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Deloitte Global  
Chief People & Purpose Officer

When Deloitte started this research 15 years ago as “The Voice of Millennials”, millennials were entering the workforce in large numbers and challenging longstanding assumptions about work and the employer-employee relationship.

Over the past 15 years, Gen Zs and millennials have changed work in tangible ways. But while expectations have shifted and norms have evolved, some structural realities have been slower to follow. These generations came of age during a period marked by repeated disruption. Those conditions did more than shape attitudes; they altered timelines.

Despite external pressures, many Gen Zs and millennials are maintaining a positive outlook. Both generations are more optimistic about their personal financial futures than about the broader economy. These generations want to build durable foundations before making life-defining moves. They are seeking stability before committing to major decisions. And their ambition is tempered by a demand for a manageable workload, clear support, and achievable pathways to success.

It is my hope that organizations will use these important insights to help create workplaces that can keep up with the pace of evolving needs, priorities, and expectations, and enable people, across generations, to thrive on their own terms.



**Carol Zheng**  
Deloitte China  
Chief People & Purpose Officer

It is encouraging to see from this year’s survey that Gen Zs and Millennials are taking a more proactive approach to enhancing their capabilities and leveraging AI to cope with workplace pressures, while overall mental well-being has shown signs of improvement.

At the same time, Gen Zs and Millennials have not lowered their expectations for growth and success; rather, they are redefining what success means. Compared with simply pursuing fast-paced career progression, they are placing greater emphasis on the sustainability and stability of growth, as well as the emotional benefits brought by legacy transfer and work friendship.

In an era marked by constant change and uncertainty, people’s expectations of career development are evolving. They are not only focused on career opportunities but are also paying closer attention to whether organizations can provide clear development direction, continuous learning opportunities, and the support systems needed for long-term growth. This closely aligns with Deloitte China’s talent philosophy. We firmly believe that true talent competitiveness comes from the ability to continuously learn, the resilience to embrace change, and the opportunity to grow alongside the organization.

Looking ahead, we will continue to cultivate an open, diverse, and future-oriented talent ecosystem, helping every individual grow through change and create long-term value through growth.

# Executive summary



Now in its 15th year, the survey connected with 22,595 Gen Z and millennial respondents across 44 countries and regions to explore their perspectives, experiences, and career ambitions. As Gen Zs and millennials move deeper into adulthood and leadership, they are reshaping how progress at work is defined. The results reveal that these generations are seeking progress on their own terms, prioritizing stability, skills, and well-being over fast-paced growth.

**1 Financial pressure is shaping both personal and professional decisions**  
Cost of living is the top concern for Gen Zs and millennials. Financial strain has become a defining feature of how these generations work, live, and plan for the future.

**2 Leadership ambitions are conditional as many consider the tradeoffs**  
Consistent with last year's findings, only 6% of Gen Zs and millennials say achieving a leadership position is their primary career goal.

**3 Adaptability is now a core career capability**  
Gen Zs and millennials are responding to rapid workplace change by prioritizing skills development, continuous learning, and innovative tools such as AI.

**4 AI adoption is accelerating faster than organizational readiness**  
Nearly three-quarters of Gen Zs and millennials report using AI to some extent in their day-to-day work. Despite widespread use, many respondents feel their organizations are not prepared.

**5 Mental health is improving, but stress remains embedded in everyday work**  
Overall mental health is trending upward. Stress, however, remains a baseline experience. The proliferation of digital tools and platforms adds to this strain.

**6 Purpose and connection define the ideal workplace and influence retention**  
Nearly all respondents say that having a sense of purpose at work is vital to their overall job satisfaction and well-being, with social connection also playing a key role.

**7 As a major generational transition approaches, preserving knowledge is critical**  
As large numbers of baby-boomer and older Generation X workers approach retirement, organizations face growing risk around knowledge continuity.

- This 15th anniversary report tells a coming-of-age story not of delay, but of discernment. Gen Zs and millennials are adapting to a world that has demanded resilience early and often. How they navigate uncertainty will help set the norms Gen Alphas encounter as they begin entering the workforce in a few years.
- This underscores a broader reality: What generations need, want, and expect from work will and should continue to evolve. Meeting that reality requires dynamic models that are constantly adapting to enable people, across all generations, to thrive on their own terms.

For profile of Chinese Mainland respondents, see Methodology on Slide 13.

# 1

## The 'Maybe Later' Reality: Financial Pressure and Delayed Decisions

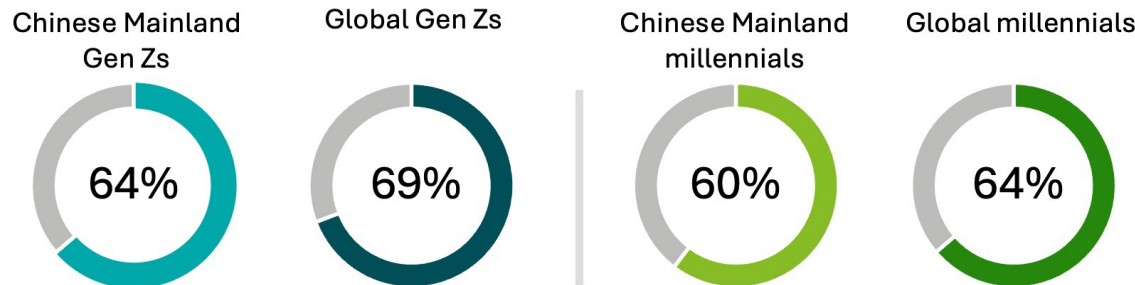
- Cost of living, health care, and income inequality are top concerns for Gen Zs and millennials in Chinese Mainland, unemployment is also a particular concern for Gen Z.
- Financial strain is present but less severe than global levels, particularly among millennials.

