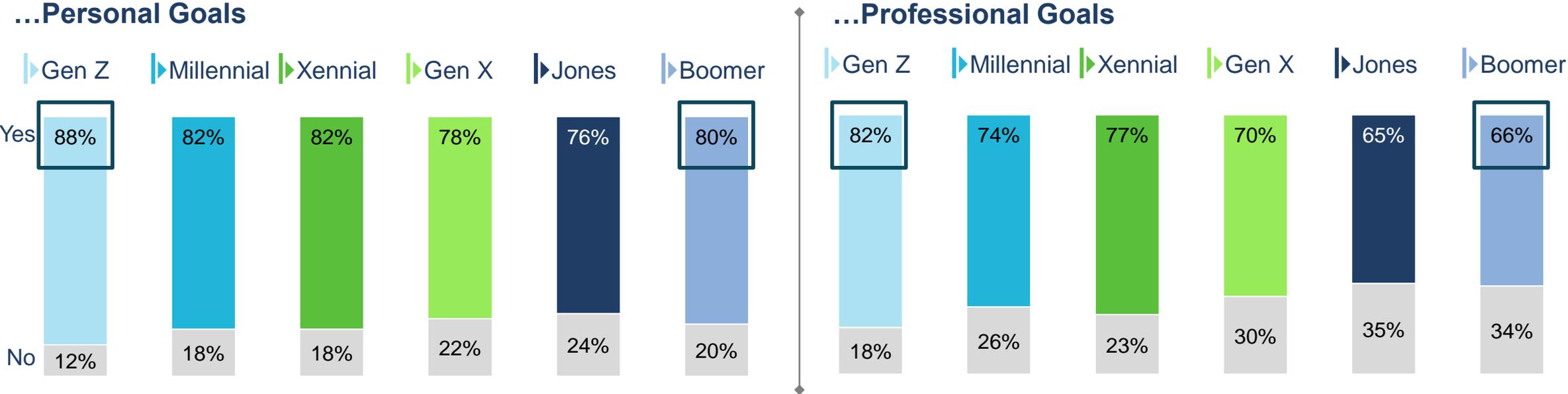
“I am not afraid to earn it, whatever ‘it’ is. Please don’t just *give* me anything, including the consolation trophy.”

Gen Z



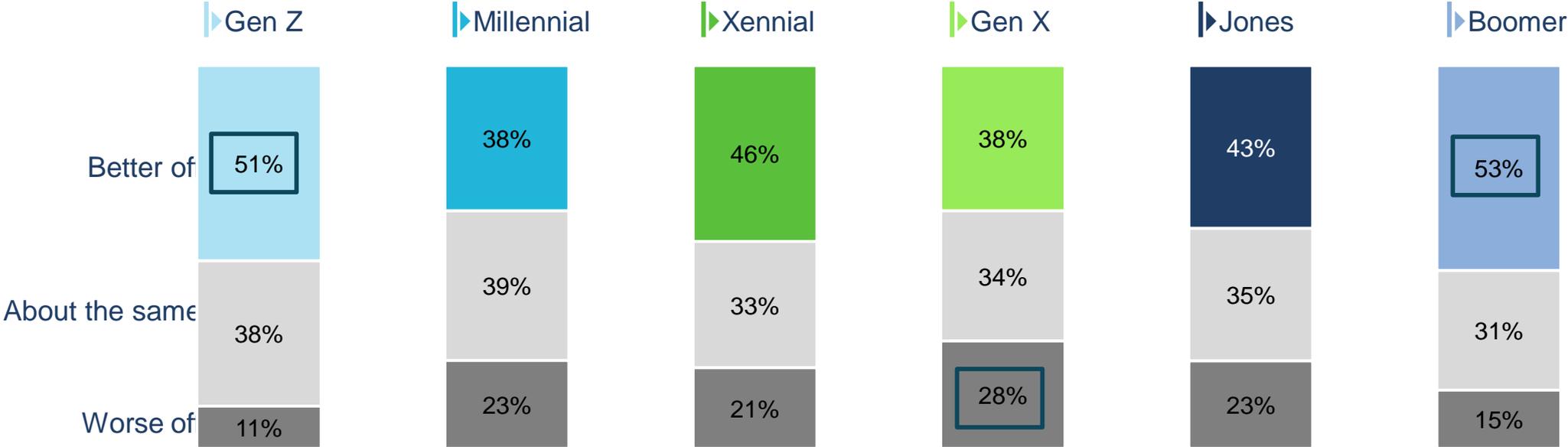
Optimistic About the Future: Gen Z believes that they will have more opportunity to achieve both their personal and professional goals than other generations

Have Had/Will Have the Opportunities to Achieve Your...



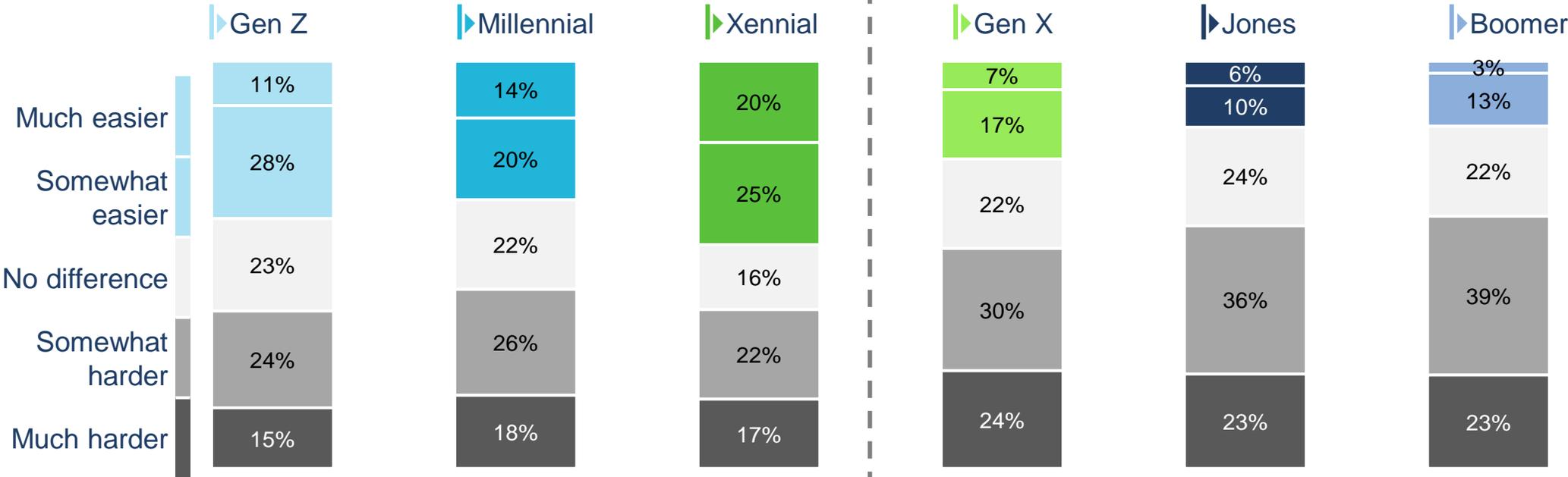
Better Off than Their Parents: A majority of Gen Z believe that they are better off than their parents – something not seen since the Boomers

Life Situation Compared to Parents



Mixed Opinions on Being Able to Achieve the American Dream: Younger generations are more optimistic than older generations about the ability to achieve the American Dream

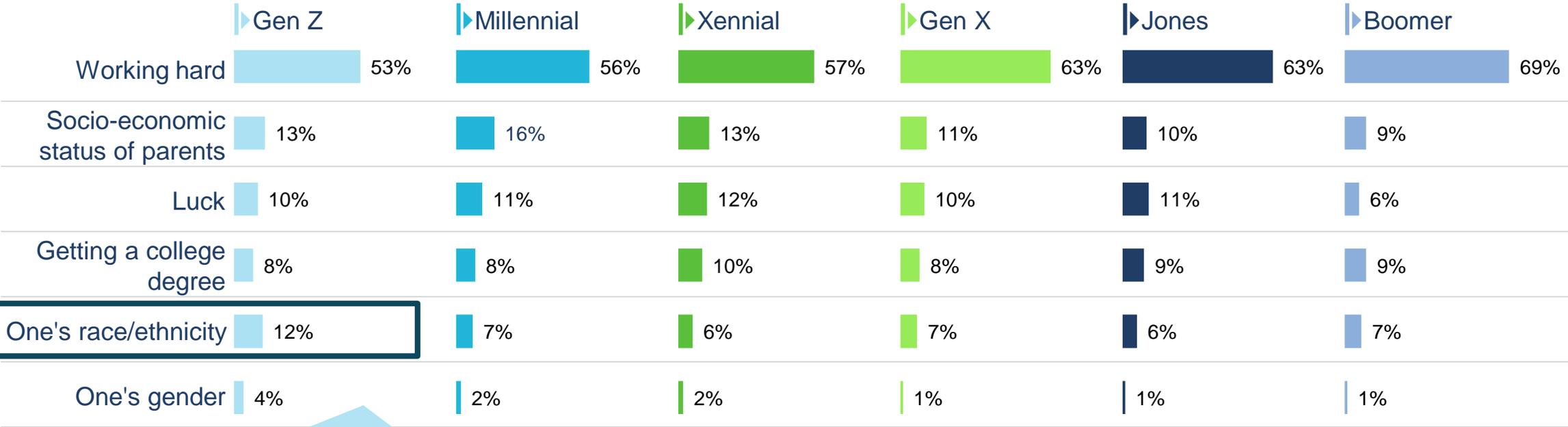
Ability of Future Generations to Achieve the American Dream



However, there is a sizeable number of Gen Z and Millennials who believe it will be harder to achieve the American Dream.

How to Achieve the American Dream: Working hard is considered the greatest contributor to achieving the American Dream.

