

STEPPING UP FOR GEN Z

As the school year begins,
Gen Z faces especially
tough circumstances in
the continuing pandemic

An Ipsos Point of View

Authors: Ella Farrell, Andrea Greaves, and Karin O'Neill



GAME CHANGERS





KEY TAKEAWAYS:

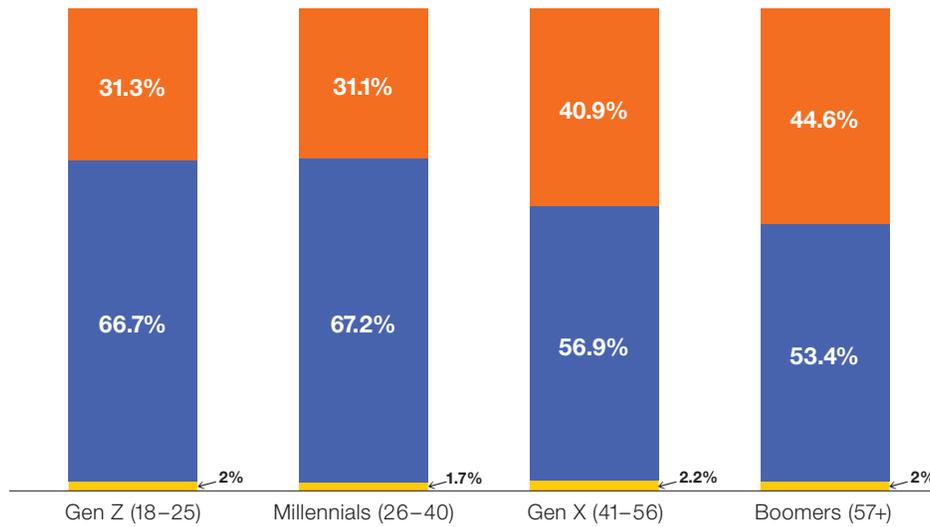
- Gen Z is passionate about changing the world for the better.
- The pandemic hit Gen Z harder because of their stage of development.
- Even with Delta creating new uncertainty, brands can help Gen Z achieve their goals.

Generation Z—roughly tweens to age 25 today—is unlike any other generation before them. Even before the pandemic, Gen Z’s unique characteristics were becoming clear—they have grown up with technology and use it to connect with others in novel ways. They are global, diverse and passionate about inclusivity. They are allies and support people not for show, but to bring value to everyone’s identity. They have a desire to do the right thing, and unlike other generations, they are not tired of trying.



People think we are overly sensitive. We mainly just want to respect people.”
 —Ipsos Gen Z panelist

Gen Z and Millennials are more likely than older generations to believe our country has work to do on equal rights for Black Americans



- Our country has made the changes needed to give Black Americans equal rights with white Americans
- Our country needs to continue making changes to give Black Americans equal rights with white Americans

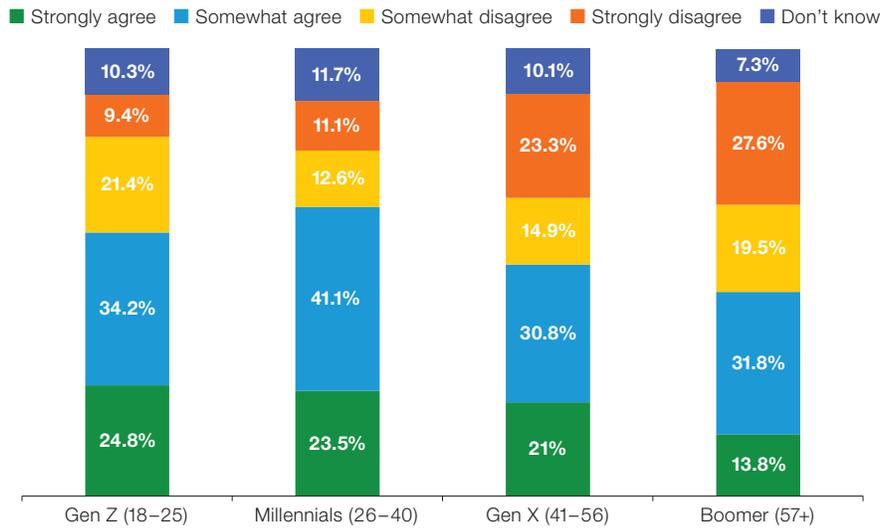


Gen Z and brands

Gen Z looks for brands that are supporting the issues that are most pressing, including sustainability and fair pay. Gen Z wants to spend their money and support brands that treat their customers and employees with respect. They pay attention to brand causes and if their mission statements align with their personal beliefs. With so much information available, Gen Z sees the B.S. and doesn't entertain it.

We like brands that are no B.S., brands with their ingredients with their working conditions and pay and also donating to causes that we agree with is really important too.”
 — Ipsos Gen Z panelist

Like Millennials, Gen Z is more likely to believe companies should take a stand



However, unlike other generations, Gen Z faces extraordinary circumstances during the pandemic, and companies must respond differently to this generation. The way that Gen Z has responded to

COVID has lessons for everyone trying to understand them and their future—including brands that are trying to reach them.

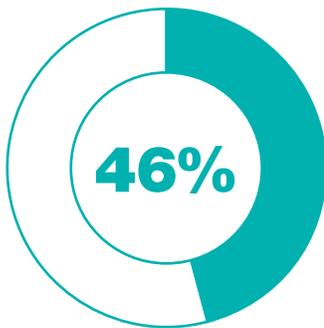


The COVID generation

Every generation goes through monumental events that change the way they develop and interact with each other. While all generations have been impacted by the pandemic in different ways, the effect on Gen Z is disproportionate because they are in a crucial stage of development.