46% of Gen Zs and 35% of millennials in Chinese Mainland say they have delayed major life decisions due to their financial situation.

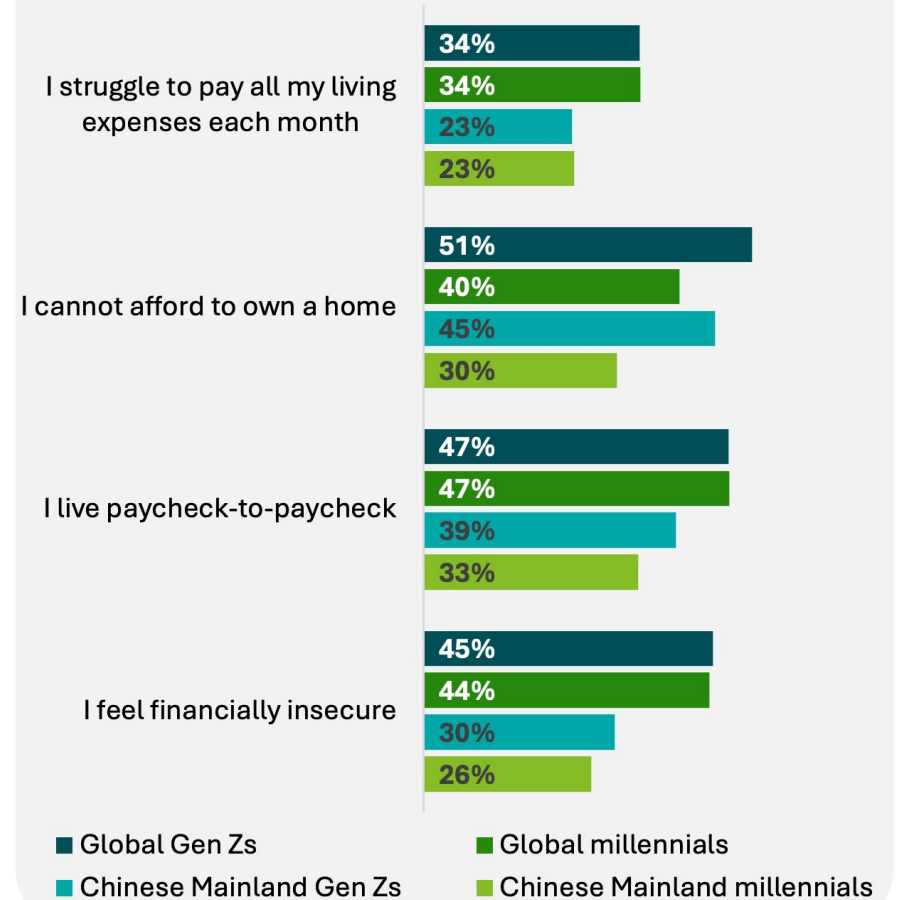
### Top Concerns

	Cost of living	Unemployment	Health care / disease prevention	Income inequality / distribution of wealth	Cybersecurity / protection of personal data
<b>Chinese Mainland Gen Zs</b>	35%	26%	22%	21%	19%
	Cost of living	Health care / disease prevention	Income inequality / distribution of wealth	Economic growth	Education, skills, and training
<b>Chinese Mainland millennials</b>	41%	31%	22%	19%	18%

### Percentage who say that the affordability of housing impacts their career decisions



### Financial Stability



# 2

## Leadership, Reconsidered

- The top goal for Gen Zs in Chinese Mainland is achieving financial independence, followed by job stability and security.
- While job stability is also important for millennials, their top goal is maintaining work/life balance.



*While 86% of Gen Zs and 83% of millennials in Chinese Mainland are interested in pursuing leadership roles at some point in their careers, only 5% of Gen Zs and 3% of millennials say it is their primary career goal.*

### Primary career goal

	Achieving financial independence	Achieving job stability and security	Continuous learning and development	Maintaining a good work / life balance	Contributing to societal or environmental causes
<b>Chinese Mainland Gen Zs</b>	26%	18%	14%	11%	6%
	Maintaining a good work / life balance	Achieving job stability and security	Achieving financial independence	Continuous learning and development	Making a creative or innovative impact
<b>Chinese Mainland millennials</b>	25%	24%	17%	10%	8%

