

THIS IS BLACK GEN Z

Key Findings Report

OCTOBER 2023

Pioneering a future of work driven by
belonging, fairness and opportunity

Tap
in



ABOUT THE REPORT

This is Black Gen Z Report

This is the second iteration of the #ThisIsBlackGenZ research report, capturing the voices of Black Gen Z Talent in the UK through a mixed methods approach. A further 2,300+ Black people between the ages of 16–25 were surveyed and interviewed in 2023 in a bid to dig deeper into their experiences of being Black in the workplace, and to understand what motivates the community to stay and ultimately perform.

The data collected for #ThisIsBlackGenZ 2022 was groundbreaking and has since been used by employers globally to strategise for more equitable employment experiences for the Black community. Having understood how Black Gen Z approach the process of finding, applying for and thriving in jobs; this report utilises an intersectional lens and digs deeper into the nuances of the Black Gen Z experience.

#ThisIsBlackGenZ remains the largest research into the experiences of Black Gen Z in Britain. We will continue telling the stories of this community, which, despite a brief surge of attention in 2020, remain underrepresented and undersupported. The impact of work like this is widespread – we must continue to learn and grow through listening, building understanding and responding appropriately to build equitable employment outcomes for all.

THE AUTHORS



Tiana Holgate

Head of Diversity, Equity,
Inclusion & Belonging, TapIn



Rachel Ayeh-Datey

Lead Qualitative
Researcher, TapIn



Erin McDermott

Chief Operating Officer,
TapIn



Ben Ellis

Lead Quantitative
Researcher, TapIn



Jemma Charnley

Lead Copywriter &
Researcher, TapIn

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We are hugely grateful to our employer partners for their support and commitment to amplifying the voices of Black Gen Z: IHG, UBS, Newton Europe & RS Grassroots. Thank you to the TapIn team – those who facilitated the research and those who brought all other elements of the project to life. To our consultant and partner Frankie Dadzie – we are so grateful for your invaluable contributions. Thank you to our partners who supported us in fulfilling our ambitious research goals – 90s Baby Show, 20/20 Levels and BYP Network.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who participated in the research. Your stories matter and we are grateful for the opportunity to amplify your voices.

The logo for '20 / 20 LEVELS' is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is centered within a white rectangular box that has a thin orange border.The logo for 'BYP NETWORK' features the letters 'BYP' in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font, with the word 'NETWORK' in a smaller, black, sans-serif font below it. The text is enclosed in a white rectangular box with a thin orange border.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

TapIn is a creative social agency that reshapes how employers understand and engage diverse talent. We specialise in developing talent attraction strategies which aid our clients in recruiting diverse talent. Our range of services covers various aspects of DEIB research, social media content production and influencer marketing. The company is home to a talented team of diverse researchers, creative strategists, content creators, DEIB experts and influencers in the industry.

We are authentic.
We are innovative.
We are inclusive.
We are TapIn.

Tap
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EMPLOYER PARTNERS

IHG
HOTELS & RESORTS

 **UBS**

NEWTON

 **GRASSROOTS**

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FOREWORD

Tiana Holgate

We are still far away from the truly equitable world of work many of us desire, with businesses still not quite hitting the mark on building supportive workforces where all individuals can thrive. In 2022, we focused on capturing the experiences of Black Gen Z who were about to enter or were already in the workplace. The focus was on storytelling. It was refreshing and empowering to see the experiences my community and I have discussed for years depicted so plainly.

Having the largest quantitative dataset to support the anecdotal evidence of the Black Gen Z experience was groundbreaking. Since 2020, we've seen increased attention on race in the world of work, but this is now on the decline. It is interesting to see that now that the spotlight isn't on so many businesses, the appetite to do meaningful work is dwindling. This is a concern to us at TapIn.

It's a concern that the black squares and headlines were more about accolades than impact. But Gen Z are seeing through this, and they're now concerned to learn who will actually be able to support them as they begin and progress their careers.

So what's happened since the #ThisIsBlackGenZ 2022 Launch?

We saw this data reach news outlets and press, but most importantly we saw it reach the strategies of companies who needed it. The data was a shock to many, but for those of us in the Black community, much of it wasn't a surprise at all. We are proud of the necessary insights we shared, and now it is time to build on what we learned.

This year, our focus is on intersectionality. The first year was about creating research focusing on Black Gen Z and hearing their stories because it had not been done before. But this year, the focus is on digging deeper. Because no one is just one thing, everyone has different aspects of their identity affecting their experience. Every type of discrimination comes from an imbalance of power. This is the mindset that has driven the development of our research questions and qualitative research design.

The data from this year reveals how the intersections of gender, ability, sexual orientation and skin tone affect people. We learn how darker-skinned Black women feel the least comfortable during interviews. We also see the continued lack of inclusivity around neurodiversity, with 50% of Gen Z women saying they would be uncomfortable reporting a mental/neurological diversability during the recruitment process. Furthermore, we found a general lack of belonging throughout Gen Z, with 47% of Black Gen Z, 63% of LGBTQ+, 91% of Trans and 59% of diversely-able participants saying they did not feel comfortable being their authentic selves in the world of work.

We have a responsibility to combat these disparities. The data we have collected provides us with a clear picture of how interconnected issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging are. As such, the actions required to achieve equity and belonging for everyone must be approached intentionally and holistically.

Navigating the world of work myself has been a real journey. It took years to find my voice as a Black woman in the workplace and start sharing the ideas I had. I have been privileged in a variety of ways, yet my experience has by no means been an easy one. We present this research as another drop in the ocean to contribute to the wave of change needed to build equitable outcomes for the next generation of Black talent.

With that being said, I am proud to introduce the second year of our #ThisIsBlackGenZ research report, focusing on the experiences of Black Gen Z in Britain.



Tiana Holgate

Head of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
TapIn

EXECUTIVE

Summary

The definitions of highlighted words can all be found in the **glossary on page 66**.

WHAT ARE THE RESEARCH AIMS?

#ThisIsBlackGenZ aims to tell the stories of Black Gen Z in the UK — to understand their experiences of the world of work, and ascertain their pain points that require change. At TapIn, we know the more employers learn and understand about Black Gen Z, the closer they get to building equitable employee life-cycles. Everyone deserves to thrive.



WHY IS THIS RESEARCH NEEDED?

The world of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) is an ever-changing one. Following an influx of attention towards the Black community in 2020, the landscape of roles focused on building equity into the world of work reached new heights. However, the inauthenticity to this attention was rapidly illuminated, with the focus on race dissipating the further we get from the 2020 Black Lives Matter surge.

Black communities remain underrepresented across almost all employment sectors of the UK and Gen Z are not exempt from this. The result? Many business are not operating at their optimum efficiency, creativity or profitability due to their lack of diversity.

We know that race is not the only aspect to building DEIB. At the intersections of gender, class, sexual orientation, ability and more we see complex, nuanced forms of discrimination, abuses of power and inequality which remain under-researched in the world of work. Gen Z are alert to this. They were the most active generation in 2020, and unlike many other groups, they have not stayed quiet since. They are building the world they want to see, and employers need them on their side.

From tech, finance and hospitality to engineering, consulting and property — many industries are attempting to get ready for Gen Z, but they are already here and have already had a significant impact. There are approximately 12.7 million Gen Z in the UK, many of which are already occupying workplaces, with some soon turning 26.

In order to support employers in their journey to build more equitable workforces, the second iteration of #ThisIsBlackGenZ has been conducted as we seek to understand: what values drive Black Gen Z in the world of work, how they navigate the recruitment journey and how belonging can be cultivated for this trailblazing generation.



KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding #1: Black Gen Z are motivated by salary and training opportunities but they value a *true* commitment to DEIB above all other values.

It should come as no surprise that for both Black and White Gen Z, salary is the biggest motivator for choosing a job. However, Black Gen Z's prioritise training and development opportunities more than their White counterparts. Black Gen Z's show a deep commitment to growing and learning new skills and employers who can support them with this growth are much needed.

But Gen Z is a generation driven by passion and values for the world around them, and this is echoed too, especially with Black Gen Z. We've found they are more driven by their passion for their jobs, with 67% of Black Gen Z motivated by their passion for the job and career — this is higher than their White counterparts. Another key difference is Black Gen Z's list **DEIB** as their top company value. Whilst for their White counterparts, they value mental health and wellbeing efforts the most. In order to get Black Gen Z on board, this value has to be clearly illustrated throughout your organisation.

There are also key differences within genders. Black women are more likely to prioritise DEIB than men and are 6% more likely to prioritise mental health support from a company too. In fact, mental health and wellbeing efforts are most important to them. Furthermore, 62% of neurodivergent Gen Z say mental health and wellbeing efforts are most important.

Key Finding #2: The barriers Black Gen Z face in the recruitment process are exacerbated at the intersections of gender, skin tone and ability.

There are many barriers that Black Gen Z's face when navigating the recruitment process, with different aspects of identity creating different experiences. They have reported regular instances of misogyny, colourism and ableism being rife in their experience of recruitment processes. In particular 86% of African candidates tend to change their names when applying for jobs. They either shortened their African names to sound more anglicised or omitted parts of their African names, in the hope of getting further along the process. This shows even before Gen Z's get into positions, they are already code-switching which makes it even harder for them to bring their authentic selves to work. Only 45% of Black women feel able to be authentic in interviews compared to 86% of White women.

Black Gen Z first stop to find roles is online job boards, closely followed by LinkedIn. Black Gen Z's particularly like LinkedIn as they can easily check the diversity of companies they are interested in by looking at their employees. They use LinkedIn over two times as much as their White and Asian counterparts. Traditional social media platforms like X, Facebook and Instagram are also used. To learn more about a company they go to websites, job boards like Glassdoor and companies' social media pages. Therefore, the digital presence and social reputation of a company is vital as Black Gen Z are very aware and cautious about potential employers.

The top types of content Black Gen Z want to see from an employer are short form videos which provide career advice and where they can see that diversity is regularly celebrated.



Key Finding #3: Black Gen Z see authenticity and belonging as the key to thriving at work — but this is not their current reality.

85% of Black Gen Z say being their authentic selves at work is key to their job satisfaction. However this is not the reality for most and they are no longer willing to accept it. 47% of Black Gen Z, 63% of LGBTQ+ individuals, 91% transgender people and 59% of diversely-abled people feel unable to be authentic in the workplace.

Black Gen Z routinely feel the need to change aspects of themselves to fit into their work environments. Gen Z individuals with diverse abilities report having to change aspects of themselves to fit in at work (59%), almost twice as much as Gen Z individuals without diverse abilities.

Authenticity looks like not having to code switch such as changing names or accents and being fearless with self expression by not questioning if your natural state is professional enough. Not being able to show up as your authentic self generally led to feelings of anxiety, lack of productivity and thus lower rates of retention.

INTRODUCTION

WHY ARE WE STILL FOCUSING ON BLACK GEN Z?

The Black community in England and Wales comprises of 2.4 million people (4.0% of the population)¹. However, Black people are under-represented in almost *all* employment sectors in the UK and experience an unemployment rate of 7.2% (over double their White counterparts)². For Black people navigating the world of work, the journey is rarely a smooth one — 58% of 18–24 year-olds have experienced racism at work in the last 5 years, as have 52% of 25–34 year-olds.³



This is the story that sparked the creation of #ThisIsBlackGenZ — the first and only research of its kind. The 2022 Black Talent Research project focused on UK-based 16 to 25-year-olds identifying as Black, who are about to enter, or already are, in the workplace. The vision was, and still is, to ensure Black people have equitable education, employment and training (EET) opportunities and outcomes. We know the most diverse work environments are the most beneficial to business outcomes — so understanding the Black Gen Z experience is where we started to help businesses on this journey.

Having built a comprehensive overview of the Black Gen Z experience of finding roles, applying for jobs, and progressing in their careers in 2022, we identified the need to dig deeper into the ‘why’ behind some of this data. Discovering and presenting more nuanced insights allows us to aid businesses in building more equitable experiences for the Black community.

Systems of oppression continually intersect and create nuanced experiences within the Black community. The world of work is not exempt from this.

75% of women of colour have experienced racism at work, with 27% suffering racial slurs.⁴ 10% of Black, Asian and minority ethnic LGBT employees have been physically attacked by customers or colleagues in the last year.⁵

¹ GOV.UK (2018). Population of England and Wales. [online] Service.gov.uk. Available at: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest#by-ethnicity>.

² GOV.UK (2019). Employment by sector. [online] Service.gov.uk. Available at: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment-by-sector/latest>.

³ Costi, A. (2023). *Year of Black Workers 2023 | Black members news | News*. [online] UNISON National. Available at: <https://www.unison.org.uk/black-members-news/2023/01/year-of-black-workers-2023/>

⁴ The Fawcett Society and The Runnymede Trust (2022). *BROKEN LADDERS: THE MYTH OF MERITOCRACY FOR WOMEN OF COLOUR IN THE WORKPLACE*.

⁵ Stonewall (2018). *LGBT in Britain – Work Report*. [online] Stonewall. Available at: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/lgbt-britain-work-report>.



Our 2023 research aimed to delve into these intersections and tell the stories of *all* of Black Gen Z in Britain.

