

Press release

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Fewer than 1 in 10 young Belgians prioritise climbing the corporate ladder

Gen Zs and millennials value financial stability, job stability and work-life balance over leadership roles, Deloitte's 2025 survey finds.

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According to Deloitte's 2025 Belgian Gen Z and Millennial Survey, only 8% of Gen Zs and 9% of millennials consider climbing the corporate ladder their main career goal. Instead, they are prioritising financial security, job stability and a healthy work-life balance, factors they increasingly associate with happiness and long-term fulfilment. Yet for many, financial security remains out of reach. The study finds that 46% of Gen Zs and 53% of millennials in Belgium live *paycheck to paycheck*, despite being in full-time employment. This underscores a growing disconnect between work and financial wellbeing. For employers the implications are clear, younger generations expect more than traditional career progression. They are looking for meaningful support, purpose-driven work, and a sustainable foundation for their future. They are also investing heavily in future-oriented skills, ranging from personal development to GenAI capabilities, often without sufficient support or guidance from their employers.

Highlights

- Only 8% of Gen Zs and 9% of millennials in Belgium see leadership roles as their top career ambition
- 46% of Gen Zs and 53% of millennials live paycheck to paycheck despite full-time employment
- 81% of Gen Zs and 87% of millennials say having purpose at work is important. Nearly half have declined an assignment, a job or even an employer because it did not align with their values
- 40% of young workers feel stressed or anxious most of the time at work
- Only 13% of Gen Zs and 12% of millennials have received GenAI training through their employer
- 67% of Gen Zs and 49% of millennials actively build new skills each week, but few receive support from managers

Just 8% of Gen Zs and 9% of millennials aim for leadership roles as their top career goal

Climbing the corporate ladder has lost its appeal for young Belgians. Deloitte's survey shows that only a small minority, 8% of Gen Zs and 9% of millennials, still view climbing the corporate ladder to obtain leadership positions as their main career ambition. For the vast majority, titles and promotions no longer define success. Instead, they prioritise roles that provide financial stability, job security and a healthy work-life balance. This shift illustrates a broader redefinition of ambition. Younger generations are not disengaged, but they are choosing different goals, such as building sustainable careers, protecting their wellbeing, and securing financial independence. While they recognise the importance of developing soft skills and time management for growth, they increasingly link success to stability rather than hierarchy.

"Younger workers no longer follow a single path to success. Career ambition today is more diverse, often moving sideways rather than upwards. But many HR strategies still rely on traditional promotion models, creating tension between expectations and reality. Organisations need to redesign career paths, combining flexible growth with targeted leadership development, to meet individual ambitions and ensure a strong leadership pipeline", says **Nathalie Vandaele, Deloitte North South Europe Human Capital Leader.**

Half of young workers lives paycheck to paycheck

Financial stability remains out of reach for many young Belgians. Deloitte's survey shows that 46% of Gen Zs and 53% of millennials live paycheck to paycheck, while nearly 4 in 10 struggle to cover their basic living expenses each month. The recent [Deloitte Belgian Financial Health study](#) also found that the financially unhealthiest segment is the <35 age group. To make ends meet, many turn to side jobs, 44% of Gen Zs and 29% of millennials report taking on an additional role, often linked to personal passions they hope to grow into future careers.

Despite these pressures, most express satisfaction with their pay and benefits, and many, especially Gen Zs, remain optimistic about the short-term outlook. Still, the results highlight a growing disconnect between full-time employment and financial comfort, underlining the need for employers to address financial wellbeing as part of a sustainable workplace.

