

Prograd's Future of Work study

The Gen Z Employment Crisis: How to win or lose Gen Z talent

November, 2024

Introduction

If you're an employer expecting business as usual or gradual change over time, it's time to rethink. Adapting to the needs of Gen Z is essential for future success, and some employers are already winning.

Gen Z is driving significant changes in the workplace, and employers must proactively adapt their strategies to meet these new expectations if they want to remain competitive and attract top talent (and retain them).

The Prograd Future of Work study was conducted with almost 2,000 Gen Z Prograd members in the UK in September 2024. Ahead of releasing our Industry Deep Dive reports, this mini report outlines the top employers leading the way in 2024, who Gen Z have identified as the most appealing employers to work for. We'll talk you through the values that Gen Z look for, and which employers are delivering against these values. We'll also summarise four key insights on Gen Z's expectations for the workplace, and the implications of these findings for employers, managers and recruiters.

Take a look and find out what is driving appeal among the winning employers (and see whether your business makes the list!).

A note from Prograd

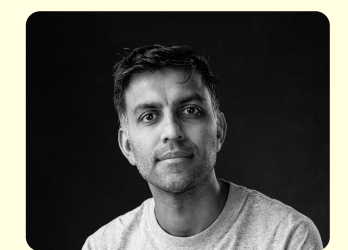
At Prograd we have brought together a community of over 450,000 members with the shared goal of improving financial literacy and personal financial outcomes for Gen Z. Prograd members use our app to access bite-sized finance lessons and flexible earning opportunities to build their own "side hustle". In our many interactions with them, it became clear that a chasm was opening up between their expectations of work and their actual early career experiences.

Through this study we wanted to dive into the key motivations and challenges for Gen Z in the workplace. To understand what the best companies do well and how their approach speaks to the values that Gen Z find important. We see a lot of narrative in the media about Gen Z and work, but for us the changing mindset of younger generations shouldn't be dismissed. It presents a opportunity to drive cultural change at employers towards greater autonomy, productivity and fulfillment.

Our mini report provides a snapshot of the findings, we hope that you find it valuable. If the message resonates, we are on-hand with further insights from our Industry Deep Dive reports.



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Our methodology

Our Future of Work study took a 3 stage approach::

Initial research & pre-survey:

The team began by compiling a list of potentially appealing industries through desk research. We then surveyed 660 Gen Z participants to rank these industries and gathered data on their preferred employers within each industry, and the reasons why they were appealing.

Shortlisting process:

After analysing the pre-survey results, we identified the top 14 industries and key employers within each. These selections were then validated by sharing with Gen Z experts (and Gen Z employees themselves) across the Prograd business.

Main survey

The final stage involved surveying 1,997 UK Gen Z participants aged 15–27, covering a range of topics related to attitudes to work, current and future employment preferences. Participants were asked to rate employers from their three industries of interest on a 5–point scale, ranging from "Very unappealing" to "Very appealing".

The 14 industries we included in the research were:

- Public Sector (Health, Education, Armed Forces, Emergency)
- Charity/Non-Profit Organisations
- Pharmaceutical, Science & Private Health
- Manufacturing, Engineering & Automotive
- Consumer Goods & Products
- Entertainment & Media
- Financial Services, Banking & Fin-Tech
- Hospitality, Food & Travel
- IT, Technology and Software
- Marketing, Communications & Advertising
- Oil & Gas, Renewables and Utilities
- Professional Services (e.g. Accounting, Consulting, Law)
- Retail and E-Commerce
- Creative Industries (e.g. Arts, Design, Fashion)

The scores used to calculate our Dream 100 are the combined net of 'Slightly appealing' and 'Very appealing'. We removed any cases where the respondent was unaware of the employer, meaning the total base size varies by employer. It's worth noting that all figures in this report are rounded to whole numbers, and where employers received the same appeal score, the difference in their position reflects their score to two decimal places. The details of appeal scores by employer can be found in the full report.

Survey sample

The results presented in this report come from our main survey of n=1,997 Gen Z aged 15–27 in the UK, obtained via the Prograd panel. To ensure that our results are nationally representative of this audience, quotas were applied by age, gender and region according to the ONS. Where exact quotas were not achieved, the data was weighted.

