



2025 Belgian Gen Z and Millennial Survey

Growth and the pursuit of money, meaning, and wellbeing

Navigating work happiness in the modern Belgian workplace

The Belgian labour market is evolving at high speed, and at the centre of this transformation lies a pivotal theme: **work happiness**. Far beyond simple job satisfaction, it encompasses both personal and professional dimensions, shaping career decisions and influencing how individuals engage with their work environment. As Aristotle famously stated, “Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life,” emphasising its central role in our daily lives.

Our exploration begins with the intrinsic connection between happiness and work. Happiness is not merely a matter of individual wellbeing; it also serves as a catalyst for productivity, collaboration, creativity, and innovation. [Research](#) indicates that individuals with higher life satisfaction are 32% more likely to experience increased job satisfaction, illustrating the strong link between overall wellbeing and positive work experiences. While much research focuses on job satisfaction as a measurable indicator, the broader concept of happiness at work captures a more holistic sense of fulfilment that includes both personal and professional dimensions. Despite this clear connection, employee engagement has nevertheless fallen to its lowest level in a decade, particularly among younger workers. This raises an important question: **is happiness the responsibility of the employer?**

A core component of [Deloitte’s 2025 Human Capital Trends report](#) is the concept of “[stagility](#)”—balancing stability and agility within the workplace. While organisations tend to prioritise agility, our Gen Z and Millennials Survey highlights that younger generations aspire to both: they seek stability in certain aspects of work while simultaneously valuing agility and flexibility in others. Achieving this equilibrium touches on critical themes such as GenAI, learning and development, financial resilience, career ambition, purpose and wellbeing, each inseparably linked to the notion of happiness at work.

Central to the discussion is the evolving [role of the manager](#). As outlined in the [2025 Human Capital Trends report](#), there is a pressing need for managers to adapt by embracing change, promoting agility, and reshaping work structures to foster innovation. Our report emphasises the need for leadership to foster collaboration and understanding between all workforce levels. We, therefore, not only define action points for business leaders but also for the next generation itself. Building a workplace that enhances happiness requires a genuine partnership, where both leadership and young talent assume responsibility for shaping the future of work.

The 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey integrates these insights into a coherent blueprint. It demonstrates how dimensions of agility (e.g., GenAI and continuous learning) and stability (e.g., purpose, wellbeing, financial security, and career development) can reinforce each other. When balanced effectively, they create the conditions for organisations and individuals to flourish. Making happiness not an abstract aspiration, but a tangible driver of sustainable success.



Among this year’s key findings:

1. GenAI at work and the road ahead:



GenAI brings both opportunity and risk for younger generations. While it boosts productivity and frees up time, it also heightens fears of job loss due to automation. **Adoption remains uneven, and most Gen Zs and millennials lack formal training, limiting the technology’s transformative potential.** The emergence of more autonomous “agentic AI” further amplifies the need for governance, transparency, and trust. The report highlights that the path forward requires shared responsibility: organisations must invest in structured training and ethical frameworks, while young professionals must actively build skills and engage in shaping how AI is used at work.

2. Learning as the engine of growth:



Learning is a decisive factor for Gen Zs and millennials in choosing and staying with an employer. These generations invest heavily in personal growth yet expect formal support from their organisations. **Many feel their managers fail to provide the mentorship and inspiration they need, exposing a leadership gap.** Beyond formal training, organisations must create time for development, enable peer learning, and embed continuous upskilling into their culture. With skills becoming obsolete faster than ever, the ability to foster continuous, flexible, and personalised learning is essential to meeting evolving workforce expectations and sustaining employability.

3. Stability, balance and the new career mindset:



Gen Zs and millennials increasingly value financial independence, job security, and work-life balance over climbing the traditional corporate ladder. Career paths are no longer linear but include lateral moves, project-based experiences, and diverse trajectories. While soft skills and time management are seen as key to advancement, organisations must invest in feedback, mentoring, and internal mobility to unlock potential, strengthen loyalty, and build sustainable career paths. **Success is defined less by hierarchical progression and more by alignment with personal values and holistic growth.**

4. Happiness and the intersection of money, meaning and wellbeing:



Happiness at work is shaped by a balance of financial security, purpose, and wellbeing. **Money provides a baseline of stability, but alignment with organisational values, opportunities to grow, mental health support, and work-life balance are equally decisive.** The data shows clear links between each of these factors and reported happiness levels. Organisations cannot fully own employee happiness but do control many conditions that enable it. Sustainable engagement and resilience come not only from fair compensation but also from fostering culture, alignment, and support structures that allow individuals to thrive.



5. Money as a generational challenge beyond economics:

Cost of living remains the top concern for the fourth year in a row, shaping both financial stress and mental health. **Many Gen Zs and millennials live paycheck-to-paycheck, struggle with expenses, and worry about retirement.** Coping strategies include side jobs, enabled by Belgium’s flexi-job system, which serve both as financial buffers and potential passion-driven opportunities. Despite challenges, most report satisfaction with rewards. Pay transparency regulations are accelerating the shift toward holistic total rewards strategies. Linking pay, benefits, pensions, and wellbeing into a coherent narrative fosters fairness, trust, and long-term engagement.



6. Finding meaning as the new career compass:

Purpose is becoming a defining factor in how younger generations choose, experience, and leave jobs. While family and friends remain the core of identity, work plays a different role across generations: central for millennials, one of several equal elements for Gen Z. Still, both attach great importance to meaningful work, with many rejecting or leaving roles that lack purpose. Purpose is deeply personal, shaped by values, mental health, and societal pressures. Organisations must go beyond generic statements and surveys to engage in authentic, individual dialogue. Only by aligning values with work in practice can they attract, retain, and energise talent.



7. The wellbeing equation for mental health and resilience:

Stress, anxiety, and burnout are widespread among Gen Zs and millennials, with work cited as a significant driver. Contributing factors include long hours, lack of leadership support, and complex digital tools that often add pressure instead of clarity. **Feelings of burnout have reached critical levels, threatening retention and organisational stability. At the same time, mental health support is a core expectation, yet many workplaces fail to meet it.** The new leadership mandate is clear: empathy, fairness, and openness are as vital as performance management. Embedding wellbeing into culture, offering diverse support options, and fostering safe dialogue are essential to building resilient, engaged, and healthy workplaces.



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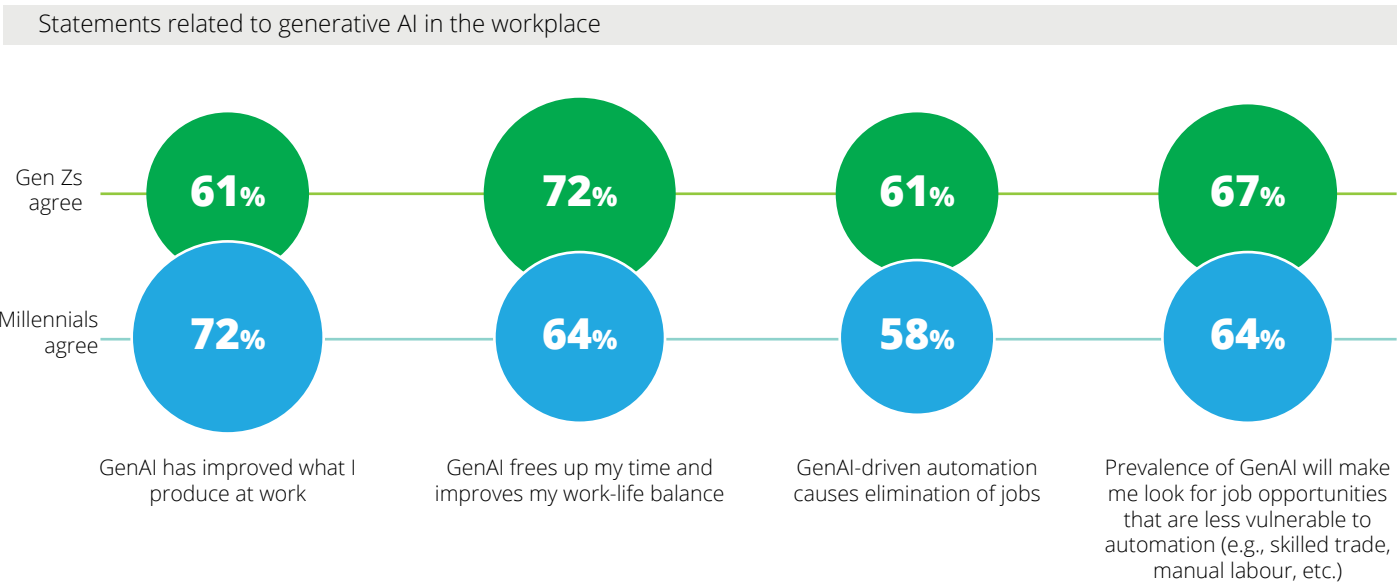
Mixed perceptions on GenAI: benefits and concerns

Generative AI (GenAI) is rapidly becoming a significant force in the modern workplace, presenting both opportunities and challenges for organisations and their younger workforce. While its capabilities continue to expand, adoption remains uneven, with **only about half of GenZs and millennials currently using GenAI tools at work**. Understanding their perceptions and usage patterns is crucial for organisations aiming to harness GenAI's full potential.