"Many organisations offer competitive pay and benefits, but too often these remain disconnected from employees' broader financial wellbeing. Without transparency and education, people may struggle to understand how their compensation supports long-term security, which can lead to mistrust and disengagement. As new regulations push pay transparency to the forefront, reward strategies must evolve. A holistic approach that links compensation, pensions, benefits and wellbeing into one clear value proposition will be key to building trust, boosting satisfaction and staying competitive", says **Timothy Bruneel, Total Reward Partner at Deloitte Belgium.**

4 out of 10 young workers say they feel stressed or anxious most of the time at work

Younger generations expect more than a job, they expect meaning. Deloitte's survey shows that 81% of Gen Zs and 87% of millennials in Belgium find it important to have purpose in their work. This is more than a preference: nearly half have declined an assignment, a job or even an employer because it did not align with their values. While 2 in 3 say they currently find purpose in their job, 1 in 3 remains disengaged, pointing to a clear opportunity for employers to act.

Mental well-being is also under pressure. 4 in 10 Gen Zs and millennials say they feel anxious or stressed most of the time, with long working hours, poor leadership support and unclear decision-making cited as

key causes. Younger workers want their organisations to take well-being seriously, not just in policy but in practice.

Only 1 in 8 young workers receives GenAI training at work

Artificial intelligence may dominate headlines, but younger workers in Belgium aren't getting the training they need. Deloitte's survey shows that only 13% of Gen Zs and 12% of millennials have completed a GenAI training through their employer. Meanwhile, over 30% express concern that their organisation is not doing enough to prepare them for the changes AI will bring.

Despite the growing presence of GenAI, adoption among young workers is progressing slowly. While 56% of Gen Zs and 49% of millennials say they use AI tools in their day-to-day work, these figures have barely increased since last year. This suggests that usage is not keeping up with the pace at which GenAI tools are evolving. Without more structured training and clearer guidance, many young professionals risk falling behind, unsure how to harness the full potential of these technologies or how they will shape their future career paths.

"While many organisations are still exploring how to integrate GenAI into their operations, the technology itself is already evolving towards a new phase of agentic AI. These more autonomous systems bring new opportunities, but also deeper uncertainty for employees. Without clear guidance, governance and support, the gap between AI's evolution and workers' understanding will only grow. To build trust and prepare their workforce for the future, employers need to invest in transparent communication, targeted upskilling and inclusive AI strategies," says **Tom Verstraete, Human Capital AI Expert at Deloitte Belgium**.

67% of Gen Zs and 49% of millennials actively invest in new skills, but lack support from managers

Gen Zs and millennials are often seen as disengaged, but the data tells a different story. Deloitte's survey reveals that 67% of Gen Z and 49% of millennials in Belgium actively work on developing new skills at least once a week. A majority also spend time on learning outside of working hours. 63% of Gen Zs and 57% of millennials who are actively investing in skills development, say they regularly invest personal time to build their capabilities.

Despite this strong commitment, many feel unsupported in their development. While younger workers value feedback, coaching and mentorship, only around 1 in 4 say their manager actually provides it. For example, just 27% of Gen Zs and 24% of millennials experience regular guidance from their manager, and even fewer feel inspired or motivated by their leadership. The [2025 Deloitte Human Capital Trends Study](#) also found that redefining the manager's role is among the top workforce priorities for Belgian organizations.

These findings point to a growing misalignment between what younger employees expect from their leaders and how managerial roles are currently defined. According to [Deloitte's 2025 Belgian Human Capital Trends](#), there is a pressing need for managers to evolve beyond operational oversight. They are expected to embrace change, foster collaboration across workforce levels, and reshape work in ways that enable innovation, agility and personal growth. With younger generations increasingly focused on skills

development, well-being, and long-term stability over promotion, organisations must empower their managers to meet these new expectations.

*“This disconnect reveals a broader leadership gap. Many managers still focus on operational execution, but younger generations expect more than oversight. They are looking for leaders who coach, guide and support their long-term development. If organisations want to keep their best talent, they need to empower managers to lead in a more human and future-focused way”, says **Nathalie Vandaele**.*

Read the full report here: [2025 Deloitte Gen Z & Millennial Trends – Belgian Perspective](#).

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