

Four generations, one workforce: turning complexity into competitive advantage

2025 EY US Generation Survey Executive Summary



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2025 EY US Generation Survey

Today's leaders are navigating a landscape shaped by economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions and rapid technological advancements. At the same time, their workforce is made up of four main generations all of whom have differing expectations and needs. So, how do leaders balance the needs of these distinct groups to position their organizations for long-term success?

To better understand the evolving perspectives of the workforce, Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) surveyed 5,000 full-time employees at large organizations¹ across four generations – Gen Z, millennials, Gen X and baby boomers. First conducted in 2022, the 2025 EY US Generation Survey reveals how they are reshaping the workplace, offering insights on how leaders can create an environment where each person can thrive.

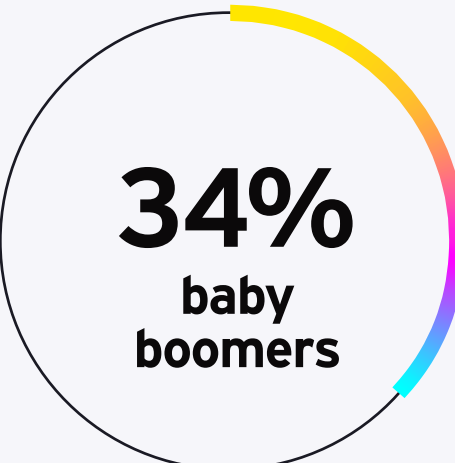
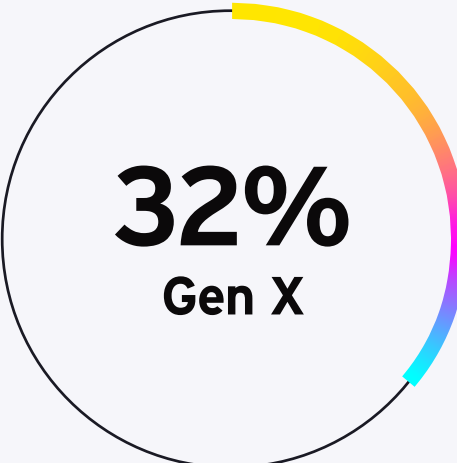
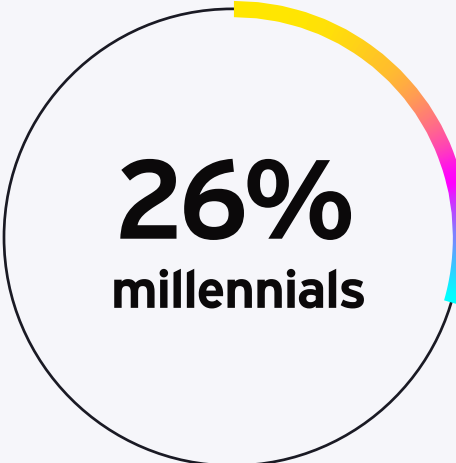
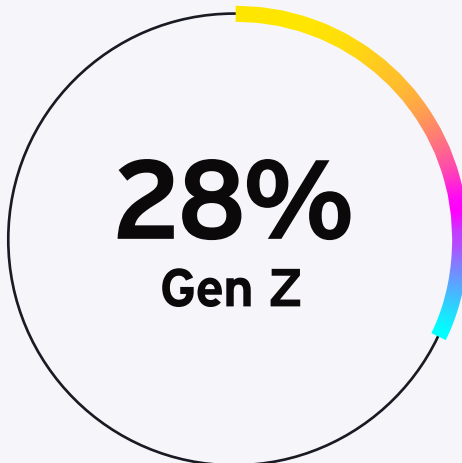


Generations are united: workplace culture matters most.

The single most unifying factor for employees, across generations, is culture. An overwhelming 94% say workplace culture impacts their decision to stay with a company, up slightly from 92% in 2022. Furthermore, six in 10 report that culture influences their decision to stay “a great deal” or “a lot,” in line with 59% three years ago.

Culture comes to life through everyday interactions, decisions and behaviors, but sustaining it demands more than just holding leaders accountable. By emphasizing key behaviors, routines and recognition, and using outcomes and impacts to measure progress, culture can be made tangible, trackable and actionable. This ongoing investment leads to higher productivity, increased employee engagement and improved business outcomes.