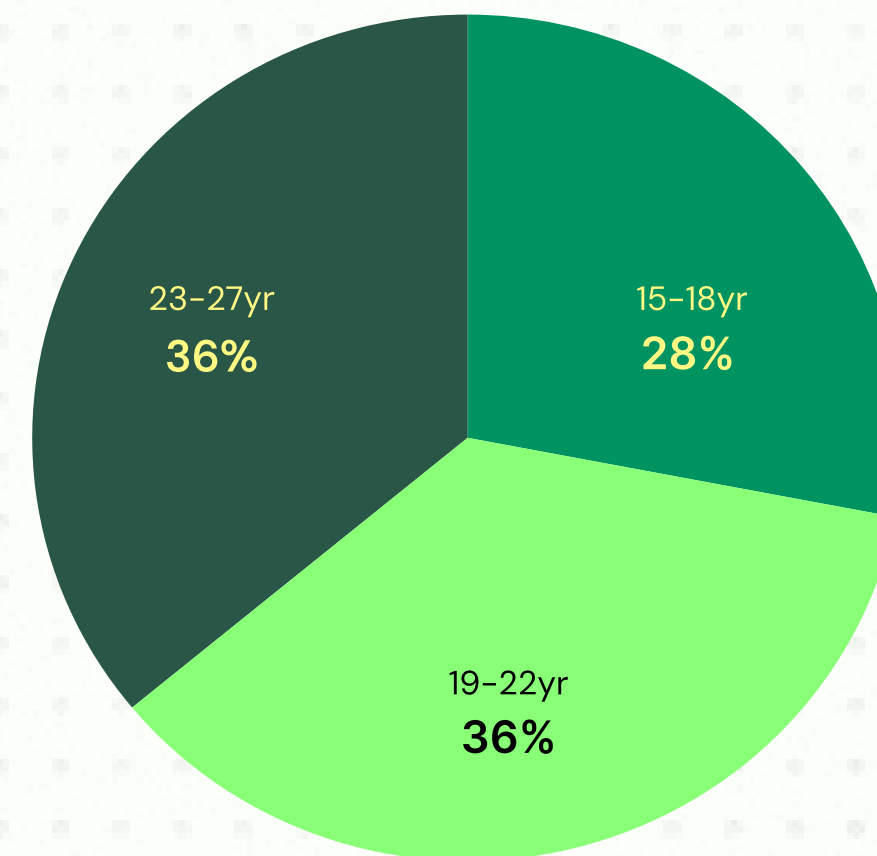
The Prograd panel

At Prograd, our mission is to help young people take control of their personal finances, through personalised earning opportunities and education. We have over 450k users in the UK, of which 350k are Gen Z. For our partners we believe in driving innovation through information, please reach out to find out more about engaging with our audience.