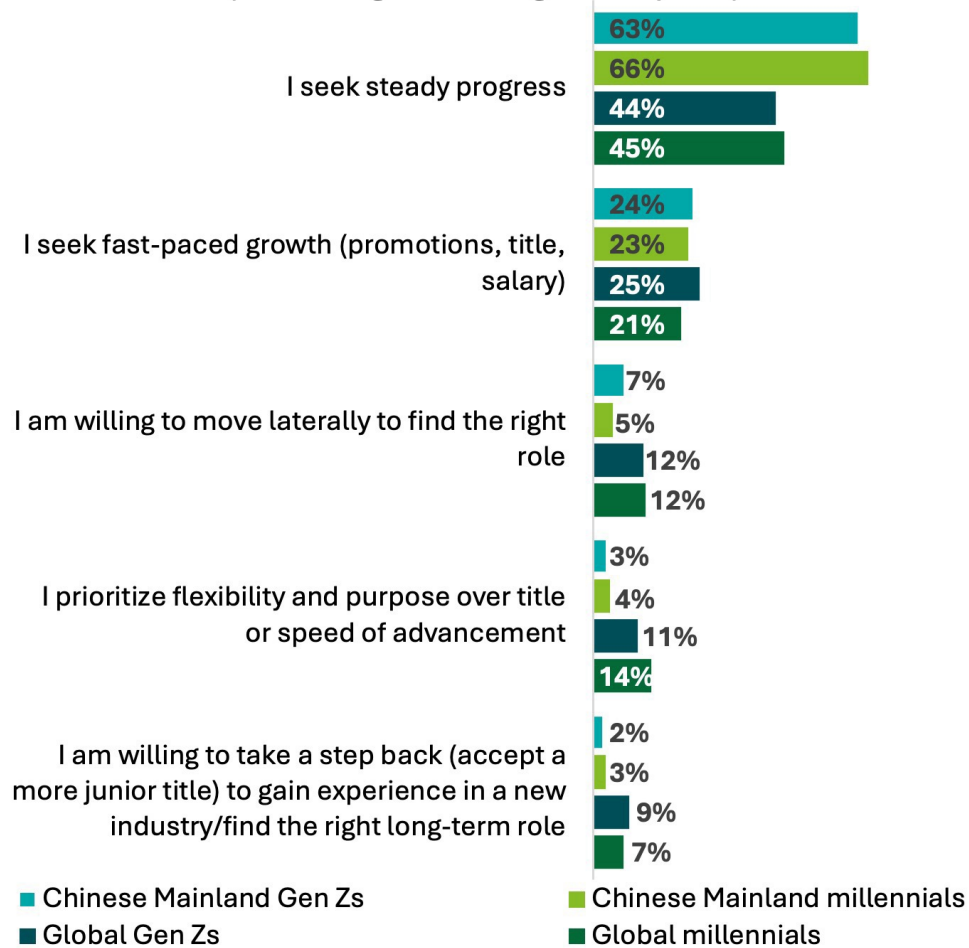
# 2

## Leadership, Reconsidered - continued

- Gen Zs and millennials in Chinese Mainland prefer steady career progression more than their global counterparts.
- While it may not be cited as a primary career goal, the vast majority are interested in pursuing leadership positions; higher compensation is a top driver of interest in pursuing these roles.

45% of Gen Zs and 61% of millennials globally, and 38% of Gen Zs and 73% of millennials in Chinese Mainland manage or supervise teams or are executives leading organizations.

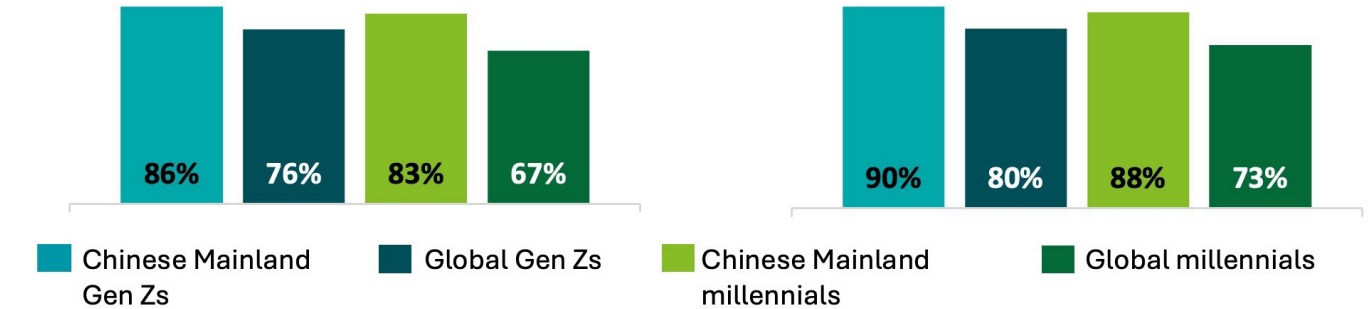
### How respondents think about their career path (Percentage selecting each option)



### Percentage of respondents who agree they are interested in pursuing leadership roles

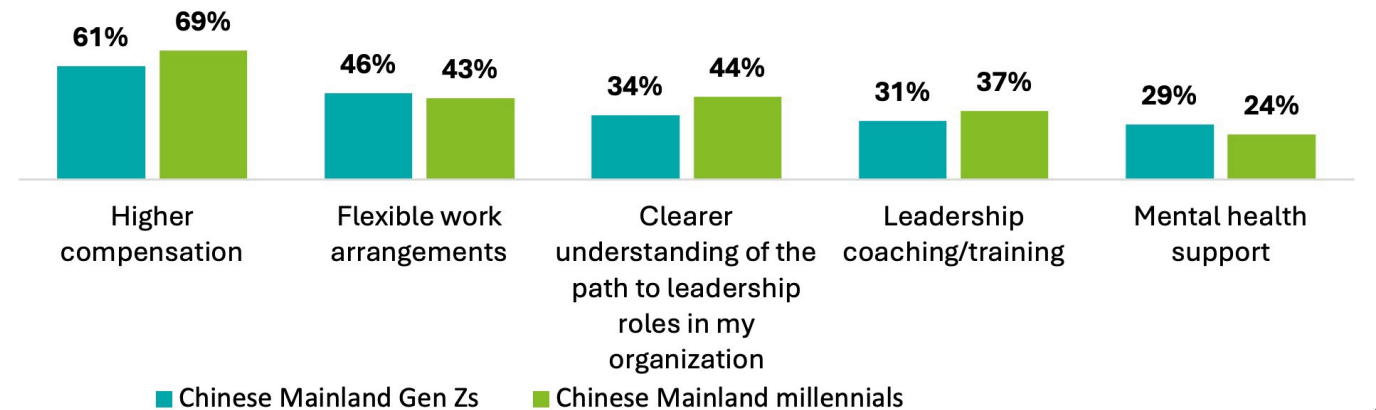
Interested in pursuing a senior leadership position (e.g., C-suite, board, or other executive position)

Interested in pursuing a supervisory or management role



### Top five factors that would increase interest in leadership roles

\*asked of Gen Zs and millennials in Chinese Mainland who say they are not interested in pursuing a leadership role



# 3

## Continuous Learning and Adaptability as a Career Strategy

- Both generations identify work ethic as a top current skill; adaptability and collaboration are also mentioned.
- Confidence in AI use at work is higher in Chinese Mainland vs. global benchmarks – however, additional AI training as technology evolves is still in high demand.