Younger generations hold nuanced views on GenAI's impact. A majority recognise its benefits: 72% of GenZs and 64% of millennials agree that GenAI frees up

time and improves work-life balance, while 61% of GenZs and 72% of millennials report enhanced work output thanks to GenAI. However, concerns about job security persist, with over 60% fearing job elimination due to automation and a similar proportion seeking roles less vulnerable to such risks.

This duality reflects the broader *"silent impacts"* of AI identified in [Deloitte's Human Capital Trends report](#), where automation of routine tasks can increase workload complexity and anxiety about job stability. **Notably, men are more likely than women (Gen Zs: 76% versus 58% | millennials: 68% versus 54%) to seek jobs less susceptible to automation**, signalling the need for tailored workforce strategies.



1. GenAI at work and the road ahead

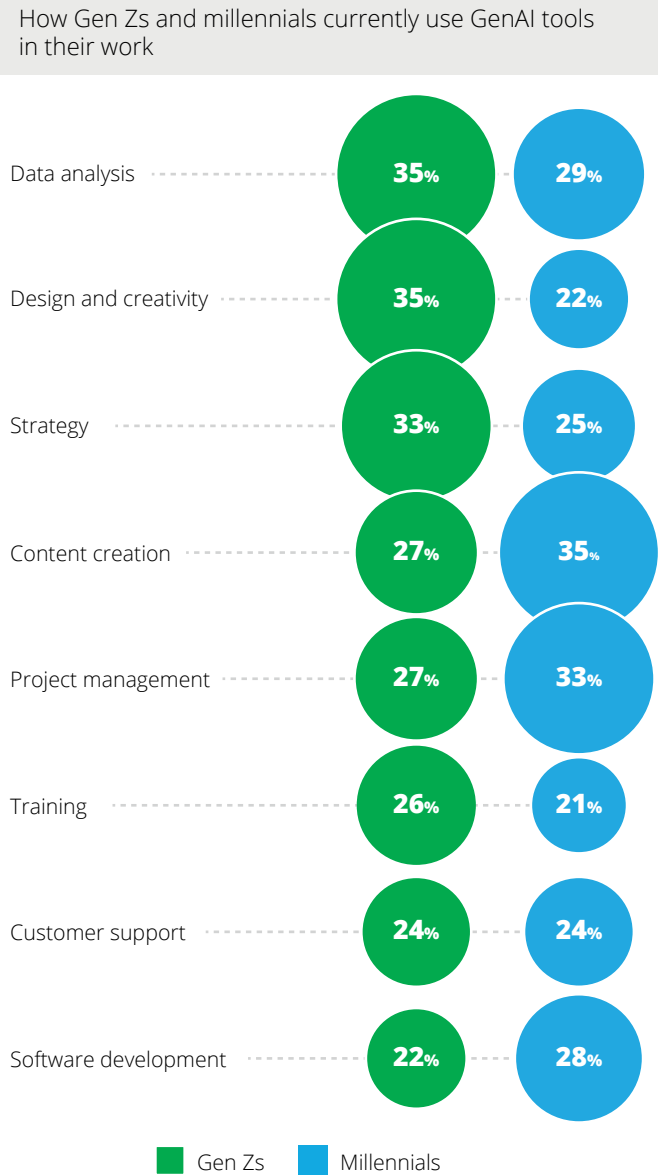
GenAI usage and integration: halfway there

Globally, GenAI adoption is accelerating, with general usage (including personal usage) rising from 55% in 2023 to 75% in 2024¹. However, [Deloitte's State of Generative AI in the Enterprise report](#) states that fewer than 40% of the overall workforce currently has access to GenAI tools, and daily usage at work remains relatively low. In Belgium, only about half of Gen Zs and millennials (Gen Zs: 56% | millennials: 49%) use GenAI at work, indicating that workplace adoption has yet to fully realise the technology's potential.

Looking closer at how younger workers apply GenAI, we see that its use spans a variety of functions. Gen Zs tend to use GenAI more frequently for data analysis, design, and creative tasks, as well as strategic activities. Millennials, meanwhile, show stronger usage in content creation, project management, and software development. Both generations also employ GenAI in areas such as training and customer support, though to a lesser extent.

Despite this breadth of application, many organisations have yet to embed GenAI deeply into strategic, creative, and high-impact workflows. The technology is often confined to routine or transactional tasks, limiting its transformative potential and the value it can deliver. This aligns with findings from [Deloitte's State of Generative AI in the Enterprise report](#), which highlights that while GenAI adoption is most mature in IT functions, organisations are increasingly deploying

it in critical business areas such as marketing, operations, customer service, and cybersecurity.



1 Ritu Jyoti and Dave Schubmehl, "The business opportunity of AI," IDC InfoBrief, November 2024.



Adding to this complexity is the emergence of agentic AI: AI systems with greater autonomy and decision-making power than traditional GenAI tools. Unlike GenAI, which generates outputs based on user prompts and remains relatively transparent, agentic AI can independently initiate actions, make decisions, and adapt behaviours without direct human input. This increased autonomy introduces new challenges, such as reduced transparency, unpredictability, and a greater impact on workflows and job roles. The rise of agentic AI is likely to intensify workers' fears and resistance. Organisations must therefore establish clear governance frameworks that ensure accountability, transparency, and ethical use. Building trust through open communication and involving employees in AI governance will be critical as workplaces prepare for deeper AI integration.

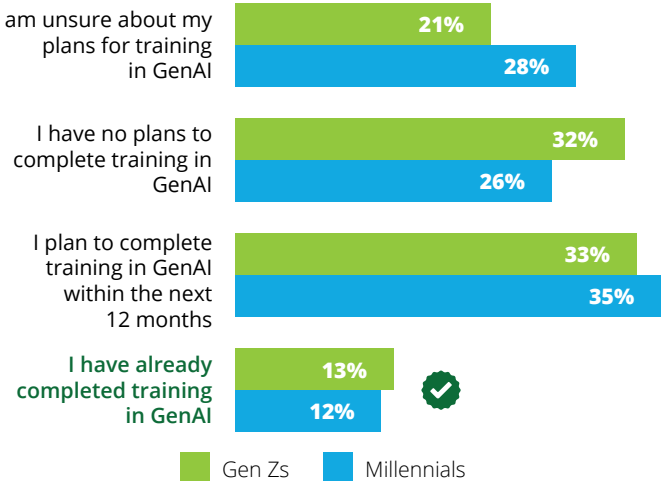
“ Looking ahead, agentic AI will require organisations to make strategic decisions about which tasks to assign to autonomous AI systems and how much authority to grant them. This “build, buy, borrow, bot” decision-making will become a critical part of workforce strategy, requiring careful governance and clear accountability. ”

Tom Verstraete
Human Capital AI Expert Deloitte Belgium

GenAI training: why self-learning isn't enough for the next generation

While Gen Zs and millennials are digitally savvy, many lack formal training to fully leverage GenAI professionally. **Only around 13% have completed GenAI training, with a third planning to do so within the next year.** However, a significant portion are part of organisations that remain uncertain or uninterested in training their workforce.

This highlights a critical distinction: being digital natives does not equate to being AI natives. Self-directed learning may suffice for personal use but falls short in meeting workplace demands. Organisations must invest in structured training programmes that develop both technical AI skills and complementary human skills such as creativity and critical thinking.





This lack of formal training programmes results in **more than 30% of both generations expressing concerns about insufficient training on GenAI’s capabilities, benefits, and value.** This aligns with [Deloitte’s State of Generative AI in the Enterprise report](#), which identifies workforce readiness and talent development as key barriers to scaling GenAI adoption. Effective change management, including comprehensive education and training programmes, is essential to overcoming these challenges. Organisations that invest in structured GenAI training improve adoption rates and foster employee trust and engagement—both critical for long-term success.

