

# Why Is Gen-Z So Stressed Out in the Workplace?

By Zara Chechi

As the workforce has begun to adapt to the instability and uncertainty that has stemmed from the last few years, Gen-Z employees are yet to adjust to the new normal. This presents a unique set of challenges for employers and businesses that are looking to maintain their [employees' satisfaction](#).

The [World Economic Health Forum](#) estimates that Gen-Z, which is defined as the generation born after 1995, will make up 27% of the global workforce by 2025.

According to Cigna International Health's 2023 survey, 91% of Gen-Z employees are stressed, compared to 84% on average. The same research also found that 98% of Gen-Z employees are struggling with burnout.

With young employees facing such extreme conditions, such as the cost of living crisis and a post-pandemic world, it's critical that businesses understand why this is, what they can do to deal with these challenges, and find ways to ensure Gen-Z are given the right opportunities to thrive in the workplace.

## What is meant by 'Gen-Z'?

Currently, the second-youngest generation, **Generation Z** (Gen-Z/Gen-Zers) is typically defined as those born between 1995 – 2009.. Gen Z's characteristics are shaped by their experiences growing up and are often impacted by global events occurring during their lifetime.

For Gen-Zers, this includes the pandemic, climate change, and the economic crisis.

Currently making up **30%** of the world's population, Gen Zers will account for **27%** of the workforce by 2025. This is why it's crucial for employers to better understand this generation and act now to provide a healthier workplace to meet their needs.

## **What's stressing Gen-Z employees out?**

We spoke to a number of Gen-Z employees to find out what contributes to their stress levels in the workplace. What we discovered was a variety of factors, including lack of workplace communication to external factors, such as the cost of living crisis and pressure from social media to be successful.

Martina Lupi, a writer and editor, spoke to us about her experience as a Gen-Z employee: *"I expect more regular feedback and recognition of my work, which is not always the norm in the company. I believe this lack of feedback can*

*contribute to a stressful work environment, as I'm left unsure of where I stand and how to improve.*

*"I also find that communication issues within the team can be a source of stress. Misunderstandings and disagreements can arise due to differences in work styles, and it can be challenging to bridge the gap between different generations.*

*"In terms of reducing workplace stress, I think that bridging the generational gap by offering intergenerational training and open communication can go a long way."*

The cost of living crisis has impacted millions of people across the UK and continues to affect various aspects of life. According to the Mental Health Foundation, 30% of UK adults have a poor quality of sleep and 23% are less social. Following a worldwide pandemic, it's no surprise that [anxiety and stress is on the rise](#).

Nathan Yoder, a software engineer and founder of RentZed, found that he didn't know what was expected of his job role, which contributed to workplace stress. He also found that he was afraid of completing his work too quickly and looking too competent, because he would be *"rewarded with more work without an increase in pay"*.

Like Nathan, many Gen-Z workers aren't willing to overwork themselves without an increase in benefits. According to the Living Wage Foundation, 1 in 7 jobs in London and 1 in 8 in the UK pay less than the Living Wage. Combined with rising living costs, Gen-Z workers are struggling while trying to manage basic living expenses.

Another factor, according to Sasha Amfo, head of people operations at FutureLearn, is the glamorised hustle culture on social media. She says, *"As TikTok trends of creators showing how productive they are waking up at 5am, hits 14.4 million views, the hustle culture depicted on users' screens is greater than ever. This can have a different impact on each individual's wellbeing, especially on youth mental health."*

The constant consumption of this kind of messaging gives Gen-Z unhealthy expectations and can contribute to burnout.

## What makes Gen-Z different?

In addition to generational differences, you might be wondering what makes Gen-Z employees different. To better understand this, we reached out to Alex Atherton, an ex-teacher who speaks and writes about Generation Z.

Gen-Z have been the generation heavily impacted by automation, gig economy, the internet, smartphones, and apps. Atherton has noted they have had to deal

with much more economic uncertainty as well as 24/7 online reputation management..