### Current and future skills

Percentage rating their skills as advanced in these areas (top 5)

	Work ethic	Adaptability	Creativity	Collaboration / teamwork	Empathy / emotional intelligence
Chinese Mainland Gen Zs	34%	33%	29%	29%	29%

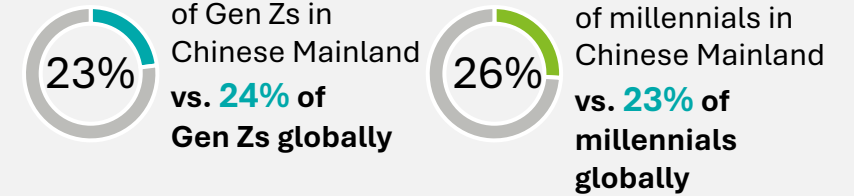
	Work ethic	Collaboration / teamwork	Communication skills	Adaptability	Project management
Chinese Mainland millennials	47%	44%	42%	41%	39%

### Percentage interested in developing this skill further (top 5)

	Creativity	Leadership / setting vision / decision making	Communication skills	Data analysis / interpretation	AI / automation tool fluency
Chinese Mainland Gen Zs	36%	36%	36%	36%	36%

	AI / automation tool fluency	Leadership / setting vision / decision making	Digital literacy / IT skills	Communication skills	Creativity
Chinese Mainland millennials	51%	43%	41%	41%	41%

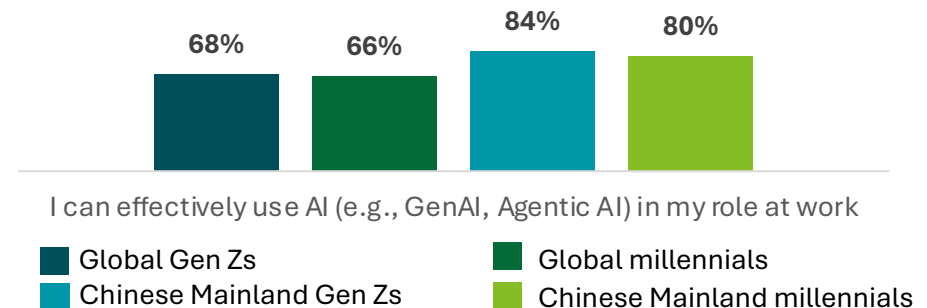
### Percentage of respondents saying they have completed AI training



### Percentage of respondents saying they continue to seek new AI training opportunities as the technology evolves



### Percentage of respondents who are confident/very confident they can use AI in their roles at work



# 4

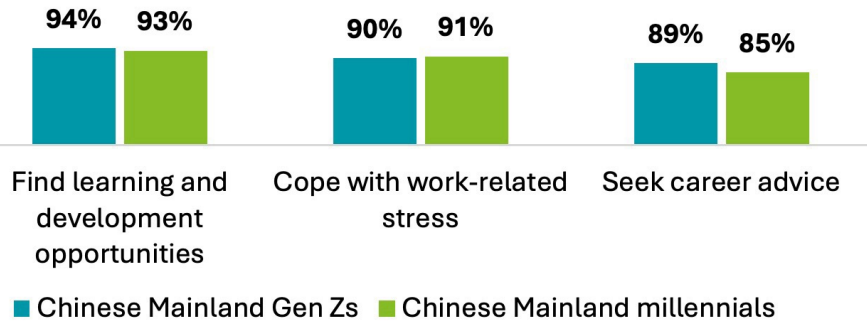
## AI, Adaptability, and the Readiness Gap

- AI is seen as positively impacting both work and personal life and around half of Gen Zs and millennials in Chinese Mainland feel that AI tools provided at work are sufficient.
- For Chinese Mainland Gen Zs and millennials, barriers to AI use at work include fit, AI capabilities, and integration with other systems.

92% of Gen Zs and 92% of millennials in Chinese Mainland use AI in their day-to-day work.

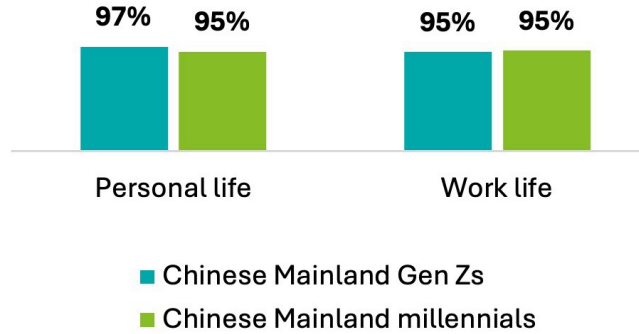
### How respondents use AI for growth/well-being

Percentage saying agree/strongly agree



### Those who say AI positively impacts their...

Percentage saying very/somewhat positive

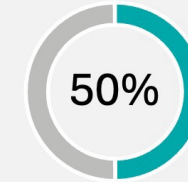


### Top five barriers to AI use at work

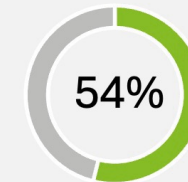
Percentage selecting each option

	AI tools don't address specific needs of my role	AI tools available lack creative capabilities	Compliance requirements limit use	AI tools are not well integrated with other systems or workflows	Lack of knowledge and experience
Chinese Mainland Gen Zs	29%	26%	25%	24%	23%
	AI tools available lack creative capabilities	AI tools don't address specific needs of my role	AI tools are not well integrated with other systems or workflows	Lack of effective training opportunities	Lack of knowledge and experience
Chinese Mainland millennials	33%	24%	24%	23%	22%