“Even though Gen Zs and millennials are digital natives, they still expect their employers to provide structured training in generative AI. Self-directed learning alone cannot meet the demands of modern professional environments.”

Tom Verstraete
Human Capital AI Expert Deloitte Belgium



Key takeaways for managers and the next generation

For managers and organisations:

- Provide structured and comprehensive GenAI training programmes rather than relying on employees to self-train, ensuring readiness to integrate AI into strategic and creative work
- Emphasise strategic and creative applications of AI in the training programmes to ensure AI’s integration extends beyond routine tasks into more impactful areas of work
- Design training that combines technical AI skills with essential human skills such as creativity, critical thinking, empathy, and adaptability
- Build and maintain trust by promoting transparency, fairness, accountability, and clear governance in AI deployment
- Identify internal AI experts and influencers to facilitate peer learning and knowledge sharing within daily workflows

For the next gen:

- Engage proactively with available training opportunities to build fluency in GenAI and develop complementary soft skills
- Balance self-directed learning with employer-provided training to meet professional demands effectively
- Participate actively in AI governance discussions and propose use cases to shape AI integration in the workplace
- Communicate learning needs clearly to managers and seek mentorship to support continuous development
- Embrace AI as a collaborative tool to augment human capabilities rather than a threat

By combining organisational responsibility with individual commitment, trust can be strengthened and the workforce better equipped to navigate an AI-driven future.



2. Learning as the engine of growth

Learning or leaving: the key to retaining young professionals

For Gen Zs and millennials in Belgium, learning is not merely a nice-to-have but a fundamental driver of career choice, satisfaction, and loyalty. Among Gen Zs, learning and development opportunities rank alongside work-life balance and flexibility as top reasons for choosing an employer. Conversely, the absence of learning is frequently cited as a primary reason for leaving a job.

“When employees from these generations feel they are no longer learning or growing, momentum is lost, and disengagement follows. This is particularly pressing in today's fast-changing environment, where upskilling and reskilling are essential for long-term employability.”

Ismaël Sabere

Learning Expert Deloitte Belgium

Strong commitment to personal growth

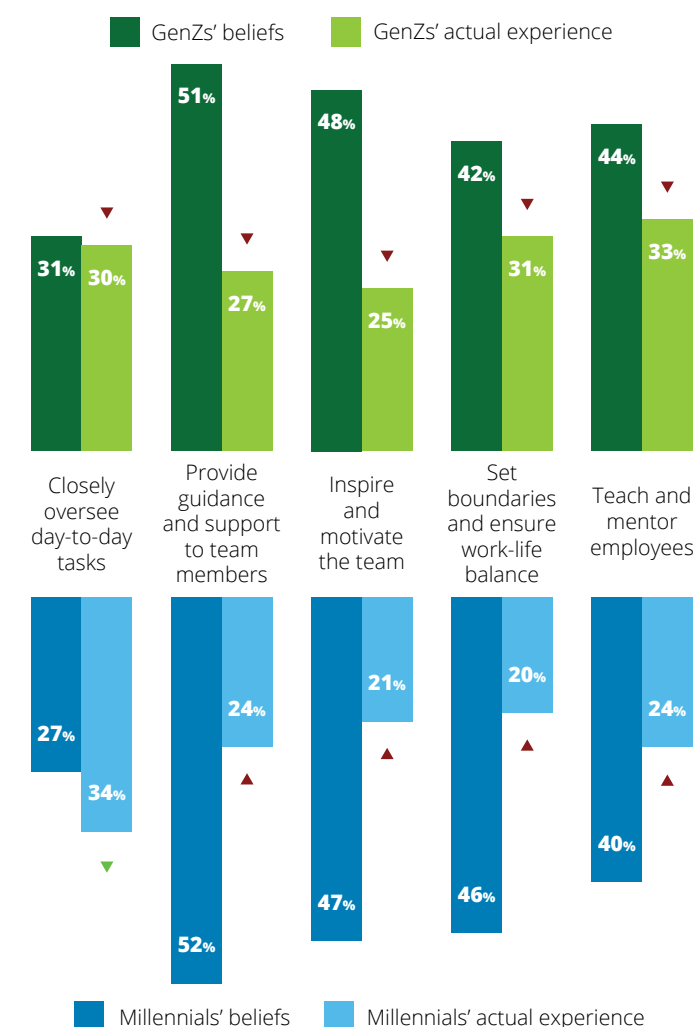
Gen Zs and millennials demonstrate a strong commitment to personal growth, dedicating significant time to developing skills that advance their careers. For instance, **67% of Gen Zs and 49% of millennials engage in skill development at least weekly**, with many investing time outside working hours. **From those who are investing in skills development, 63% of Gen Zs and 57% of millennials do this also outside of their working hours.** Despite this strong commitment to self-development, these generations still expect their employers to provide formal training and learning opportunities that enable their personal growth and career progression.

This raises a common question: who is responsible for learning? The answer is a shared one: HR, business leaders, managers, and employees themselves all have key roles to play. HR typically starts the learning process during onboarding, leaders and managers offer coaching and support, and employees take ownership of their growth.

The leadership learning gap

Managers play a crucial role, especially for younger employees, as a supportive manager can significantly influence their career success. However, many managers tend to prioritise compliance and process improvement over providing guidance, inspiration, and mentorship. As a result, younger employees often feel their managers are not sufficiently supporting their skill development and career growth. There is a notable gap between what Gen Zs and millennials expect from their managers and what they actually experience.

The gap between what respondents believe their managers should do, versus what they actually do



This gap highlights the urgent need for (middle) managers to develop not only technical expertise but also strong people skills, balancing operational responsibilities with active support for employee growth. It also highlights the importance of knowing how the younger generations want to experience learning opportunities and how to support their learning needs and preferences.

Rethinking learning: beyond formal training

Organisations must rethink how they approach learning and development (L&D) to effectively engage younger generations like Gen Zs and millennials. When asked how their employers can support their learning needs, we see most of these younger employees indicating they want their employer to:



Create dedicated in-house learning programmes



Foresee time to ensure learning does not interfere with workload/responsibilities



Create time and provide support for learning while working



Facilitate peer learning and knowledge sharing



Provide access to learning platforms and subscriptions

The greatest challenge often lies in providing employees with sufficient time to learn, rather than merely offering access to content or platforms. While formal training remains important, its impact is limited if organisations overlook informal learning channels such as mentoring, on-the-job support, and knowledge exchange. These elements create a learning culture where employees continuously grow through real-world experience and interaction.

“ True learning is not confined to the classroom or a training event; it is an ongoing process that happens in the brain, shaped by exposure, experience, education, and environment (the 4 Es of learning). ”

Jeroen Van Eeghem

Learning Expert Deloitte Belgium

There is significant value in fostering an environment where informal learning, mentoring, and knowledge sharing thrive, as these elements support the ongoing development that younger generations seek. This is reflected in the management preferences of both Gen Zs and millennials, who favour regular recognition, feedback, and guidance. Notably, **64% of employees in these generations are satisfied with the recognition they receive for their contributions.**

This positive experience aligns with their high satisfaction levels regarding learning opportunities: **72% of Gen Zs and 66% of millennials are content with the opportunities they have to develop new skills or receive mentorship from senior colleagues,** highlighting the importance of supportive leadership in enabling effective learning.

The half-life of skills and emerging demands

A recent Deloitte report¹ on the evolving role of HR leadership highlights that this need for new learning approaches reflects a broader trend across industries, where work is constantly being reinvented and the demand for different skills is rapidly changing.

For instance, the half-life of skills, the time it takes for a skill to become outdated, has shrunk dramatically. A Harvard Business Review study shows that the half-life of certain technology skills is as short as 2.5 years, and this period may become even shorter with advances in generative AI². Supporting this, data from the global hiring platform Indeed shows that in major European countries, the share of job postings referencing generative AI skills more than doubled in the year leading up to March 2025³. In such a dynamic landscape, it is crucial for organisations to nurture continuous learning cultures that are both agile and responsive to the ever-changing needs of the workforce.

¹ Evolving CHRO competencies | Deloitte Insights, 2025

² Reskilling in the Age of AI | Harvard Business Review, 2023

³ GenAI job postings rise across Europe: Which countries lead the way? | Euronews, 2025

Use case

An international energy group in Belgium faced inefficiencies due to overlapping soft skills training across multiple business units, leading to duplicated efforts and unclear L&D responsibilities. **By adopting a federal learning operating model with unified governance, a harmonised training catalogue, comprehensive learning needs analysis, and a clear L&D structure, they streamlined their approach.**

This increased efficiency not only reduced duplication and optimised resources but also allowed greater focus on the quality and innovativeness of the content. Employees now benefit from consistent, relevant, and



high-quality training, while collaboration between teams has improved, making learning a more effective and agile driver of growth in a dynamic energy market.