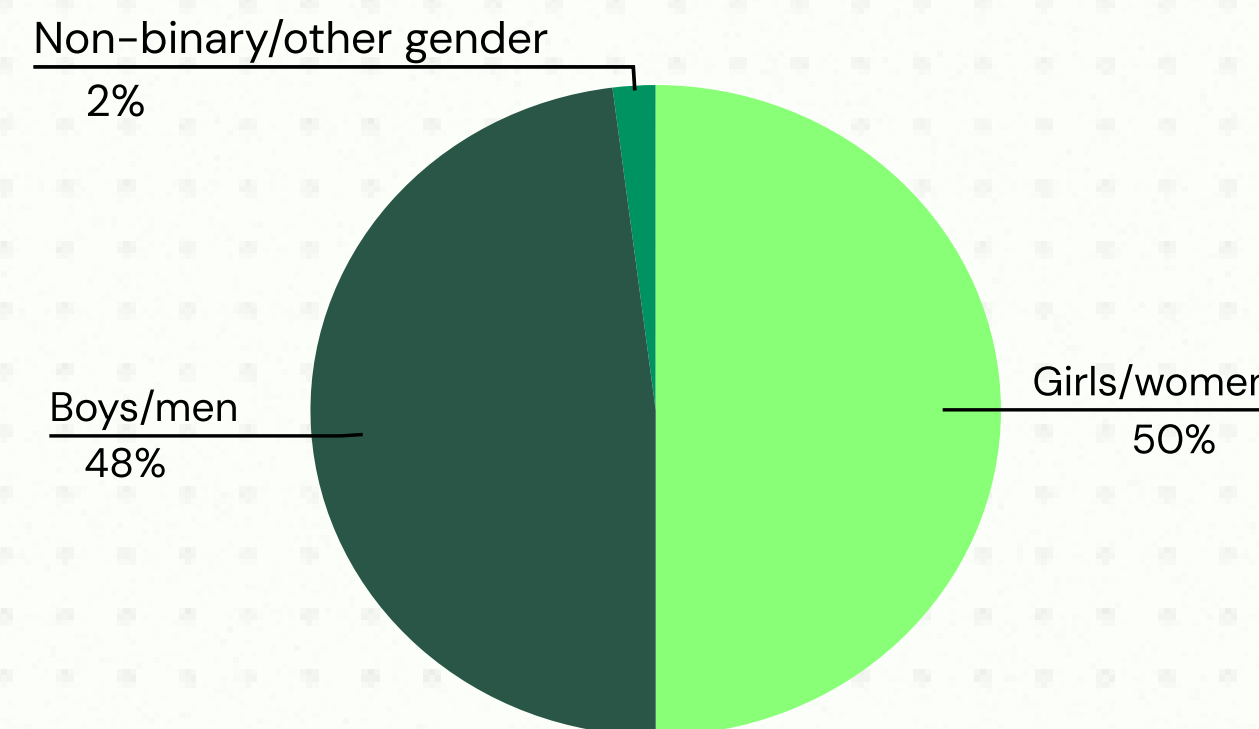
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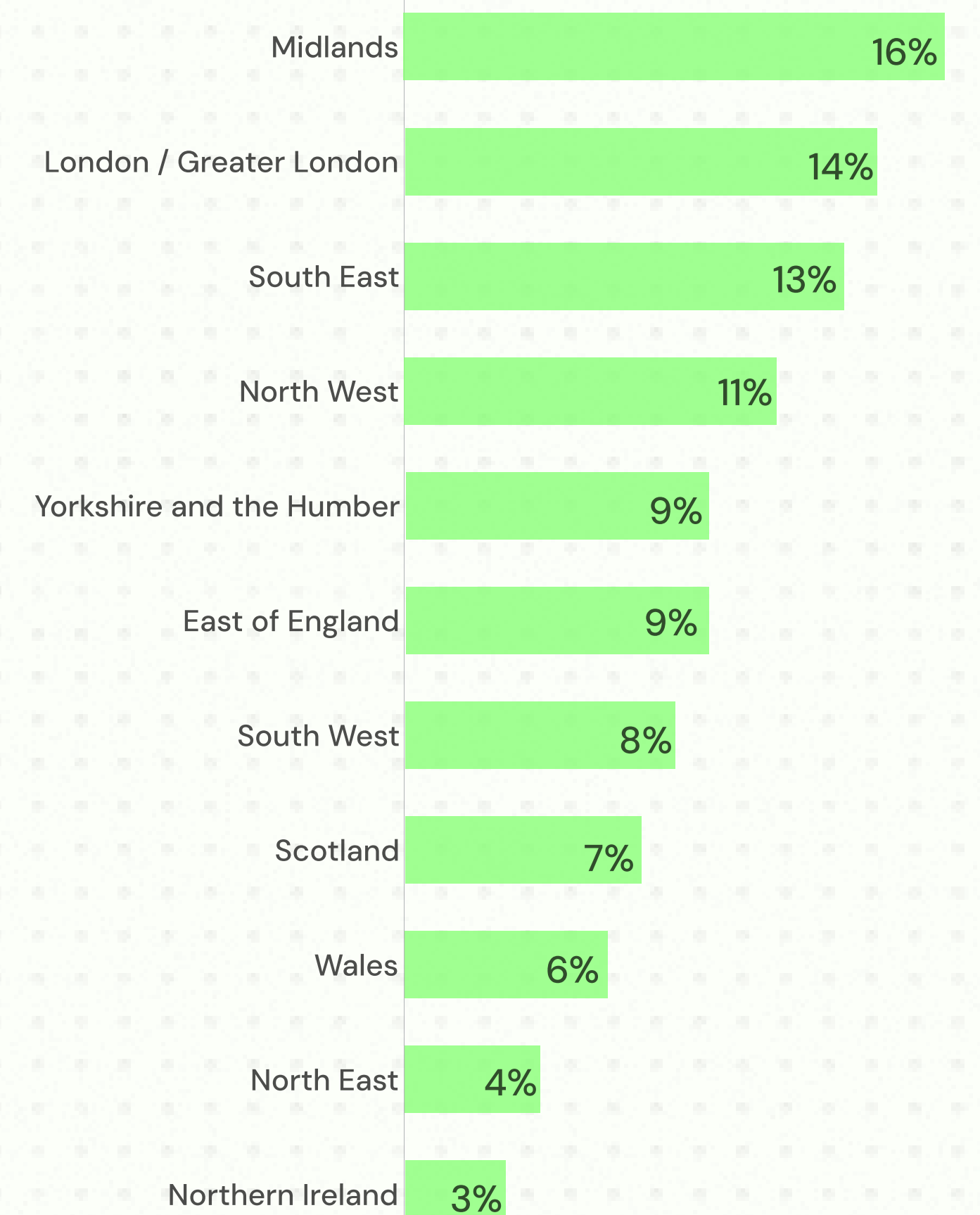
Age Groups