### Percentage of respondents who rate the AI tools provided by their employer are mostly/completely sufficient



of Gen Zs in Chinese Mainland vs. **38%** of Gen Zs globally



of millennials in Chinese Mainland vs. **40%** of millennials globally

# 5

## Well-Being as Infrastructure

- Over three-quarters say their mental health is good despite stressors such as financial and family concerns.
- Year-over-year, there has been a decrease in the percentage of Gen Zs and millennials in Chinese Mainland saying employers take employee mental health seriously.

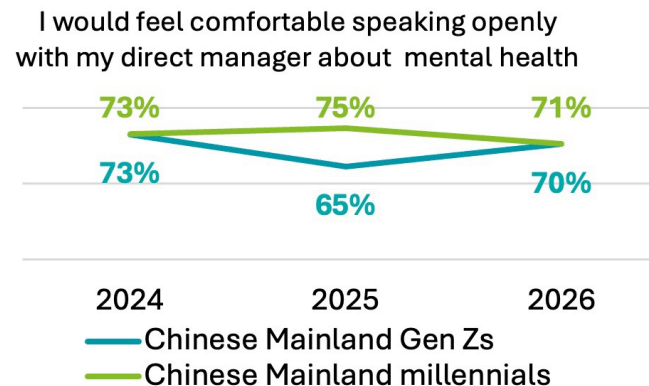
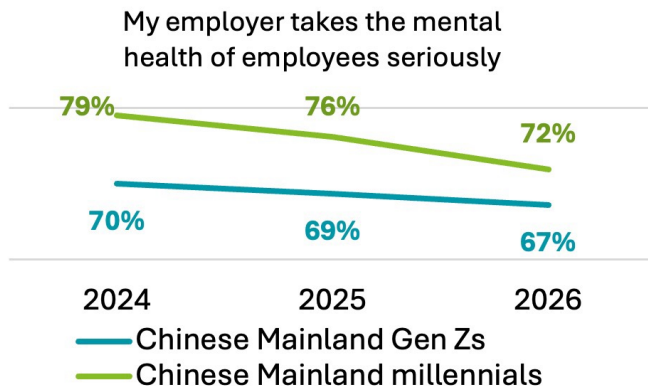
17% of Gen Zs and 20% of millennials in Chinese Mainland say **they feel stressed all or most of the time.**

### Top five factors contributing a lot to anxiety/stress in Chinese Mainland

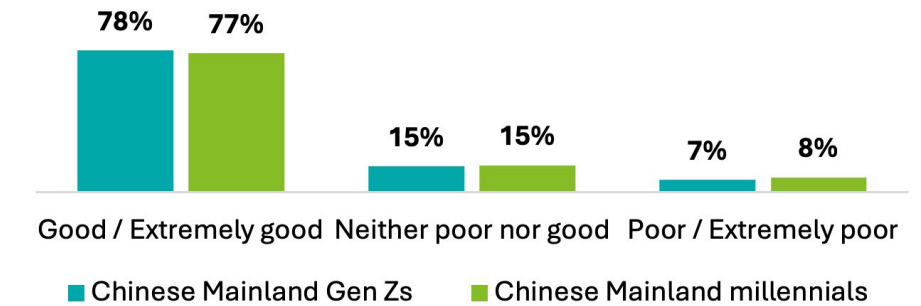
\*asked only of those who feel anxious or stressed

	My longer-term financial future	The health / welfare of my family	Family / personal relationships	Domestic or caregiving responsibilities	My job
Chinese Mainland Gen Zs	24%	23%	22%	21%	20%
	My longer-term financial future	The health / welfare of my family	My day-to-day finances	My job	Domestic or caregiving responsibilities
Chinese Mainland millennials	25%	24%	24%	21%	17%

### Percentage who agree/strongly agree with the following statements about mental health in the workplace

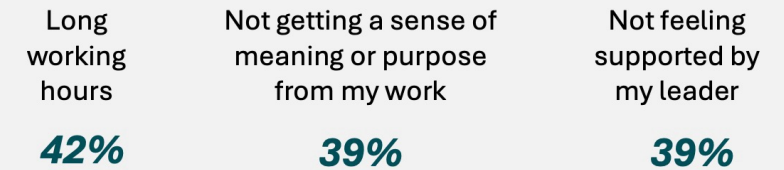


### How respondents rate their overall mental well-being

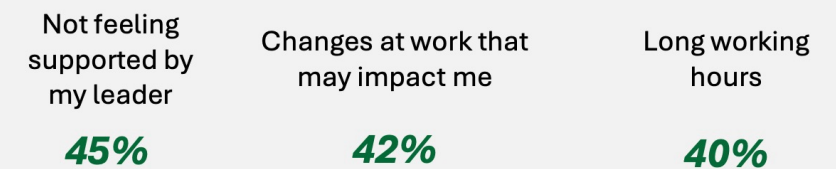


### Top three aspects of job contributing to anxiety/stress

#### Chinese Mainland Gen Zs



#### Chinese Mainland millennials



# 6

## The Ideal Workplace: Where Purpose and Connection Converge

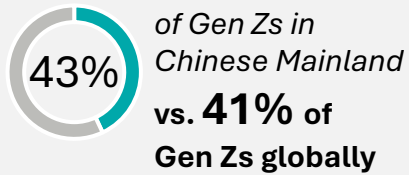
- While purpose is universally important, only 56% of Gen Zs and 66% of millennials in Chinese Mainland indicate their current job aligns with their values.
- Gen Zs in Chinese Mainland are less likely to believe in their ability to drive change at work compared to millennials.