Key takeaways for managers and the next generation

For managers and organisations:

- Set clear and realistic expectations around learning and development to provide employees with direction and motivation
- Allocate dedicated time within work schedules for meaningful learning beyond mandatory compliance training
- Invest in developing managers' people skills so they can effectively guide, inspire, and mentor employees
- Promote a culture of continuous learning that values both formal training and informal learning such as mentoring and peer knowledge sharing
- Facilitate informal networks and communities of practice to encourage knowledge exchange and collaborative learning
- Design learning programmes that align with both the specific skills and roles of employees and the learning objectives, ensuring the chosen methods effectively support the desired outcomes—for example, recognising that a video alone is insufficient to learn to fly a plane, even if it is a preferred format

For the next gen:

- Take proactive ownership of your learning by seeking feedback, mentorship, and new experiences
- Balance self-directed learning with participation in employer-provided training to build comprehensive skills
- Communicate your learning needs and preferences clearly to managers and leaders
- Be patient and persistent, recognising that developing deep expertise requires time and continuous effort
- Engage actively in both formal and informal learning opportunities and contribute to peer knowledge sharing

By fostering a culture of continuous learning that is supported by leaders, allows time for development, and is strengthened through collaborative networks, organisations can meet the evolving expectations of Gen Zs and millennials and unlock the full potential of their workforce for the future.



3. Stability, balance and the new career mindset

Beyond the ladder: the quest for financial independence, work-life balance, and job stability

Gen Zs and millennials are reshaping the definition of career success and happiness by placing greater emphasis on stability and personal fulfilment rather than traditional ambitions. Throughout their professional journeys, these generations prioritise financial independence, work-life balance, and job security over conventional goals like climbing the corporate ladder. Women often regard maintaining a healthy work-life balance as their top career priority and are less likely than men to aspire senior leadership roles, reflecting enduring gender norms. **Overall, leadership positions (once viewed as the ultimate career achievement) hold limited appeal, with only 8% of Gen Zs and 9% of millennials identifying such roles as their primary career goal.** Instead, both generations focus on financial independence (valued by 18% of Gen Zs and 19% of millennials), work-life balance (also prioritised by 18% and 19%, respectively), and job stability (important to 13% of Gen Zs and 16% of millennials) as their main career objectives. This shift underscores a broader trend toward pursuing secure and meaningful careers that align with their individual values and aspirations.

This evolving mindset is reflected in how careers are now being shaped: no longer following a uniform path but embracing diverse trajectories that offer flexibility and respond to changing interests. The reality of career progression is dynamic and multifaceted, often involving lateral moves and shifts in focus rather than a straightforward upward path. Understanding the skills individuals possess, alongside the skills required for different roles, enables more effective guidance and personalised career navigation that aligns with both personal ambitions and organisational goals.

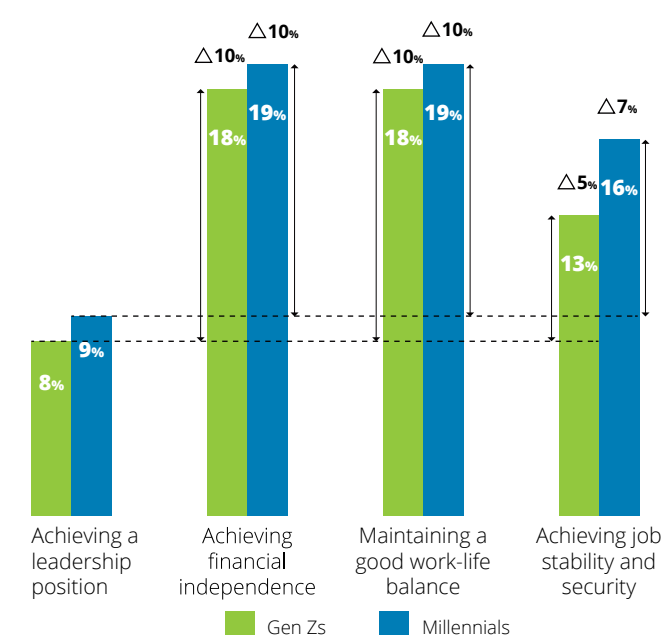


“It remains vital to actively facilitate and support vertical growth alongside horizontal opportunities by targeted investments in development and coaching of future managers. This to secure sustainable organisational development and a strong leadership pipeline.”

Dirk Goovaerts

HR Strategy & Technology Expert Deloitte Belgium

Primary career goal



Advancing careers: soft skills lead, technical skills follow

When it comes to career advancement, the survey reveals that **Gen Zs and millennials perceive soft skills, such as communication, leadership, empathy, and networking, and time management as more essential than technical skills.** Soft skills are valued by 75% of Gen Zs and 76% of millennials and time management skills are deemed important by 75% of Gen Zs and 74% of millennials. In contrast, technical skills are considered less critical (but not non-important) for career advancement, with 68% of Gen Zs and 67% of millennials prioritising them. GenAI skills, a flourishing area of expertise, are even less emphasised, with only 52% of Gen Zs and 51% of millennials recognising their importance.

Yet, as automation and GenAI increasingly take over routine tasks, more complex and technical cases will demand human expertise as stated in the [2025 Human Capital Trends report](#), elevating the importance of technical skills in the near future. This evolving landscape underscores the necessity for continuous upskilling in technical areas, complemented by strong soft skills that enable effective navigation and resolution of these complex challenges.

“AI is revolutionising the workplace, but the true challenge is not mastering technology: it is cultivating the mindset and collaborative skills that unlock seamless human-machine partnerships.”

Daniel Akhtar
Organisation & Work Transformation Expert
Deloitte Belgium

Career paths: aligned with training, influenced by generational drivers

Contrary to popular belief, a significant majority of young professionals remain in careers aligned with their academic training, signalling a preference for stability. Specifically, **78% of Gen Zs and 71% of millennials have not deviated from career paths related to their education**. However, when examining those who have changed direction, distinct motivations emerge between the two generations. Gen Zs tend to seek stability through change, with **27% citing better job market conditions and 25% seeking improved work-life balance as their main reasons for change**. In contrast, millennials are more driven by personal fulfilment and financial considerations, with **26% motivated by discovering new passions and 24% by better compensation**. These differences highlight a generational divide: while Gen Zs change careers primarily in response to external market factors and stability, millennials are more inclined to switch careers based on evolving interests or financial incentives.

Fuelling career growth: feedback, learning and mentorship

Navigating career paths and transitions is no longer a solo journey: it is powered by dynamic tools that fuel growth and unlock potential. Certain career development tools stand out as essential in shaping Gen Zs’ and millennials’ career growth. **Feedback and performance reviews resonate strongly, with 77% of Gen Zs and 72% of millennials finding them vital for shaping their careers**. However, many organisations recognise that traditional performance reviews alone are often inadequate, most employees prefer ongoing coaching and continuous feedback to more effectively support development and engagement. Hands-on learning and real-world experience are even more prized, embraced by 75% of Gen Zs and a striking 81% of millennials as essential to their development. Mentorship from experienced colleagues lights the way for 75% of Gen Zs, while formal training programmes hold great importance for 73% of millennials. Beyond fostering skill development, these primary tools play a pivotal role in enhancing