In March to July 2023, we surveyed over 2,300 Black Gen Z students and employees to understand:

- What values drive Black Gen Z in the world of work?
- How do Black Gen Z navigate the recruitment journey?
- How can belonging be cultivated for Black Gen Z?

We also conducted 16 qualitative focus groups with Black Gen Z students and employees, to gain an in-depth understanding of their views and experiences, with a particular focus on their specific intersecting identities.

In this study, we define Black Gen Z as people who identify as:

- Aged 16 to 25
- Based in the UK
- African, Caribbean, or any other ethnic background mixed with an African and/or Caribbean heritage.

SO, WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS CARE?

Having diverse, equitable workforces is more than just the moral thing to do. Companies sitting at the top quartile of ethnic and cultural diversity outperform those at the fourth quartile by 36% in profitability.⁶ Furthermore, diverse teams benefit from a cognitive agility, complexity and creativity that non-diverse teams do not. Such teams see more effective and considered decision-making, are also less likely to remain complacent in thinking and often have heightened communication skills through collaboration.

We pursue diversity, equity and inclusion because it is the right thing to do, yes. But doing so, also benefits businesses.

⁶ Dixon-Fyle, S., Dolan, K., Hunt, D.V. and Prince, S. (2020). *How diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) matter* | McKinsey. [online] [www.mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters#/). Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters#/>

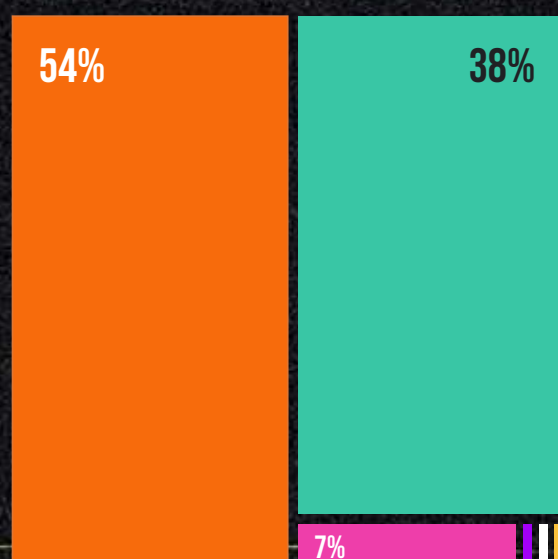
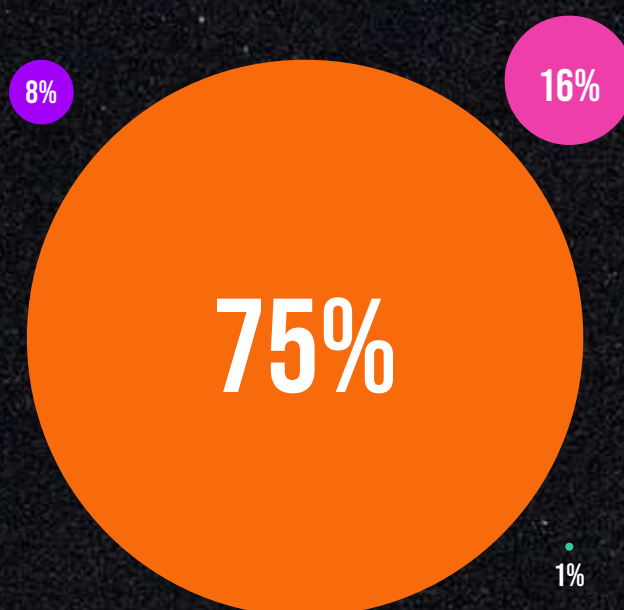
WHO TOOK PART?

The sample

Overall 4,068 people took part in our survey – all of which were UK residents. Within this report, we focus on the 3,059 Gen Z respondents, and the 2,367 Black Gen Z respondents. This section of the report outlines the demographic of our respondents by race, gender, life stage, sexual orientation, ability, skin tone, and region in the UK.

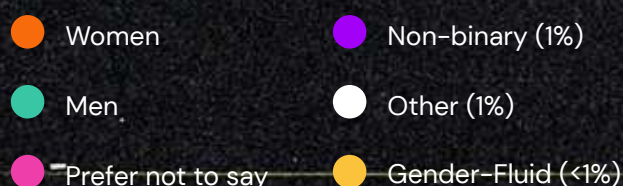
RACE

The vast majority of our Gen Z sample was made up of Black respondents, as this was our target audience for this piece of research. Our 2023 sample saw an increased number and proportion of Black Gen Z respondents, however, having a substantial number of respondents of other backgrounds was essential in order for us to benchmark the experiences of Black Gen Z against that of their counterparts.



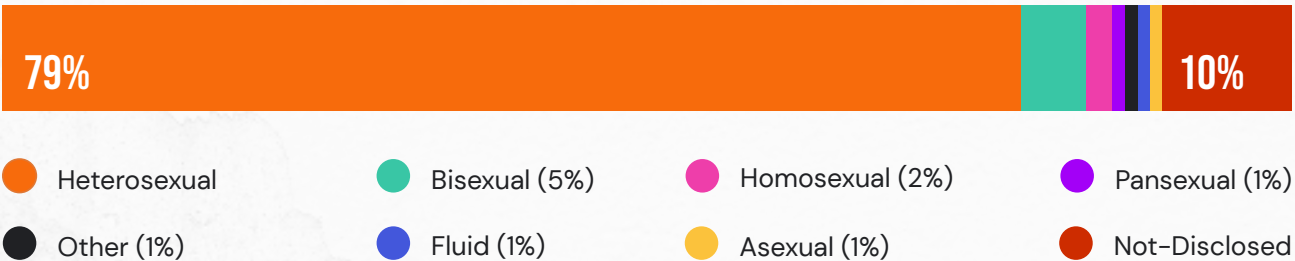
GENDER

Over half of the Black Gen Z respondents identify as women (54%), followed by men (38%), non binary (1%) and gender fluid (<1%). 2022 saw an increased proportion of men responding, which was an intentional goal during outreach to improve representation.



SEXUAL ORIENTATION

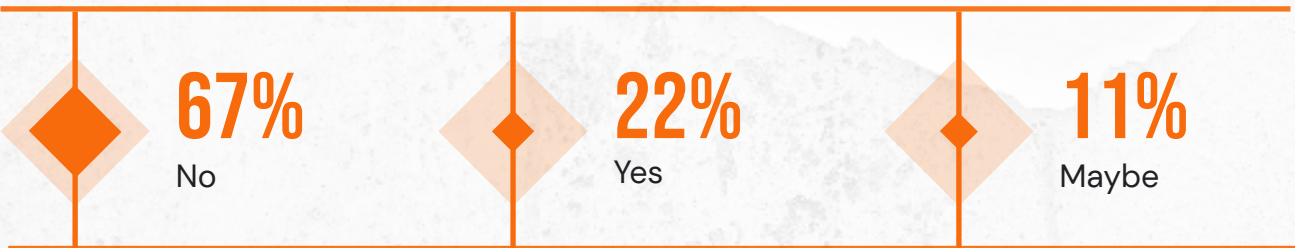
Of our Black Gen Z respondents, the majority (79%) were heterosexual and 10% were LGBTQ+. This demonstrates a welcome increase in representation of the LGBTQ+ community within our research — another area of focus for us given the intentional exploration of intersectionality within the research.



DIVERSABILITY

Within our Black Gen Z sample, 20% disclosed having a diversability, whether this be diagnosed or undiagnosed. 10% of this sample report 'maybe' to having a diversability.

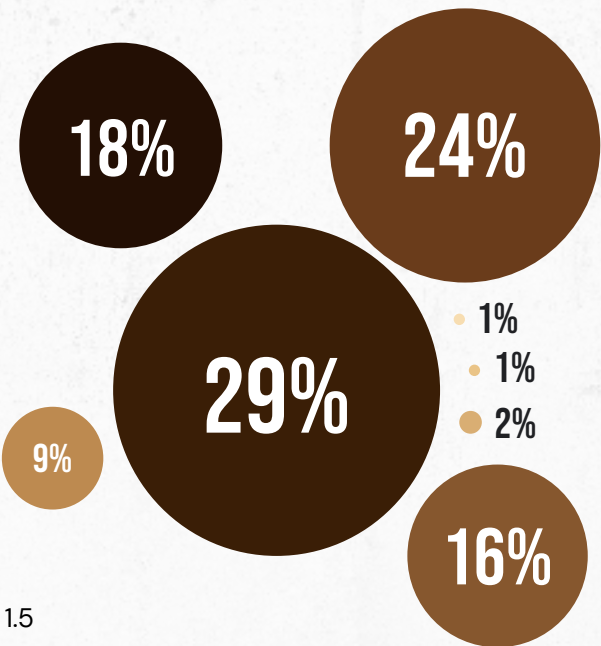
Diversabilities refer to physical, cognitive, developmental, learning, and/or neurological differences, or diversity, in ability levels.



SKIN TONE

For the 2023 research, looking at skin tone was crucial. Themes of **colourism** are hugely under-researched in the UK landscape, whilst remaining prevalent in the world of work. We asked Black respondents to select which skin tone was the closest reflection of theirs.

To standardise this data, we used the Fitzpatrick scale, which uses a six-category classification for human skin colour. It is also the basis of the skin tones used for emoji modifiers. Whilst the scale uses six categories (Fitzpatrick 1-6), the skin tone question in the survey had eight options in order to be as inclusive as possible. We added Fitzpatrick 1.5 and 5.5 for the purposes of our analysis.



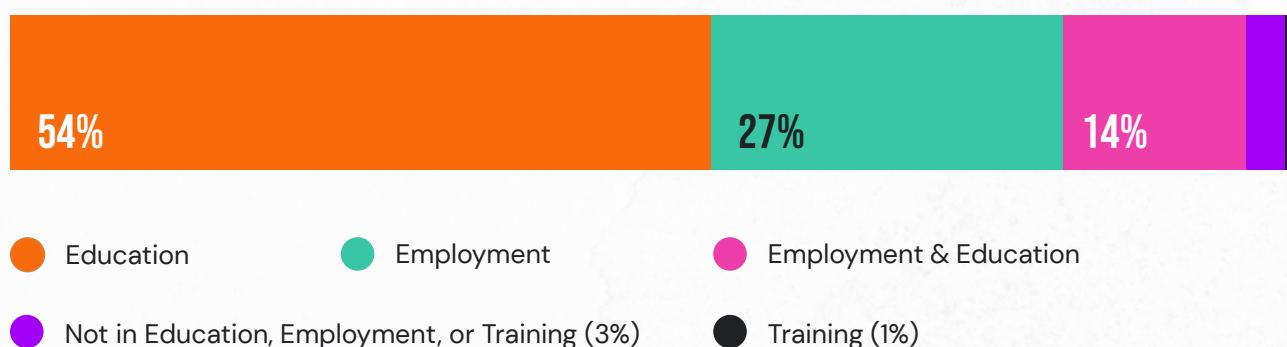
REGION IN THE UK

A new question for this year in terms of demography, was to identify the location of formative years for respondents. We are aware that for Gen Z, the corporate world is seen to be centred around the capital city. As such, we asked this question to identify whether experiences and perspectives varied across region. As expected the largest group of respondents originated from London (30%). This was followed by the North West (15%) and the South East (9%).



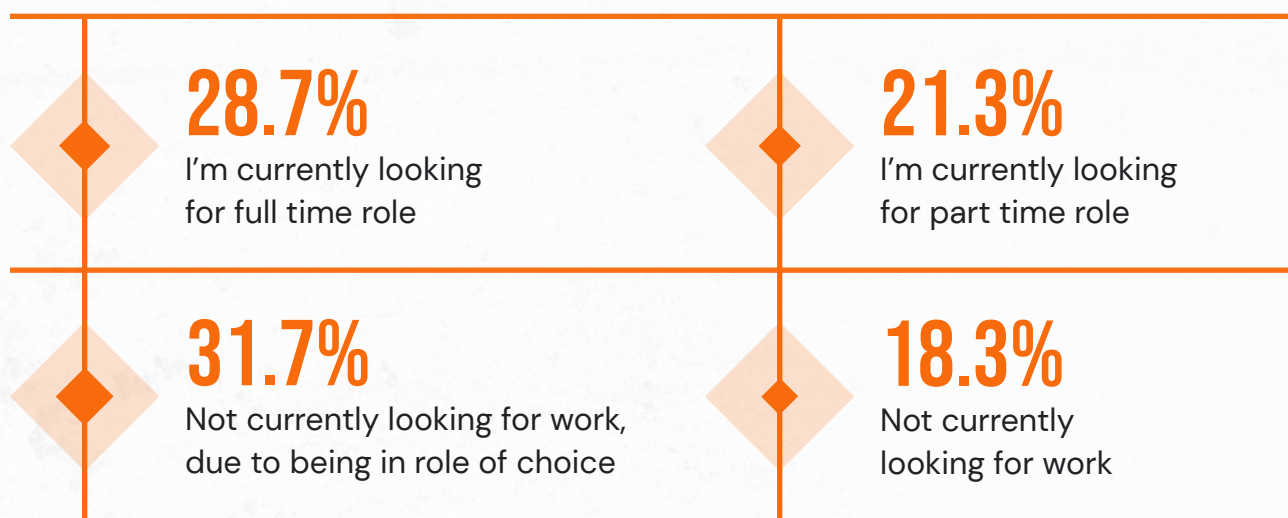
EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Similarly to our 2022 research, just over half of Black Gen Z respondents were in education (54%) followed by employment (27%). 14% were pursuing both education and employment. A decline from 2022, 3% were not in employment, education or training followed by those in training alone at 1%.