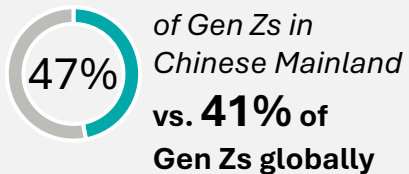
100% of Gen Zs and 99% of millennials in Chinese Mainland say *having a sense of purpose is important for their job satisfaction.*

### Percentage of respondents who rejected an assignment/potential employer due to personal beliefs

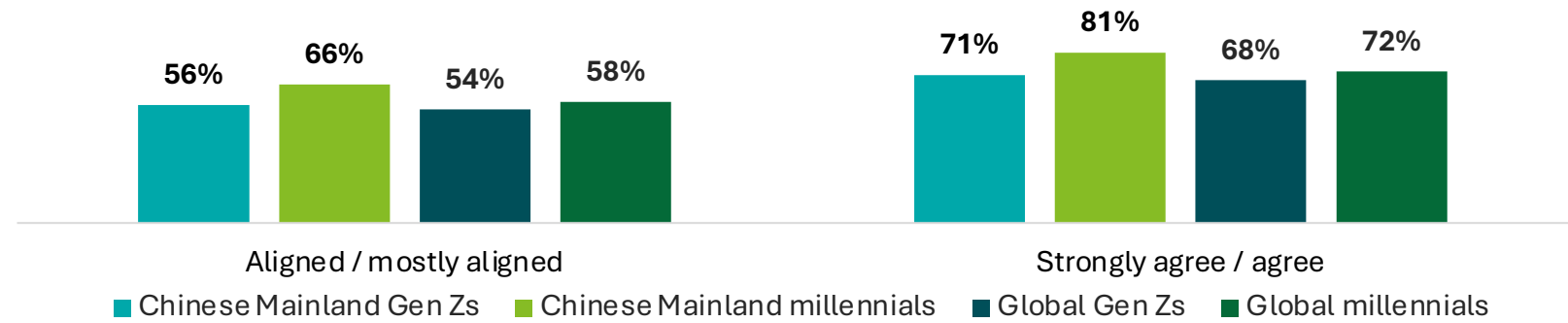
Potential employer



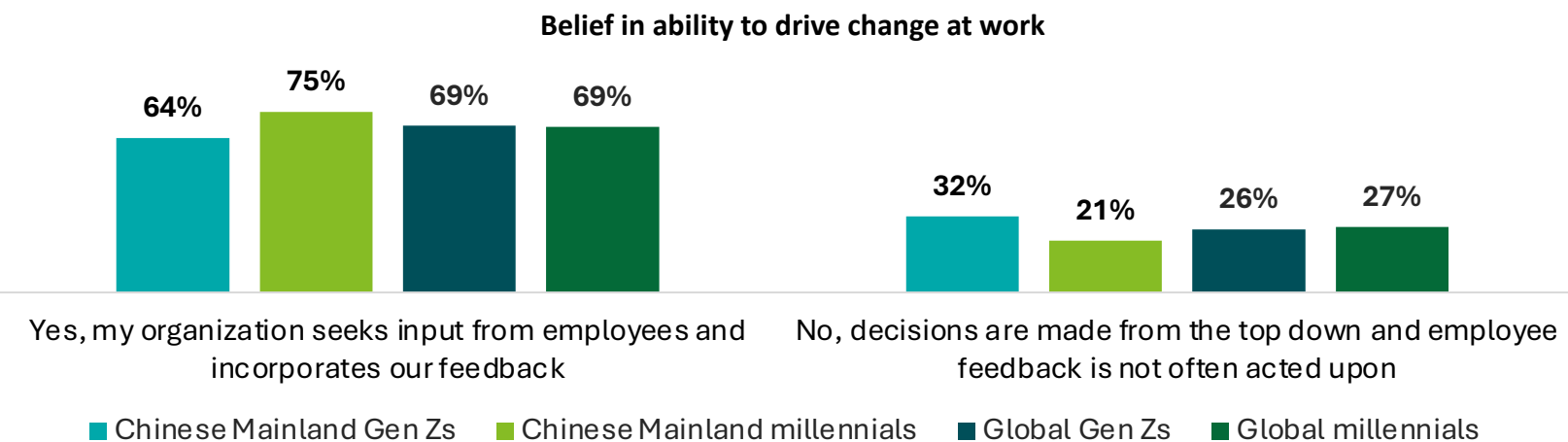
Assignment/project



### Percentage who say their current job aligns with their beliefs/values



### Percentage who say their current job allows them to make a meaningful contribution to society

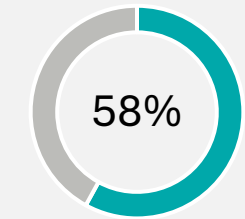


# 6

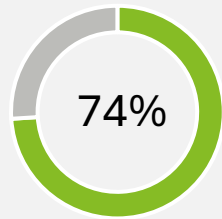
## The Ideal Workplace: Where Purpose and Connection Converge - continued

- Work friendships are common in Chinese Mainland, particularly among millennials who are also more likely to participate in engagement behaviors (networking, mentoring, coaching).
- Those who have a personal friend at work are more likely to report high levels of happiness.

### Percentage of respondents in Chinese Mainland who say they have **work colleagues** that they **consider personal friends**.