Gen Z was knocked off course by the pandemic. Schools shut down, unemployment hit those who were working, and they were isolated at a developmental stage where their focus was shifting from home to peer relationships and independence. Uncertainty reigned; mental health diagnoses soared.

Moving beyond COVID is Not so Easy



Noticed a new or worsening mental health condition in their teens, higher among girls

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health 2021, among parents of teens, conducted by Ipsos.

Even before the pandemic, Gen Z believed there was a lot to fix: climate change, racial injustice, inequality, and so much more. The burden was heavy on Gen Z, many of whom still wanted to make change as the world was shutting down around them.

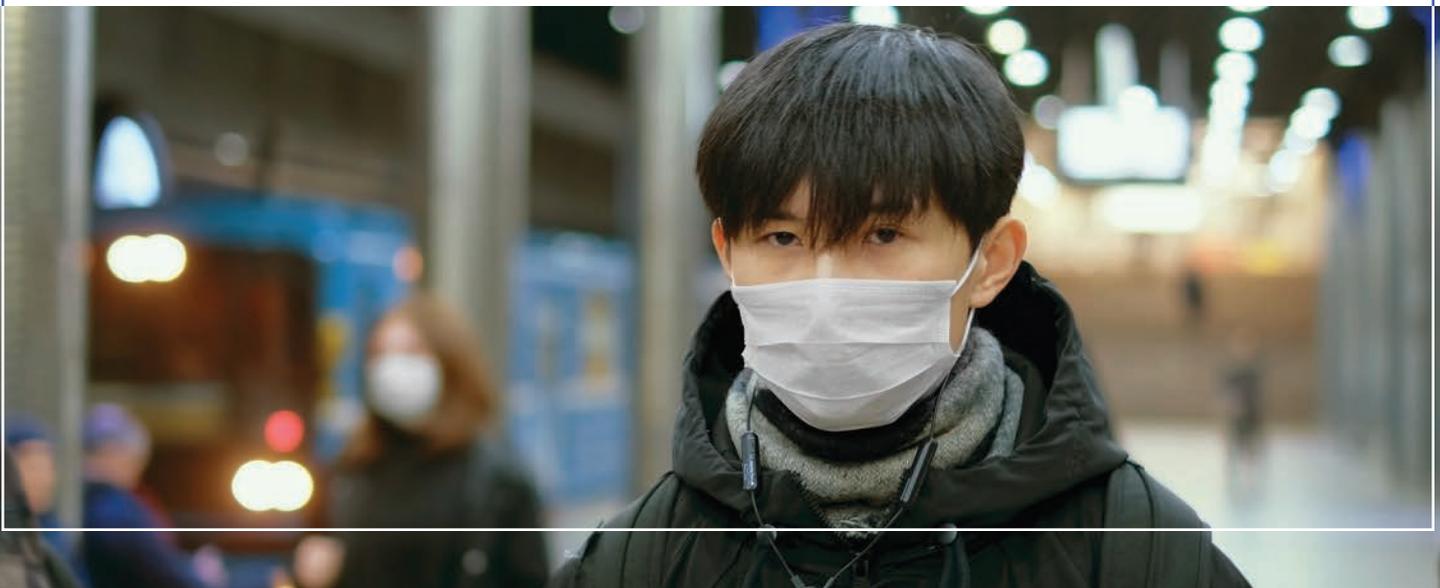
 *The transition to online school just didn't work for me. I took a year off. I had to start getting anxiety medication and it was pretty rough."*

—Ipsos Gen Z panelist

Gen Z was forced into online classrooms and out of extracurriculars to make sure they stayed safe. They were drawn to what they know best—screens. Online games and viral videos gave them more ways to connect. While it provided needed connection, the retreat into screens may mean that in-person skills, like reading facial expressions and body language, have atrophied. Yet they are still hopeful as they look forward to live concerts, sitting in libraries and laughing together again.

 *I'm really excited for concerts to start back up. I didn't even realize that was something that I actively ached for. I miss it so much."*

—Ipsos Gen Z panelist



What are the implications for brands?

Brands have a unique opportunity to connect with and support Gen Z during this latest COVID limbo. Here's how.

- 1. Consider what's important to them and stand for something, authentically.** Many issues are important to Gen Z, from sustainability to fair treatment, diversity, equity, and inclusion, mental health, COVID-19, and more. But while Gen Zers want brands to take a stand, they quickly sense shallow efforts.
- 2. Reflect their world in brand communications.** Gen Zers expect to see a global view including diversity, intersectionality and individuality.
- 3. Meet their re-entry needs.** Emerging from pandemic isolation, Gen Zers have a strong need to rebuild connections, as well as address their mental and physical health needs. Consider how your brand can help with or be sensitive to these concerns. While it's tempting for brands to "skip" COVID-19, it's not a genuine way to connect with Gen Zers who were tremendously impacted.

Ultimately, brands should empower Gen Z to re-enter and change the world. While many have been dealt a blow by COVID-19, it has only strengthened their resolve to make an impact.

Authors:

Ella Farrell

Intern, U.S. Qualitative, Ipsos
ella.farrell@ipsos.com

Karin O'Neill

SVP, U.S. Qualitative, Ipsos
karin.oneill@ipsos.com

Andrea Greaves

Qualitative research strategist, Ipsos
andrea.greaves@ipsos.com

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