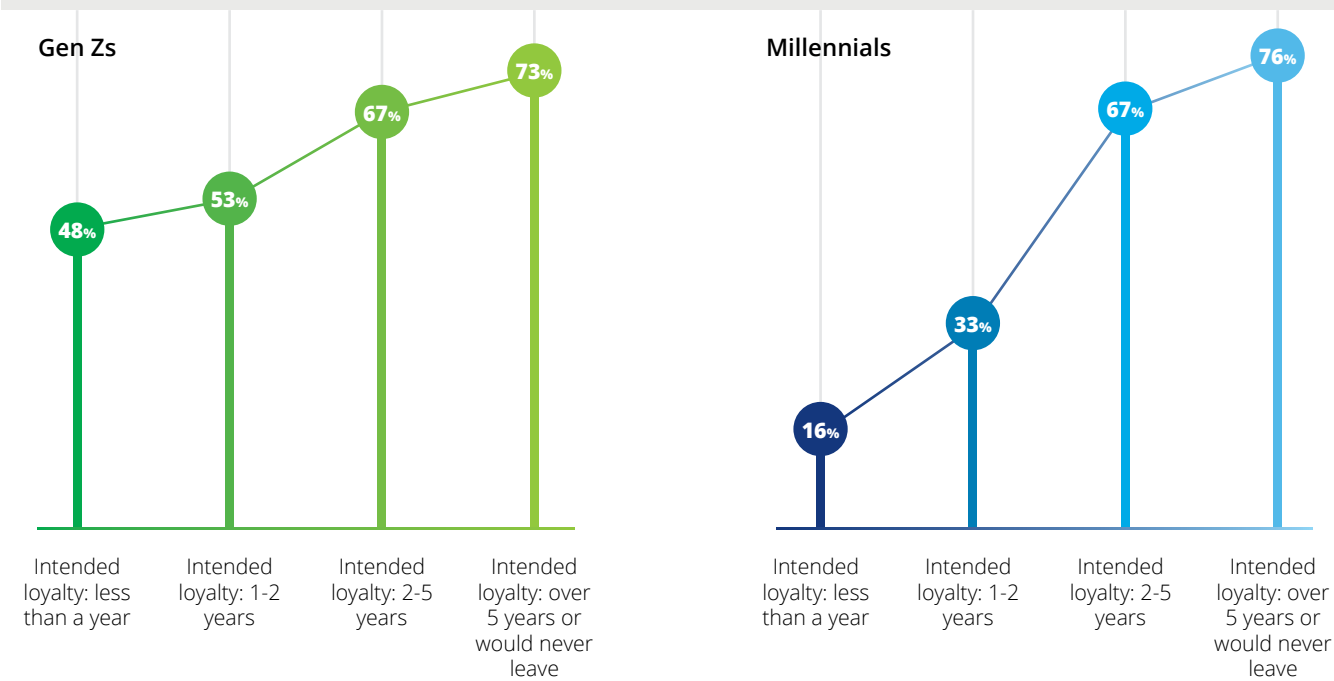
employee satisfaction and reinforcing loyalty to employers.

At the core of effective career development lies meaningful dialogue. Managers should not assume that their own career paths or experiences reflect those of their teams. Instead, they must engage in open and honest conversations to understand individual values, motivations, and aspirations. This shift toward dialogue unlocks true potential by tailoring support to what really matters to people. Feedback should be embraced as an ongoing, two-way exchange that drives continuous growth.

Career opportunities and their influence on loyalty

While a majority of both Gen Zs and millennials express satisfaction with their career progression opportunities, a significant share (around one in three) does not. This represents a sizable portion of the workforce and is particularly important given the strong link between career satisfaction and (intended) loyalty. The pattern is clear: the higher the satisfaction with career opportunities, the greater the intention to stay with the current employer. A connection that is even more pronounced among millennials. Focusing on creating career progression opportunities can help organisations strengthen retention and extend workforce tenure.

Satisfaction rate around opportunities to progress/grow in their career





Key takeaways for managers and the next generation

For managers and organisations:

- Enhance the attractiveness of vertical career paths to ensure continuity of new leadership, by actively engaging and developing the next generation of talent as future leaders
- Invest in structured development programmes for first-time managers to facilitate vertical growth, build both a strong and broad leadership pipeline, and reduce apprehension around leadership roles
- Promote internal mobility and marketplace initiatives to maximise talent utilisation and offer diverse growth opportunities
- Foster a culture of continuous feedback, mentorship, and on-the-job learning to enhance employee engagement and skill development
- Encourage managers to engage in open dialogue with employees, recognising that individual career aspirations and values may differ significantly from their own experiences

For the next gen:

- Actively pursue opportunities to enhance both soft and technical skills, recognising the growing significance of technological expertise alongside interpersonal strengths
- Develop the mindset and collaborative abilities needed to work effectively alongside AI, within diverse teams, and with leadership, as these will be critical differentiators in the future workplace
- Take proactive ownership of your work by regularly seeking feedback and mentorship to effectively navigate career transitions and shape a fulfilling professional journey

By fostering shared responsibility for career development between organisation and individuals, career satisfaction, loyalty and happiness can be strengthened, contributing to sustainable growth and an empowered workforce.

Use case

An EU agency faced challenges with limited internal mobility and unclear career progression, which affected employee engagement and leadership development. To tackle this, they introduced a skills-based career framework linking job roles to detailed skills profiles and personalised learning paths, supported by a 360° digital tool that enabled employees to assess their skills against role requirements. This empowered staff to identify development needs and explore career moves aligned with their interests and organisational goals. As a result, internal mobility increased, employees became more engaged, and the agency built a stronger leadership pipeline by making career progression transparent, flexible, and tailored to individual aspirations.





4. Happiness and the intersection of money, meaning and wellbeing

It takes more than money to be happy at work

Happiness at work is rarely the result of a single factor. Instead, it is shaped by a combination of different elements that reinforce or counterbalance each other. Our survey shows that three dimensions stand out in particular: **money, meaning, and wellbeing.**

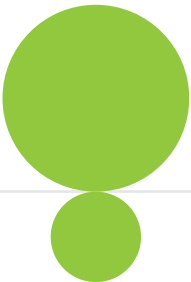
Financial security provides a sense of stability, but it is the “softer” dimensions such as feeling aligned with organisational values, experiencing support for mental health, having opportunities to grow, and maintaining work-life balance that often make the strongest difference in how happy people feel in their jobs. For organisations, this means that employee happiness is not only influenced by paychecks, but also by the everyday choices leaders make in shaping culture, values, and support systems.



The role of money

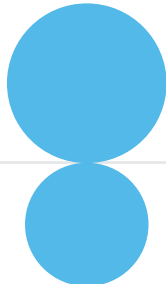
Financial stability clearly contributes to happiness. Among Gen Zs, 62% of those who feel financially secure report being happy, compared to only 30% of those who feel financially insecure. For millennials, the contrast is 53% versus 41%. This demonstrates that money provides an important baseline, but not the full story.

Money: How financial security correlates with happiness



62% of financially secure Gen Zs say they are happy

30% of financially insecure Gen Zs say they are happy



53% of financially secure millennials say they are happy

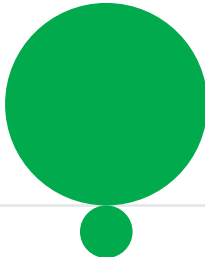
41% of financially insecure millennials say they are happy



The power of meaning

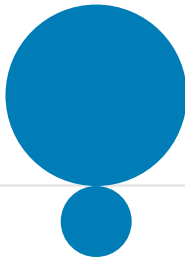
When people feel that their values align with those of their organisation, happiness levels rise significantly. Among Gen Zs, 77% of those with firm value alignment report happiness, while only 20% of those without alignment say the same. For millennials, this difference is nearly as strong: 69% versus 27%. This highlights how essential it is for organisations to create an environment where employees can genuinely connect with what the company stands for.

Meaning: How alignment with their organisation's values correlates with happiness



77% of Gen Zs whose values are aligned with their organisation say they are happy

20% of Gen Zs whose values are NOT aligned with their organisation say they are happy



69% of millennials whose values are aligned with their organisation say they are happy

27% of millennials whose values are NOT aligned with their organisation say they are happy



The importance of wellbeing

Wellbeing at work shows equally strong links to happiness across several dimensions:

Mental health support: 73% of satisfied Gen Zs and 72% of satisfied millennials say they are happy, versus only 25% and 26% respectively among those dissatisfied.

The organisation's effort to foster better mental health



Growth opportunities: 76% of satisfied Gen Zs report being happy, compared to just 23% among those dissatisfied. For millennials, it is 76% versus 21%.

Having opportunities to grow at work



Work-life balance: 76% of satisfied Gen Zs and 82% of satisfied millennials say they are happy, while only 23% and 17% of dissatisfied peers report the same.

Current work/life balance



What does this mean for organisations?

Taken together, these findings emphasise that while money matters, the “softer” factors such as meaning and wellbeing are at least as influential and often more so in driving happiness.

For organisations, this offers both an opportunity and a responsibility. While employers cannot be held fully accountable for the overall happiness of their people, they do shape many of the conditions that determine how employees experience money, meaning, and wellbeing at work. Leaders, HR, and managers can either positively or negatively influence these experiences.

The takeaway is clear: investing in fair compensation is important, but true impact comes from also fostering value alignment, supporting mental health, enabling growth, and ensuring work-life balance. Doing so not only enhances employee happiness but also strengthens engagement, resilience, and long-term organisational success.