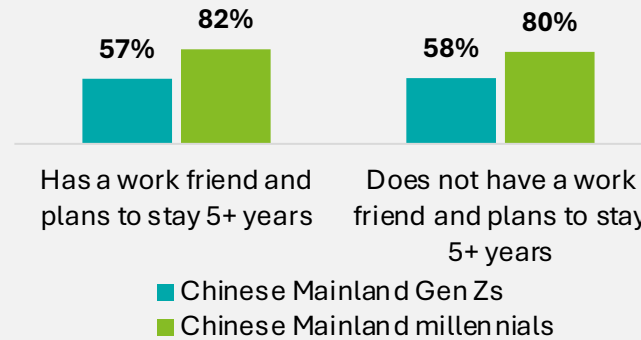
Chinese Mainland Gen Zs



Chinese Mainland millennials

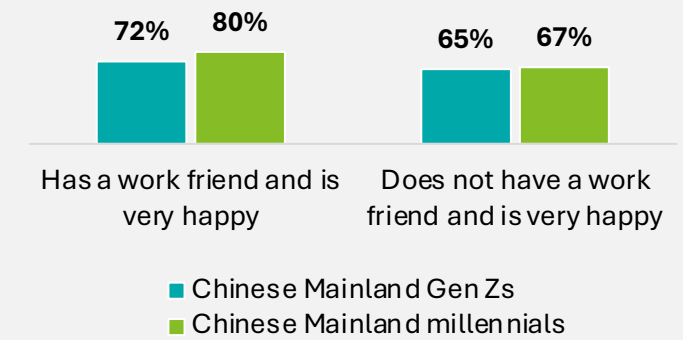
### How work friendships correlate with planned work tenure

Percentage who plan to stay more than 5 years

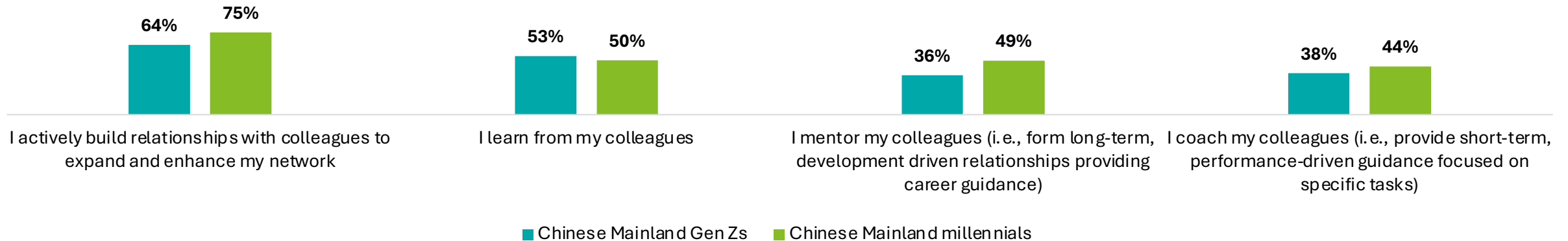


### How work friendships correlate with happiness

Percentage who are very happy with their life



### Engagement with work colleagues (percentage selecting each option)



# 7

## The Future They're Preparing For

- While the majority feel performance could be sustained after the loss of a key expert, challenges for effective knowledge transfer are still acknowledged – primarily lack of incentives/recognition.



62% of Gen Zs and 65% of millennials in Chinese Mainland say ***their team could maintain performance if a key expert left.***

### Top five challenges concerning effective knowledge transfer (percentage selecting each option)

	Lack of incentives/recognition	No standard templates or tools	High turnover disrupts continuity	No clear owner for documentation	Confidentiality concerns
<b>Chinese Mainland Gen Zs</b>	42%	33%	28%	28%	26%
	Lack of incentives/recognition	High turnover disrupts continuity	Confidentiality concerns	No standard templates or tools	No clear owner for documentation
<b>Chinese Mainland millennials</b>	43%	29%	26%	25%	24%



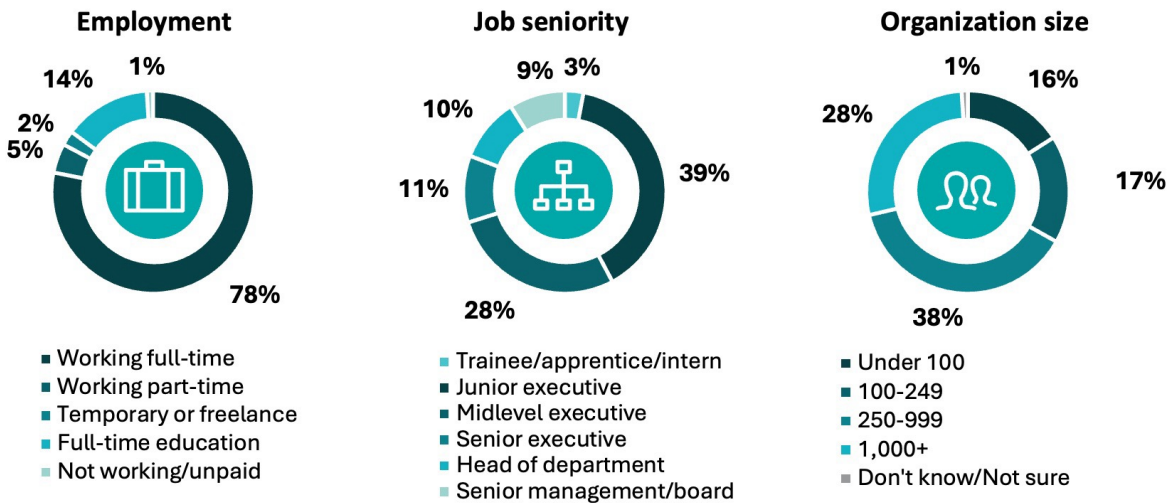
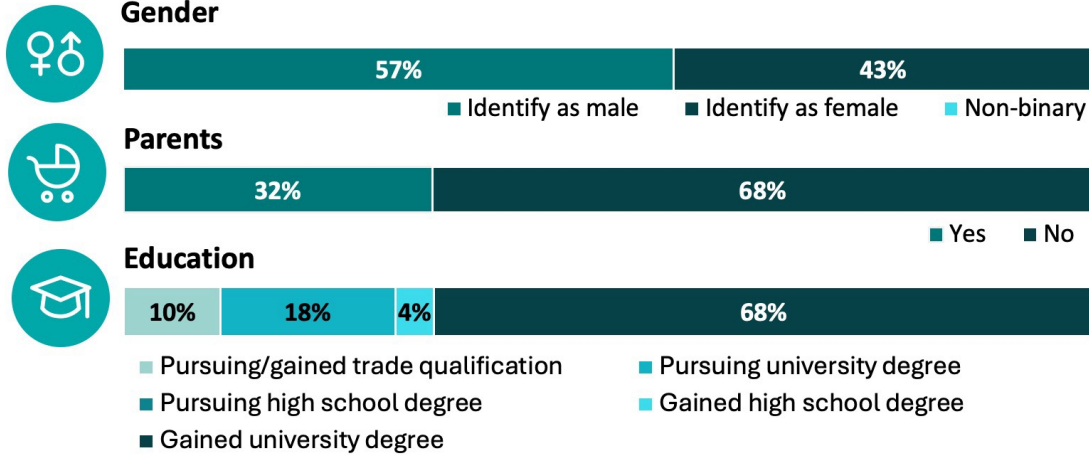
# Methodology