JOB SEEKERS

When asking about participants' life stage, we aimed to understand whether they are currently actively looking into careers. Of our sample, 50% are currently looking for work – some full time and some part time. 31.7% are currently in a role they are content in, and thus are not actively looking for a new role (but could perhaps move for the right opportunity) and 18.3% are not currently looking for work (e.g. due to being in full time education).



The diverse range of participants we heard from during the survey has allowed us to dig into some interesting reflections and intersections for 2023.



FOCUS GROUP SAMPLE

We conducted 16 focus groups with Black Gen Z, broken down by the identity groups. This was done to understand the nuances within these groups and provide a safe space for more complex themes to be discussed. Two focus groups took place per identity factor and were broken down as follows: women, students, working professionals, diverse-abilities, non-Londoners, darker skin tone, Caribbean, 25+.

Spotlight A YEAR ON WITH BLACK GEN Z

In the lead-up to #ThisIsBlackGenZ 2022, TapIn reached out to 15 young Black Gen Z in the UK who were leading the way in diversity and inclusion efforts. For 2023, we decided to reconnect with 5 of these individuals and conduct more in-depth discussions about how they and their work progressed over the last year.

In this chapter, we will break down the conversations we had.



THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY

The key focus of this year's report is to build on the foundations of last year's report as well as look at their experiences with a more intersectional lens. Whether prompted or not, the theme of intersectionality cropped up throughout the conversations had in "A Year On."

When asked about intersectionality, Seun Odensaya pointed out her views on how the intersection of race and gender is something she has noticed in particular.

"Intersectionality in the workplace is something I completely recognise ... And sometimes with Black women in particular, I think we're kind of missed with diversity initiatives. Because there will be a focus on women. And then they'll look at men and be like, okay, we need more diverse men. But then I do feel Black women kind of fall through the cracks."

Lauren Pereira-Greene also spoke to the difficulty of navigating spaces as someone identifying as a Black woman.

"I feel like a lot of women I know are a lot more conscious about voicing their ideas when they are in a majority-male space. But then also as the only 'non-White' person as well, I felt under a lot of pressure to say the right thing."

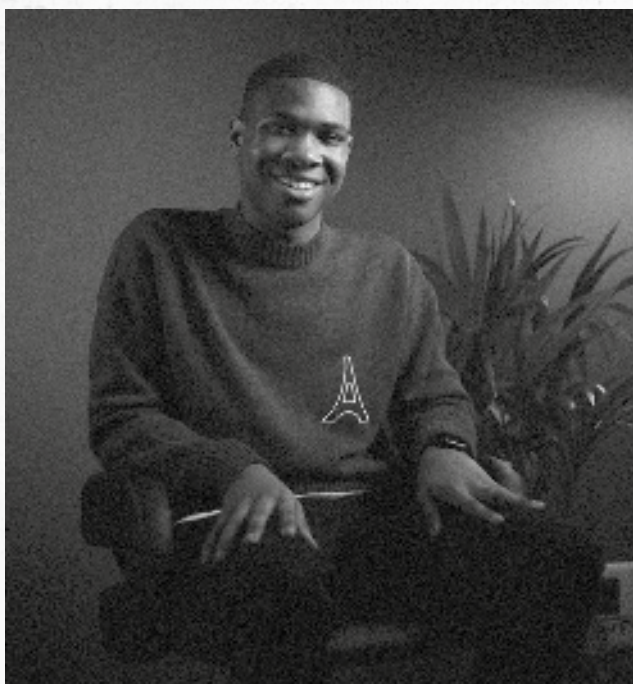
On the other hand, Tiana Holgate spoke about how ethnicity also makes a difference, relating to her own experience of being Caribbean.

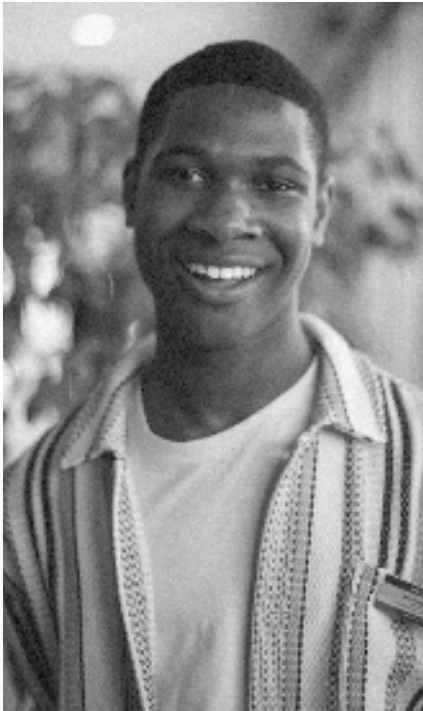
"For example, as someone with Caribbean heritage, changing my name or surname isn't something I ever consider because my surname is a British-sounding slave name and originates from Yorkshire."



Lastly, Onyinye Udokporo talked about how being Black and neurodiverse can often impact your experience, particularly in terms of diagnosis and general treatment.

"I say that because so many different factors come with being Black and neurodivergent. The first is there is a big cultural block to neurodivergence, which is due to a lack of education about what Neurodivergence is."





THE BARRIERS GEN Z FACE

#ThisIsBlackGenZ 2022 made clear the various barriers Black Gen Z face when entering the world of work. The interviewees this year spoke to some of the most commonly discussed ones, giving their own perspectives or experiences.

Seun Odensaya highlighted the struggle she herself faced when starting her graduate role, as she was worried about her hair and what would be considered 'professional.'

"Before moving to Aberdeen for my job, I remember getting my hair done and thinking a few days after whether I should have gotten a weave instead of braids. And I remember genuinely struggling with that and just thinking it shouldn't be like this. But at the same time, I wanted to be viewed as professional."

NUANCED DIVERSITY & INCLUSION EFFORTS

The final recurring theme of these interviews was the nuances in Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging efforts. In particular, the interviewees drew attention to how organisations need to adopt a more holistic lens to be effective and how there needs to be a balance between making beneficial generalised efforts on DEI, and building tailored strategies for individuals.

George Obolo spoke to this, as well as how he believes data-driven changes are where the most impact will be made.

"One thing I find particularly exciting about them, some other companies are doing this really well too, is just the evidence-backed recommendations for improving D&I. So recommendations that have been observed in studies can be contextualized and applied to each company – it ensures companies aren't doing inauthentic things just for the sake of it."

Conversation sits at the root of change. We highly value the opportunity to talk to these individuals about their lived experiences over the last two years, and we have learned invaluable insights from every one of them. Speaking to these five Gen Z both in 2022 and now has allowed us to see how their experiences have grown, and how the world of work is developing for the next generation of young Black Leaders. To read their conversation in more depth, please visit thisisblackgenz.com/blog.

01

WHAT MATTERS TO BLACK GEN Z

01 WHAT MATTERS TO BLACK GEN Z

Truly understanding diverse talent is what will set businesses in Talent Attraction apart, do you know what excites Black Gen Z, what makes them tick? Do you know what intrinsic drivers they have that influence their decision-making, what or who they are influenced by externally or what values they have? Building diverse teams means optimising businesses through diversity of thinking, diversity of experience and diversity of perspective, but before building anything, let's start at the beginning of **WHO BLACK GEN Z ARE AT THE HEART.**

WHAT MOTIVATES BLACK GEN Z WHEN IT COMES TO WORK?

68.8%

of Gen Z are motivated by a decent salary.

It's no surprise financial incentive peaks as the top priority for Gen Z in relation to workplace benefits, however, Gen Z are becoming more savvy with their assessment of what is deemed fair pay. Not only do they look at the salary, they look at the job description with an analytical lens to see if it's fair, reflective of the required duties and how much work-life balance could be achieved as a result of fulfilling the role.

"I look for balance with flexibility. I also look at the responsibilities of the role and if it matches with pay. This gives me a view of if they have enough staff."



This comprehensive approach to role assessments at the application stage by prospective candidates is key to explore due to the variances by gender. Gen Z men opted for salary as a sole priority over four times as much as Gen Z women;

SALARY AS A SOLE PRIORITY

65%

14%

● Gen Z Men

● Gen Z Women

Gen Z women opted for a combination of benefits instead:

65%

Salary + Flexible
Working Hours

66%

Salary + Training
Opportunities

70%

Salary + Annual Leave

Flexible Working was deemed the most popular working style (with no reference to face-to-face or remote). Gen Z will actively seek out roles that demonstrate agency to control their working day and what it looks like in terms of hours, rather than expressing a preference of location.

Over half of Black Gen Z (52%) prefer flexible working, whereas only 25% of White Gen Z opted for this working style. White Gen Z preferred hybrid working as their top choice, with **29% of respondents** leaning towards time split between the office and remote settings as more important, than deciding how their day is structured. This is particularly useful to learn as the reversal of the remote work trend is in full swing. We've now seen many employers encouraging more employees to return back to the office, therefore useful to note how both flexible hours and hybrid options are preferential to Black Gen Z than 100% back in office or 100% remote. This is something to keep in mind when developing team working styles as part of long-term retention strategies.

- Black Gen Z - Flexible working
- White Gen Z - Flexible working
- All respondents - Time split (office / remote)

Building well-rounded benefit packages with an industry-standard salary as bare minimum ensures candidates of **all genders** will be attracted to your company.

25%

29%

52%



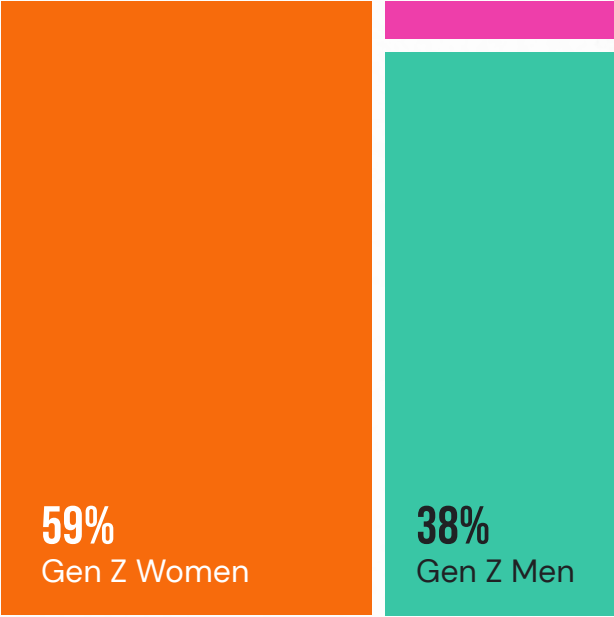
Black British Woman
18-24 years old

"Standard working hours are outdated. I don't think returning to the office is fun or inclusive. The pandemic changed working styles and people found the way they worked wasn't suited for them. I have never had to do a full 9-5 and I'm fully remote. I worry that my next job won't be accommodative"

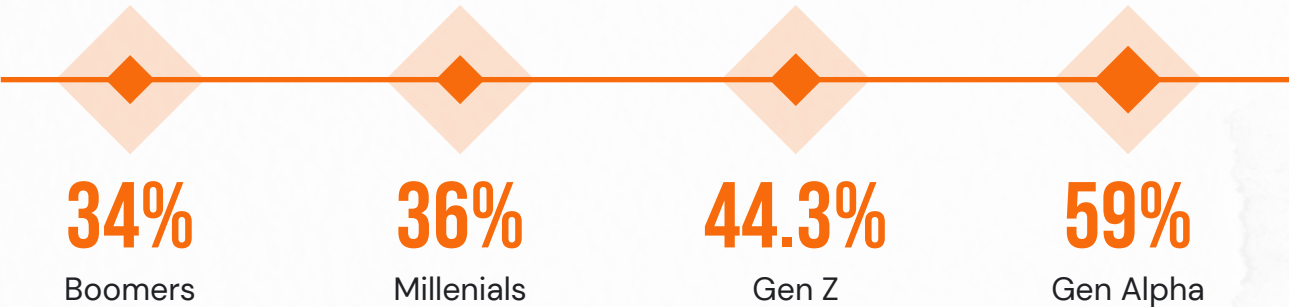


Age and gender are also influential in regards to preference for flexible working. The disparity between Gen Z men and women is notable, yet on trend as more women seek out more work-life balance enabling them to sustain achievable career aspirations simultaneously to traditional caregiving roles and unpaid domestic.

- Gen Z Women
- Gen Z Men
- Other (3%)



The younger the generation, the more interest there is in flexible working as a top priority. This will ultimately shape the workforce preference over the course of the next 15 years and the type of working environment that employers should aim to build to attract and retain diverse talent.



Black Gen Z in particular view salary as the most important factor driving their interest when applying to job roles, in contrast to their White counterparts. This mirrors the racial wealth gap, whereby Black Gen Z may be driven to build generational wealth they've seen some of their White peers have. The notion of financially supporting families was also mentioned in relation to salary, highlighting the driving force behind this motivation.



