

HUMAN8

READY FOR

THE ZOOMERS!

Gen Z report: China edition

SHORT ON TIME? 5 REPORT TAKE-AWAYS

1

GEN Z x MENTAL WELL-BEING

42% of Gen Z in China feels stressed. Yet this 'it's OK to not be OK' generation is all about dropping taboos and expects brands to take on the role of coach, supporting them in prioritizing and discussing the topic of mental health.

2

GEN Z x FINANCE

Redefining how to make money, Chinese Zoomers are self-educating, with 66% following fin-fluencers for financial advice. They want accessible and actionable advice from brands that support them in building financial resilience.

3

GEN Z x METAVERSE

Embracing and shaping the metaverse, together with their Millennial allies this always-on generation wants brands to create exciting experiences by seamlessly integrating the online and offline worlds.

4

GEN Z x BRANDS

Having a strong focus on injustice, Gen Z wants brands to make an impact on planet and people. 76% of Chinese Gen Z is even willing to pay more for brands that try to have a positive impact on society. At the same time, they expect brands to provide a personalized, playful experience.

5

GEN Z x SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Given the profound impact of the pandemic recession on their everyday lives, Gen Z is determined to create a better future with topics such as health problems and the economic crisis being high on their agenda. Yet, one-off actions by brands are a no-go; this generation wants to see an ongoing social impact.

REPORT NAVIGATION

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READY FOR
THE
ZOOMERS?**

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UNCERTAINTY & INCLUSIVITY

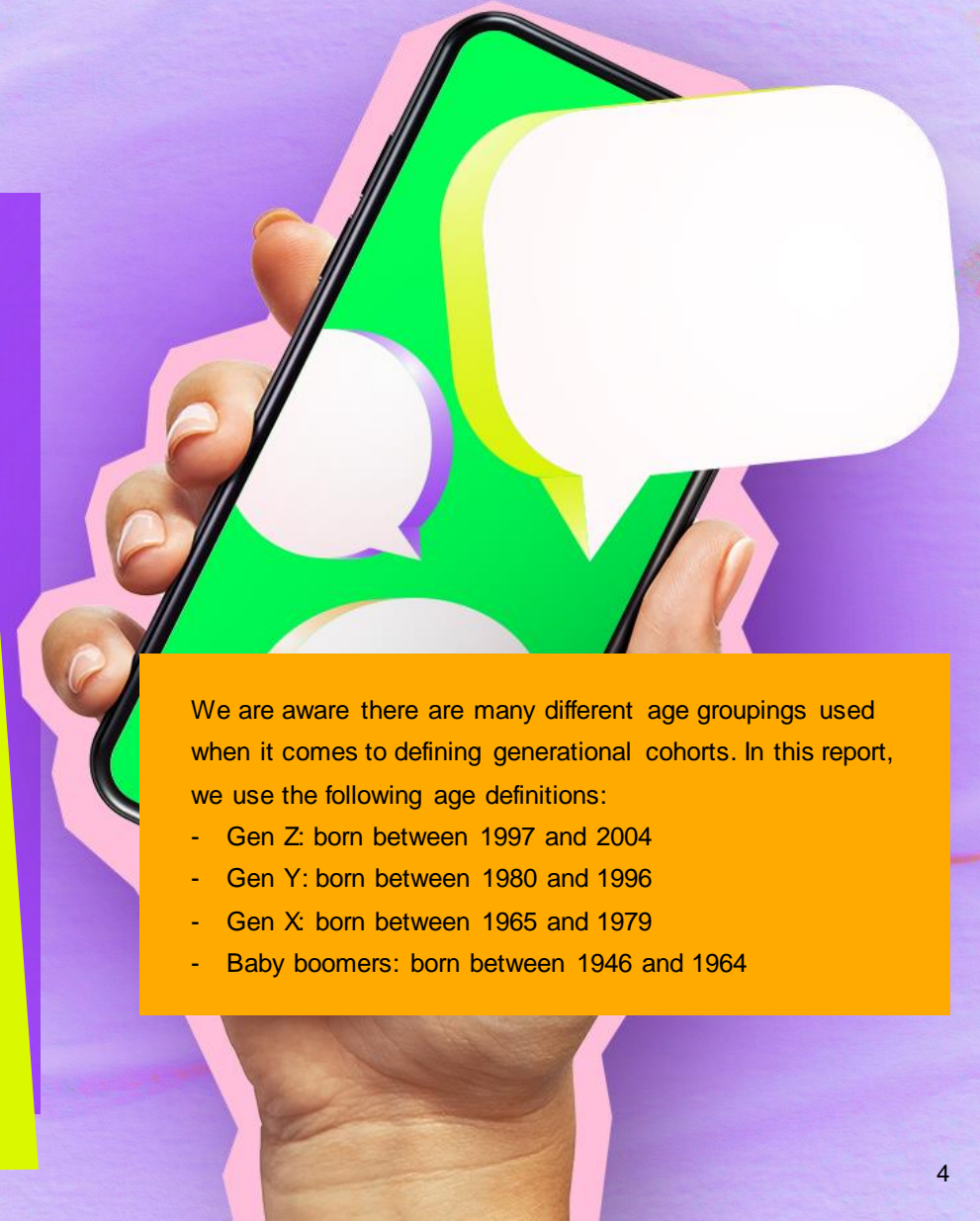
ARE YOU READY FOR THE ZOOMERS?

