

What really matters to younger workers?

Deloitte has recently published the results of its Global 2024 Gen Z and Millennial survey. Over 22,800 respondents from 44 countries participated in the survey, which aimed to uncover their attitudes to work and the wider world. In this briefing, we distil the key points of interest for employers and consider what really matters to younger workers.

Stereotypes of Gen Z and Millennial workers (those born between 1995-2005 and 1983-1994 respectively) tend to present them as demanding, entitled, disengaged, lacking in loyalty and obsessed with technology. Like most stereotypes, these labels are unfair and are likely to lead to unjustified negative views of younger workers. Deloitte's Global 2024 Gen Z and Millennial survey seeks to cut through the labels, by using data to find out what actually motivates workers from these generations.

The survey made six key findings, which will be of interest to all employers of Gen Z workers and Millennials.

- **Work/life balance is the top priority:** work/life balance topped the list of priorities for when choosing a new job role. Conversely, poor work/life balance or feelings of burnout were commonly cited reasons for leaving a job. Two thirds of respondents had been mandated to return to office working post-pandemic. There were

mixed feelings about this. On the plus side, respondents liked the improved engagement, connection, collaboration and routine. Yet others reported increased stress levels, a drop in productivity and a negative financial impact. Overall, these workers prized flexibility in both where and when they worked and wanted employers to offer part-time working opportunities and four-day working weeks. Last year, a pilot scheme in the UK trialled a four-day working week – you can read more about this in our article [here](#). More recently, UK flexible working laws have been overhauled to improve access to flexible working – you can read more about the reforms in our article [here](#).

- **The cost of living is a major concern:** although just under half of respondents expected their personal finances to improve within the next year, financial insecurity was still a major concern for many. Around a third reported feeling financial insecure and over half were living from pay day to pay day. The cost of living remained the top concern for these workers, ahead of other concerns such as unemployment, climate change, mental health and crime. In our recent article, we explored ways that employers support workers facing financial difficulties – you can read that article [here](#). These concerns were exacerbated by social and political uncertainty, particularly in countries (including the UK) facing elections over the next year.

- **Stress and mental health at work needs to be managed properly:** only around half rated their mental health as either good or very good, and stress levels remain high. Around 40% reported feeling stressed all or most of the time. Financial and family matters are major stressors, as are job-related factors such as long working hours, lack of recognition, overwork and not feeling decisions are made in a fair or equitable way. Although many reported that their employers took mental health at work seriously, only around 40% said they would feel comfortable discussing mental health with their manager or would be confident that the manager would know how to respond if they did raise it. Concerningly, around 30% said they feared their manager would discriminate against them if they raised concerns about mental health. Acas has recently published guidance on making adjustments for mental health, with specific guidance aimed at managers – you can read more about the guidance in our article [here](#).

- **Purpose and values at work are important:** the vast majority of respondents (almost 90%) say having a sense of purpose is important to their overall job satisfaction and wellbeing. So much so, that around 40% of these workers had rejected roles with prospective employers who did not align with their values or beliefs on issues such as the environment, inclusivity and work/life balance. Others reported turning down specific tasks or projects with their current employer for the same reason – although around a fifth said they were not listened to and made to complete the task anyway, while others reported that detrimental treatment

followed. Emphasis was also placed on an employer's purpose beyond making profit, with three-quarters of respondents reporting that societal impact was an important factor when considering a future role. Respondents wanted businesses to champion protection of the environment, ensure that Generative AI was used ethically, and influence social equality, for example by creating inclusive employment opportunities.

- **Environmental sustainability affects career decisions:** in keeping with the focus on purpose and values, respondents also reported environmental sustainability as a top concern. Around 60% reported feeling worried or anxious about the environment in the past month. This group want employers to take more action to protect the environment and make sustainable choices. The actions that these workers wanted employers to take included educating staff about sustainability, renovating the workplace to become greener and committing to net-zero greenhouse emissions in the next decade. Again, workers in these groups were prepared to choose job roles which aligned with these values, with 20% saying they had changed jobs for this reason, and another 25% reporting that they intended to do so in the future. And around 70% said environmental credentials and policies were important when assessing a potential employer.

- **There are mixed feelings about the rise of Generative AI in the workplace:** only around a quarter of respondents use Generative AI all or most of the time at work, the remainder used it rarely or not at all. Less frequent or non-users were more likely to feel uncertainty about such tools, with women being more uncertain than men. In contrast, frequent users were more likely to feel trust and excitement about such tools, believing that they will free up time, improve work/life balance and enhance the way they work. However, such users also had concerns that Generative AI drive automation would eliminate jobs and make it harder for young people to progress in their careers. In response, some are focusing on reskilling and/or applying for roles that are less vulnerable to automation. Overall, only half of respondents felt their employer was providing sufficient training on the capabilities, benefits and value of Generative AI.

You can read the full results of the survey [here](#).

BDBF is a law firm based at Bank in the City of London specialising in employment law. If you would like to discuss any issues relating to the content of this article, please contact Principal Knowledge Lawyer Amanda Steadman (amandasteadman@bdbf.co.uk) or your usual BDBF contact.