815 total respondents in Chinese Mainland: 515 Gen Zs and 300 millennials

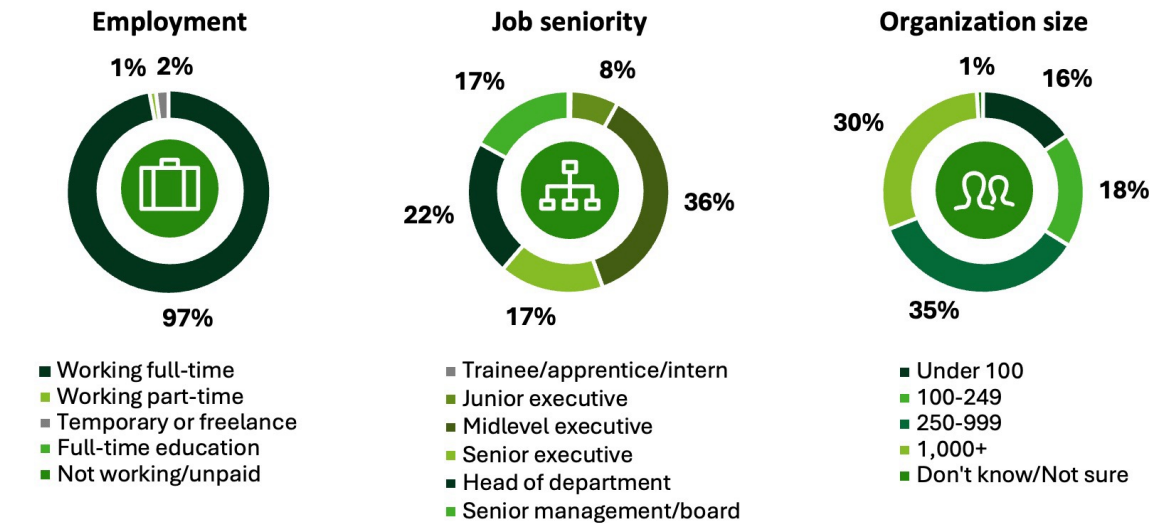
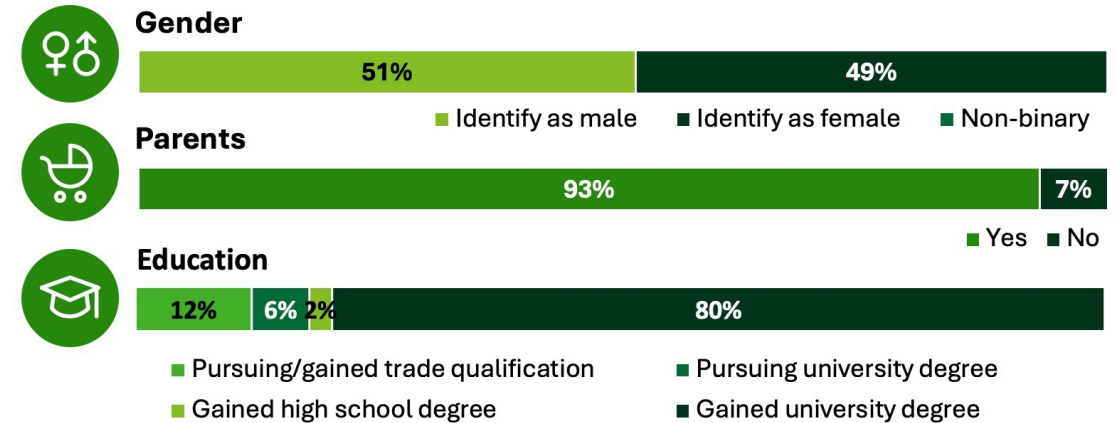
As defined in the study, Gen Z respondents were born between January 1995 and December 2007, and millennial respondents were born between January 1983 and December 1994.



## GEN Z PROFILE



## MILLENNIAL PROFILE





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