Today, Gen Z is the world's largest generational cohort, accounting for one third of the global population. Also known as post-Millennials, the iGeneration, or Zoomers, they have the fastest-growing disposable income, which is expected to reach \$33 trillion over the next decade. In China, the definition of Gen Z for most media and public research is the population born between 1997 and 2012, who are 10-25 years old in 2022. In fact, about 232 million Chinese people belong to Gen Z, accounting for 16% of the total population. No matter what you call this generation, your business's future is likely to depend on them.

Who is Gen Z?

Born into a tech-enabled world, this digitally native generation is social-media-literate, always-on, and hyper-informed. Online platforms are their means to be in the know, to stay connected, and above all, they allow them to amplify their voice. This generation is not afraid to call out injustice. Growing up against the backdrop of social development, climate change, and a global health crisis, this is a generation that struggles with mental well-being, but they don't hold back when talking about it. With many coming of age during the pandemic, the past two years put a mark on their lives and outlook on the future.

So, what characterizes these Zoomers, and how are they different from the generations before them? In this report, we shed a light on what makes Gen Z tick and what they expect from brands.



We are aware there are many different age groupings used when it comes to defining generational cohorts. In this report, we use the following age definitions:

- Gen Z: born between 1997 and 2004
- Gen Y: born between 1980 and 1996
- Gen X: born between 1965 and 1979
- Baby boomers: born between 1946 and 1964

REPORT METHODOLOGY

To gain insight into Gen Z's attitude and behaviour, and how this differs from previous generations, we ran a global proprietary quantitative research piece with the four largest generational cohorts - Gen Z, Gen Y, Gen X and baby boomers.

The focus of this report is on China, where we surveyed 2,523 consumers in June-July 2022: 995 Gen Z, 817 Gen Y, 390 Gen X and 321 baby boomers.

	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby boomers
Born between	1997 – 2004*	1980 – 1996	1965 – 1979	1946 – 1964
China	995	817	390	321

*Taking into account ethical research guidelines, the survey focused on 18 years and older



**01
GEN Z x
MENTAL
WELL-BEING**

STRESS, HAPPINESS & PANDEMIC

GEN Z x MENTAL WELL-BEING

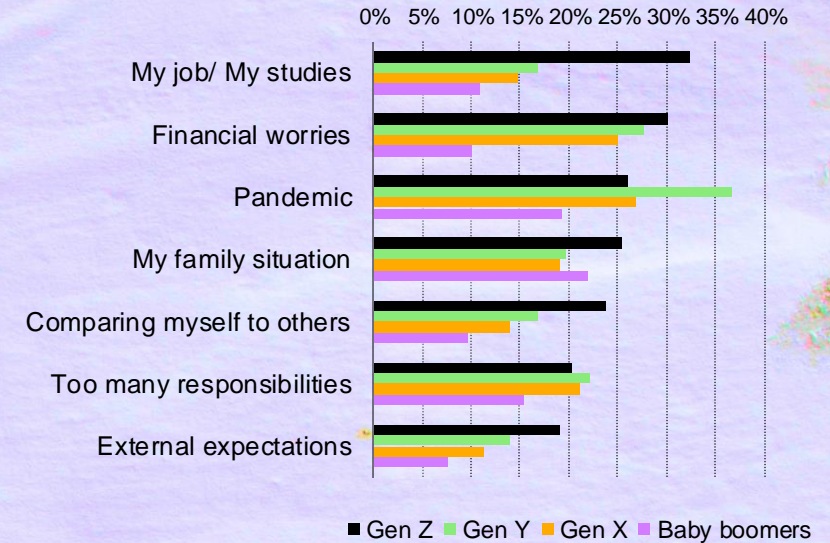
COMPETITIVE & STRESSFUL ENVIRONMENT

In China, 42% of Gen Z feels stressed, which is in line with the stress levels Gen Y (40%), Gen X (36%) and baby boomers (34%) experience. Yet the type of stressors they struggle with, differ from their older counterparts.