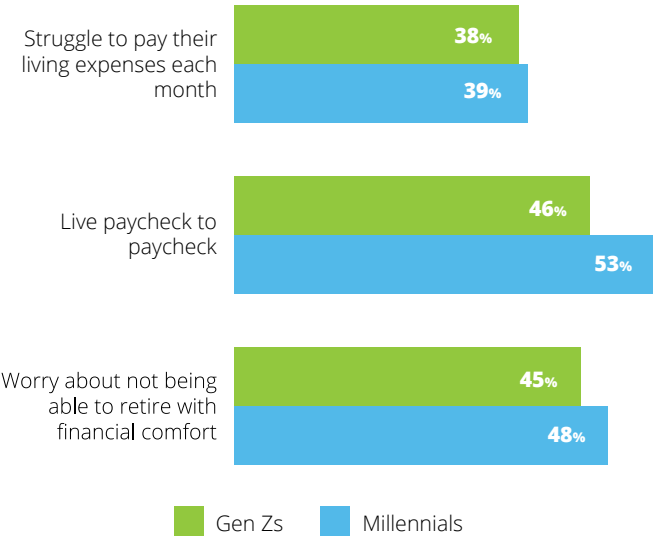


5. Money: a generational challenge beyond economics

The persistent pressure of cost of living and how it impacts the behaviour

Financial stability remains a fundamental concern for Gen Zs and millennials, reflecting deeper generational dynamics beyond local economic conditions. Despite Belgium’s wage indexation, many young workers continue to experience financial insecurity, a trend also observed in countries without such protections.

For the fourth year in a row, cost of living remains the top concern for both Gen Zs and millennials. This persistent pressure not only impacts their wallets but also takes a toll on their mental health. **While half of Gen Zs (50%) and 44% of millennials describe themselves as financially secure**, many continue to experience significant struggles in their daily lives.



This concern about retirement has increased notably over the past years. Among Gen Zs, the percentage who worry about financial comfort in retirement rose from 27% in 2024 to 45% in 2025. For millennials, it increased from 36% in 2024 to 48% in 2025. While both generations show a rising trend, millennials consistently appear slightly more worried than Gen Zs. Broader economic pressures, labour market changes, and/or uncertainty about personal financial planning may be driving this heightened concern.

Despite the financial stress today and for the long-term future, both generations maintain a degree of optimism about the short-term, especially Gen Zs: **42% of Gen Zs and 30% of millennials expect their personal financial situation to improve, while only 19% of Gen Zs and 29% of millennials believe it will worsen.**

Coping mechanisms: the rise of side jobs

One visible outcome of financial insecurity is the number of young people taking on additional jobs, with **44% of Gen Zs and 29% of millennials now holding a second (part-time) side job**. In Belgium, this trend is closely tied to the flexi-job system, which allows employers to take on an additional worker under more favourable tax and social security conditions. [RSZ statistics](#) show that flexi-jobs are especially popular among the 25-39 age group, aligning strongly with the demographic profile of younger millennials and older Gen Zs. While financial necessity is a key driver, side jobs are not always purely about survival. For some, these jobs are linked to hobbies or personal passions they hope to turn into a primary career in the future.



Satisfaction with rewards: challenging perceptions and embracing transparency

The survey reveals that 69% of Gen Zs and 73% of millennials are satisfied with their pay, financial rewards, and workplace benefits. This positive sentiment contrasts sharply with the common perception that Gen Zs hold “unrealistic expectations” about pay. Although some expectations may indeed be high, many are shaped by misinformation, reliance on inaccurate sources, or a lack of direct, clear feedback from hiring managers and HR about what is realistically achievable.



This disconnect highlights a crucial challenge: without transparent communication and education, employees may develop distorted views of compensation, which can undermine trust and engagement over time. The growing emphasis on pay transparency, mandated by regulations such as the EU Pay Transparency Directive, addresses this gap by requiring organisations to openly share how salaries are determined, how pay progression works, and how compensation compares within peer groups.

Effective pay transparency not only aligns employee expectations with organisational realities but also fosters trust and fairness. However, it also raises the bar for reward functions. As transparency exposes pay structures and compressions, organisations can no longer rely solely on base pay differentiation to attract and retain talent. To maintain high satisfaction rates in this new environment, reward functions must evolve toward a holistic total rewards approach. This means integrating compensation, benefits, pensions, and wellbeing initiatives into a coherent strategy that supports employees' overall financial and personal wellbeing. By linking rewards to wellbeing, organisations can differentiate themselves beyond salary alone, offering development opportunities, flexibility, culture, and purpose as part of the total value proposition.

This integrated approach not only meets the expectations of younger generations but also builds lasting trust and engagement, positioning organisations to thrive amid changing workforce dynamics and regulatory shifts.

“ Many organisations provide benefits and rewards, but few effectively connect these to employees' financial wellbeing. Satisfaction increases when employees understand how their pay, pensions, and benefits contribute to their long-term financial security, rather than viewing them as isolated perks. ”

Timothy Bruneel
Total Reward Expert Deloitte Belgium



Key takeaways for managers and the next generation

For managers and organisations:

- Communicate rewards as wellbeing: frame salaries, pensions, and benefits as part of employees' long-term financial wellness, not just as a transactional package
- Prepare for transparency: publish clear pay ranges, progression paths, and equity commitments; train managers to lead open conversations on rewards
- Build total rewards maturity: integrate compensation, benefits, development, and wellbeing into one story, breaking silo ownership
- Differentiate beyond base pay: use development, flexibility, and purpose to strengthen the value proposition in an era where pay levels are increasingly visible
- Acknowledge side jobs: recognise the dual role of side jobs and flexi-jobs, as both financial safety nets and avenues for growth, and explore ways to offer similar opportunities internally

For the next gen:

- Engage in the dialogue: use transparency to understand pay structures, ask about progression, and express realistic expectations
- Be critical of sources: calibrate reward expectations with reliable data, not assumptions or peer anecdotes
- Leverage side jobs strategically: use second jobs not only for income but to build skills and networks aligned with future goals
- Provide feedback: share openly what you value in the total rewards package; continuous listening helps shape offerings that truly matter

By focusing on both organisational responsibility and individual ownership, financial stress can be reduced, resilience can be strengthened, and trust between employees and employers can grow.





6. Finding meaning as the new career compass

The rise of purpose: a generational shift

Purpose has become the compass guiding Gen Zs and millennials through the complex landscape of work and identity. Understanding purpose begins with recognising what shapes the identity of Gen Zs and millennials. The survey highlights that for both generations, friends and family remain the most significant pillars of identity, with 60% of respondents affirming their importance.

Beyond this common ground, the picture starts to diverge. For millennials, work takes a clear second place (44%) in shaping their sense of identity, followed by elements embraced by approximately one-third of millennials such as physical activity, sports, and cultural engagement. For Gen Zs, however, their identity looks different: while friends and family remain equally central, work does not stand alone in second place. Instead, it is placed on the same level as exercise, sports, and cultural activities, all carrying a similar weight (around 30%) in their self-definition.

This distinction highlights a subtle but important difference. For millennials, work occupies a prominent and distinct role in their identity, second only to personal relationships. For Gen Zs, work is still core, but it competes more evenly with other aspects of life, such as physical and cultural engagement. Over time, we also observe natural fluctuations: in some years, sports or culture may rise in importance, in others, work regains significance. This align with insights from the [2025 Human Capital Trends report](#), which reveals that most workers are motivated by a diverse range of factors and often experience multiple motivations simultaneously, with these motivations fluctuating over time.