Black British Nigerian Woman
18-24 years old

"I see what the pay progression is like and the workplace culture. Also the way staff describe their day makes a big impact. If people who work there say they work long hours and only have a packet of crisps for lunch, this is a big negative for me."



Black Gen Z no longer take salary on face value as an arbitrary number, but cross-reference the incentive in line with realistic expectations of working hours, work-life balance and workplace culture. Even more favourable or higher than market rate salaries, Gen Z hold the notion of 'Is this worth it?' approach weighing up multiple variables. If Gen Z are already employed and conduct an 'Is this worth it?' analysis without seeing any real changes from the employer, it can often contribute to the trend of 'Quiet Quitting' where the enthusiasm to get involved, be energised and showcase passion towards their work, may begin to reduce gradually or as Gen Z would describe it – 'acting your wage'.

Gen Z rely on their peers' opinions through review sites and socials to obtain authentic information about companies, that they often avoid sharing or struggle to share in a way that resonates with Gen-Z. Therefore transparency on expectations, work-life balance and workplace culture is a must-have communications strategy to truly educate and attract this audience. This will be further explored in Chapter 2, under the section about [finding jobs and opportunities](#).

Interestingly, Black Gen Z view training and development as the second most important factor, whereas White Gen Z would be more driven to apply by favourable bonus or commission structures, access to mental health support and health insurance before training opportunities.

Quiet Quitting

Where employees perform their duties, with the lowest amount of effort sufficient enough to get by, get paid and not get fired. Instead of quitting the job, quitting the 'above and beyond' mentality. Boomers may say "Earn your stripes", Gen Z may counter that with "Pay me fairly and treat me well, to see my stripes".

WORKPLACE BENEFITS

BLACK GEN Z

78.9%

Salary

32.3%

Training Opportunities

WHITE GEN Z

41.9%

Salary

23.85%

Training Opportunities

This highlights the appetite of Black Gen Z to learn, grow and develop within a business, as continued professional development is a non-negotiable for them. They have clear goals to upskill simultaneously while earning a living wage. The likelihood of Gen Z staying at a workplace increases if they have the opportunity to up-skill through work and vision their pathway; this is irrespective of whether they are currently employed, in training or in education — it's a no-brainer. However, people of colour highlighted the importance of ethnically-targeted training programmes taking into consideration the intersectionality of needs and challenges per sub-group.



British Dominican Woman

24-30 years old

“Training programs for people of colour, so not only do they have a job but they also have the skillset to perform. They can also get to know senior leadership, get mentoring and identify any skills that are lacking”



Navigating the workplace as a woman of colour, means the likelihood of representation within senior leadership is less likely than that of black men. Therefore, including mentor-style training for this group would facilitate meaningful and continuous conversations to build confidence and skills. Although Black men are more likely to be represented within Senior Leadership than Black women, in contrast to their White men counterparts they are still highly underrepresented and would benefit from the inclusion of mentoring.

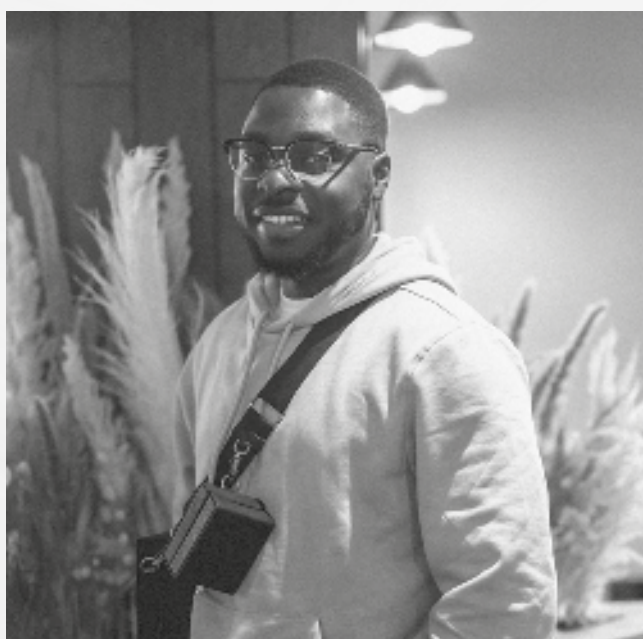
13%

Black respondents

13%

Asian respondents

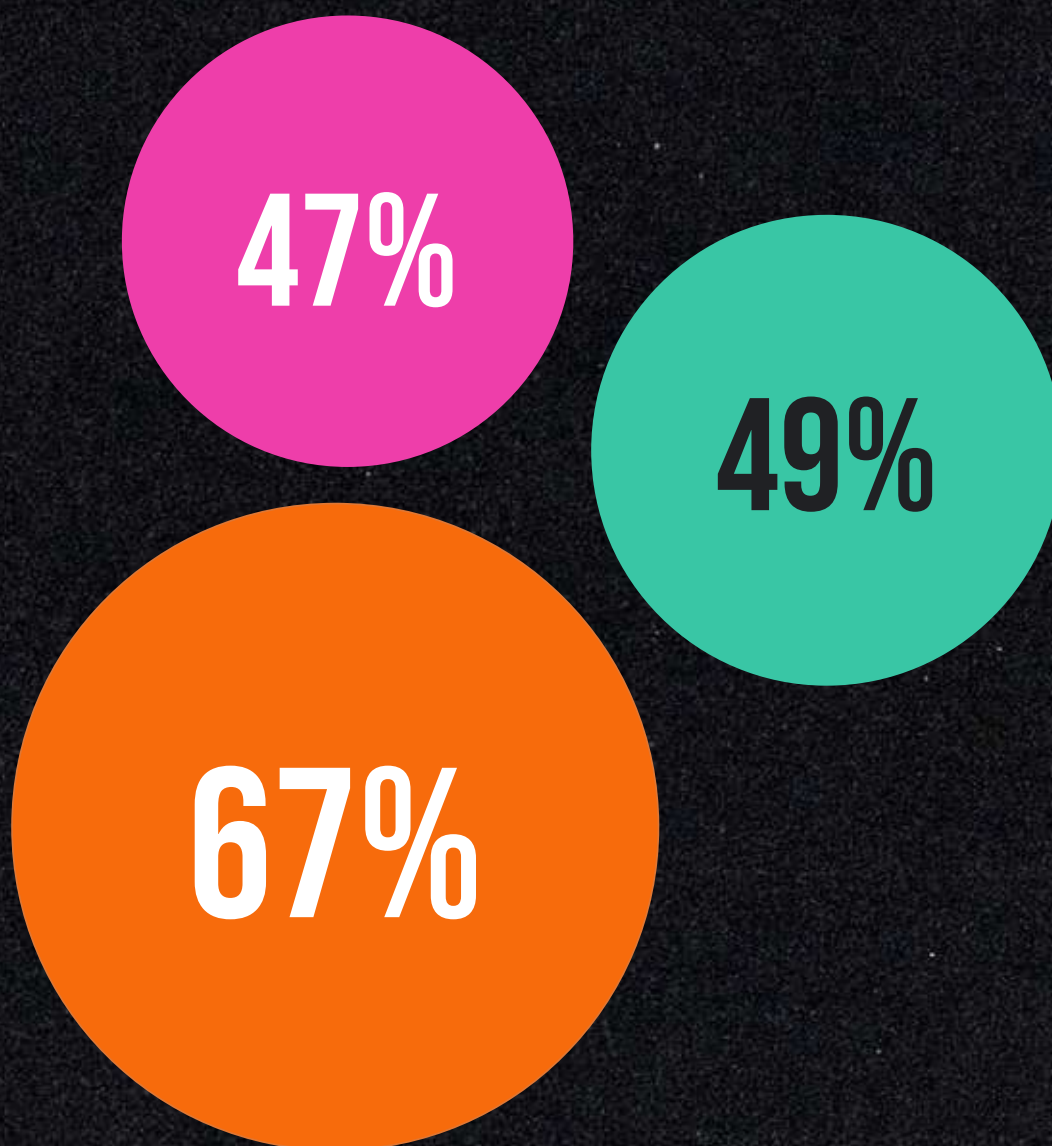
Only 13% of Black respondents and 13% of Asian respondents mentioned seeing themselves represented in senior roles as an influence.



Training, development and networking should take a blended approach as 100% remote working is the least popular working style for Gen Z. Appetite for learning, growth and development aligns with the degree of passion Gen Z expresses towards employment, although similarly **20% more of Black Gen Z** ranked **Passion** as an influencing factor when considering a job or career choice.

PROPORTION OF GEN Z NOTING 'PASSION' AS A MOTIVATING FACTOR AT WORK

- Black Gen Z
- Asian Gen Z
- White Gen Z



Tapping into Black Gen Z's desire to pursue a career aligned with their interests and values, it is imperative to explore what their values are through a data-led approach.

WHAT VALUES ARE IMPORTANT TO BLACK GEN Z?

Diversity & Inclusion

41.6%

of Black Gen Z
valued DEIB the most

41.6% of Black Gen Z ranked **DEIB** as the MOST important value they look out for when scouting the job market, which exceeded other Gen Z groups. Being part of a marginalised group, particularly when entering a workplace for the first time, it is difficult to know what 'standard practice' or 'normal' is without a reference point or comparison of other workplace experiences.

DEIB as an organisational value is universally placed high when considering a workplace to join. Interestingly, personal identity was not the sole driver for inclusive and diverse workplaces, highlighting how **DEIB** should be a visible priority that appeals to the majority regardless of race. The real emphasis here is how organisations put DEIB 'into action'. Gen Z needs to see **DEIB** weaved throughout business activity, representative teams and well-thought-out communications to believe it. This emphasises the idea your **DEIB** strategies need to be authentic to drive any change.



Black British Congolese Woman
25+ group, 25–28 years old

"I feel diversity and inclusion is the most important part in employment and needs to be put into action"





Black British-Ghanaian Woman
18-24 years old

“Most important thing: implement training sessions and feedback sessions for the employers, no change can be made without their input”.



Gen Z wants to use their voice and be part of the change when it comes to improving **DEIB** in the workplace, and it requires input from everyone, regardless of identity, to ensure it's a collective effort. Encouraging involvement creates a sense of belonging, as everyone's individual experiences are considered, helping to drive genuine human connection between teams.



Black British Caribbean Woman
18-24 years old

“Now I think about if the work I've been doing is going to be valued and is it making a difference and being appreciated. When I was younger, I did not realise diversity was a need for me in workplaces. It was much harder when I was younger, I was always a minority.”



There was a consistent trend of Gen Z establishing the importance of **DEIB** as they became older and gained different experiences, however, this highlights opportunities for organisations to make more impactful changes for Gen Z and Gen Alpha as they enter the world of work. It suggests they've seen inequity — either witnessed or experienced firsthand — creating a sense of reflection which translates into a drive for positive change within this space. Providing them with safe spaces to discuss sensitive issues, providing **DEIB** literacy training ensuring everyone is equipped with the tools to participate and fostering a culture of collaboration is paramount to align with this value.

Gender diversity is also recognised as important, with **women being 16% more likely to prioritise DEIB compared to men**. This highlights the need to employ gender equality practices and showcase initiatives to tackle issues that affect this group — *what initiatives do you have in place to tackle misogyny in the workplace?* Gen Z should be able to paint a clear image of your organisation and what you stand for, how you go about these types of initiatives by every brand touchpoint; through your website, your podcasts, your content, the language you use on your job boards, everything becomes 'evidence' as to whether your organisation truly stands for that value or not.



MENTAL HEALTH

Women are also 6% more likely to prioritise a company's mental health and wellbeing initiatives compared to men. This aligns with the trend of women being more prone to depression and anxiety disorders in adulthood, however, they also have the degree of self-awareness to understand its importance and the impact it can have on work-life.



Black Kenyan Woman
18-24 years old

"I focus more now on the wellbeing aspects the organisations have. Like how they approach mental health, especially focusing on marginalised races. I think about this more now than I did when I was younger. It is crucial that the people you work with constantly have your back, they have the same values as you"



Gen Z identifying outside of the **gender binary** and trans people are also more likely to prioritise a company's **DEIB** and Mental Health initiatives when considering their next role, compared to men.

DIVERSABILITY

Diversability largely influences the most important values Gen Z considers during the decision-making process when seeking employment. **62% of neurodivergent individuals say their next employer must prioritise mental health and wellbeing**, which aligns with the nature of their experience. Neurodivergent Gen Z may be more prone to adverse mental health as a result of not being understood or supported in environments which challenge how they would naturally operate. Whereas, Gen Z with a physical disability prioritise **Diversity and Inclusion** as the most important, which aligns with their need for inclusion, by removing barriers and ensuring the workplace and role itself is accessible for them. **Only 15% of people with a diversability prioritised other factors such as national or international impact, community outreach, or sustainability efforts**, showcasing the degree of importance of both **DEIB** and mental health and wellbeing as core values to attract and retain diverse Gen Z talent.

Spotlight
**WHAT DOES
IT MEAN TO
BE 'BLACK
BRITISH'?**

Spotlight

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE 'BLACK BRITISH'?