Gender




























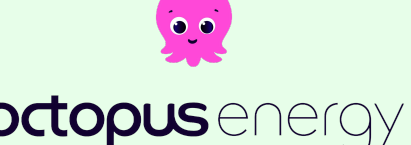



















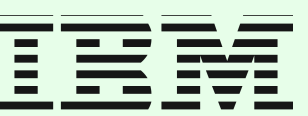



UK Region



Dream 100: The top employers winning with Gen Z

 Microsoft	 Google	 Apple	 Rolls-Royce	 BMW GROUP		 McLaren	 YouTube	 NETFLIX	 SAMSUNG
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
 SONY	 Nintendo	 JLR	 Spotify			 unicef	 CANCER RESEARCH UK	 Save the Children.	 DIOR
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	 VOGUE	 intel	 mind	 British Heart Foundation	 TESLA	 BRITISH AIRWAYS	 UNIVERSAL UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP	 The WALT DISNEY Company	 BritishRedCross
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
 MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT	 NVIDIA	 TikTok	 RSPCA	 OpenAI	 WWF	 BARCLAYS	 LLOYDS BANKING GROUP	 British Gas	 aws
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
 adidas	 DELL	 LV	 Hewlett Packard Enterprise	 logitech	 CHANEL	 prime	 UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION	 nationalgrid	 HSBC
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50

Dream 100: The top employers winning with Gen Z

 51	 52	 53	 54	 55	 56	 57	 58	 59	 60
 61	 62	 63	 64	 65	 66	 67	 68	 69	 70
 71	 72	 73	 74	 75	 76	 77	 78	 79	 80
 81	 82	 83	 84	 85	 86	 87	 88	 89	 90
 91	 92	 93	 94	 95	 96	 97	 98	 99	 100

Tech employers take the lead

The top three employers are all in the IT, Technology and Software industry:

 Microsoft,  Google and  Apple

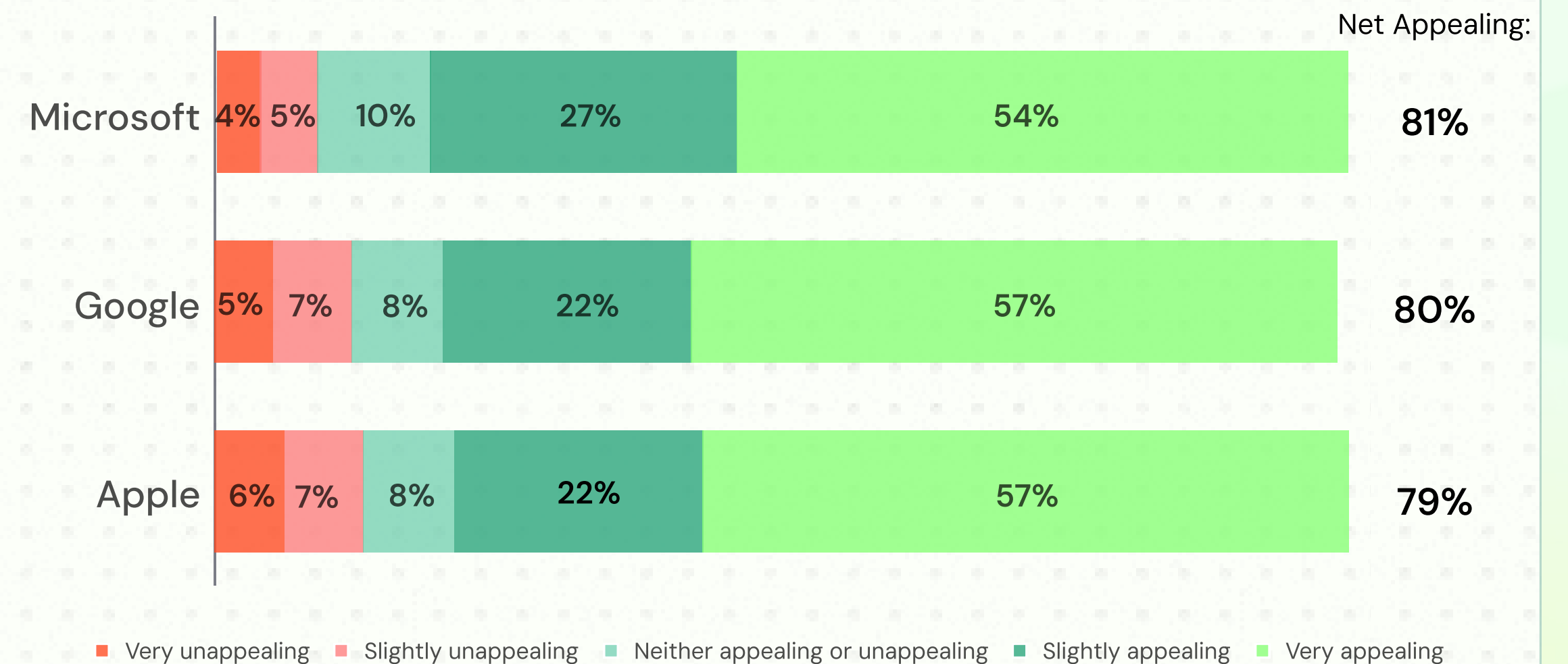
Consistently, these employers have high 'very appealing' scores, and perform extremely well against three specific values which Gen Z care about:

- Career Growth Opportunities
- Competitive Salary & Benefits
- Innovation, Fresh Ideas & Use of Technology

Career growth opportunities and competitive salary and benefits are the top values that Gen Z deem important, and Gen Z believe the winning employers currently deliver these to their employees, as well as standing out for their innovation and fresh ideas. What sets these employers apart seems to be not only the presence of these attributes, but their ability to communicate them clearly and consistently, creating strong value associations in the minds of potential employees.

The data shows that employers performing less well often have less clear associations, suggesting that Gen Z is less attracted to companies whose value propositions are ambiguous. Communicating and demonstrating values is important; Gen Z want to know what you stand for.

How appealing is this employer as somewhere you might want to work in the future?



Tech employers take the lead

What really stands out is how these companies are great at showing potential employees the complete package of what it's like to work for them. When asked why they want to work for these companies, Gen Z frequently referenced not just the tangible benefits like competitive salaries, but also the intangible aspects of workplace culture. Phrases like "fun and enjoyable," "looks after its employees," and "fosters creativity" appeared repeatedly in their answers, suggesting that Gen Z seek employers who can provide both professional advancement and personal fulfillment at the same time.

For employers looking to attract the next generation of talent, the message is clear: invest in creating and communicating a workplace that delivers on multiple fronts. Gen Z look for multiple 'puzzle pieces' that fit together to create the perfect employer. Even our winners aren't perfect, but they deliver on certain values that Gen Z care about and they communicate these clearly.

So, what else do we know about the values that Gen Z care about most? What are the other puzzle pieces they look for? Read on to find out more...

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*"I think **Microsoft** is a great company which looks after its employees, as well as supporting them to grow their own career as an individual" – Woman, 18*



*"**Google's** culture stands out – it values creativity, collaboration, and a healthy work-life balance, which makes it a great place to grow both personally and professionally. Plus, the impact of working on products that millions of people use every day is incredibly motivating." – Woman, 24*



*"**Apple** can give me a huge opportunity to grow and make a huge amount of money!" – Man, 18*

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Gen Z's top workplace values, and who is setting the standard

The study uncovered the values that Gen Z are most likely to look for in employers, and which employers Gen Z think are doing well at delivering (and communicating) these values.

1 Career growth opportunities

The employer offers clear paths for advancement and skill development within their organisation.

 Winner: British Airways

"They offer a range of job opportunities to grow a career and develop new skills."



2 Competitive salary and benefits

The employer offers fair compensation and comprehensive benefits packages that meet or exceed industry standards. Examples include private health insurance or ability to travel.


 Winner: Rolls-Royce

"Luxury cars would be amazing to work with as it would often times lead to a high paying role."



3 Work-life balance, flexible working & remote working

The employer respects personal time and offers adaptable work arrangements, such as remote working options.

 Winner: Uber Eats

"It's easy to make money and it's flexible."



4 Job stability and security

The employer provides assurance of long-term employment and financial stability.

 Winner: Tesco

"My mum's always had a good job there and they pay generously."



5 High quality leadership and management

The employer has competent, inspiring and supportive leaders who guide the organisation effectively.

 Winner: John Lewis Partnership

"You have the opportunity to be a partner as well, it also seems to be a good work environment."



Our Industry Deep Dive reports uncover the rest of the values that Gen Z find important, and whether or not employers in your industry are delivering on these.

The Gen Z Playbook: Four priorities redefining work

1 Beyond the paycheck: Competitive pay opens the door, but growth keeps Gen Z

60%
of Gen Z say they are prioritising improving their finances (e.g. saving money).

Gen Z have grown up in a world of worry and financial uncertainty and are living in a very different world to their parents. They know this, and they aren't happy about it. Gen Z want employers to get the basics right – which means remuneration, benefits, and the opportunity to grow.

Eight in ten of Gen Z said they often worry about money (81%), which was even higher among women (87%). A decent salary is now no longer simply aspirational, it's a need for avoiding financial stress in today's cost of living. Gen Z are looking for jobs that can provide security, a decent salary and reduce their money worries. In fact, competitive salary and benefits was the second most important value that Gen Z look for in an employer – and they [want to see this in the job advert](#).