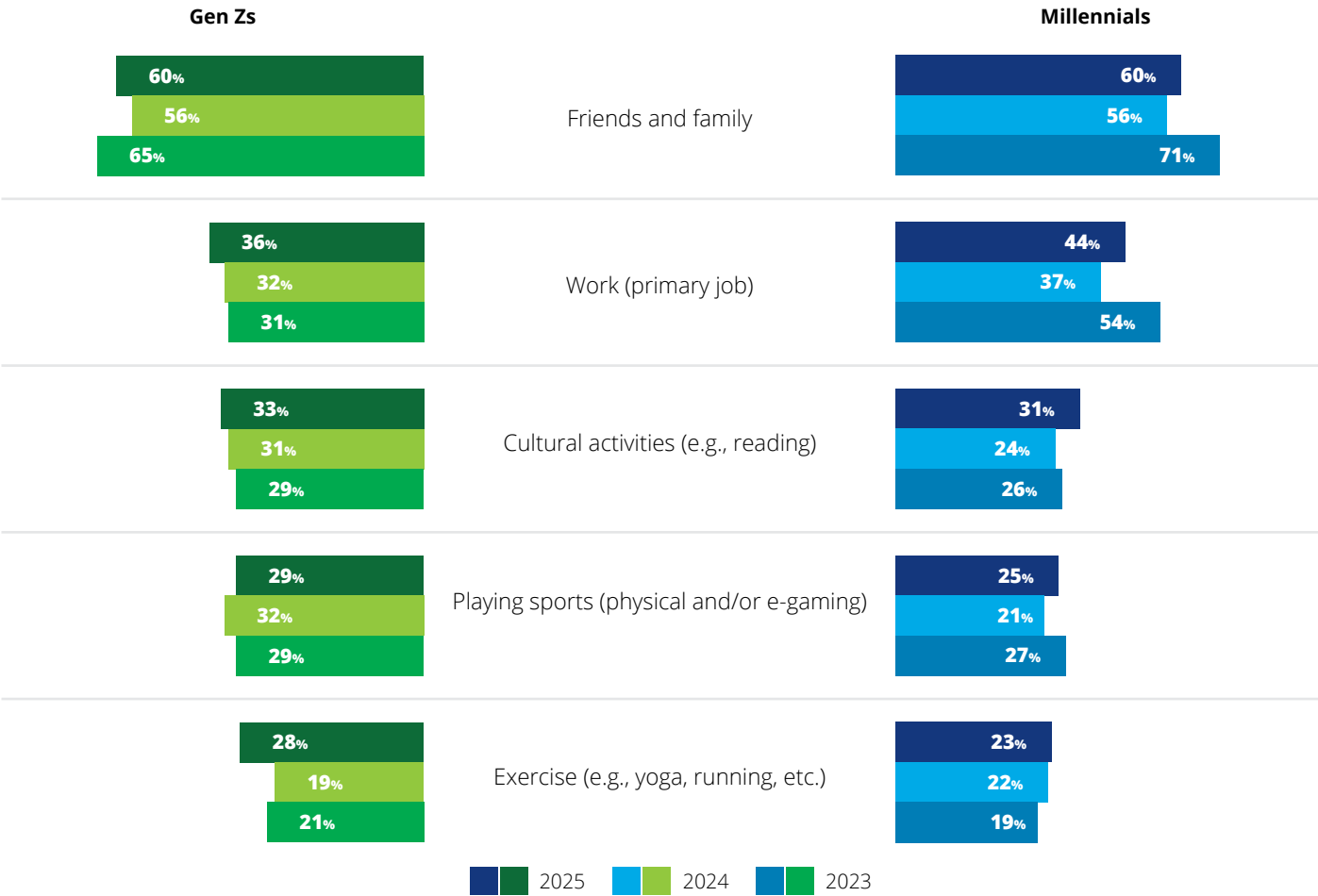
Still, the overall trend is clear:

For millennials, identity is shaped by a clear hierarchy:

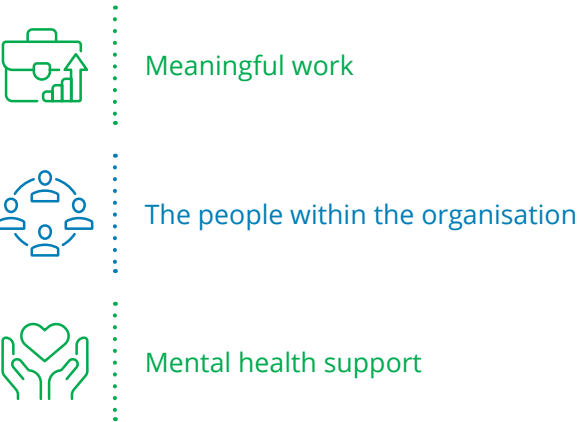
- 1. Friends and family
- 2. Work
- 3. Other factors.

For Gen Zs, identity is less hierarchical. Friends and family remain central, but other aspects (such as work, sports, exercise and culture) carry an equal weight in defining who they are.

Top factors shaping Gen Zs' and millennials' sense of identity: percentage choosing each as a top 3



Despite these differences, both generations share a common pursuit: the quest for meaningful work. **A decisive majority, 81% of Gen Zs and 87% of millennials, believe that having a sense of purpose is crucial in their professional lives.** However, not all of them are also satisfied. Our report reveals that **two in three individuals from both generations express satisfaction with the purpose they find in their current jobs.** To engage the remaining one in three, it is crucial to understand which aspects of purpose matter most to them. According to both generations, the most important aspects identified are:



millennials have actively rejected assignments or projects because they lacked a sense of purpose. When it comes to choosing employers, 50% of Gen Zs and 46% of millennials have declined potential job opportunities due to perceived misalignment with their values or a lack of meaningful engagement. Perhaps most strikingly, **43% of Gen Zs and 45% of millennials have left jobs altogether because they felt the work lacked purpose.**

These figures illustrate a clear message: Gen Zs and millennials are unwilling to settle for work that does not resonate with their personal values and sense of meaning. This is not a passive preference but a proactive stance that challenges organisations to rethink how they define and deliver purpose. The rejection of work and employers that fail to inspire meaning signals a shift from traditional employment models to a more value-driven and purpose-centred approach. It demands that organisations move beyond generic statements of purpose and engage deeply with what meaningful work truly means for their people.

From measurement to meaning: the power of authentic dialogue

While many organisations have clearly defined their purpose and regularly measure employee engagement, a critical gap remains: the absence of meaningful, personalised conversations about what purpose truly means. Purpose and meaningful work are not universal concepts, what inspires and motivates one employee can differ profoundly from another. The [2025 Human Capital Trends report](#) underscores that understanding motivation at the “unit of one”, the individual level, is transformative for driving performance and engagement. **Yet, only about a third of employees strongly believe their organisations and managers truly understand what motivates them.**

This significant disconnect calls for organisations to move beyond standardised surveys and generic metrics, instead embracing authentic dialogue that uncovers the unique drivers behind employees’ sense of purpose. By creating space for these conversations, organisations foster deeper belonging and alignment between personal motivations and company goals. Though simple in idea, facilitating such dialogues requires managers to listen actively, navigate evolving motivations, and inspire direction. Prioritising authentic conversations transforms purpose from a static statement into a shared, energising experience.

Actions speak louder: purpose-driven decisions

Purpose is not merely an abstract ideal for Gen Zs and millennials: it is a decisive factor influencing their career choices and engagement. The survey reveals a powerful narrative of action driven by the search for meaning. **Nearly half of Gen Zs (49%) and 41% of**



Key takeaways for managers and the next generation

For managers and organisations:

- Be upfront, open, and transparent about job expectations from the beginning to create a common understanding and engagement towards a shared purpose
- Move beyond surveys by regularly talking with employees about their individual motivations and what meaningful work means to them
- Equip managers with the ability to listen actively, navigate complex motivations, articulate values clearly, and inspire without overcomplicating
- Facilitate internal and external talent mobility to ensure employees find roles that align with their evolving sense of purpose and competencies

For the next gen:

- Take time to understand what truly drives you beyond external rewards or societal expectations
- Be proactive in sharing what meaningful work looks like for you with managers and peers
- Use available resources and guidance to connect your skills and passions with meaningful contributions to your organisation

By embracing these actions, organisations can foster a culture of purpose that not only attracts and retains talent but also inspires individuals to bring their whole selves to work, driving sustained performance and wellbeing for both employees and the business.



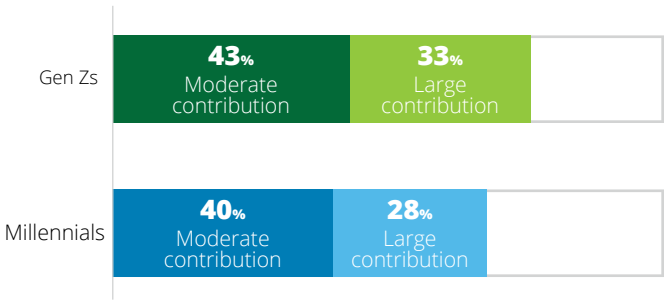


7. The wellbeing equation for mental health and resilience

The normalisation of stress and anxiety: a silent epidemic

Stress and anxiety have become alarmingly common experiences for Gen Zs and millennials in the workplace. **Of the Gen Zs and millennials who took part in the survey, 40% and 39%, respectively, report feeling anxious or stressed all or most of the time.** While wellbeing is deeply personal and shaped by a range of factors, two key contributors consistently emerge across both generations: family responsibilities and financial pressures. Yet, work remains a significant driver of stress too. **Around 70% of Gen Zs and millennials say that work contributes to their overall stress levels**, with one in three identifying it as a major contributor and more than 40% acknowledging a moderate impact. This shows that, although work may not always be the primary cause of stress and anxiety, it is far from a neutral factor in employee wellbeing.