The term Black British was first developed in the 1950's when referring to Caribbean people from former British colonies who came to Britain to help rebuild the economy. These people are known as the Windrush Generation. In the present day, the Black British identity is a more subjective label commonly used by those who align with being a Black person in Britain. Black Britishness, as with all identifying labels, is complex and not monolithic. Black Gen Z reflect on Black Britishness as being in flux and subject to change depending on their environment. Black British people understand the cultural, political and social aspects of Britishness whilst being aware of, and in touch with, their heritage and the duality that comes with being British and of African or Caribbean descent.

DO YOU IDENTIFY AS BLACK BRITISH?



70%
Yes



30%
No

WHAT DOES IDENTIFYING AS BLACK BRITISH LOOK LIKE?

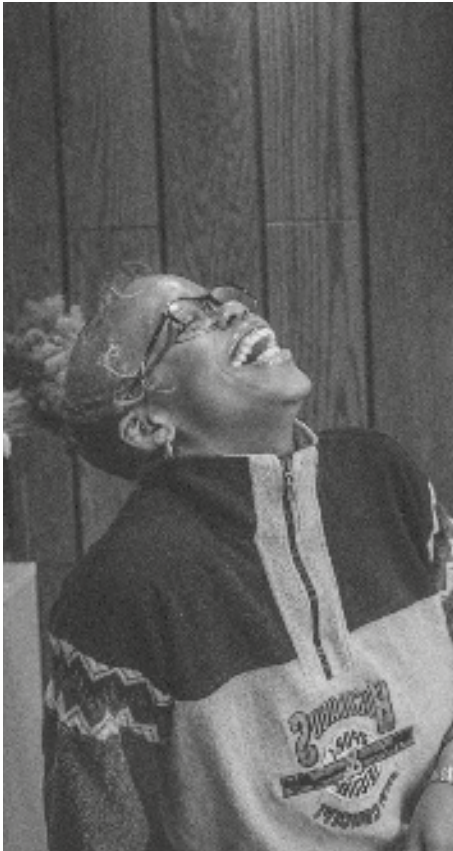
For most Black British Gen Z, time spent in the UK is the most important factor in determining whether or not they feel Black British, especially if they weren't born in the UK. They've spent a significant portion of their lives in the UK, influencing their experiences and upbringing, thus contributing to them identifying as Black British. Additionally being deeply connected to Black British culture (such as music, food and art) makes them more open to identifying as Black British.



Black British Nigerian Man
24-26 years old

"When it comes to black Britishness, it is multifaceted and there is a former empire, and there is a current empire, which can come into place with the monarchy. If I was sent back to Nigeria, I would grieve and would be unhappy, as Nigeria is not my home. I'm from Barking and I'm proud of this. We have people like John Boyega, J Hus and Little Simz who I really look up to"





AND WHY IS CLAIMING BLACK BRITISH IDENTITY NOT AN OPTION FOR OTHERS?

There were mixed feelings about being called Black British. The British part of the label generated the most push back. Racist experiences and fear of future exclusion from Britishness, led some Black Gen Z's to avoid calling themselves Black British. There was a feeling that Britishness is contingent upon acceptance by white British people and their contributions to British culture. Gen Z's who don't identify as Black British emphasise the importance of their ancestry or bloodline in shaping their identity, shaping their self-perception as African or Caribbean. The most mentioned factor contributing to this identity is their family and upbringing. They mention being raised with specific cultural values, traditions, and beliefs separate from what they perceive as British culture, which they feel disconnected from. Gen Z's who weren't from London also talked about their struggles with identifying as Black British, as most of Black British culture feels rooted in London.



British Nigerian Woman
18-24 years old

"I feel like I'm in the middle. Being born in the UK and being African, it can have the response of people saying 'go back to your country'"



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE WORLD OF WORK?

Whilst Black people have been a part of the UK workforce for generations, Black Gen Z still grapple with being their true selves at work. Historically facing systemic racism and **microaggressions**, as well as discrimination affecting specific intersections of Black identity (e.g. **misogynoir**, **texturism**, **colourism**), many members of this community feel compelled to hide aspects of their identity to fit into corporate cultures that may not fully understand or appreciate their unique experiences as Black British people. The act of hiding or adapting parts of themselves to fit in at work is known as **code switching**. When Black Gen Z's feel compelled to code switch, it speaks to the lack of belonging they feel or are anticipating in a work environment. This reveals the importance of being able to show up as your authentic self and feeling represented in all levels of the workplace.

02

APPLYING FOR JOBS

02

APPLYING FOR JOBS

Attracting Black Gen Z is one thing, but requiring them to overcome obstacle after obstacle like an Olympic hurdler to simply get a job offer is an area of Talent Attraction that needs a complete Gen Z shake-up. Through this initial journey, Gen Z will also be assessing **YOU** as the employer on how much you showcase your values, and whether they believe you have created an environment they would thrive in.

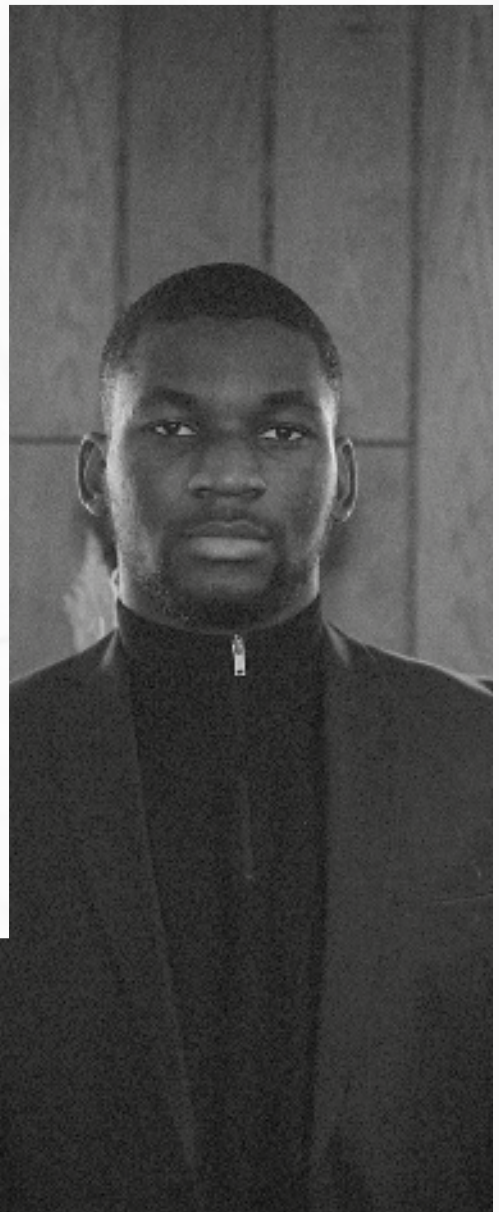
FINDING JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Gen Z is known to do everything in a new way — and job hunting is no different.

While there is an increased focus on social platforms, traditional methods still hold. In fact, online job boards, both diversity-focused and general, have become the most popular option among Gen Z individuals in their search for new career opportunities. These platforms offer convenience and accessibility, allowing individuals to easily search and apply for relevant positions. Furthermore, the higher success rates of Black individuals on online job boards suggest these platforms are effective in connecting diverse talent with job opportunities.

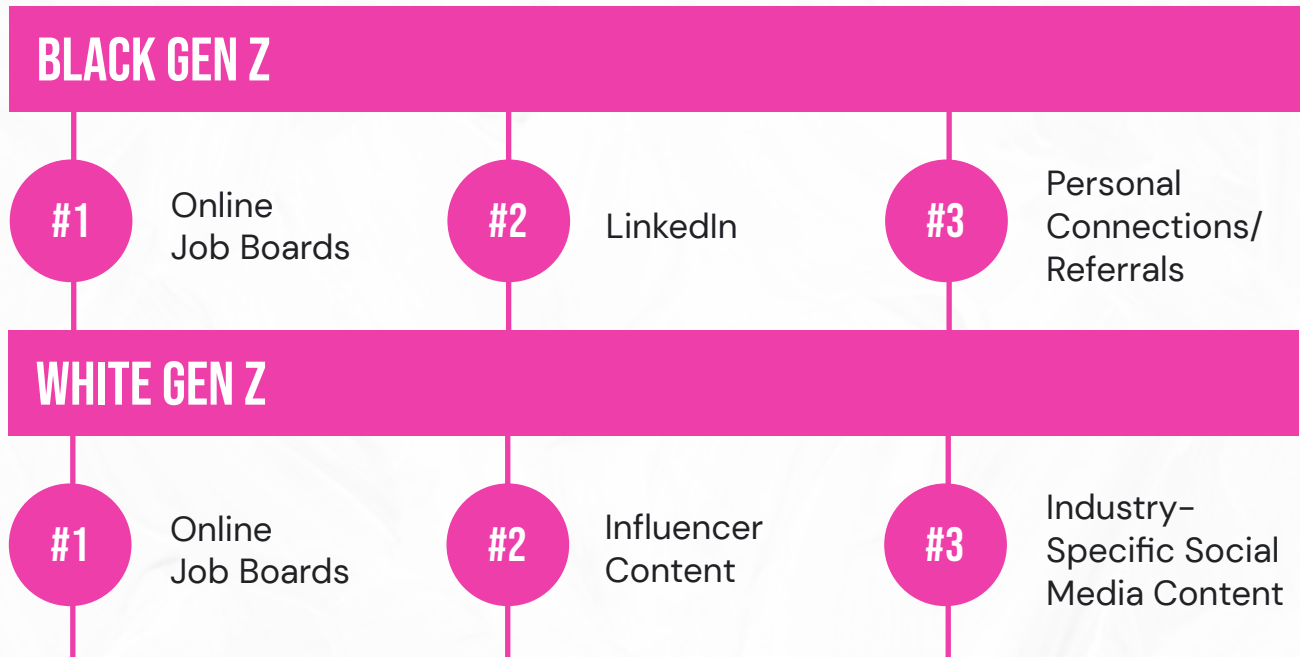
#1

**ONLINE JOB BOARDS ARE
GEN Z'S #1 PLACE TO GO
WHEN JOB-HUNTING.**



When we dig deeper, the usage and success rates of platforms differ between racial backgrounds. For example, the top two places Black Gen Z utilise after online job boards are LinkedIn and their personal network, whilst White Gen Z use influencer content and industry-specific social media.

Q: 'Where do you look for a new role or opportunity?'



Aside from race, individuals prioritised the use of platforms for different reasons, for example, the industry they were in or how much guidance they needed.

Some participants stated they preferred to start with Indeed or Glassdoor as they have more options to choose from, and you do not require specific search criteria like you do for LinkedIn and Instagram. However, for others, LinkedIn was their preferred platform as they found it aided in every aspect of the job search i.e. creating their CV, knowing what employers are looking for, and being able to speak with current employees. Ensure your advertising on LinkedIn is top notch, as well as your presence on online job boards.



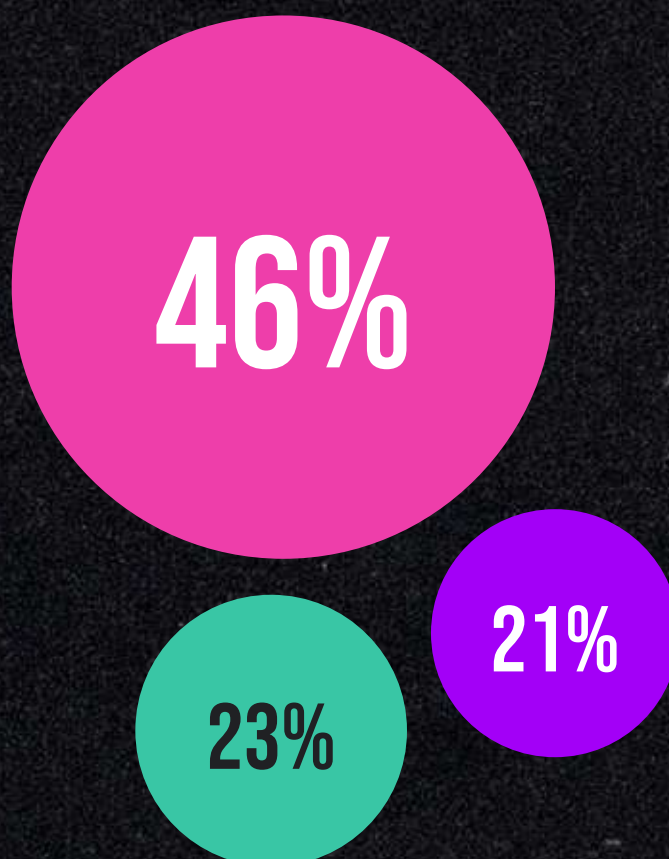
THE POWER OF SOCIAL

Black Gen Z branches beyond traditional online routes and are exploring opportunities through every social media platform.

Of course, the platform for professionals, LinkedIn, has proven particularly popular among Black Gen Z, with 46% leveraging it to find new career prospects, compared to Asian and White Gen Z with 23% and 21% usage respectively.

LinkedIn usage to find new career opportunities

- Black Gen Z
- Asian Gen Z
- White Gen Z



However, other casual platforms are also being used. We found specifically Twitter (since renamed to X) and Facebook are being used to look for opportunities. **Among the Gen Z population, 30% of the Black community, 33% of Asian Gen Z, and 25% of White Gen Z have found new job opportunities through these platforms.** The diverse representation on industry social media helps connect individuals with various organisations and industries, enabling them to explore different career options.