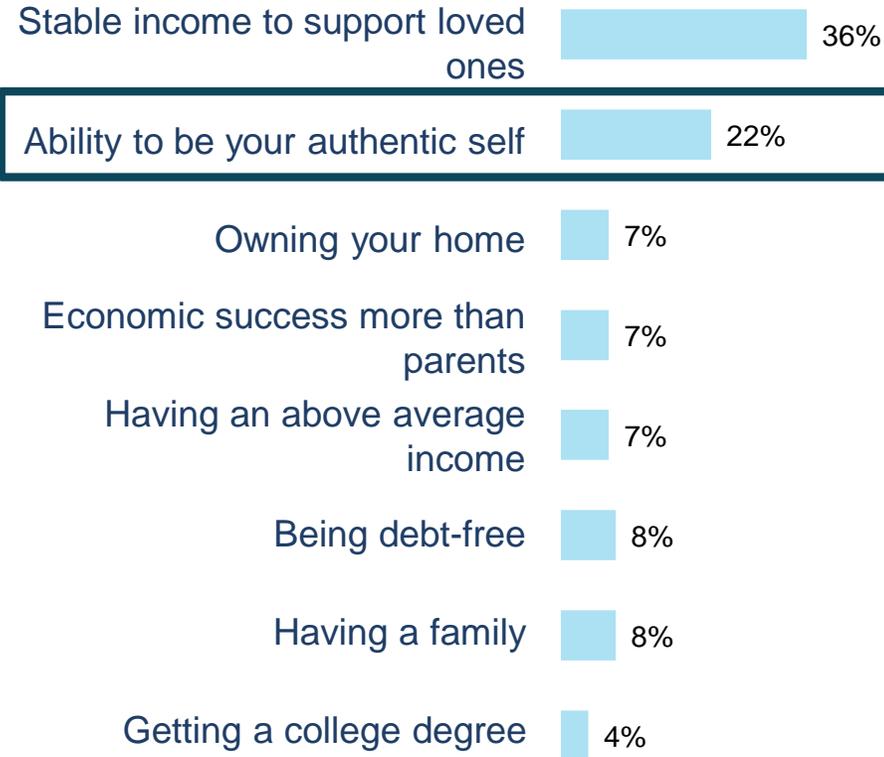
Greatest Contributor to Achieving the American Dream (ranked by Gen. pop.)



Gen Z also cite race/ethnicity and gender as significant factors.

Being Your Authentic Self: Along with being financially secure, Gen Z values living an authentic life as part of the American Dream

Gen Z: What Living the American Dream Means



“Gen Z culture is not really having cliques in school like jock, prep, etc. It isn’t so black-and-white, since people are starting to not fall under one stereotype any more ... **We see beyond what a person is at face-value. We let people be themselves, not confined to just one aspect of themselves.**”
Source: gen-z-culture-is

Practical and Frugal Generation: Even before the Pandemic, Gen Z was known to be frugal and careful with their money

According to a 2019-20 report on Gen Z by The Center for Generational Kinetics:

- 91% plan to buy their own home some day
- 69% think saving for retirement should be a priority
- 66% are worried about accumulating or not being able to pay off debt



Gen Z

Impact of the Pandemic

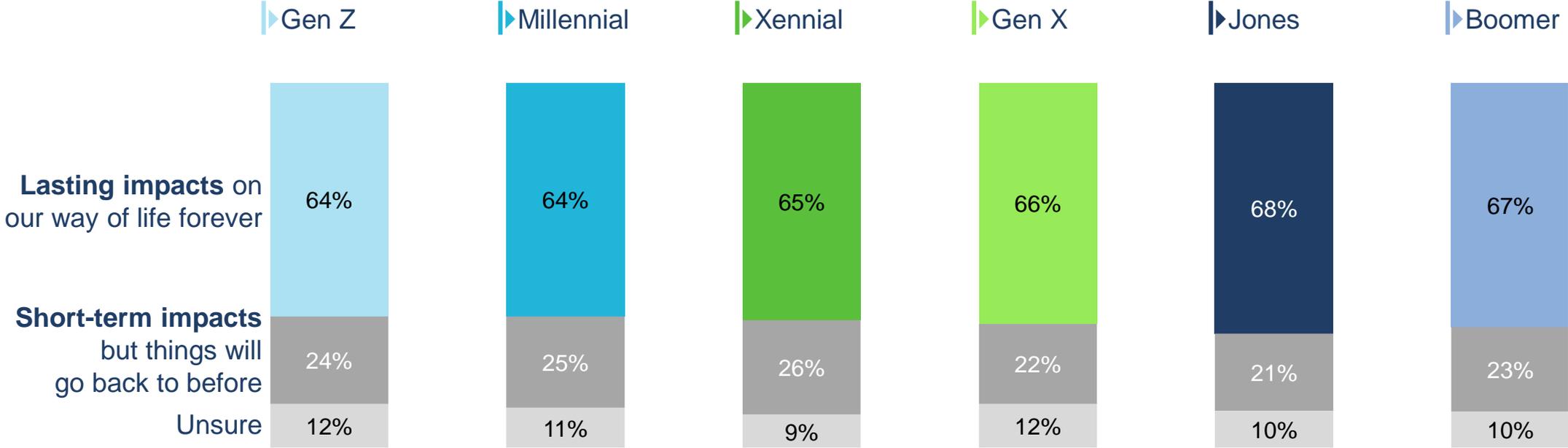
“The pandemic impacts decisions on everything, from where they live, to cars and the type of company they would go to work for.”

Jason Dorsey, Gen Z Expert



Impact of COVID19: Two-thirds of all generations think that the pandemic will have a lasting impact on our way of life

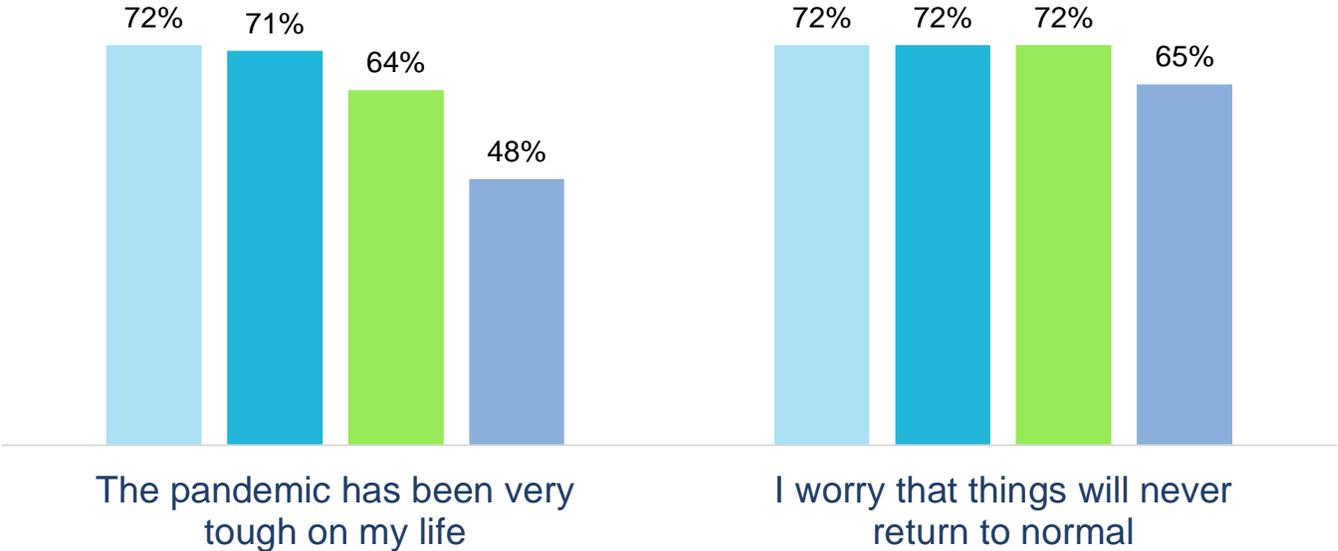
COVID-19 will have ...



Ability to Return to Normal: The pandemic was especially tough on younger generations and they worry that things will never return to normal

% Strongly/somewhat Agree with Statement

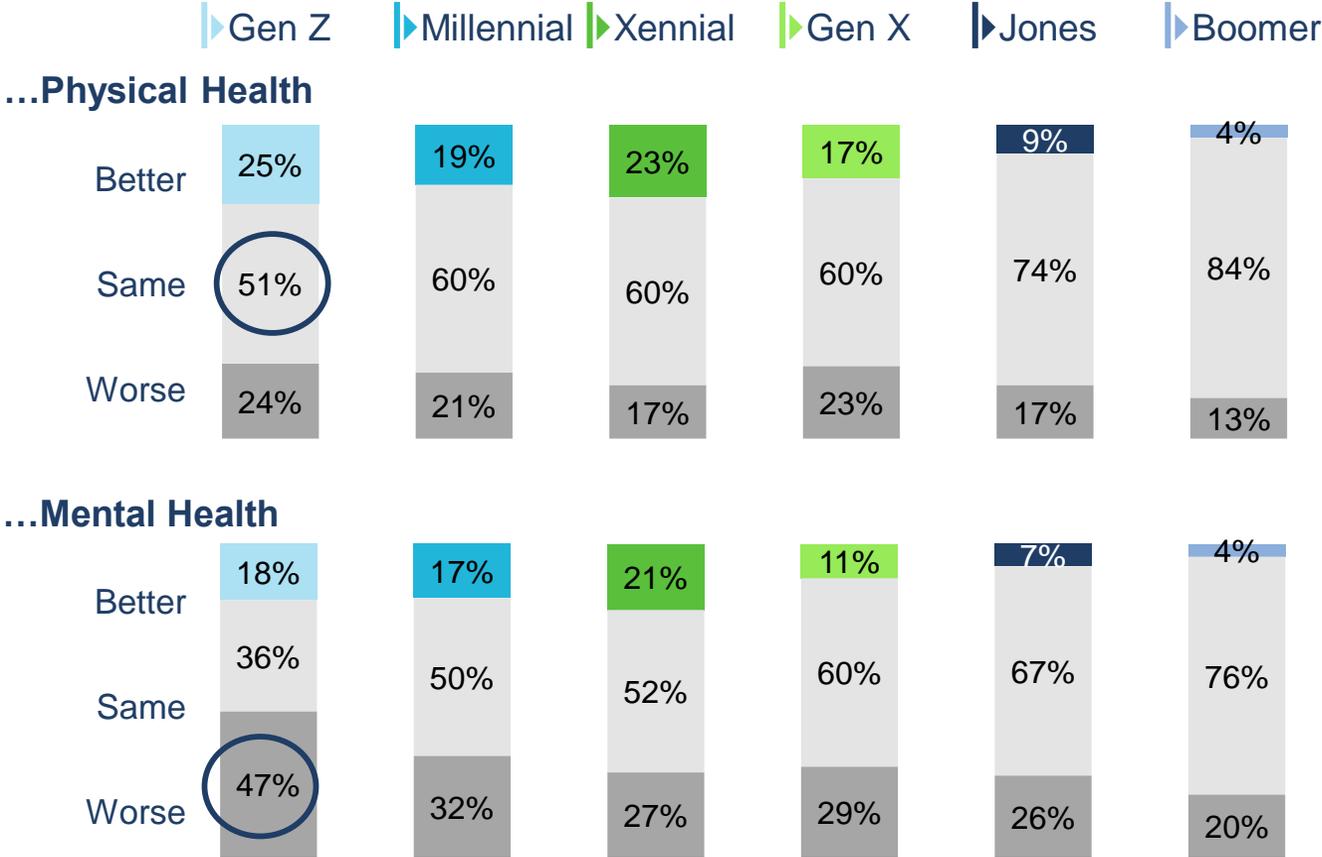
■ Gen Z ■ Millennials ■ Gen X ■ Boomers



Half of the oldest Gen Z's (ages 18 to 23) indicated that they or someone in their household had lost a job or taken a pay cut due to the pandemic (*Pew Research*)

Impact on Mental Health: Nearly half (47%) of Gen Z say they feel worse about their mental health due to pandemic

Impact of COVID on My...

