

Is Gen Z the spark we need to see the light?

2021 Gen Z Segmentation Study
Insights Report

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The better the world works.



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Executive summary

Gen Z is different. They are a generation that will not be put in a box. They defy labels. And they are here to challenge your perspective of the world.

Gen Z is shifting societal paradigms, creating new norms around **activism, wellness, and success.**

These seismic shifts bring major implications for businesses from both a consumer and employee perspective.

Businesses can better predict future trends when they look through the eyes of the generation that comes next.

Table of contents

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| An introduction to Gen Z | 04 |
| Who is Gen Z? | 06 |
| Segmentation | 13 |
| Activism | 20 |
| Implications | 28 |
| Mental health | 29 |
| Implications | 36 |
| Meaning | 37 |
| Implications | 45 |
| What does this mean for you? | 47 |
| Appendix | 57 |

What do we really know about Gen Z?



Born between 1997 and 2007



While Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2007, represent just 14% of the U.S. population, they out-punch their weight in influence – setting the pace of change for prior generations, as well as providing indicators of what generations that follow will come to expect. Together, **Gen Z and those that follow represent 28% of the U.S. population, and their influence and spending power will far exceed even that high percentage.**

In this report, “Gen Z” refers those born between 1997 and 2007, unless otherwise noted.

46.4 million

Gen Z born between 1997 and 2007 live in the U.S.

Source: US Census Bureau, [Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Single Year of Age and Sex for the United States: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019](#)

Methodology

Ernst & Young LLP surveyed a representative sample of 1,509 members of Gen Z from across the United States. The online survey was completed between 24 March 2021 and 8 April 2021. To be considered a member of Generation Z, a person had to have been born between 1 January 1997 (age 24 in 2021) and 31 December 2007 (age 14 in 2021). The survey recruited 40% ages 14-17 and 60% ages 18-24.

A photograph of two young women, likely Gen Z, looking at a smartphone together. The woman on the left is wearing a light purple hoodie and has her finger on the screen. The woman on the right is wearing a red turtleneck and has her hand near the phone. The background is dark, and the overall mood is focused and collaborative.

These digital natives have had access to real-time, unlimited and unfiltered content practically since birth.

Born into digital, Gen Z has only known instant and unfettered access to friends, news and entertainment all through a single device. With this, they have gained an ability to learn at a rate that was inconceivable to past generations.

They can imagine what others think impossible and they are not afraid to question convention and propose new normals.

Through it all, they are changing societies, redefining cultural norms and challenging geopolitical and business assumptions that have been in place for decades.

Gen Z instantly experiences it all – for better or worse.