64%
of Gen Z ranked career growth opportunities in their top 5 most important values (#1 of all employer values)

While initial salary is very important, Gen Z have high expectations for growth and advancement (including possibly unrealistic expectations for salary alongside this). While the traditional career ladder may not be what Gen Z want, they are ambitious and strive to improve, learn and build skills. 89% of Gen Z agree that continuous learning and skill development are crucial in their career.

Employers must actively engage with their Gen Z workforce through clear career path planning, skill-building opportunities, and open discussions about future roles and salaries to help them feel more secure.

2 The side hustle surge and Gen Z's entrepreneurial mindset

When asked why they were thinking about switching jobs, 63% said it was because they wanted a better salary. Gen Z are frustrated by their salaries not meeting expectations, often looking to switch jobs to see whether the grass is greener.

They may also be tempted to start a side hustle; having grown up with the rise of the gig economy these extra ways of earning income are the new normal for Gen Z.

3 in 5
58%
Gen Z agree that entrepreneurship is more appealing than traditional employment.

To attract and retain this talent, companies should consider fostering a culture of intrapreneurship, allowing employees to gain skills, take responsibility of projects and initiatives within the organisation and giving them the option to have their own ideas. Perhaps businesses could even encourage side-hustles to improve employees' financial situations, by offering skill and network building opportunities and additional time to pursue these side quests.

A quarter of Gen Z
26%
are prioritising starting a side hustle in the next 5 years.

A quarter (24%) of Gen Z say they are prioritising starting or growing a business within the next five years. Freelancing and project-based work across multiple companies is also gaining traction, with over half (58%) of Gen Z finding this more appealing than traditional employment. This entrepreneurial mindset reflects a desire for greater autonomy, financial independence, and creative control.

3 Embracing AI: A duality of enthusiasm and uncertainty

Two thirds
64%
agree that companies should incorporate AI tools to improve productivity

Gen Z show remarkable enthusiasm and adaptability when it comes to using artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace. This tech-savvy generation demonstrates high confidence in navigating technological change, with 71% expressing comfort with rapid technological evolution.

Their self-assurance extends to AI literacy, as more than two-thirds (68%) feel confident enough to explain AI concepts to their peers.

At least 60% of Gen Z already actively use AI to enhance their learning, boost productivity, and believe in its potential to simplify life. Organisations need to recognize that Gen Z candidates will increasingly expect AI integration as a standard part of the workplace environment, not just a nice-to-have feature.

Despite their openness and enthusiasm around AI, there are still some concerns and apprehension. Half are worried about AI taking over their jobs, while half agree that their industry is likely to change greatly because of AI (49%). Gen Z display a complex relationship with AI in the workplace - while they're enthusiastic about its productivity benefits, they also worry about job displacement and industry disruption.

48%
of Gen Z feel worried about AI taking over their jobs.

To address this duality, employers need to focus on transparent communication about AI implementation, invest in skills development that emphasizes human-AI collaboration, and actively involve Gen Z in decisions about AI integration. Help answer the questions that they have about AI: what's your stance as an employer? Are they themselves allowed to use it? What do your leaders have to say about the ethics of AI in your industry? Staying quiet may put you on the back foot.

4 Zen Z: Prioritising balance and happiness

88%
of Gen Z agree that employers should prioritise the mental health of their employees

Gen Z place unprecedented importance on mental health, work-life balance, and workplace wellbeing. Eight in ten (81%) admit they view work primarily as a means to fund their lifestyle rather than their whole life, two thirds (68%) agree that work-life balance is more important than a high salary, and 57% of Gen Z said that work-life balance and flexibility is a top value they look for in an employer.

This represents a fundamental shift in workplace expectations, with flexibility being particularly crucial - 75% prefer flexible schedules and 63% consider remote work essential for job satisfaction. This is extremely topical given the [recent announcements](#) of many businesses, such as Amazon, requesting that staff cut down on remote working.

The stakes for employers are high, and Gen Z aren't afraid to look elsewhere if these needs aren't being met. 31% of Gen Z employees have experienced burnout in their current job, with over half of these considering leaving their jobs as a result (58%). The number one reason why Gen Z would avoid working for an employer is if they had heard about the poor treatment of employees. They embrace and expect wellness and support and have a lower tolerance for 'toxic' workplace environments.

39%
of Gen Z in full time work plan to switch employers in the next 2 years, with half of these saying it is to improve their happiness or work-life balance

For employers and recruiters, this signals a clear imperative: companies must adapt their workplace cultures and policies to emphasise wellbeing, support and flexibility, or risk losing out on Gen Z talent. This is especially crucial for attracting and retaining women, with 64% ranking work-life balance and flexibility among their top values, compared to 49% of men.