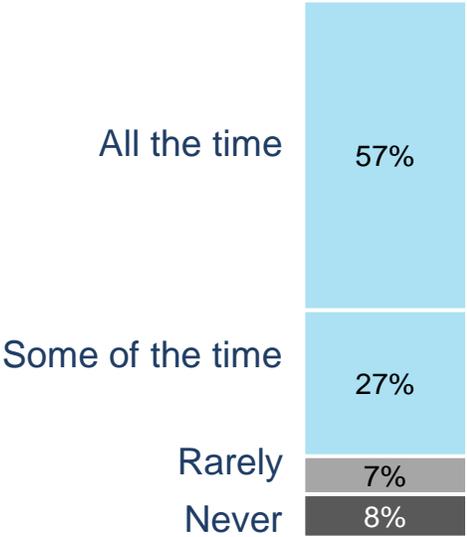


66% of Gen Z respondents experiencing heightened loneliness and 43% feeling anxiety. Nearly half (47%) also report a decrease in life satisfaction as a result of lockdown (*Regenerations 6/20*)

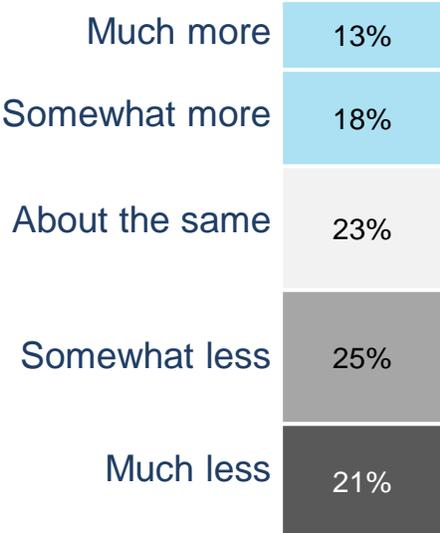
Remote Schooling: Most Gen Z who are still in school are attending classes at home all or some of the time. Of those at home, many find it challenging and struggle to be productive.

School from Home During Pandemic (Gen Z)

Frequency Attend School From Home



Feel More or Less Productive?



How are You Doing?



Nearly half view remote school as challenging

Remote Work: A majority of older Gen Z feel that working at home is challenging and would like to get back completely or partially to the workplace

Working from Home During Pandemic (Gen Z)

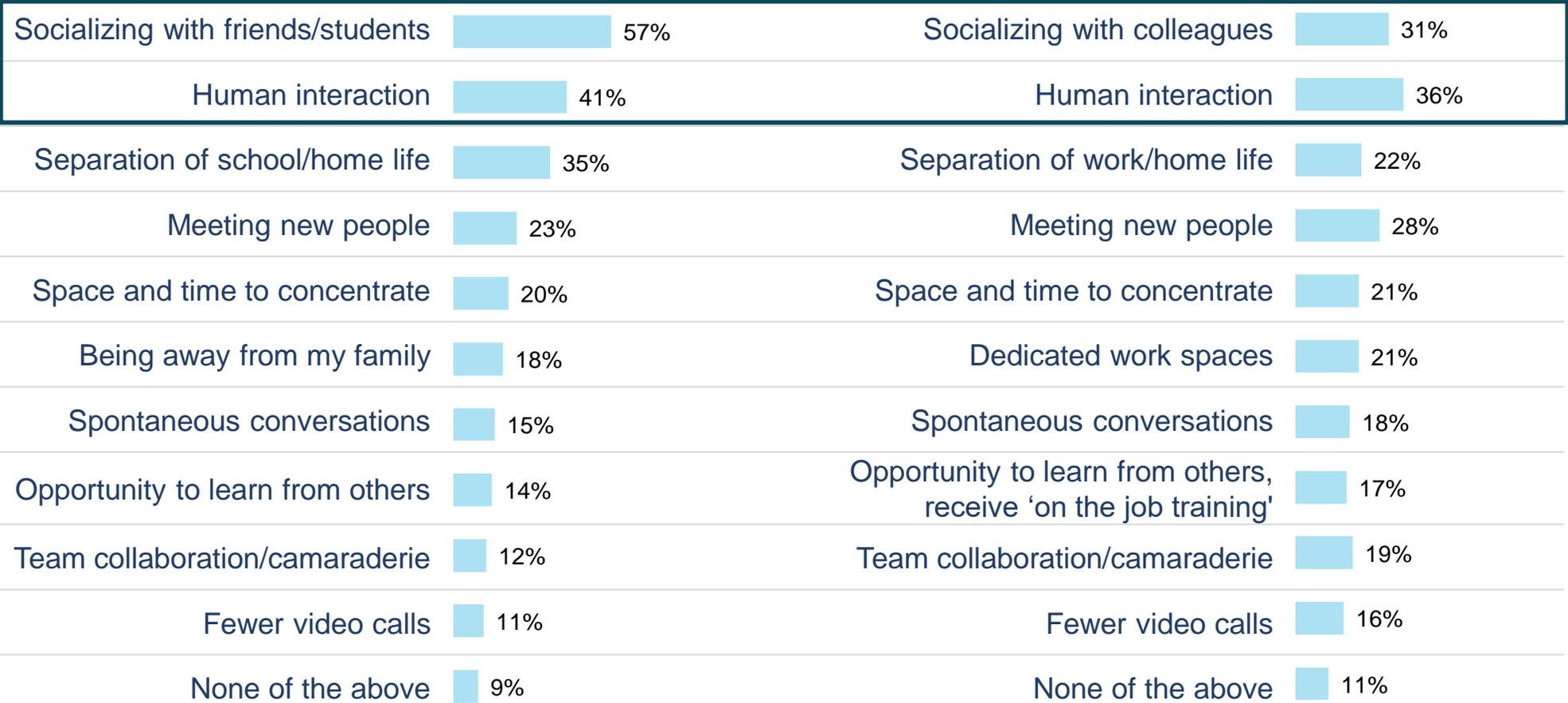


What's Missed? Socializing and interacting with people are most missed aspects of work at home or remote schooling

Activities Missed the Most Among Gen Z

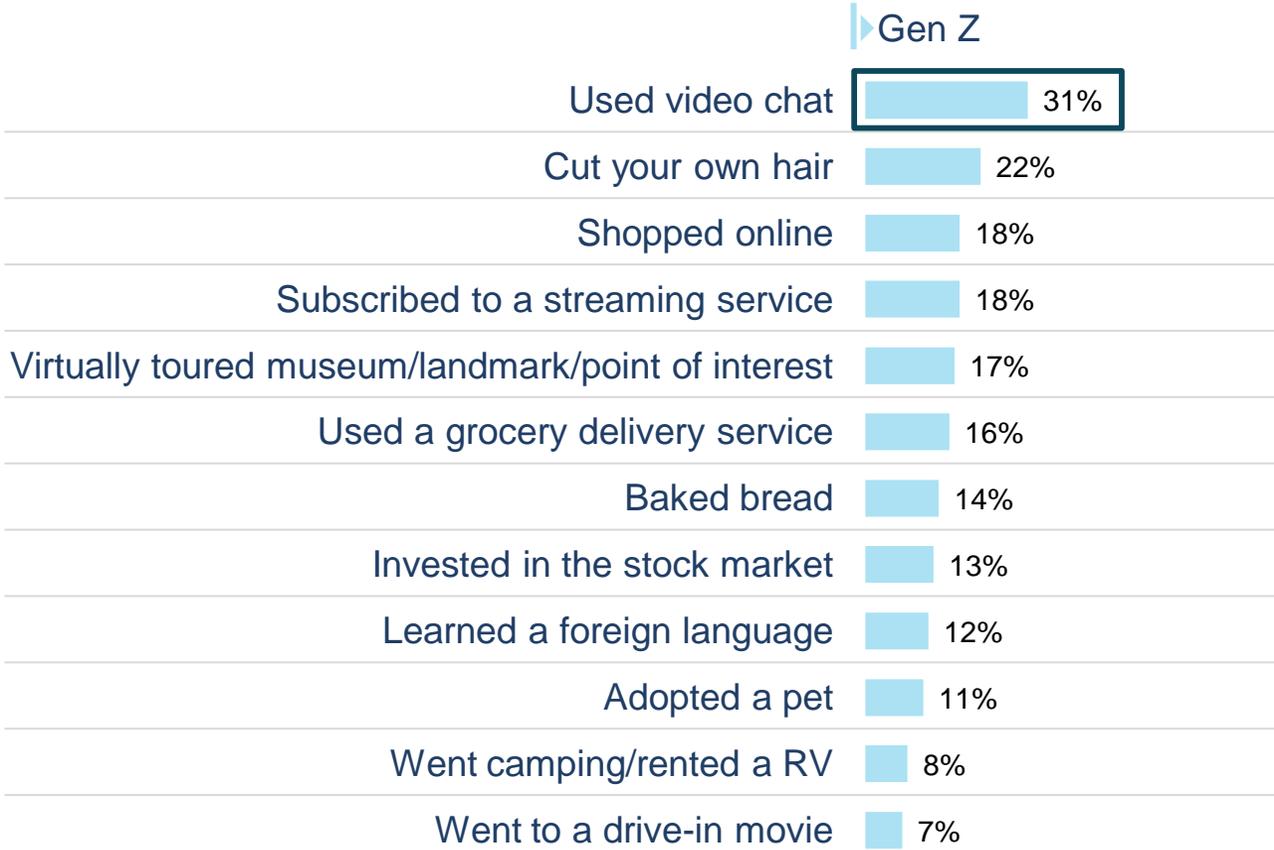
Attending School from Home

Working from Home



Adapting to the Pandemic: During the pandemic, Gen Z most often used video chat or cut their own hair for the first time in last year.

Did for the First Time in Last Year



Many of the “firsts” will have long-lasting impacts on their lives, e.g. investing in the stock market or adopting a pet

Gen Z and Social Issues

“I am extreme in all that I am and all that I do. This, I believe, will break down walls and invite inclusion for all.”

“We care about our world. We care most about the humans in our world.”



Racial Equality: Although Gen Z cares about many social issues, *racism* has emerged as the top issue facing the US among this age group, followed by the *pandemic* and *climate change*.