When asked about the most valuable aspect of company culture, respondents of all generations gave the same answer: **“how people treat each other.”**



matters

Ernst & Young

¹ For the purposes of this survey, large organizations are defined by those with 5,000+ employees

Misaligned values are a deal-breaker, especially for Gen Z and millennials.

While workplace culture keeps people; misaligned values drive them away. Even in a weakened job market, one in five professionals (22%) planning to leave their company in the next year say it’s because their employer’s values do not align with their own – a sentiment felt most strongly by millennials (30%).

Professionals, across the generations (44%), want their employer to align with their personal values. In fact, nearly half of millennials (47%) and Gen Z (48%) say they want to work for a company that reflects their values and beliefs.

Values must go beyond words on a website or a mission statement. They should guide a company’s actions and decision-making and be visible in everyday behaviors. As millennials and Gen Z increasingly comprise a significant portion of the workforce and take on leadership roles, authentic values will become a key differentiator for companies competing for talent.

For Gen Z, growth is the new currency.

Compensation remains important among all generations in the workforce, but its importance is fading among Gen Z, who rank flexible work, mobility and upskilling opportunities as top factors when choosing a new role.

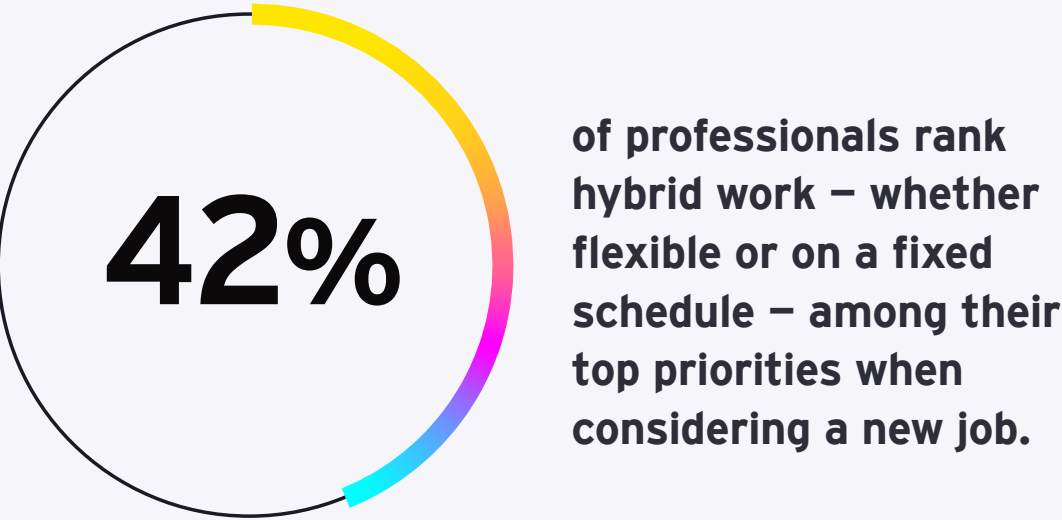
Survey responses show that 71% of all professionals rank salary as a top factor and 40% prioritize benefits, those numbers drop to 57% and 37%, respectively, among Gen Z.

Leaders should look to create personalized career experiences that resonate across generations. This means showcasing their investment in professional growth, career development and customizable benefits.

When it comes to flexibility, one size does not fit all.

Flexibility has become a defining feature of the modern workplace and plays a key role in driving employee engagement, productivity and satisfaction. And that’s with good reason; all professionals say they value flexibility in where and how they work. In fact, 42% rank hybrid work – whether flexible or on a fixed schedule – among their top priorities when considering a new job. They also say they would “probably” or “definitely” leave their jobs if they were not given flexible or hybrid work options (50%). This is particularly true among millennials (98%).

Flexibility can be interpreted in many ways, so leaders must tailor their strategies to meet generational expectations and clearly articulate the rationale for, and benefits of working in-office.