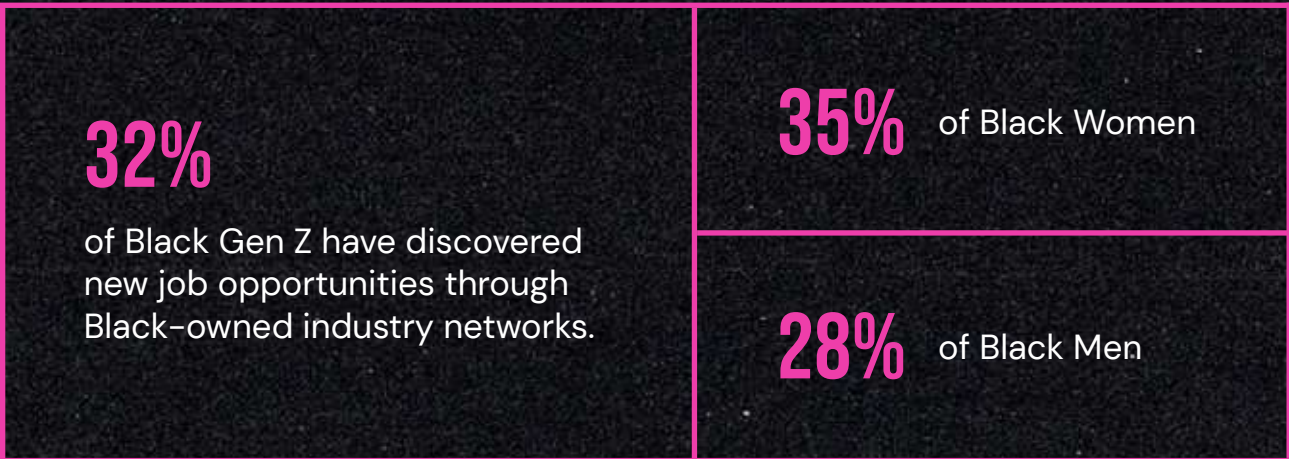
The more creative individuals tend to lean towards using Instagram, as it allows them to showcase their work and network with individuals in their industry. This trend is pronounced among Black (23%), Asian (17%), and White individuals (18%). Within the Black Gen Z community, 67% of individuals involved in the creative industry report using Instagram as a means of finding their next creative opportunity. This percentage is particularly noteworthy among Black women, with 70% of them relying on Instagram for their creative career prospects compared to 30% of Black men. This disparity suggests that Instagram plays a crucial role in providing Black women with a unique avenue for career advancement.

When it comes to the type of content they want to see, short videos, career content and a regular celebration of Diversity are crucial for Black Gen Z. They also value seeing interviews with existing members of staff, thought leadership and podcasts.

Q: On social media, what type of content attracts you to a company the most?



Furthermore, Black Gen Z especially appreciate the existence of specific industry networks catered towards diverse racial backgrounds (e.g. networks for Black Gen Z, by Black Gen Z). These industry networks provide a space for Black professionals to connect, collaborate, and support each other in their career journeys in a safe and understanding environment.



The findings from the responses on where Gen Z looks for roles also highlight the importance of personal networks and referrals for career advancements. Black Gen Z, in particular, benefit greatly from leveraging their community connections and industry networks tailored to their racial background. These networks provide a sense of community, support, safety, and opportunities for collaboration and career advancement. These are also spaces where Black Gen Z don't need to worry about not being welcome.

Beyond looking for jobs on social platforms, Gen Z also uses these spaces to research organisations they are interested in.

WHERE DO GEN Z GO TO LEARN MORE?

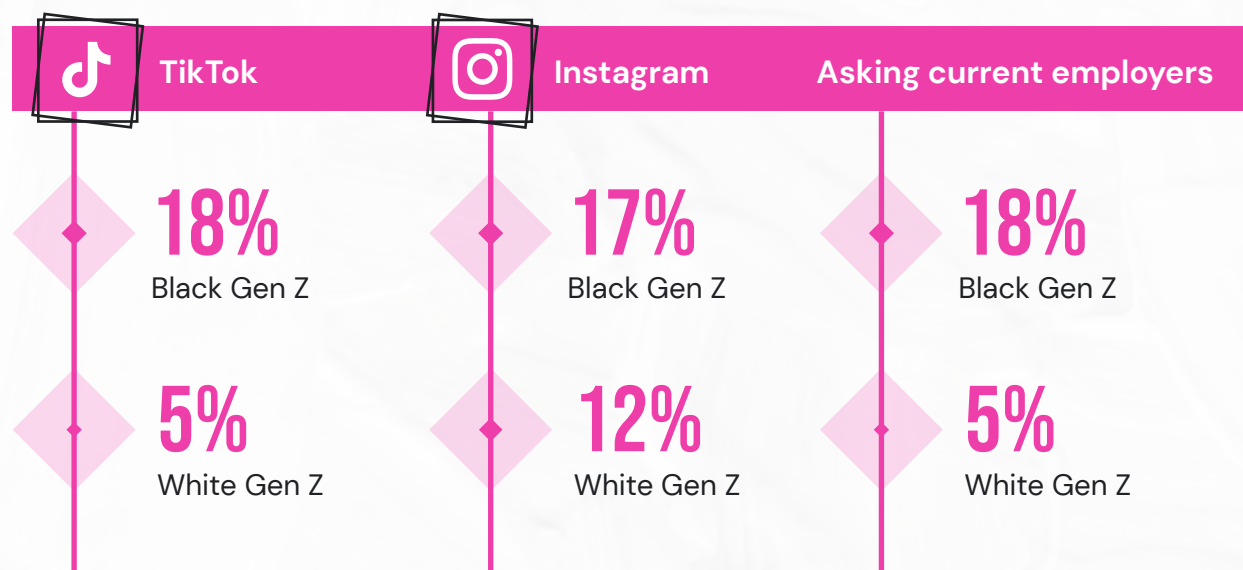
The most popular source for finding more information about a desired company is their company website, followed by Google, and careers sites. Gen Z, regardless of race, are seeking authentic information about a company, and use existing employees' LinkedIn pages to find it. Similarly, YouTube content (whether from the company or its employees) is a go-to location for more information.

Other specific platforms mentioned were LinkedIn and Glassdoor. LinkedIn was seen as useful for getting information about the day-to-day, whereas Glassdoor was helpful for the 'nitty gritty' of the employee experience. Mentions were also made of video and webinar content featuring current employees as being helpful to get a gist of what working life would be like. This indicates the necessity of building a positive online presence.

Q: 'Where do you look for a new role or opportunity?'



When we break this down by race, Black Gen Z show a higher preference for TikTok, Instagram and asking current employees about their experiences, compared to their Asian and White counterparts.





CHOOSING AN INDUSTRY

This year, we also looked at what factors influence Black Gen Z to consider different industries.

The availability of opportunities stands out as a significant influence, with **22% choosing that option**. This could be attributed to historical and structural barriers that have limited access to certain industries for Black individuals. **Additionally, family influence plays a notable role (11%), indicating the importance of familial support and expectations in shaping career choices.** This indicates a more proactive approach is needed, and a more diverse range of employers needs to be working with universities, educational institutions and training providers in order to reach this demographic.

59%

of Black Gen Z prefer to apply for roles aimed at their ethnic group.

One way to do this is through targeted roles. **This is something Black Gen Z shows an inclination towards with a preference rate of 59%.** The preference for job opportunities targeting their ethnic group remains consistent across different gender identities within the Gen Z cohort. Whether identifying as a woman, a man, non-binary, or another gender identity, Black Gen Z job applicants still exhibit a strong inclination towards applying for these opportunities.

Similarly, the location of their formative years does not seem to influence the preference for ethnically targeted job opportunities. Whether growing up in urban, suburban, or rural areas, Black Gen Z individuals consistently express a high preference for these opportunities.

Barriers during the **APPLICATION PROCESS**

What is holding Gen Z back in the application process?

While some responses echoed those of *#ThisIsBlackGenZ2022*, looking at these issues through an intersectional lens illuminates the nuances of these problems.



THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

For Gen Z across the board, lack of communication during the recruitment process and unnecessary tests were seen as the most prominent barriers.

Psychometric testing during the application process was deemed unnecessary and exclusionary, especially for entry-level roles. The same was said for maths or english tests which do not directly test skills used in the roles.

Secondly, a preference for clear communication is evident in Gen Z and other generations. This sentiment is consistent across genders and race, with 92% of Gen Z individuals feeling strongly about this; it indicates a lack of clarity in the recruitment process and can be a deal-breaker for job applicants. Clear communication and feedback would also make the recruitment process far more accessible for neurodiverse individuals.

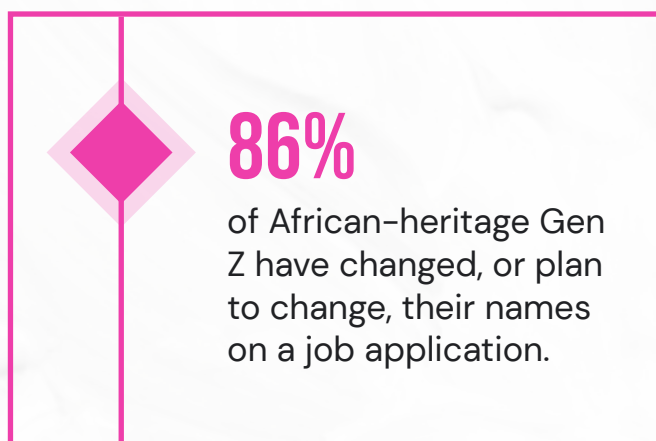
Organisations that prioritise and provide this level of clarity in their recruitment process are more likely to attract and retain top Gen Z talent. By ensuring that job descriptions are thorough and accurate and that the application process is as transparent as possible, employers can demonstrate their commitment to open communication. This not only appeals to the preferences of Gen Z individuals but also helps to build trust and loyalty among candidates of all generations.

THE NEED TO CHANGE NAMES

One barrier we explored last year was the need Black Gen Z felt to change their name during the application process in order to do well. This year, we broke that down further through ethnicity. Among Gen Z individuals, those with African heritage are 5 times more inclined (**86% likelihood**) to **change their names on job applications, compared to their peers with Caribbean heritage (14% likelihood)**. This distinction is crucial — those of Caribbean heritage are likely to have western-sounding surnames, given to them by slave-owners during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Therefore, at first glance, they could be assumed to be White. Contrastly, those of African heritage are far more likely to have assumptions made about their race based on their names.

For Gen Z Africans, this tendency is particularly notable among people from Nigeria (41%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (9%), Ghana (7%), Zimbabwe and Angola (both at 6%)

Beyond this, it was found participants believed Africans received more judgement based on their less anglicised names and potential accents, however, stereotypes around 'work ethic' were believed to harm Black Caribbean Gen Z.



British Jamacian Woman
18-24 years old

"Based on names, Caribbeans have a better experience when it comes to applications. However, there is a stigma around Caribbean people's work ethic e.g. West Africans are harder workers compared to Caribbeans."



British Dominican Woman
24-30 years old

"Based on experience, African names seem to get more judgement that normally doesn't happen to Carribeans based on their names. Africans also tend to have accents which breeds judgement"



Going beyond Black Gen Z, this affects Gen Z of other racial backgrounds. Changing one's name for an interview was also prevalent for Asian Gen Z. **Over half of Asian Gen Z respondents (52%) have either changed their name on a job application or intend to change their name for a future job to be employed.**

52%

of Asian Gen Z have changed, or plan to change, their names on a job application.

THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER, RACE AND SKIN TONE

Colourism plays a significant role in barriers experienced by Black Gen Z through the recruitment process, and this itself is further split by gender, with Black Gen Z men and women having different experiences.

Whilst this is an area that many employers are not yet confronting, the data speaks for itself. Comfort during interviews based on skin tone is inversely proportional to gender and skin tone, and it's one of the key areas in which we see **colourism** and **misogynoir** play a major role in the professional experience of Black and Mixed Black Gen Z. Interestingly, the darker-skinned women are least likely to feel comfortable being themselves during an interview. On the other hand, if they are a darker-skinned man, they are likely to feel the most comfortable.



DIVERSABILITIES

Individuals with diverse abilities have their own set of barriers to contend with. Across races, there's a shared discomfort in disclosing one's disability during a recruitment process if the diversability is mental-health related or neurological instead of physical. Gen Z women are particularly impacted by this, being the gender to report a higher level of discomfort in sharing a mental/neurological diversability compared to other genders. When it comes to neurodivergence, **50% of Gen Z women would not report it during the recruitment process, compared to 29% of Gen Z men who would do the same.**

29%

50%

Would not disclose their neurodiversity during a recruitment process

● Gen Z Women

● Gen Z Men

Participants of all abilities expressed a desire to level the playing field so neurodiverse communities could thrive. They would do this by making the recruitment process more accessible and fostering a better culture.



Black British Man
18-24 years old

"People with autism don't get a fair chance so I'd want to level the playing field."



DOES LOCATION MATTER?

Lastly, a perceived barrier to opportunities was believed to be location, specifically being based outside of London. Participants feel that not living in London is a huge barrier to employment, due to there being fewer opportunities outside of London. Furthermore, as London is more diverse than some of the cities they are from, they feel they have experienced more discrimination out of the capital.