Top 10 Issues in the US Today

Racism	42%
COVID-19 pandemic	41%
Climate change and the environment	20%
Fake news and misinformation	18%
Gay rights	14%
Education	13%
Health care	12%
Sexism	12%
Jobs and the economy	11%
Immigration	11%
Taxes and government spending	11%
Drugs and addiction	11%
Abortion	11%

Twice as many Gen Z than any other generation named Racism as a top Issue

Gen Z

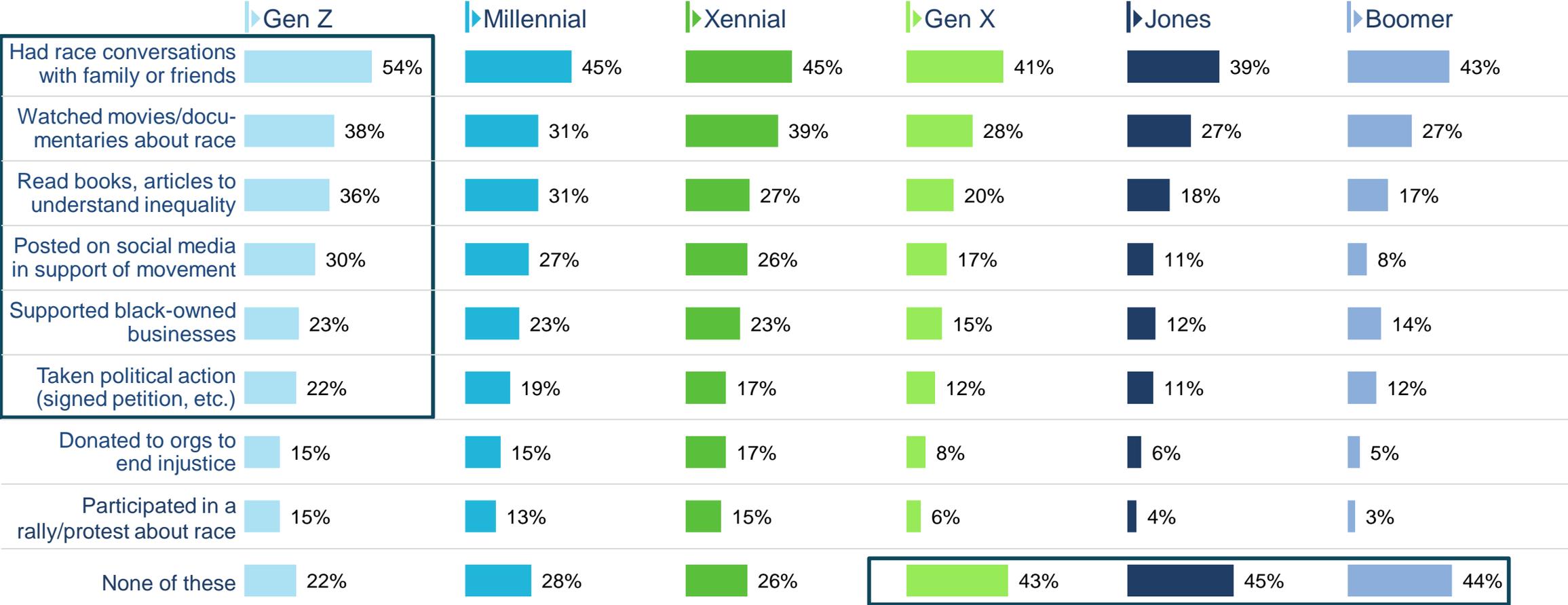


Top Ranking Events of the Century

1	Covid-19 pandemic
2	#BlackLivesMatter movement
3	Trump elected president
4	11-Sep
5	Biden elected president
6	Obama elected president
7	Same-sex marriage legalized
8	#MeToo movement
9	War on Terrorism
10	Jan 6th storming of the U.S. Capitol
11	Sandy Hook elementary school shooting

Gen Z and Racial Justice: “Diversity” and “inclusion” are not just buzzwords to Gen Z. Gen Z are actively learning and supporting racial justice more than other generations

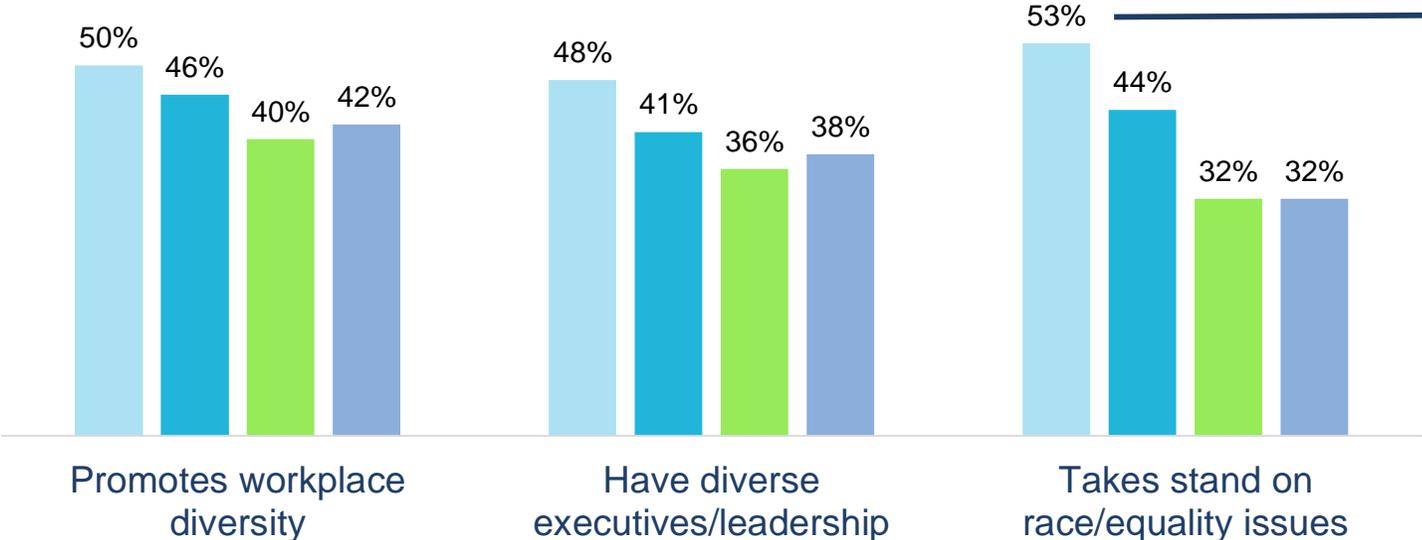
Actions Taken to Address/Better Understand Racial Justice in the U.S. (ranked by Gen. pop.)



Importance of Diversity in Employment: Gen Z evaluates potential employers by their commitment to diversity

% Agreeing that Statement is Very Important When Evaluating Potential Employer

■ Gen Z ■ Millennials ■ Gen X ■ Boomers

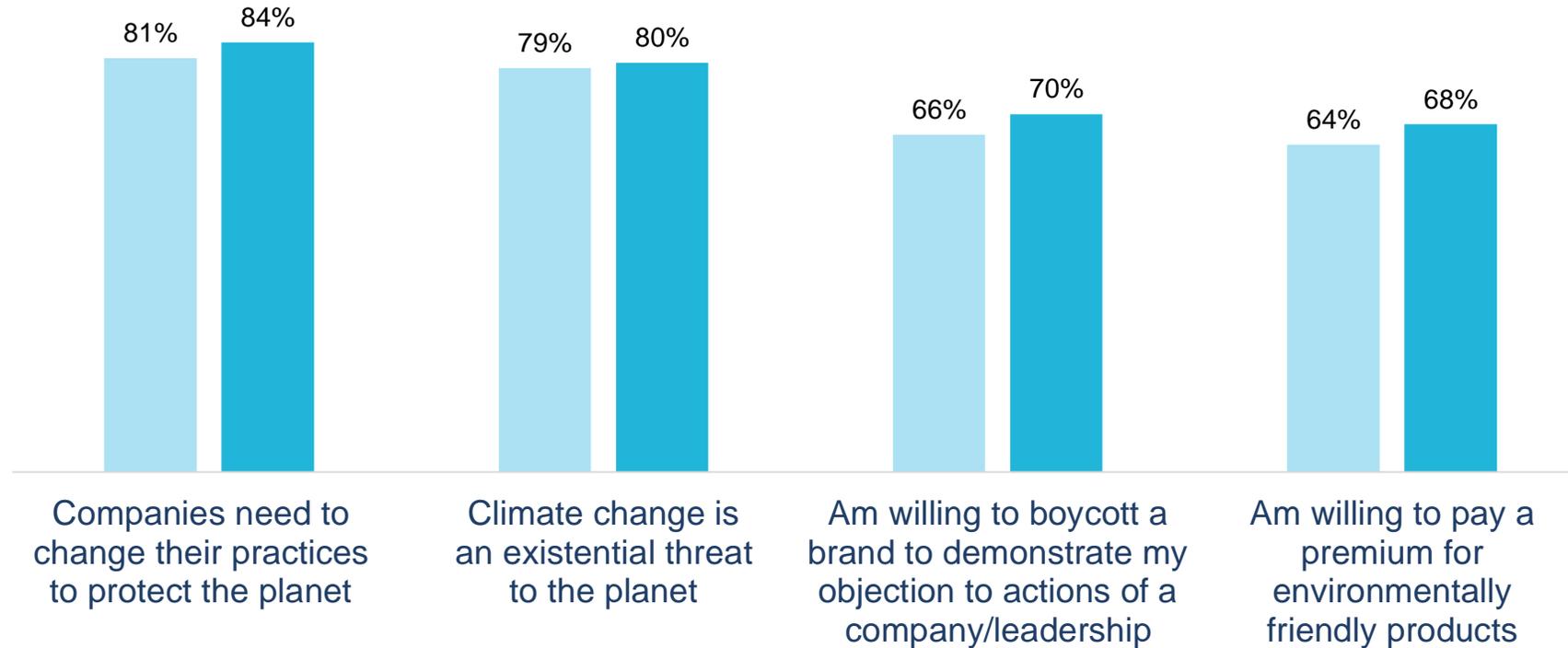


~60% of Gen Z believe that companies should do more to promote racial justice and equality

Climate Change: Climate change is seen an existential threat for both Gen Z and Millennials with general agreement that companies need to change their practices; however there is less personal commitment to make a change.

% Strongly/somewhat Agree with Statement

■ Gen Z ■ Millennials



Although climate change is seen as a threat, 45% of Gen Z do not know what the Green New Deal is all about.