Full employer rankings

1. Microsoft	40. AWS	79. Greenpeace	118. JLP	158. Npower	197. Slaughter and May	237. Sanofi	278. Deliveroo
2. Google	41. Adidas	80. Goldman Sachs	119. Bupa	159. Design Bridge	198. Next	238. Eversheds	279. VMLY&R
3. Apple	42. Dell	81. Revolut	120. British Museum	160. Lululemon	199. Admiral Group	239. Skanska UK	280. Danone
4. Rolls-Royce	43. Louis Vuitton	82. Coca-Cola	121. Channel 4	161. BDO	200. Tata Steel Europe	240. Expedia	281. McDonald's
5. BMW	44. HP	83. Oxfam	122. Oracle	162. VolkerWessels UK	201. Publicis Groupe	241. Schlumberger	
6. Mercedes	45. Logitech	84. Burberry	123. Asos	163. Urban Outfitters	202. Anglian Water	242. Morrisons	
7. McLaren	46. Chanel	85. Red Bull	124. Pinewood Studios	164. Bayer	203. Marriott	243. Liang O'Rourke	
8. Youtube	47. Amazon Prime	86. Age UK	126. Snapchat	165. Tesco	204. BBH	244. WPP	
9. Netflix	48. UN Foundation	87. BP	127. Johnson & Johnson	166. MSD	205. R/GA London	245. Royal Navy	
10. Samsung	49. National Grid	88. Alexander McQueen	128. BAE Systems	167. General Electric	206. Aldi	246. British Army	
11. Sony	50. HSBC	89. V&A	129. PepsiCo	168. Legal & General	207. Thames Water	247. Morgan Sindall Group	
12. Nintendo	51. PwC	90. Starling Bank	130. RSC	169. Accenture	208. Sports Direct	248. Balfour Beatty	
13. Jaguar Land Rover	52. Childline	91. Sky	131. Grant Thornton	170. Civil Service	209. Police Force	249. Seven Trent Water	
14. Spotify	53. RAA	92. eBay	132. BT	171. Superdrug	210. John Deere	250. Saatchi & Saatchi	
15. Instagram	54. EDF Energy	93. Scottish Power	133. McKinsey	172. TUI Group	211. Takeda	251. Co-op	
16. Warner Brothers	55. Alzheimer's Society	94. EY	134. Nestlé	173. Meta	212. Allianz	252. JDO	
17. UNICEF	56. Deloitte	95. Shopify	135. Marks & Spencer	174. United Utilities	213. Baker Hughes	253. Royal Marines	
18. Cancer Research UK	57. NHS	96. AstraZeneca	136. BCG	175. Centrica	214. Atom Bank	254. Procter & Gamble	
19. Save the Children	58. JP Morgan	97. IBM	137. Linklaters	176. Metro Bank	215. Virgin Media	255. HelloFresh	
20. Dior	59. Gucci	98. Royal Opera House	138. SSE	177. Mother London	216. AbbVie	256. Havas Group	
21. Nike	60. AMD	99. Monzo	139. GSK	178. Innocent Drinks	217. Waitrose	257. Greggs	
22. Vogue	61. Nuffield Health	100. Tate	140. Boots	179. X	218. Fire Service	258. Dentsu Aegis Network	
23. Intel	62. Bank of England	101. Electronic Arts	141. Activision	180. Omnicom Group	219. Wieden+Kennedy	259. Wolf Olins	
24. Mind	63. National Theatre	102. Nationwide	142. The Body Shop	181. Babcock	220. Kier Group	260. Coastguard	
25. BHF	64. KPMG	103. Airbus UK	143. Mars	182. Pinsent Masons	221. Sainsbury's	262. Kraft Heinz	
26. Tesla	65. BBC	104. UK Universities	144. Roche	183. Nando's	222. McCann Worldgroup	263. Coastain Group	
27. British Airways	66. Shell	105. Hilton Hotels	145. Siemens	184. Wise	223. Primark	264. Uber Eats	
28. Universal	67. ITV	106. Samaritans	146. Easy Jet	185. Novartis	224. Asda	265. Just Eat	
29. Walt Disney	68. Natwest	107. Clifford Chance	147. Allen & Overy	186. Gilead Sciences	225. Southern Water	266. Pret A Manger	
30. British Red Cross	69. Amazon	108. The Princess Trust	148. Ubisoft	187. CMS	226. Ashurst	267. BrewdOG	
31. Macmillan	70. Prad	109. RBS	149. Army	188. TCS	227. DLA Piper	268. Prudential	
32. Nvidia	71. UK Power Networks	110. Barnado's	150. Uber	189. Eli Lilly and Company	228. Arup Group	269. Interserve	
33. Tiktok	72. YSL	111. L'Oreal	151. Airbnb	190. Freshfields	229. RAF	270. Pentagonam	
34. RSPCA	73. Pinterest	112. JD Sports	152. Stella McCartney	191. UK Schools	230. Yorkshire Water	271. Mondelez	
35. Open AI	74. Halifax	113. McKinsey	153. Twitch	192. Virgin Group	231. Capgemini	272. ISG	
36. WWF	75. Vivienne Westwood	114. E.ON	154. Sephora	193. Affinity Water	232. Aviva	273. Ocado	
37. Barclays	76. Octopus Energy	115. Vitality	155. Booking.com	194. Superunion	233. Costa Coffee	274. AKQA	
38. Lloyds Banking Group	77. Santander	116. L'Oréal	156. Zara	195. Unilever	234. Ryanair	275. KFC	
39. British Gas	78. Amnesty	117. Pfizer	157. Ambulance Service	196. Cisco	235. Lidi	276. Reckitt	
					236. Dare	277. Diageo	