Black British Woman

18–24 years old

“No job opportunities outside of London. If you don’t live [in London] you have to stretch yourself to get there”



Black South African Woman

18–24 years old

“I definitely had those moments that I think being outside London had a negative impact as people in London are more used to my type of name. I feel like people see my name and don’t even give my CV a chance as people outside London are not used to it. I do feel like racism is everywhere though so it is likely there would be some passive-aggressive behaviour as it exists everywhere.”



Looking at these barriers through an intersectional lens highlights the need for a bespoke approach when it comes to creating solutions. While there are solutions that would improve the application process for all applicants, understanding the individual’s experience and context is key to creating true change.

Navigating the APPLICATION PROCESS

When it comes to navigating the application process, one of the biggest challenges is **authenticity**.

The key thing Gen Z search for is the ability to be as close to their authentic selves as they can within a role. When so much of your life is spent in your workplace, it is necessary not only for your happiness but also for your ability to thrive.

For this research, we asked Gen Z individuals if they would feel comfortable being their authentic selves during a job interview or assessment process. Among the Gen Z groups who participated in the survey, Black women were the least likely to feel they could be their authentic selves during a job interview or assessment process, **with only 45% feeling they could be. In contrast, Black men reported higher rates of feeling confident in expressing their authentic selves, peaking at 64%.**

Only **45%**

of Black women feel comfortable bringing their authentic selves to a job interview, compared to...

86%

of White women.

Men with darker skin tones are more likely to feel they can bring their full selves to a job interview. The focus groups revealed this is due to confidence in Black men being celebrated societally, but confidence in Black women being labelled as aggression. This was identified by both men and women respondents, highlighting another way misogynoir shows up in the recruitment process. This level of comfort for Black Men is based on the diversity of the hiring team, particularly if they have a darker skin tone. If they can see a diverse hiring team, they are more likely to continue with the application while being true to themselves throughout the process. On the other hand, **Asian Gen Z (men at 92%, and women at 88%) and White Gen Z (86% for White women and 93% for White men)** were the groups that felt the most comfortable being their true selves during a job interview.

An individual's ability to navigate the interview process is therefore not only dependent on aspects of their own identity but also on the representation of those interviewing them.

Enablers during the APPLICATION PROCESS

To address these issues, we asked Black Gen Z what could be done during the application process to allow them to be their authentic selves. The main enablers which emerged were transparency, visible **diversity** and communication.

VISIBLE DIVERSITY

Both Black and Mixed Black Gen Z agreed seeing visible **diversity** in the company throughout their application process is incredibly important, and this was something they often found lacking.



Black Jamaican Woman
18–24 years old

“HR teams are normally the same sort of people, so a more diverse HR team will hire a more diverse workforce. Disadvantaged people should be on an accelerator program to give them an extra hand into the workplace”



Representation increases the likelihood of those with darker skin tones applying or continuing their application. Furthermore, this need for visible representation extends beyond race, as other aspects of identity such as religious wear were also noted as important signs of representation. Markers such as these signal an inclusive environment where there would be the opportunity to discuss things such as religious holidays or locations to pray.

A lot of concerns were raised around **colourism** and potential **bias** impacting the recruitment process. They expressed concerns that names recruiters may perceive as “too ethnic” or “too hard to pronounce” could easily lead them to **exclusion**. Participants offered various solutions to this, one of which was having a diverse hiring team as mentioned above and anonymising CVs.



Black British-Ghanaian Woman

18–24 years old

“Anonymous CVs and interviews with multiple people like people from different races and genders to get different opinions. If CVs are anonymous, it removes the risk of initial bias from people flicking through the CVs, because recruiters may want to remove the awkwardness of engaging with people who have names that may appear difficult to pronounce.”



Black British African Woman

24–30 years old

“I think being able to apply for a role blindly and an app that looks at competency. You can apply for roles where they did not look at last name, sexuality and only focused on skills. It is different from applying for jobs in the healthcare system and they look at your mannerisms.”



FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATION

Another common enabler during the application process was consistent feedback and open communication. **92% of Gen Z individuals across all, genders, races, ethnicities, and abilities would like feedback from a recruiter if they do not progress to the next stage of the application process.** This is corroborated by the feedback from the focus groups, where Gen Z individuals mentioned that, if they were CEOs of their own companies, they would see the value in providing open feedback internally; it stands to reason that this feedback would extend to interviews too — how do they know what to work on if not?



92%

of Gen Z would like feedback from a recruiter at the end of an application process.

This desire for feedback highlights the importance of communication and transparency in the recruitment process, as is also shown by the responses to the statement, *"I would be less inclined to apply for a job if the full application process and stages are not clear from the start"*. Gen Z individuals are not merely looking for a job; they are seeking growth opportunities and personal development. By receiving feedback, they can understand their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to improve and enhance future prospects.

TRANSPARENCY

Lastly, Gen Z places importance on transparency through the application process. This included transparency around the salary, the skills needed and what the various stages of the application process would be. This is important for employers to adopt as it increases confidence among Gen Z individuals.



Black British Nigerian Man

18-25 years old

"CV's are outdated and the company should pitch to me and present the roles and at the end say what the headcount is and explain what the salary is and then you find out at the end and it is a waste of time to hold back information."



Black British Nigerian Man

24-26 years old

"Group interviews are childish. Being headhunted is a preference and friendly process, recruiters, emails, dms, upfront details. Being honest about pay will stop conflict."



It is evident that Gen Z students desire transparency in the recruitment process for their future job roles. Interestingly, Gen Z individuals who are currently employed are more likely to avoid applying for a job that lacks clarity. This may be attributed to their past experiences with recruitment processes, which have influenced their expectations regarding the level of detail they require at each stage.

Spotlight
**IN CONVERSATION
WITH PAFF EVARA**

In conversation with **PAFF EVARA**

TapIn's Tiana Holgate and Researcher Rachel Ayeh-Datey got to sit down with Paff Evara, creator, speaker, and co-founder of Take Up Space. They have described their work as "lying at the intersection of impact, inclusion and storytelling." In this chapter, we discuss not only their story but also their views on the importance of creating spaces with more intersectional approaches in mind.

RACHEL: HAVE YOU EVER HAD ANY EXPERIENCES OF EITHER YOUR SEXUALITY OR GENDER EXPRESSION IMPACTING YOU IN THE WORKPLACE?

Paff: Looking back at my journey, I've come out three times. The first time I came out as bisexual was when I was 19. Then in 2020 when I was 27, I came out as gay. And then a year after, I came out as gender non-conforming. I think what impacted me the most was the third one. I was exploring gender a little bit more and started to use primarily they/them pronouns. That's when I felt the most friction in the workplace.

I was running a digital marketing agency and I was heading up all the sales. I was basically just meeting new people every single day. And each new Zoom call or meeting or phone call was an opportunity to be misgendered. I've now been able to kind of curate a work environment because I'm working for myself that is really safe. And I'm very cognizant of other queer and trans people for whom pronouns can be a very simple but easy way to make people feel seen or make people feel really hurt in that instance.

PRONOUNS:

Tiana Holgate: She/her

Rachel Ayeh-Datey: She/her

Paff Evara: They/them

TIANA: HOW WOULD YOU SAY, IF AT ALL, NEURODIVERSITY HAS IMPACTED YOUR NAVIGATION OF THE WORKPLACE?

Paff: I had lived nearly three decades of my life not knowing I was different. I was struggling with all of the things I now see as ADHD traits. When I went into the work environment, I always had this sense I needed to prove myself. From an employer's perspective, that's the perfect employee because they'll always say yes to everything, always put their hand up, work themselves to the ground and never ask for help – which is what I was doing.

I was constantly pushing myself to a state of burnout. My self-worth was so tied to my output and my productivity and it was a really toxic place for me to be in. In the last couple of years, I've really grown to understand what ADHD is and how it explains so many things about my life that I didn't have answers for. And it's only now I'm able to structure my life in a way that actually works for my brain instead of working against it.

RACHEL: SO WHAT CHANGES DO YOU THINK ORGANISATIONS SHOULD BE MAKING TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE OF LGBTQ+ EMPLOYEES, ESPECIALLY FOR THE YOUNGER ONES?

Paff: From an employer perspective, you want people to bring their best selves. You want them to be the best team players or the best leaders they can kind of be for your organisation. So from a recruitment perspective, are you very clearly signalling that you are an inclusive employer for queer people? Whether that be from pronouns or more importantly through policies? Look at your leadership. Who's there? Do you have any queer people or black people in leadership?

The benefits are incredible if you're able to create an inclusive space where people can be their authentic selves. If you're able to really show up for a certain community, you have completely opened up your audience, even your potential customers.



TIANA: WHAT NUANCES ABOUT BEING NEURODIVERSITY DO YOU THINK ARE NOT SPOKEN ABOUT ENOUGH?

Paff: So one thing being spoken about a lot at the moment is accommodations. But usually, I'm seeing the conversation as, you know, you book a meeting or a call with someone and they'll have like a little box saying, 'If you have any accommodations, let us know.'

This is a good first step because it shows they understand some people may have different accommodations. But what I think would be even better is actually doing the research to learn what some common accommodations could be, and then being proactive. So, a simple example when you're booking a call is to send an agenda before the call because lots of neurodiverse folks like to prepare. So if you're able to learn about some common ones and implement those you'll actually better serve maybe undiagnosed people or just neurotypical people as well.

03

IN THE WORKPLACE



03 IN THE WORKPLACE

The race doesn't stop once you have employed diverse talent. As an employer, you still need to make a concerted effort to keep your workplace obstacle-free to allow your Black Gen Z employees to sprint and do their best. That's why retention strategies that involve real-time feedback are essential in assisting Black Gen Z in navigating the world of work as their authentic self.

BARRIERS IN THE WORKPLACE

Post the peak of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, attention to the experiences of Black people in the workplace has been declining. Overall we see less focus and money being committed for DE&I purposes⁷. We have seen the progress of 2020 being reversed, and Black employees' experiences are still getting worse. Black Gen Z reflected on a range of issues which stifled their growth and led to them leaving the workplace. The key issues shared were:

Harassment. Women especially spoke about the fear of harassment and recounted their experiences in men-dominated workplaces, feeling unprotected by their employers. All participants who were women felt they had faced **misogynoir**. They all felt that their gender had impacted their working lives.



British East African Woman
18–24 years old

"[I wish we had] more protection at work from rape and sexual assault culture."



⁷ Alfonseca, Kiara. "How corporate America is slashing DEI workers amid backlash to diversity programs." ABC News, 7 July 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/corporate-america-slashing-dei-workers-amid-backlash-diversity/story?id=100477952>. Accessed 5 September 2023.

Discrimination. Women and interviewees with diverse abilities reflected on the instances of discrimination they faced, such as being passed up for opportunities based on their identities which thus impacted their progression. Interviewees talked about the lack of action from their employers to adequately deal with these instances of discrimination.



Black British Nigerian Woman
18–24 years old

“Male staff are presented with more opportunities which women can also do as well. When you see the rota, you can see that the male employees get more hours than other people. When I’ve tried to figure out why this happens, there is no reason or explanation as to why”



Lack of support for diversability. People with diverse abilities felt their differing needs were not catered for in previous workplaces. They would avoid working for companies that did not consider accessibility.



Black British Woman
18–24 years old

“Allow employees to have flexible working schedules — as long as the work is done to a high standard it shouldn’t matter when it is done. I would avoid companies that aren’t that accessible”



Microaggressions. **Microaggressions** were named widely as a key barrier in the workplace. Caribbean people, especially, shared experiences of stereotypes and misconceptions they had heard in their workplaces. The desire and need to express one's authentic self in the workplace resonates deeply with Gen Z individuals from all racial backgrounds, as well as across gender identities. The fact that such a sentiment is consistently shared by Black, Asian, and White Gen Z members highlights the growing importance of inclusivity and diversity in today's workforce.



Black Jamaican Woman
18–24 years old

“In the workplace, people will think you listen to Bob Marley or make jokes about smoking weed, or they start talking about that one time they went to the Caribbean on holiday.”



In navigating these barriers without feeling supported by their employers, there's a big emotional burden placed on Black employees. It can feel like they are coming to work and doing emotional labour on top of their actual jobs.



Black British African Woman
18–24 years old

“We need better systems to report anything. This is essential because people can feel safe to share, room for mediation and conversation and can be sorted proactively. There should be standardised training on Diversity and Sexual harassment (which wasn't in place in my first job). It felt like I had to do a lot of emotional labour just to make it through the day.”



Navigating the WORKPLACE

Navigating the workplace can be tricky for most people, but especially the younger generation who have spent their whole lives in education. They find themselves struggling to figure out how to be themselves in these new environments. The overwhelming majority of Black Gen Z, amounting to 85%, believe being authentic is key to their job satisfaction and long-term commitment to a company.







85%

of Black Gen Z say being their authentic selves at work is key to their job satisfaction...