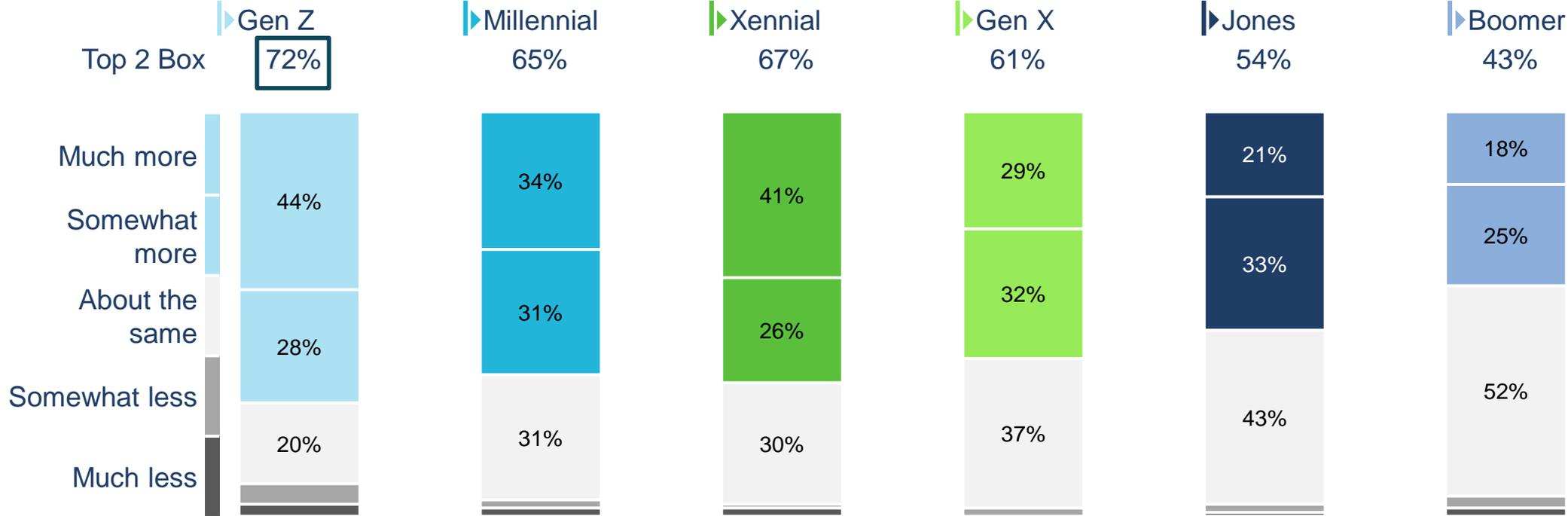
Gen Z and Technology

“Social media is not merely entertainment. Yes, it is fun. However, each social platform I use has a different purpose for my life.” Gen Z



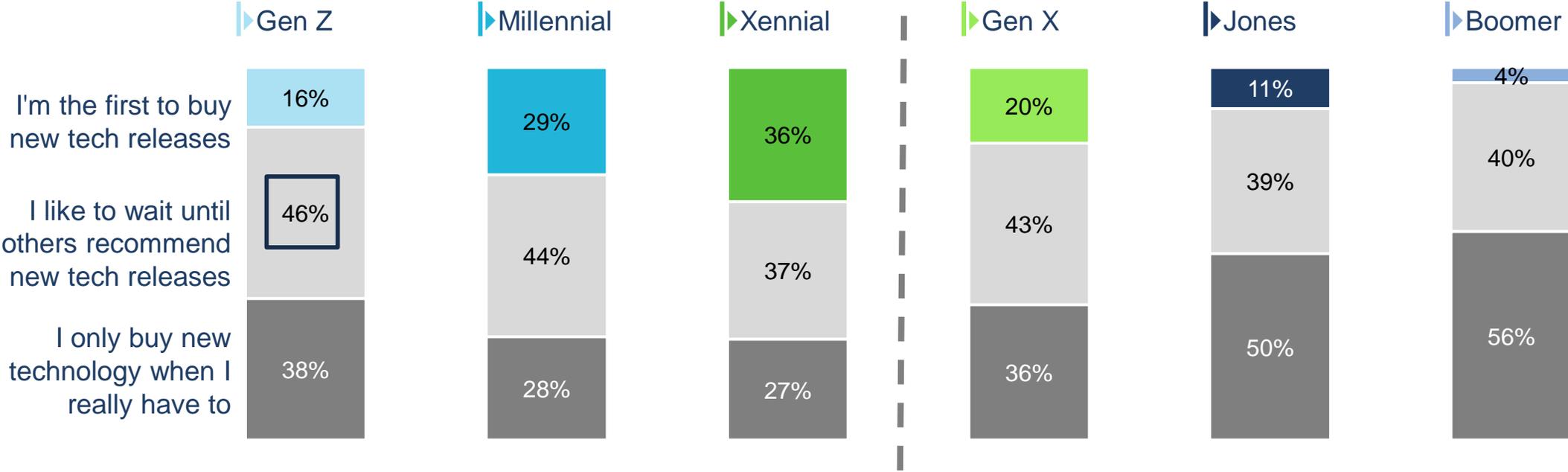
Spending More Time Using Technology: Nearly ¾ of Gen Z say they are spending more time on technology—more than other generations.

Compared to a Year Ago, Time Spent Using Technology in a Typical Day

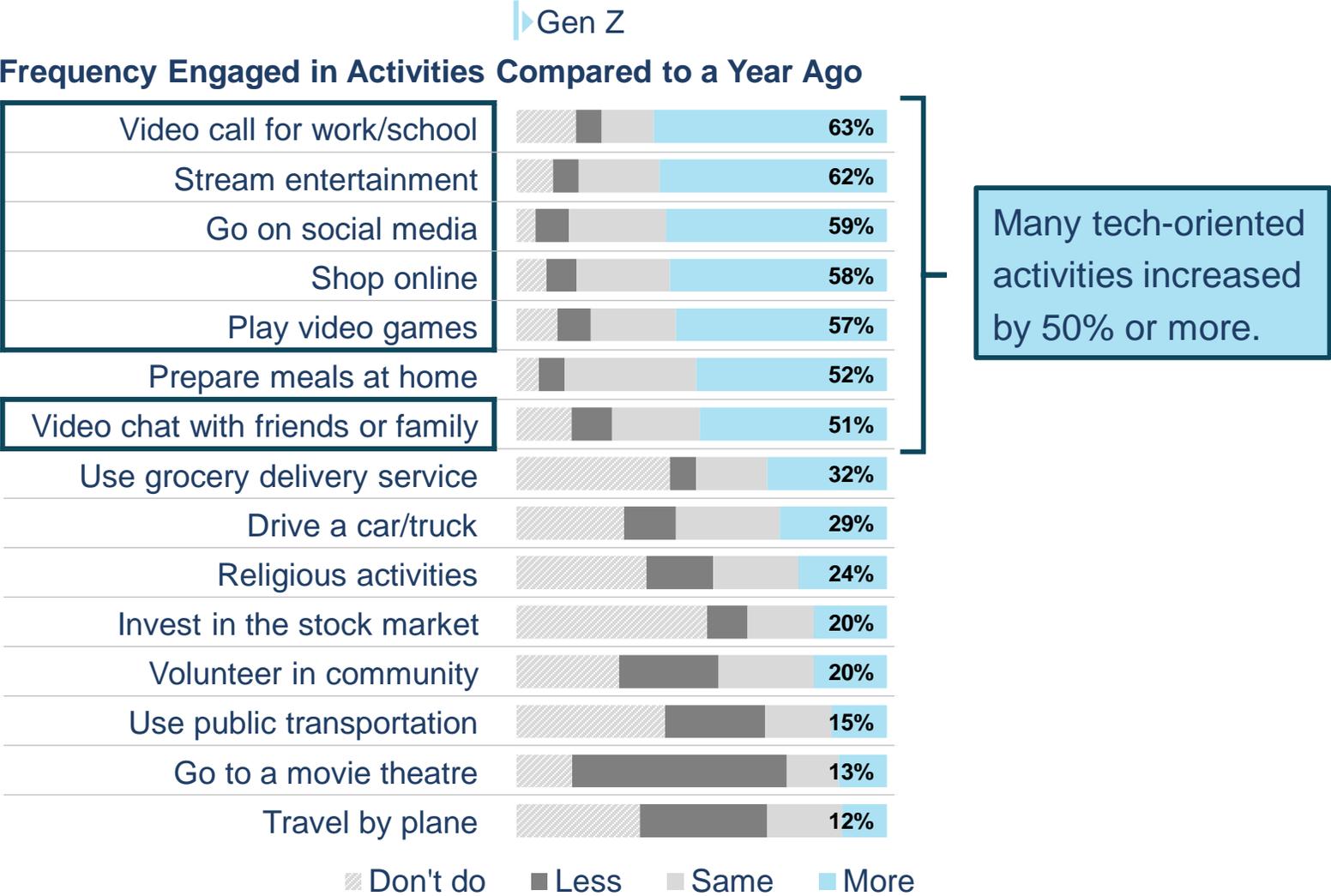


Early Adoption: Despite Gen Z's reliance on technology, they are not early adopters. They are more likely to be swayed by recommendations.