Reputation management comes in the form of the number of likes, shares, or followers on social media. Gen-Z have an acute sense of awareness when it comes to the way they present themselves to the world and the type of values they align themselves with.

Alongside the glamorisation of [hustle culture](#), economic instability is another reason Gen-Z are more likely to start or want to start their own business, or work towards multiple streams of income.

A study by Oliver Wyman has found that Gen-Z are happy to job-hop and are actively seeking healthy work-life balance and flexibility. If they don't receive this, they're happy to jump ship. In fact, some use this as a tactic to negotiate higher pay as they switch jobs every couple of years.

Alex says that this could be down to the fact that they inherited such a poor deal, Gen Zers could be working longer and potentially not even retiring.

***“Somewhere down the line, you are never ever buying property”***

Alex also found that Gen-Zers are more likely to take care of their wellbeing when compared with other generations. *“I think (the) younger generation look after themselves much better physically. They’ll more likely be in the gym than the pub.”*

Alex noted that while Gen Zers are aware of the importance of mental health and how to manage it, mental health support in the UK is fairly behind.

***“Which is why I suspect sometimes people, you know, just walk out of their jobs thinking well actually this is making me ill.”***

Want to understand Gen Z audiences?

We spoke to leading [Gen Z marketing agencies](#) to understand how to best market to the new generation. Check out our findings.

**What can businesses do to de-stress their Gen-Z employees?**

With Gen-Z employees making up the newest and future workforce, it's important for businesses to provide an environment that caters to their needs and provides a way through these challenges.

While there are external factors that can't always be dealt with by employers, there are ways that employers can provide a supportive and nurturing environment for its Gen-Z employees.

Here are some insider top tips for businesses:

- **Clearly outline expectations** – Gen-Z employees will often be new to the workplace and have found that workplace culture, job roles, and expectations aren't clearly outlined, making it difficult for them to meet expectations. Instead, they are left to fend for themselves and figure out how to succeed. As a side note, doing so from the selection process is a great way of engaging with them from the get-go and [reducing your recruitment bias](#) towards older applicants.
- **Provide more open and honest communication** – compared to older generations, Gen-Z workers are typically more open and honest and are happy to communicate concerns and questions. However, in workplaces where this isn't the norm, it can be difficult for employees to manage any stressors that arise.
- **Educate managers on mental health and wellbeing:** while mental health first aiders are important and found in many workplaces, this can sometimes miss the mark – many people may not feel comfortable reaching out. Instead, ensure managers with direct reports are educated on how to manage workplace stress, thereby providing an honest space for employees to discuss concerns.
- **Feedback should be communicated regularly:** remote and hybrid work has its benefits, but some Gen-Z employees have found that this has led to a lack of helpful feedback. Scheduling regular feedback sessions will help

employees understand where they're doing well and where they can improve. As mentioned earlier, Gen-Z have developed a better sense of reputation management than other generations and typically embrace feedback well.

- **Encourage work-life balance:** while employers may not be able to mitigate all of the external factors affecting Gen-Z, they can encourage a healthier work-life balance. This will go a long way to providing employees with improved mental health and wellbeing.
- **Communicate company values:** for Gen Zers, [company values are important](#) when choosing a place of work. Being clear about what these are helps Gen-Zers understand if your company is suited to them. By being upfront about what these are will help you attract and retain compatible employees.
- **Understand their needs:** while we can quote stats and theories, the best way to manage specific Gen-Z challenges is to speak to your employees directly. This empowers them to communicate their specific needs and allows you to meet them where they're at. With Gen-Z being happy to switch jobs that [don't meet their needs](#), to retain talent, you'll need to be open to receiving feedback and implementing it where relevant.

Gen-Zers are searching for flexibility, a work-life balance, communication, and feedback. Providing these will help your business flourish and retain talent. While external stressors will continue to affect Gen-Zers, as an employer, you have a level of responsibility towards providing your employees with a healthy workplace.

For more insights, check out how employee [smartphone addiction](#) could be slowing down your business.