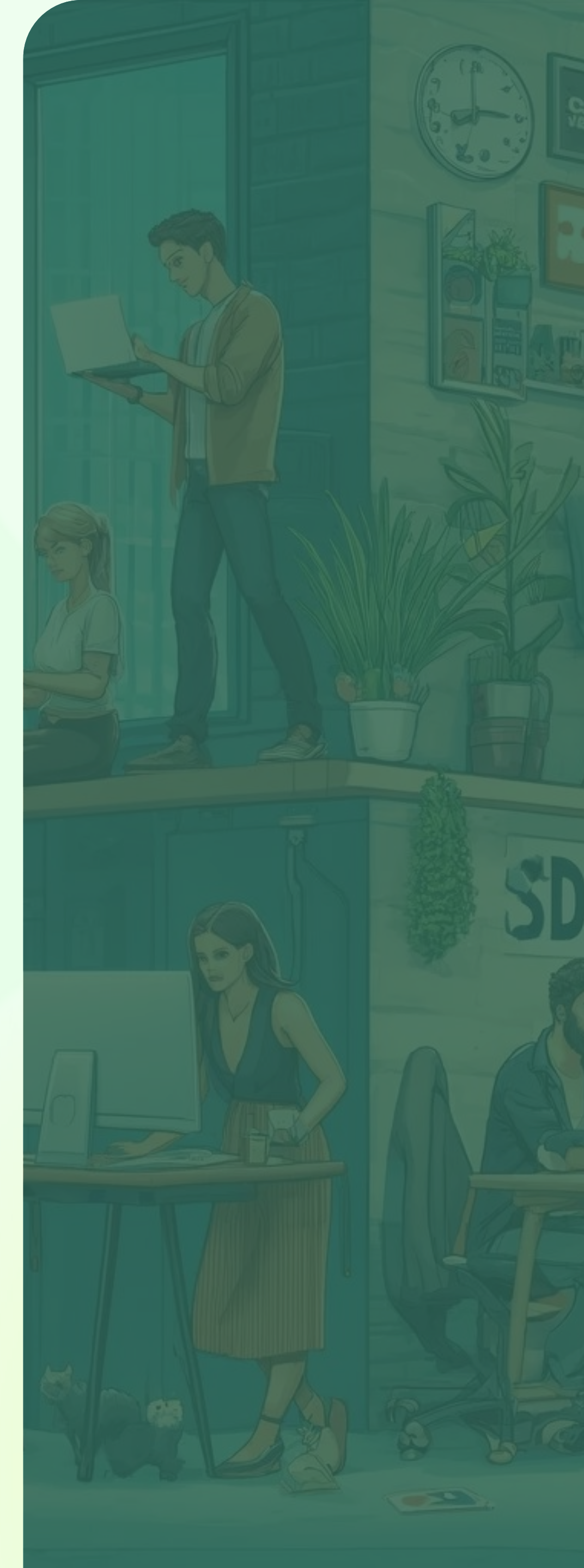
Want more insights into what Gen Z think of your industry?

Industry Deep Dive reports are available for purchase.

Our industry reports aim to give you a deep understanding of Gen Z so you can attract and retain the best talent. Each industry report includes...

- 🎯 Additional insights on Gen Z's attitudes to the future of work
- 🎯 Gen Z's values when it comes to employment
- 🎯 How your industry is delivering on these values and which employers are doing best
- 🎯 Appeal scores of each employer within your industry
- 🎯 The profile & attitudes of Gen Z who find your industry appealing
- 🎯 Additional mined conversational insights from our insights partner Human Dot Plus.

Get in touch for more information on our industry reports with personalised content and a free consultation session, or bespoke research at marco@prograd.uk



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