New Technology Adoption

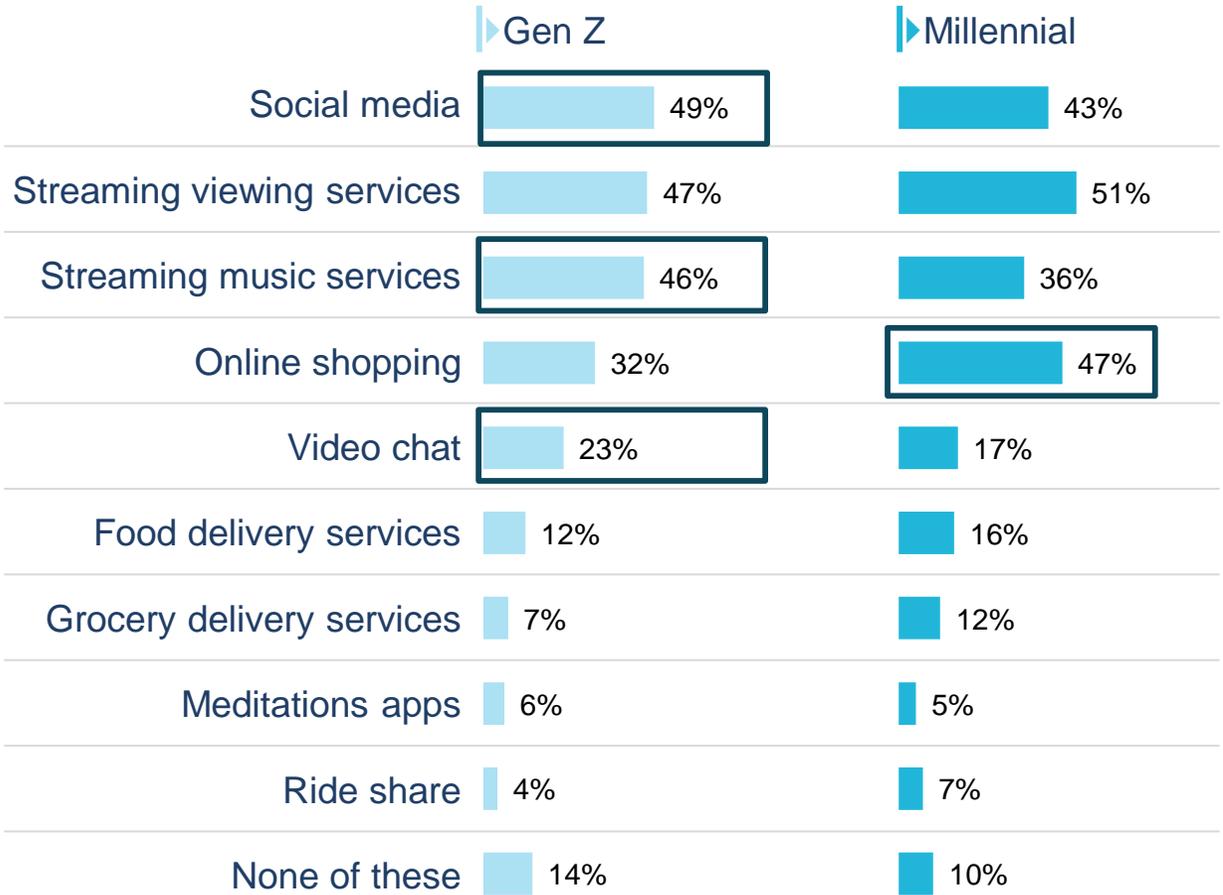


Activities versus Year Ago: Gen Z's reliance on technology has grown across many aspects of their lives versus a year ago.



Technology Dependence: There is a shift in technology dependence among the younger generation.

Can Not Live Without These Services/Apps (ranked by Gen Z)

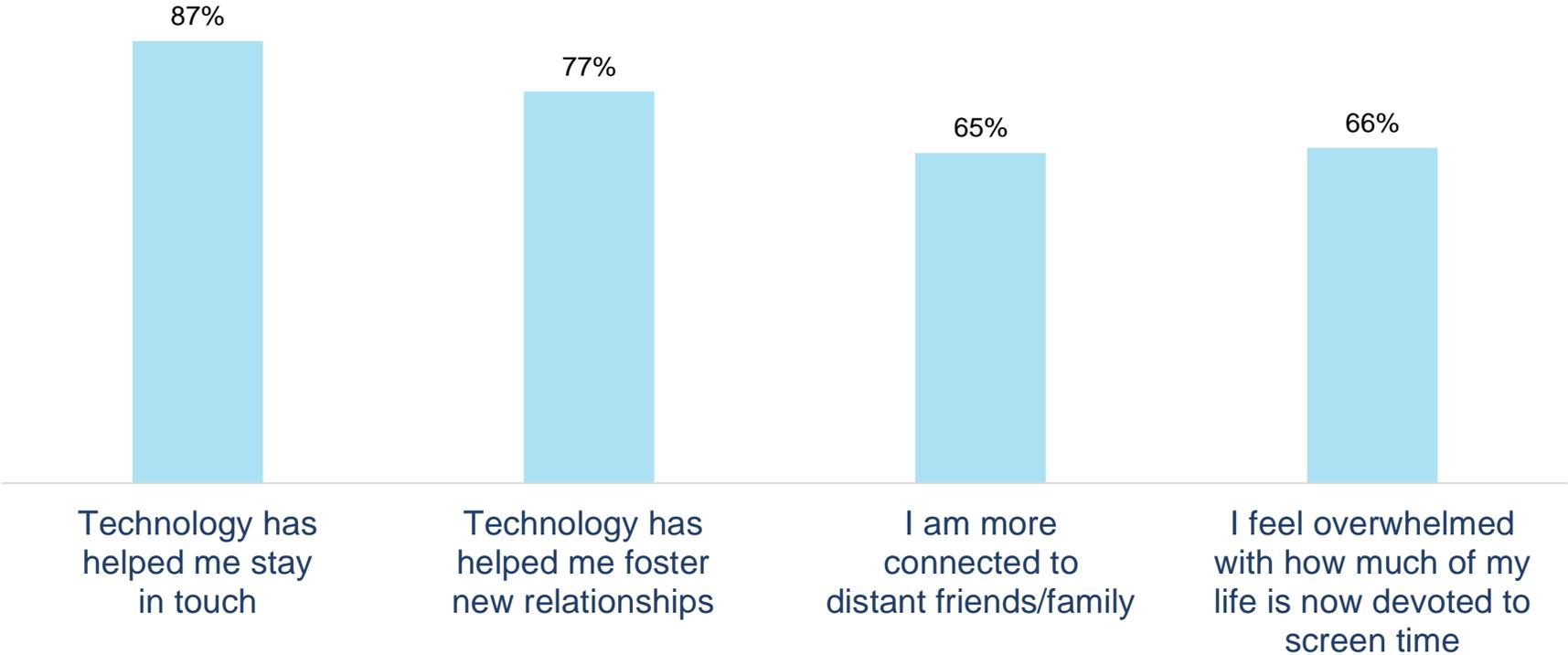


More millennials depend on apps for shopping while Gen Z is more dependent on social media, streaming music, and video chat.

Attitudes Toward Technology: While Gen Z recognizes the ability of technology to help them keep up and foster new relationships, 2/3 also feel overwhelmed by amount of screen time.

% Strongly/somewhat Agree with Statement

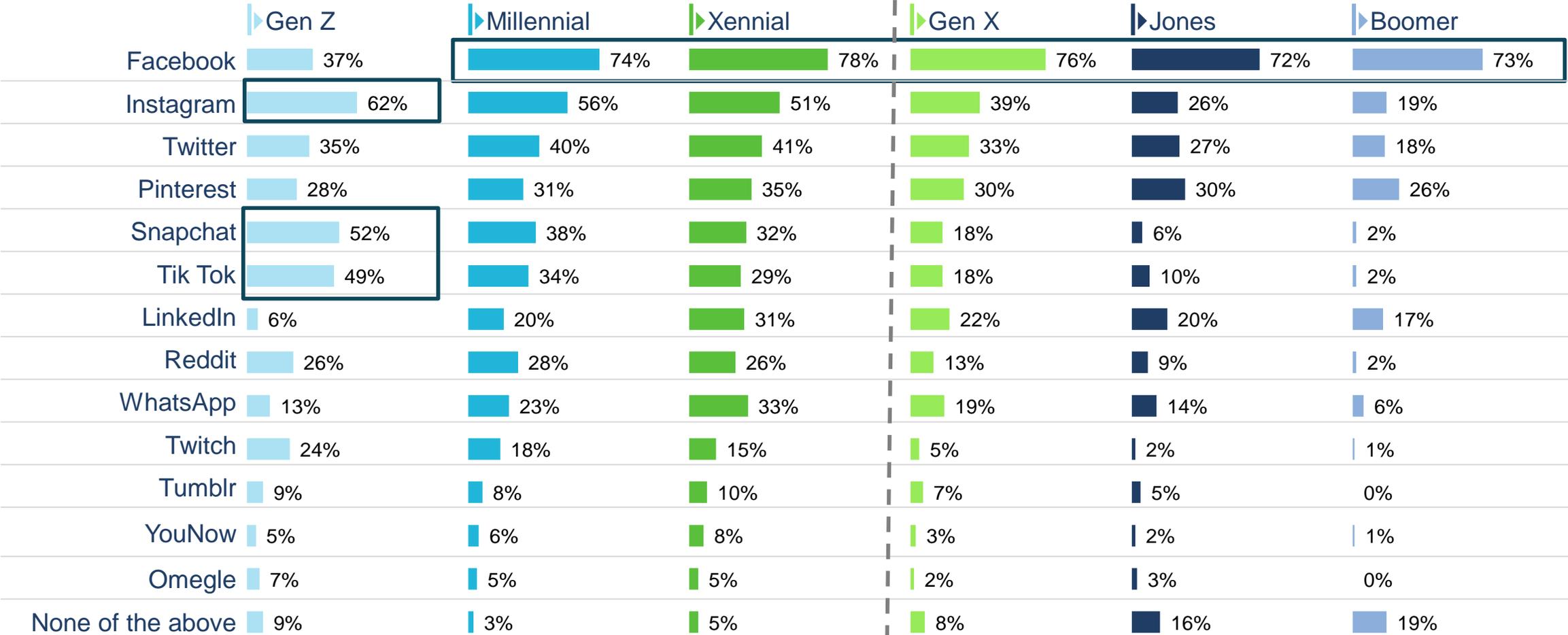
■ Gen Z



Gen Z are living “digital lives,” rather than simply being immersed in digital technology.

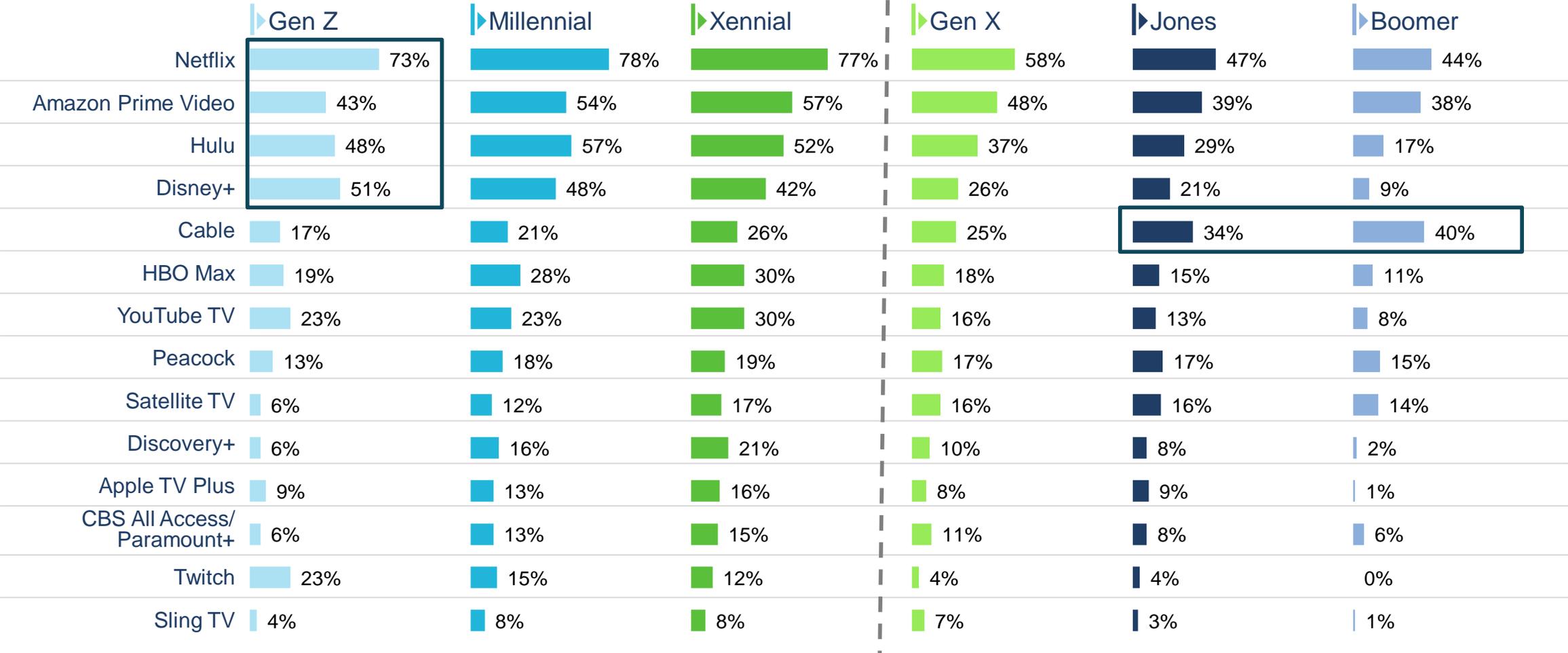
Social Media Platforms: Gen Z strongly favor visual platforms. Instagram, Snapchat and Tik Tok emerge as the key platforms for this generation.