Percentage of respondents who said that work contributes to their feelings of anxiety or stress



The rising toll of workplace stress

Workplace stress is increasingly shaping the professional lives of Gen Zs and millennials. Gen Z employees point to long working hours, a lack of fair and equitable decision-making, and changes at work that may personally impact them as key sources of stress. Millennials share similar concerns, citing insufficient support from their leaders, long working hours, and decision-making processes they perceive as unfair as primary stressors. The extended working hours that both Gen Zs and millennials endure often leave little or no room for “[slack](#)”: the intentional creation of unscheduled, unassigned time that workers can autonomously manage to balance their responsibilities. According to the [2025 Human Capital Trends report](#), without such slack, employees have limited opportunities to recover and adapt throughout

the workday, which can significantly increase feelings of stress and burnout.

This mounting stress is further intensified by the influx of new workplace tools and technologies, as stated in the [2025 Human Capital Trends report](#). Rather than simplifying workflows, these innovations often add layers of complexity: constant notifications, frequent updates, and data-heavy dashboards can overwhelm employees, leading to cognitive overload. Although these tools are intended to boost productivity and efficiency, they frequently contribute to an environment characterised by heightened pressure and reduced clarity.

Employers must recognise that work pressure extends beyond mere workload, it encompasses the overall quality of the work environment. This includes factors such as transparent decision-making, fair distribution of tasks, and the level of support employees receive from their managers and colleagues. These elements combine to create a workplace where employees feel safe, valued, and empowered. Leaders have a vital role in fostering this environment by for example balancing clear performance expectations with openness and fairness. At the same time, employees play an important role in determining how much pressure they experience within the structure and support established by leadership. How Gen Zs and millennials set boundaries and manage their workload influences whether their work feels energising or draining, which is key to maintaining wellbeing.

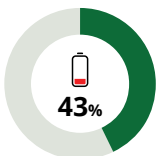


The feeling of burnout: the hidden crisis

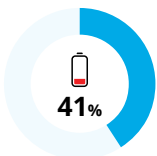
Burnout has become a tangible and pressing reality for many Gen Zs and millennials, shaping the way they experience both work and life. With 43% of Gen Zs and 41% of millennials feeling burned out, the implications extend far beyond individual wellbeing. Nearly half of both generations report that numerous colleagues have recently departed their organisation due to the pressures of their work. This trend signals a critical juncture where sustained stress and exhaustion are not only undermining personal health but also threatening organisational stability through workforce attrition.

Burnout's growing impact highlights the importance of shifting from crisis management to early intervention and prevention. Wellbeing is a complex interplay between personal and professional life, and while employers cannot control employees' private circumstances, they are responsible for cultivating a work environment where individuals feel safe, supported, and empowered. Providing a "menu" of wellbeing options, ranging from access to psychologists for those facing deeper challenges, to team-building activities that help employees recharge, enables individuals to select what best suits their needs. Rather than imposing one-size-fits-all solutions, offering a broad spectrum of support addresses the full continuum of wellbeing, from everyday stresses to more severe issues like burnout. Prioritising prevention through open conversations about mental health and encouraging vulnerability is essential to building a resilient and supportive workplace culture.

Percentage of respondents who feel burned out

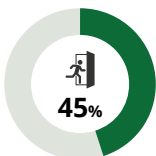


Gen Zs

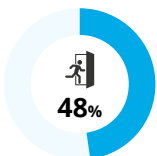


Millennials

Percentage of respondents who have seen colleagues leave the organisation due to the pressures of their work



Gen Zs



Millennials

Bridging the mental health gap through redefined leadership

Mental health support is no longer considered a bonus or a perk by younger generations, it is a fundamental expectation. Yet, many workplaces still fall short. One in three Gen Zs and millennials feel that their employer and senior leadership do not take mental health seriously. The same proportion report the absence of formal policies or assistance mechanisms to support employees facing mental health challenges. Additionally, one-third of both generations do not feel comfortable discussing mental health openly at work, and a similar share is not confident that their manager would treat them fairly or avoid discrimination if they disclosed mental health struggles. These findings underscore a critical disconnect between what Gen Zs and millennials need and the environment in which they are expected to perform.

Gen Zs and millennials are raising the bar for what they expect from their managers and organisational leadership. Beyond performance and task management, they seek leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence and a genuine understanding of their teams' mental and emotional wellbeing. There is a clear call for managers who take mental health seriously, who foster transparency, uphold fairness, and who can build a safe space for open dialogue. Traditional leadership models centred on authority and control no longer suffice. Instead, the emerging workforce values empathy, clarity, and collaborative partnership as essential qualities in their leaders.

“Before organisations can effectively support wellbeing and mental health, they need to take a step back and truly understand how these elements fit within their overall employee experience and culture. It is not just about ticking boxes or launching initiatives, it is about deciding how deeply they want to embed wellbeing into their culture and aligning these efforts with their broader strategic goals. Only with this clear vision and thoughtful strategic reflection can organisations be inspired to choose the right tools and create meaningful, lasting impact for their people.”

Nathalie Vandaele

Deloitte North South Europe Human Capital Leader



Key takeaways for managers and the next generation

For managers and organisations:

- Establish a psychologically safe environment by encouraging open dialogue around mental health and ensuring non-discriminatory practices
- Implement or reinforce formal mental health policies and provide access to confidential support resources
- Redesign workflows to reduce unnecessary complexity and prioritise clarity over constant digital engagement
- Allocate unscheduled, unassigned time to allow employees space to recover, reflect, and self-manage their workload
- Foster fairness and transparency in decision-making processes to rebuild trust in leadership
- Invest in leadership development programmes that build emotional intelligence, empathy, and wellbeing-oriented management skills, while encouraging leaders to demonstrate vulnerability and openly discuss mental health realities to proactively address employee wellbeing
- Offer a "menu" of wellbeing initiatives from which employees can choose, recognising that one size does not fit all, and that prevention is better than cure
- Embed wellbeing strategically within the organisational culture and employee experience, aligning initiatives with broader business goals

For the next gen:

- Proactively communicate expectations and boundaries to ensure sustainable workloads and work-life balance
- Take advantage of available mental health resources and contribute to normalising open conversations around wellbeing
- Champion fairness and inclusion by voicing concerns and offering solutions through appropriate channels
- Collaborate in building a workplace environment where autonomy and accountability can coexist
- Recognise that each generation grows up in different contexts. Be open to diverse approaches and respect evolving perspectives on mental health and work-life balance

By embracing these action points, organisations and employees can work together to shift from reactive crisis management to proactive wellbeing promotion. This collaborative approach not only supports individual mental health but also strengthens organisational resilience and long-term success.





Research methodology

In the 2025 survey of Gen Zs and millennials in Belgium, we explore the expectations and hopes that these generations have towards today's employers while comparing this to what they are experiencing.

Marking its 14th annual edition, Deloitte's 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey connected with respondents from Belgium to gauge their views about work and the world around them. The survey was conducted using an online, self-complete-style interview. Fieldwork was completed between 25 October and 24 December 2024.

The report includes quotes from survey respondents who answered open-ended questions, as well as from participants in one-on-one, ethnography style qualitative interviews conducted separately from the online survey. The qualitative interviews were conducted between 19 December 2024 and 10 January 2025. All quotes are attributed to respondents by generation and gender.

The report represents a broad range of respondents, from those with executive positions in large organisations to others who are participating in the gig economy, doing unpaid work or are unemployed. Additionally, respondents include students who have completed or are pursuing degrees, those who have completed or plan to complete vocational studies, and others who are in secondary school and may or may not pursue higher education.

As defined in the study, Gen Z respondents were born between January 1995 and December 2006*, and millennial respondents were born between January 1983 and December 1994. The Belgian report is based on a sample size of 308 Gen Zs and 200 millennials. It includes quotes from Deloitte experts who provided their insights into the quantitative data gathered through the survey.

**Gen Zs are typically defined as being born between January 1995 and December 2010, but this study does not include respondents younger than 18, so each year the definition of Gen Zs in this survey shifts a year to include all adult Gen Zs.*

Contact



Nathalie Vandaele

Deloitte North South Europe
Human Capital Leader

nvandaele@deloitte.com



Helena Van Loon

HR Strategy &
Technology Consultant

hvanloon@deloitte.com



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