2000

OxyContin launches

Facebook launches

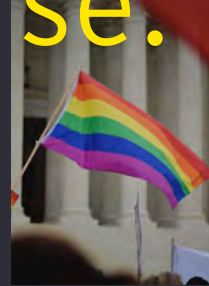
Wi-Fi Revolution

First iPhone released

2010

Osama bin Laden killed

Aurora, CO movie theater shooting



The Supreme Court legalizes gay marriage

Hillary Clinton runs for President

George Floyd is murdered

BLM gains momentum

Columbine High School Massacre

GPS goes mainstream

Uber launches in New York City

Superstorm Sandy devastates the East Coast

#MeToo movement gains momentum

Vice President Harris elected



9/11 Terrorist Attack

Netflix announces streaming video

Hilary Clinton runs for President

The Occupy Wall Street movement begins

Expansion of broadband and streaming

Donald Trump elected



California Wildfires

Barack Obama elected



Sandy Hook school shooting

The Black Lives Matter movement begins

Las Vegas shooting

The Great Recession begins

Recreational marijuana legalized in CO and WA

Boston Marathon bombing

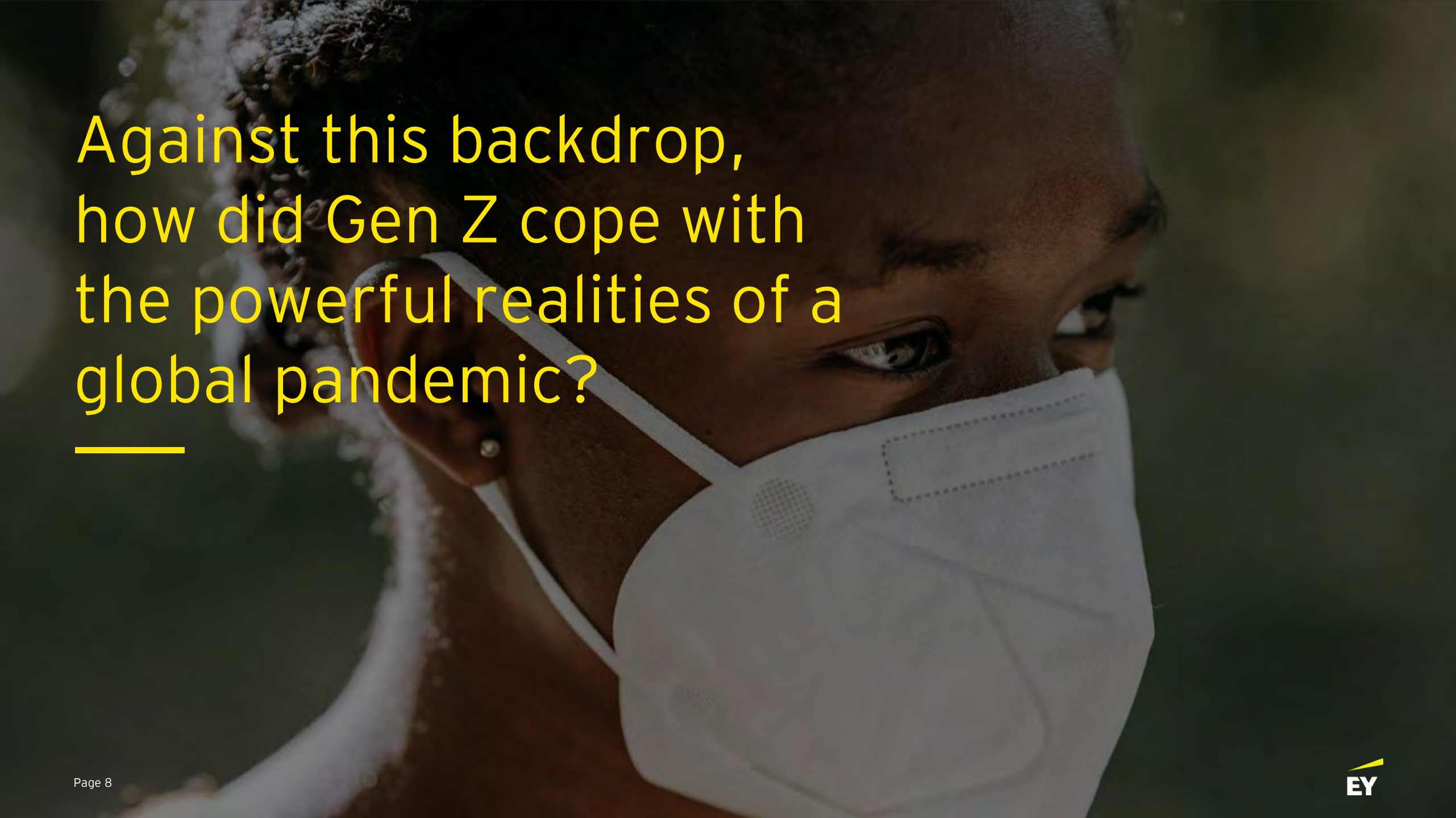
Orlando nightclub shooting

COVID-19 Pandemic

Assault on The Capitol

Barack Obama re-elected

The Flint water crisis begins



Against this backdrop,
how did Gen Z cope with
the powerful realities of a
global pandemic?

As the global pandemic raged, Gen Z experienced the realities of an economic, health, and social crises. Their response will define their generation.

69%

worried about running out of food.

Q: Since March 2020, how often did you worry that your food would run out before your household got money to buy more?

28%

either lost their job or had someone in their family lose a job.

Q: Did you or anyone in your family lose their job because of COVID-19's effects on the economy, or did that not happen?

47%

of Gen Z know someone who was seriously ill or died from COVID-19.

Q: Do you personally know someone who was seriously ill or died from COVID-19, or do you not know anyone like that?




The **global pandemic brought fundamental changes** to this generation, as they tried to come to grips with home schooling, lockdowns and social injustice.

It activated
their activism.

It challenged
their mental health.

It redefined how
they find meaning.





Trying to define Gen Z
defies the realities of Gen Z.
They are, by far, the most
diverse generation yet.

As we've seen with millennials, and every generation that preceded them, there is no single perspective that defines Gen Z. Instead, they're a generation full of plans, passions and paradoxes. Their diverse experiences and strong opinions will have a profound impact on society. And their time is now.

This study focused on engaging and recruiting an audience as diverse as the generation itself.

In the EY 2020 Gen Z Segmentation Study – published just before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic – we identified five unique segments within Gen Z.

Just one year later, the pandemic has created measurable change among this generation's segments. **There is no longer tolerance for indifference and stress levels are rising across the board.**

Explore more details about each segment in our pre-pandemic report published in April 2020.

[Gen Z – A generation of contradiction](#) →

Gen Z segments



Stressed Strivers

35% of Gen Z in 2021



Authentic Activists

22% of Gen Z in 2021



Big Dreamers

18% of Gen Z in 2021




Secluded Perfectionists

20% of Gen Z in 2021



Carefree Constituents

5% of Gen Z in 2021

A woman with dark curly hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a black top with colorful polka dots. She has her hands raised, and a large cloud of multi-colored powder (yellow, blue, orange, purple) is exploding from her hands and covering her face. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

Thank you for your
interest in the
EY Gen Z Insights
Report.

[To access the full report, please provide your information here.](#)

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