Platforms Used at Least Monthly (ranked by Gen. pop.)



Streaming Platforms: Gen Z most often are watching NetFlix, Amazon Prime, Hulu and Disney+. Cable is preferred by older generations.

Streaming Services Used (ranked by Gen. pop.)



Conclusions and Thought-Starters

Authenticity is what Gen Z craves, and rightly so; it's a healthier and more transparent form of leadership. Being authentic means listening, being open and kind, over-communicating and creating safe spaces and environments where folks can be themselves and show up to do their best work. Brands need to understand that they don't market this; they become this. Brands need leaders that exemplify this style of leadership. - [Lauren Cooney, Spark Labs](#)



Thought Starters: Appealing to Gen Z

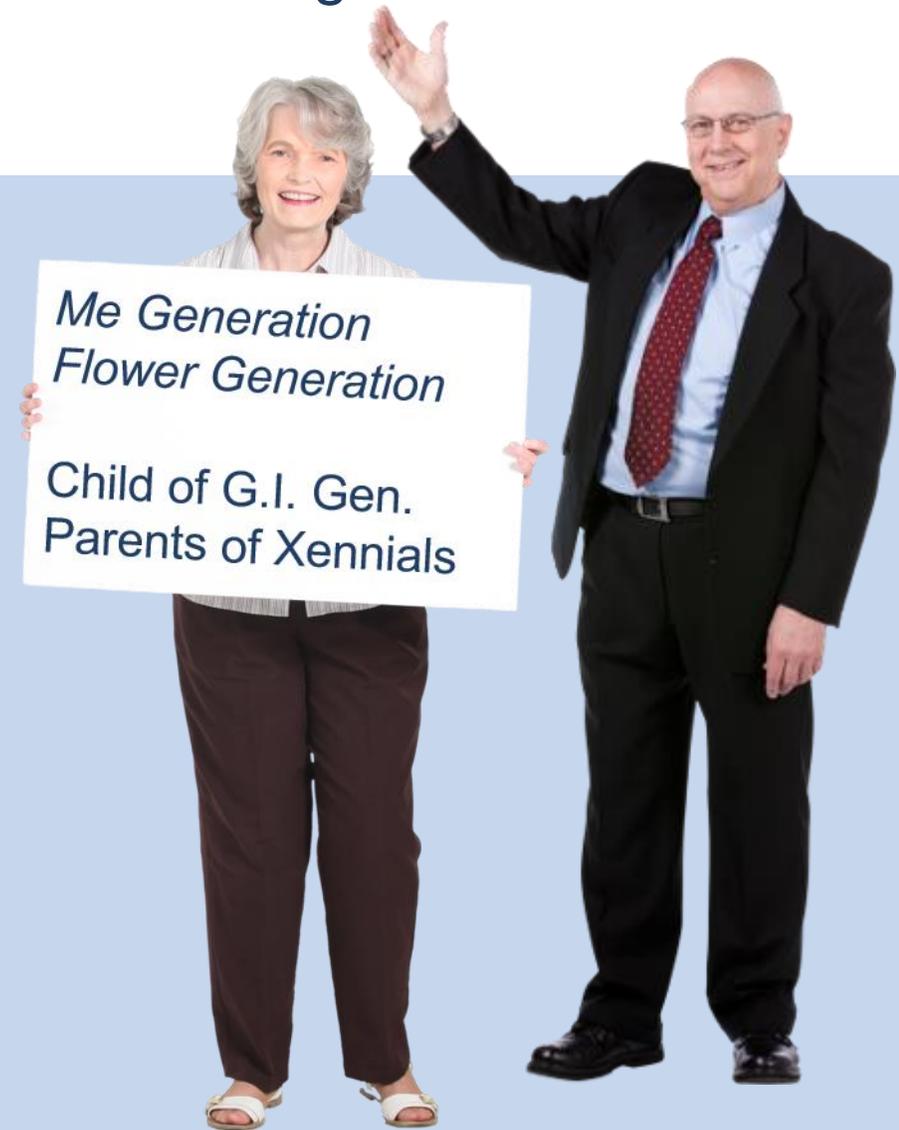
- **Being your authentic self:** What does it mean for a company or brand to be “authentic?” How can your brand support this generation’s desire for authenticity?
- **Importance of racial equality:** How can a company demonstrate its commitment to racial equality in a sincere way?
- **Taking action on social issues:** Important for companies to have a strong social responsibility commitment to attract Gen Z as both consumers and employees. How can you create favorability and preference for your brand through your CSR efforts? Does your company have the kind of reputation you need?
- **Making your brand warm and accessible:** Gen Z wants human interaction and visual experiences. How can your brand leverage platforms like Instagram, Snap and TikTok to allow for creativity, connection, and inclusion?
- **Making technology an integral part of your shopping or product experience:** It’s important for brands to actively look for ways to incorporate technology into the experience. How can you use technology to make the shopping and buying experience easier – in store or online. Is your brand and experience up-to-date?
- **Gen Z and Money:** How can you appeal to the practical and rationale aspects of this generation? This generation was hit hard economically by the pandemic, but have big dreams of financial security.
- **Minimizing the Stress:** “Being easy to work with” may become even more important for this generation. How can your company or brand make both the shopping and customer experience easier? How can your company encourage stress-free work environments?

Appendix

Boomers: Unprecedented improvements in the standards of living

Years born: 1946-1955; Ages: 66-75

- Childhood: “Cult of the Child”, *Brown v Board of Education*
- Adolescence: Societal upheaval – civil rights, political assassinations, Vietnam War, second-wave feminism, political unrest, counterculture
- Early Adulthood: “Cult of the Adult” starts – lowering of voting age, drinking age, college tuition/access, transition of government funds from programs focused on children to programs focused on adults
- Midlife: *We’re #1 – Greed is Good*, end of Cold War; Clinton presidency
- Mature Adulthood: Great Recession (impacts on retirement)
- Elder: COVID-19 (sickness and death)



What sets Boomers apart from all other Generations?

Boomers are a generation that is known to be idealistic and challenges the status quo.



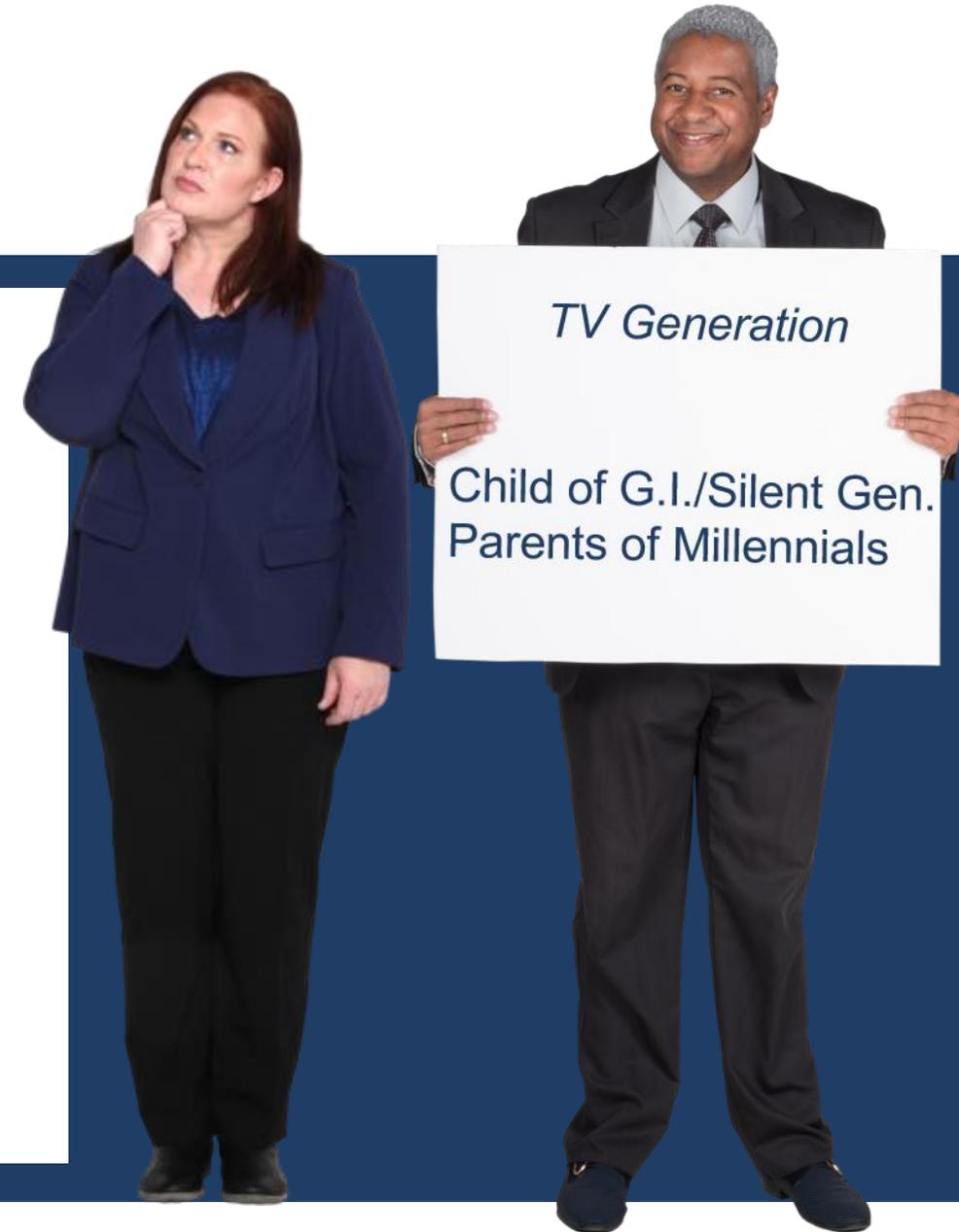
Despite saying the pandemic has impacted their lives more than any other event this century, their lives have not changed much.