...however this is not a reality for many

With the ability to be authentic at work being so important to Black Gen Z's, the amount of them who actually felt this was possible pales in comparison. A significant percentage of Black (47%), African heritage (46%), and Caribbean heritage (54%) individuals, as well as Black LGBTQ+ individuals (60%), felt the need to change themselves to fit in at work. A smaller percentage of Asian (18%) and White individuals (22%) also share this sentiment. Among different genders, transgender individuals report the highest percentage (91%), while cisgender men (30%) report the lowest percentage. This shows that conformity is a widespread issue amongst Gen Z individuals in the workplace, especially for Gen Z from the LGBTQ+ community.

Q: I feel the need to change myself to fit in at work

-  Black Gen Z
-  LGBTQ+
-  Trans
-  Diversely abled

47%

63%

91%

59%



Gen Z individuals with diverse abilities report having to change aspects of themselves to fit in at work (59%), almost twice as much as Gen Z individuals without diverse abilities. This is particularly higher for Gen Z individuals with a mental health condition and neurodivergence (63%), and individuals with a physical disability (61%). The significantly higher rates among individuals with mental health conditions, neurodivergence, and physical disabilities highlight the lack of inclusive practices and accommodations in many workplaces. This not only denies these individuals the opportunity to thrive but also perpetuates ableism and neglect of diverse talents and capabilities.

WHAT DOES AUTHENTICITY IN THE WORKPLACE LOOK LIKE?

Not having to code-switch. Black Gen Z reflected on how much they have adapted the way they speak in order to fit in with their White colleagues. Working from home was listed as one of the ways to ease the stress of this for Black Gen Z.



Black British Nigerian Woman
18–24 years old

“There have been numerous occasions in the workplace where I have code-switched in order to fit in with the White man and to make them feel more comfortable. This happens anytime I see a White person. I code switch even when I’m talking to older people from my family.”



Being fearless with self-expression. Black women particularly talked about not wearing their hair in particular styles out of fear of being seen as less professional. Women were more likely to report that they actively change things about themselves (hair, demeanour and censor themselves) in comparison to men.



Black British African Woman
18-24 years old

“When looking for grad jobs I was advised to change hairstyles to avoid a bias in the workplace or recruitment process. Braids and natural hair are seen as unprofessional and a lot of my friends in accounting have made their hair straight”



IMPACTS OF NOT BEING AUTHENTIC IN THE WORKPLACE

Not being able to show up as your authentic self generally leads to feelings of anxiety, lack of productivity and lower rates of retention. Workplace culture not matching what has been advertised is the biggest issue. Black Gen Z's believe they are going into inclusive workplaces but once they get through the door, they are met with the opposite.



Black Nigerian Man
22-26 years old

“Companies say they care about diversity and they are inclusive. But when you start working there, you quickly find out that they aren't actually.”



Support and progression in THE WORKPLACE

Black Gen Z were very clear and vocal about how they would like employers to support their progression and make them feel as comfortable as possible at work.

The key modes of support were:

ACTIVE EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Having active employee resource groups or Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) networks in place is a crucial factor for many Gen Z professionals when deciding whether to stay at a company. These findings hold true across all racial and ethnic groups, with the majority of respondents indicating that they are more willing to remain with a company that prioritises diversity and inclusion. **Among Black Gen Z professionals, 75% expressed a stronger inclination to remain at a company with active ERGs or DEIB networks. Black women showed a slightly higher inclination, at 77%, compared to Black men, at 72%. Also, Asian men and Asian women expressed an overwhelming preference for companies with active ERGs or DEIB networks (94%).**



75%

of Black Gen Z will stay at a company with active ERGs

ROBUST PROCESSES OF REPORTING HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Gen Z want employers to have clear and effective processes for reporting harassment and discrimination. This was especially important for women.



Black British Caribbean Woman
18–24 years old

“Having more open and safe spaces for discussion especially when talking about discrimination”





Black British Caribbean Woman
18-24 years old

"More open forums to report things without fear"



Black African Woman
18-24 years old

"Clarity on standardised producers when it comes to reporting sexual harassment and assault"



Black British-Ghanaian Woman
18-24 years old

"Employers should be acknowledging potential unconscious bias as naturally, people resonate with who looks closer to them or more like them"



EDUCATIONAL TRAINING ON THE EXISTENCE AND IMPACT OF COLOURISM AND RACISM

Darker skin tone individuals suggested separate training on colourism and racism would help employers and staff mitigate potential biases. Being in companies which prioritise these training programmes was especially important to darker skin tones women.

DIVERSE MENTORSHIP & ALLYSHIP

Black Gen Z place a lot of value on having mentors who look like them and allies in the workplace. Black and Asian women specifically wanted to be partnered with mentors. Allyship was seen as something that was possible in the workplace but had to be meaningful and considered.



Black British Woman

18–24 years old

“Mentorship and career progression advice provided to women and ethnic minorities specifically”



Black British Nigerian Man

24–26 years old

“ENDSARS occurred and I was working remotely. I was not responsive and unmotivated. My manager checked in on my well-being and mental health. He gave me the day off to relax. The acknowledgement and showing the care was appreciated”



SUPPORT FOR ALL FAMILIES

When thinking of how best to support women, people talked about the need to support different family structures – single parents and working parents. Companies that have these benefits should highlight them clearly, as Gen Z care about this even if they aren’t at this stage of life yet.



Black Caribbean Woman

18–24 years old

“There should be more opportunities for single mothers and families where they can sort out their child care as you do not know what people’s circumstances are like. Employers could also help families with paid time off and also offer women more support and wellbeing.”



Recommendations **FOR EMPLOYERS**

Recommendations FOR EMPLOYERS

TO ATTRACT BLACK GEN Z

Bring your values to life in your organisation, before you shout about them. Gen Z are in tune to inauthentic **DEIB** (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging) efforts. So take time to review whether your values are a reality throughout the employee life-cycle. If they are not, work with **DEIB** professionals either internally or externally to identify how these can be brought to life, so employees are not sold a false dream about your culture.

Build a **DEIB-specific, multi-channel communications strategy to complement your existing strategy.** Share initiatives, stories and progress on **DEIB** efforts in your organisation. Black Gen Z values diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging over all other values, and they'll only know about your commitment if you talk about it. Similarly, be transparent about what you haven't done yet — Gen Z appreciates this honesty.



Prioritise valuable in-person interactions for employees. Whilst Gen Z exists in a digital ecosystem, they still value the importance of in-person interactions for their development and to expand their experience. Fully remote working is their least favourite way to work, so ensure that there are in-person opportunities for them to network, collaborate, and grow.

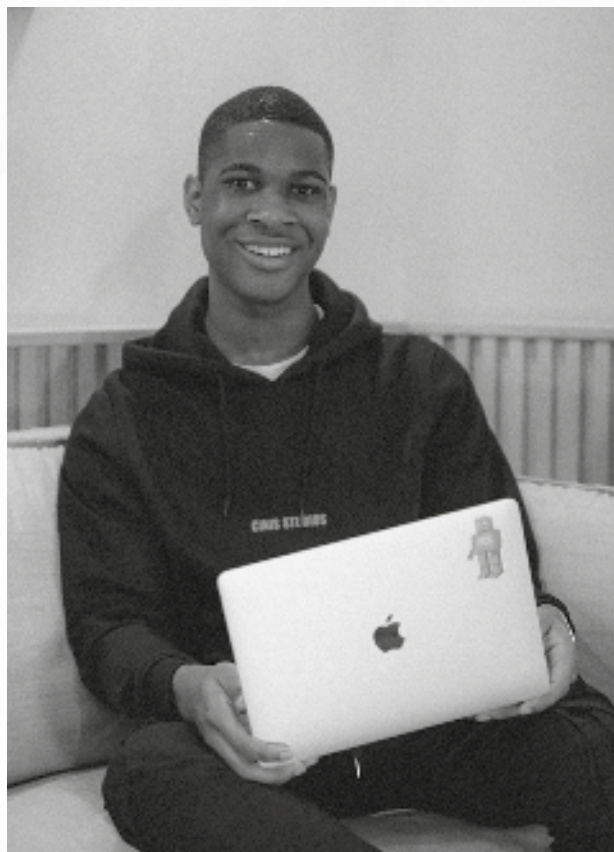
Re-think your Talent Attraction strategy to improve representation at all levels – not just entry level. Whether it be through the design of your job advertising, the content you share, or influencers and organisations you collaborate with. We know this takes time, but Gen Z candidates will then be able to see that there is space for them to also thrive throughout all levels of your company.

Build partnerships and collaborations with a diverse range of organisations. Gen Z pays attention to where you place your time, attention and investments. By partnering with a diverse range of organisations, you are more likely to build a more holistically inclusive environment. This could be by broadening your horizons to collaborate with influencers at virtual or live events to increase your reach, or building content partnerships so that your name is in places that are already familiar to Gen Z.

TO RECRUIT BLACK GEN Z

Pull apart your organisation's application process. Conduct research to identify what barriers exist at each step of your recruitment process for different identity groups. Work with internal and external stakeholders to challenge the status quo in addressing these barriers. Lastly, take the time to outline the recruitment process in a way that is accessible for applicants. Applicants are more likely to apply if they know what they will be embarking upon.

Embed accessibility into all your ways of working – from the recruitment process, to the day-to-day. There are various adjustments you can make to how information is shared and communicated which make a world of difference for neurodivergent applications and colleagues. Instead of offering accommodations generally, build an understanding of what specific accommodations would look like for your organisation and enact these.



TO RETAIN BLACK GEN Z

Build systems of mentorship and sponsorship into your employee lifecycle. Having a senior sponsor in the organisation is one way to build more equitable progression routes. When building mentorship, be intentional about who the mentors are. If you do not currently have a sufficiently diverse workforce who can act as mentors, work with organisations that do, such as Black professional networks.

Develop robust and restorative reporting systems for harassment and discrimination. Your commitment to building an inclusive workforce is only as robust as your response to exclusionary behaviours. Ensure your reporting systems are centring the well-being of the individuals affected. Work with your Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), existing communities and HR to review what processes are in place for discriminatory behaviour.

Invest in, build and grow Employee Resource Groups to foster belonging. Gen Z are eager to join these, so ensure their visions, values and brands appeal to a Gen Z audience. Be aware of the intersections individuals occupy, and provide support to ensure that the ERGs themselves are inclusive of all facets of the community they aim to serve.

Focus on anti-discrimination training, allyship and inclusive leadership training, as opposed to unconscious bias training. Unconscious bias training is unlikely to directly uproot systems of inequality. Instead, build a workforce of brave leaders who are active allies and oppose discrimination through multi-channel educational programmes.

GLOSSARY

This is Black Gen 3 Report

Authenticity

This means to be genuine or real. In the context of this research, it is about being able to be your true self in an environment, and not feeling you have to hide parts of your identity to be accepted.

Bias

A disproportionate or unfair inclination for or against a particular group or person.

Code-switching

Adjusting one's style of speech, appearance, behaviour, and expression in ways that will optimise the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, or to be accepted.

Colourism

Prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group.

Cultural bias

To interpret something or someone based on the distinct values, beliefs, and other characteristics of the society or community to which they belong. This sometimes leads people to form opinions and make decisions about others in advance of any actual experience with them.

DEIB

Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. An alternative to D&I or DEI, it emphasises that developing a sense of belonging is a true marker of whether diversity, equity and inclusion have been holistically built into a space.

Diversability

Diversabilities refer to physical, cognitive, developmental, learning, and/or neurological differences, or diversity, in ability levels.

Diversity

This is the equal representation of every identity within a space or organisation.

Employee Resource Groups

Groups of employees that join together based on common characteristics or life experiences such as gender, race or sexual orientation. Sometimes described as staff networks. These are created in an effort to foster inclusiveness in workspaces.

Equity

The recognition that each person and community has different circumstances and therefore allocating the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity denotes groups of people that share a common cultural background or descent.

Exclusion

Exclusion is the extent in which certain groups of people are blocked from (or denied full access to) resources, rights and opportunities that should be afforded to all people. People can be excluded due to their race, class, sexuality, gender, weight or ability.

Gender Binary

The societal structure of categorising gender into only two groups (man/woman). People commonly identify outside these distinct groups (non-binary for example).

Inclusion

The extent to which the contributions, presence, and perspectives of different groups of people are valued and integrated into an environment.

Intersectionality

The cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups. Coined by Kimberle Crenshaw.

Marginalise

To socially exclude a person or group of people from social, economic or political life. To treat them as if they are not important either personally or systematically.

Microaggression

Subtle and common actions, words, interactions and behaviours that communicate a bias against marginalised groups. These can be intentional or unintentional.

Misogynoir

Dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against black women. Misogynoir shows how sexism and racism manifest in black women's lives to create intersecting forms of oppression.

Neurodiversity

The wide range of neurological functioning that exists among humans and the many ways human brains differ from each other.

Othering

To view or treat a person or group of people as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself, or a dominant social group.

Privilege

A special right, social advantage, or immunity granted or available to a particular person or group due to their specific identity group, or how they present.

At its core, privilege is about the distribution of power and therefore can change across time, space, environments and geographical contexts.

Texturism

Texturism is discrimination based on how close or far your natural hair is to European (fine or straight) hair. Darker toned women are more likely to face this form of discrimination.

Systemic barriers

Barriers embedded in the structure of an organisation or country that discriminate against individuals based on aspects of their identity. This can allude to laws, policies, procedures or practices.

Underrepresented

If a person or group of people is underrepresented, it means there are not enough of them in a space, or in this case an organisation.

Tap-
in