How each generation defines workplace flexibility:

Gen Z

Getting to take personal days or time off without having any negative impacts or consequences

Millennials

Flexible working hours

Gen X

Being able to schedule time for personal or family needs

Baby boomers

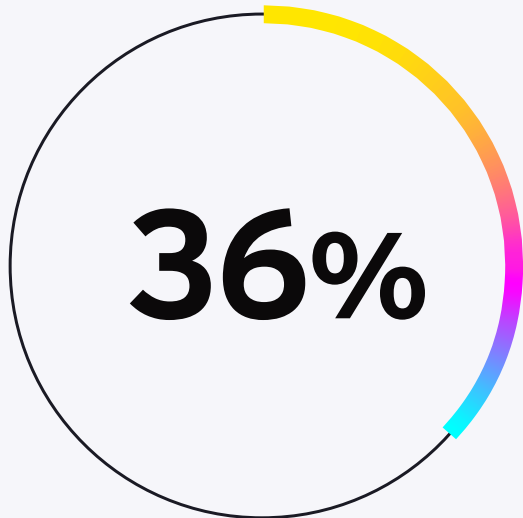
Autonomy in how they organize and prioritize work

Learning and development: a perception gap among employers.

For leaders looking to future-proof their workforce, learning and development may seem like the most obvious area of investment. However, the survey data suggests employers may not be doing as much as they think they are. Only 36% of professionals feel their company is investing in their professional growth, meaning nearly two-thirds aren't getting the guidance and resources they desire.

Perceptions vary, however. Gen Z is most likely to say they feel their employer is investing in them (41%), while baby boomers are least likely to say the same (29%). Though baby boomers may be approaching the end of their career, many still want to grow their skill sets but are unsure where to start (19%) and feel stuck and unable to grow (11%).

To close the perception gap and unlock the full potential of a multigenerational workforce, leaders should prioritize rank- and role-specific learning, empower managers to create the time and space for professional development while encouraging continuous learning, and integrate durable and technical skills into workflows.



of professionals say they are actively building their skills in emerging technologies or developing the durable skills that will help them succeed as leaders and work alongside AI.

Durable skill development is most pronounced among Gen Z:

43% are building emotional intelligence

42% are building relationship skills



41%
Gen Z is most likely to say they feel their employer is investing in them





A warning sign for employers: professionals are feeling the stress.

While half (50%) of all professionals surveyed plan to stay at their jobs five years or more, there are warning signs for employers now. Many of those who say they are planning to leave their jobs within a year say it's because they are feeling burned out (32%), their employer isn't meeting their expectations (30%) or their mental health is negatively impacted (27%). This is most acute for Gen Z and millennials, indicating a need for tailored support and wellbeing strategies.

Leaders who ignore these warning signs will likely have to contend with the financial ramifications of presenteeism, diminishing employee satisfaction, declining levels of engagement and drops in productivity. Instead of examining static employee sentiment survey results only two to three times a year, they can regularly look at experiential data, like whether people feel supported, and operational data, including hours worked, to gain a more comprehensive picture of each individual's experience. This allows for targeted and timely interventions to better support someone who might be struggling.

What's causing employees to leave their jobs? Gen Z, millennials and Gen X feel similarly, but baby boomers have a different perspective:

Burnout	38% Gen Z	35% millennials	31% Gen X	14% baby boomers
Company not meeting expectations	30% Gen Z	41% millennials	30% Gen X	7% baby boomers
Mental health strain	33% Gen Z	29% millennials	31% Gen X	7% baby boomers



Considerations for leaders

Immediate actions

- Demonstrate company values in actions through storytelling and behaviors.
- Clearly articulate the rationale for and benefits of working in-office, while also allowing for flexibility.
- Set expectations that managers create opportunities for continuous learning and development and prioritize wellbeing.

Longer-term focus

- Develop differentiated, rank- and role-specific learning opportunities.
- Make career agility part of the employee experience.
- Establish wellbeing as a business focus to combat burnout and increase employee engagement.

Conclusion

Managing a multigenerational workforce in today's world is more complex than ever, but it's also a powerful lever for long-term success. By understanding and proactively responding to the evolving needs and expectations of Gen Z, millennials, Gen X and baby boomers, leaders can turn complexity into a true competitive advantage. Operationalizing culture, living authentic values, personalizing growth and flexibility, and prioritizing wellbeing are not just short-term solutions, they are strategic investments in the future. Organizations that get this right will benefit from a resilient, future-ready workforce that can adapt, innovate and drive sustained performance.

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