- **Introspective consumers** – focused on self-growth
- **Influential and self-assured.** Most influential generation in history – and they believe it! They are not afraid to voice their opinions
- **Ambitious.** Work to live. Though expect everyone to be workaholics so view younger generations as lazy and unmotivated
- **Smart decision-making abilities.** Favor objectivity, logic, as well as reliable analysis while making decisions
- **Relationship focused** – Loyal and team orientated
- **Desire quality** in products
- **Recognition driven.** From the workplace to shopping rewards programs, they expect recognition for their accomplishments
- **Communicate in-person**

Jones: Never lived in a world without televisions

Years born: 1956-1964; Ages: 57-65

- Childhood: Desegregating world; Start of busing
- Adolescence: No compulsory military service, no defining political cause, Backlash to 1960s counterculture
- Early Adulthood: Mass unemployment and de-industrialization along with oil crises, stagflation/inflation, recessions, “Morning in America”
- Midlife: NAFTA impacts; Raise of partisan politics; help children navigate the Great Recession
- Mature Adulthood: COVID-19 – economic impacts as they near retirement



What sets Jones apart from all other Generations?

Jones are a generation that is known to be very competitive and seeking more prosperous days.



Their reaction to the past year is a blend of skepticism overall and acknowledgement that it really hasn't impacted them – at least they haven't changed much.

- **“Jonesing” for level of freedom and affluence granted to Boomers.** Many believe Boomers had an abundance of resources and privileges
- **Optimism to Disillusionment.** Optimistic childhood but Adolescence and Early Adulthood had a different reality – shift from manufacturing to a service economy, mass unemployment, inflation, oil crises
- **We report. You decide.** Want the “facts” and they will decide the truth
- **Long for the good ‘ole days** – remember what life was like before the rise of technology and they long for that simplicity
- **Reconnect to childhood dreams** – they weren't able to live out their lives as desired, but retirement is giving them new opportunities
- **Distrusting** of government and **cynical** voting behavior tracks well with this cohort's support of Donald Trump (political outsider).

Gen X: Society shift from Cult of the Child to Cult of the Adult

Years born: 1965-1975; Ages: 46-56

- Childhood: Education post-integration but urban flight/segregation academies; Shifting societal values – “latchkey kids” (increase in divorce/dual earning households)
- Adolescence: Reagan presidency, Crack epidemic, AIDS crisis
- Early Adulthood: College attendance by both genders; corporate downsizing, accelerated offshoring; Internet and dot-com bubble; entrepreneurial tendencies; 9/11 First Responders
- Midlife: Lack of a “midlife crisis”
- Mature Adulthood: Work-life balance; “Raised for a Pandemic” mentality for COVID-19



What sets Gen X apart from all other Generations?

Gen X is a generation that is cynical, disaffected, yet entrepreneurial and adaptable.



True to form, Gen Xers are most cynical about the future and their station in life.

- **Independent.** Their formative years lacked parental oversight – dual career or single parent households
- **Adaptable.** Accustomed to change in their environment
- **Self-reliant**
- **Skeptical.** Don't understand the optimism of Boomers and Millennials
- **Comfortable with authority.** May not like authority but they can deal with it
- **Entrepreneurial.** Their mistrust of institutions has led to a strong entrepreneurial streak; the original start-ups of the dot com bubble
- **Problem solvers.** They used to using their own skills and know how to overcome challenges
- Value **work-life balance**

Xennial: Born analog but comfortable in the digital world

Years born: 1976-1985; Ages: 36-45

- Childhood: Remember a time before the digital age but most of their schooling included computers and the introduction of the Internet; Expanded opportunities for girls (Title IX)
- Adolescence: U.S. as only global super power; Internet at home; Cell phones
- Early Adulthood: College/entering workforce during Dot com bubble and 9/11; Core military sign-ups for War on Terror; Great Recession disrupts career progression, home ownership, paying back student loans
- Midlife: COVID balancing act – own work and helping younger children navigate school from home, large number of women exiting the workforce



What sets Xennials apart from all other Generations?

Xennials blend the cynicism of Gen X and the optimism and drive of Millennials.



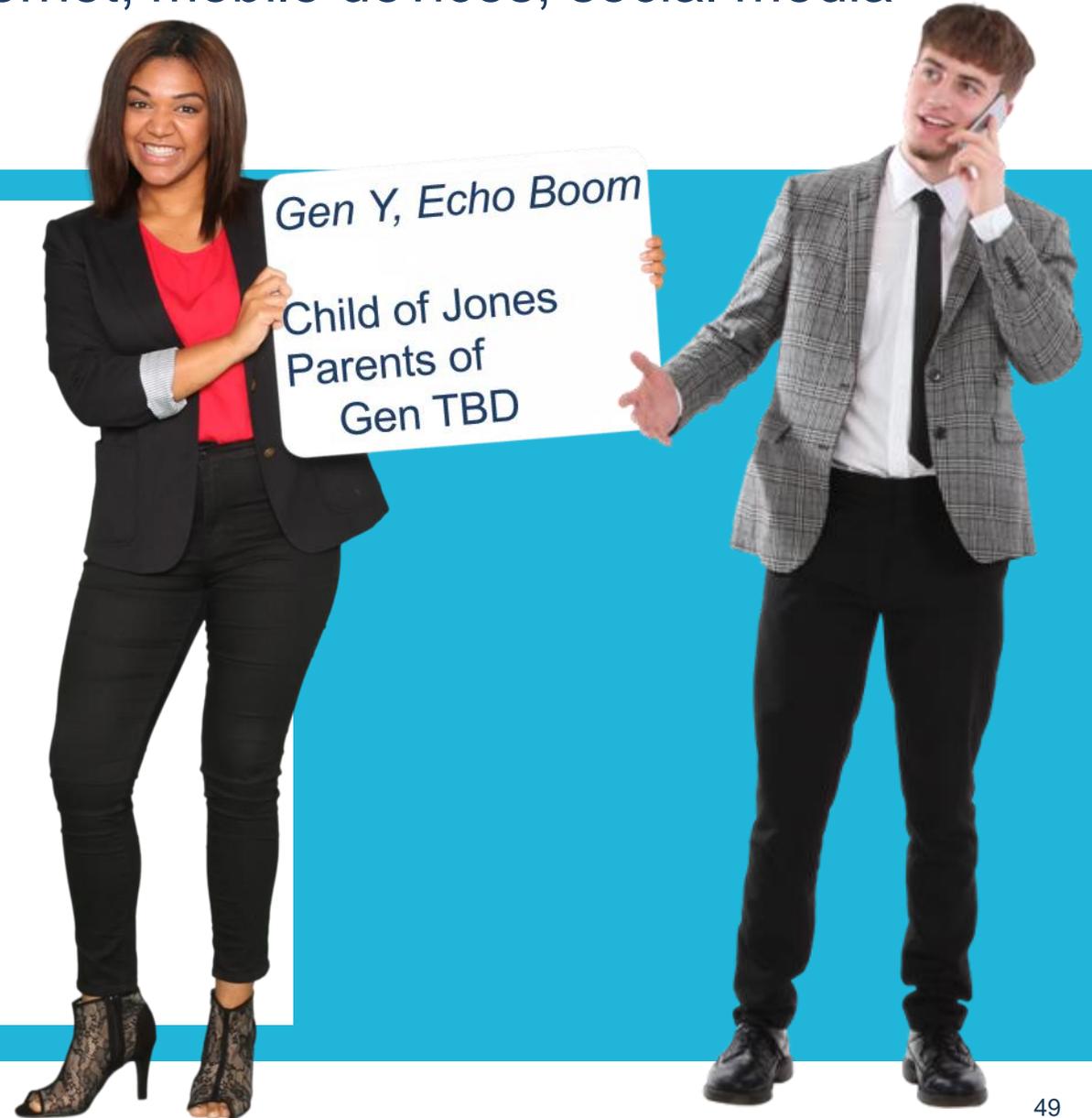
Their Millennial-like optimism is winning out over their Gen X disaffection as it relates to the future. However, COVID-19 has presented unique challenges (child care, exiting workforce, remote school/work).

- **Nimble, agile, and adapt to change.** ‘Bridge’ between analog and digital – have had to change throughout their lives
- Schooling, Friendships, Dating all started in an analog world but transitioned to doing these things digitally
- **Multitask and out of the box thinkers.** Learning new ways to do things throughout their lives has led them to seek out the best option
- **Purpose driven.** Highly educated, resourceful, AND care about feeling connected to the greater mission of orgs and brands
- **Prepared.** High student loan debt, outdated degrees, and the Great Recession, have impacted their views of the working world and how they plan for the future
- Value **job fulfillment and career satisfaction.** Self-care and flexible work schedules are highly valued

Millennial: First digital natives – use of Internet, mobile devices, social media

Years born: 1986-1996; Ages: 25-35

- Childhood: Plethora of Choice –TV, Internet, Gaming
- Adolescence: Social media and mobile revolution; parents/teachers not the authority but rather the Internet; school shootings
- Early Adulthood:
 - College debt
 - High levels of unemployment during Great Recession and COVID-19
 - Lack of work benefits
 - Low marriage and home ownership rates



What sets Millennials apart from all other Generations?

Millennials are a generation that is known to do things their own way.



Despite the stereotype of being overly optimistic, the now Early Adult Millennials are showing signs of being skeptical of the future and their station in life.

- **Hyper-connected consumers** – on-the-go and always-on; technology has enabled them to be connected at all times and everywhere
- **Eager to share.** Expect a stage on which their voice can be heard – they expect brands that they purchase from to put them first and get satisfaction knowing their opinion matters
- **Do a little bit of everything.** Encouraged to be whatever they want and try everything
- **Family first** – but how family is defined is based on the individual
- **Girl Power!** Girls out performing boys – college admissions, college graduates, advanced degrees
- **Prefer experiences** over products
- **Resist authority.** Respond poorly to those who act in an authoritarian manner
- **Communicate with video and images** over words