While all generations are stressed due to financial worries and the pandemic – which is a significant stressor for Millennials – Gen Z's top stressor is related to their job/studies (32%). This is not surprising as Gen Z enters adulthood during a pandemic recession. While for years China's fast-growing economy easily absorbed fresh graduates into corporate careers, hiring has slowed down. This leads to a very competitive and stressful environment which is reflected in our study with 24% of Gen Z indicating they get stressed by comparing themselves to others, 20% point to having too many responsibilities and 19% feel the pressure of external expectations. With social media being an inherent part of their lives, this only adds to the stress equation

42%
**OF GEN Z
FEELS
STRESSED**

TOP SOURCES OF STRESS



NETEASE CLOUD MUSIC x DEPRESSION CLOUD

Freemium music streaming service NetEase Cloud Music has become a place where young people can vent their stress and connect virtually with other users. In fact, in the comment sections under songs, users share stories of breakups, personal tragedies, anxiety, and loneliness. Therefore, the platform has latched onto its nickname 'NetEase Depression Cloud' via campaigns that encourage users to ask for help and by providing counselling services.



GEN Z x MENTAL WELL-BEING

SOCIAL MEDIA x MENTAL WELL-BEING

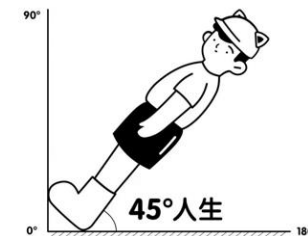
While social media is a space for Gen Z to connect, be creative and relax, it is often cited as a contributing factor to their mental-health struggles. 66% feels that the unrealistic depictions and filtered images put a lot of **pressure on looks**, something they have in common with their Millennial counterparts (62%). As a result, Gen Z tries to **show the best version of themselves online** (70%).

66%
OF GEN Z
**FEELS THE
PRESSURE
ON LOOKS**

45-DEGREE LIFE

In 2021, a new movement, tang ping, or 'lying flat' arose among Chinese Gen Z. It represents their reluctance to engage with the gruelling '996' rat race – that is, working 9am to 9pm, six days a week. Despite going viral in no time, research conducted by Fudan University revealed only 10 percent of youngsters actually practiced 'lying flat'. And so another term has emerged: '45-degree life'. This refers to the gray area between burnout culture and 'lying flat', and is believed to be a more appropriate description of the younger generations' attitude. The hashtag

#post2000dontwanttolieflattheyareactuallyhardworking started trending, receiving over 700 million views on Weibo. Many netizens admitted that while they couldn't afford to give up their salaries, they didn't wish to 'neijuan', or overwork. Therefore they fit somewhere in-between: a '45-degree life'.



REVER x MOOD ENHANCING BATH BOMBS AND CREAMS

Gen Z's focus on mental well-being can inspire brands to take on the role of life coach: supporting youngsters in prioritizing their mental health, and encouraging discussions around the topic.

Rever, a Chinese bath and body brand specialized in mood-enhancing bath bombs and creams, helps young professionals unwind through evening shower rituals.





02
GEN Z x
FINANCE

FROM FIN-FLUENCERS TO INVESTMENT

GEN Z x FINANCE

REDEFINING WHAT IT MEANS TO MAKE MONEY

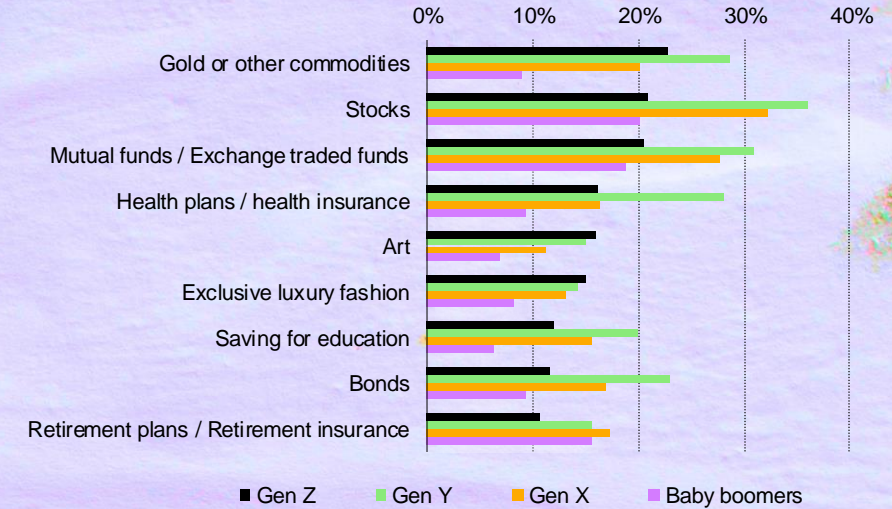
Growing up in the shadow of the 2008 financial crisis and against the backdrop of the COVID-19 recession, Gen Z wants to write their own money rules. **40% has a side hustle** (with more than 60% Gen Zers working full-time), which is something they have in common with Millennials (38%). And this side job goes beyond traditional babysitting. Flirting with Douyin and Bilibili algorithms, this generations turns their social game into a business plan in no time. In fact, 64% would like to start their own business, taking their future in their own hands in a pandemic-hit labour market.

But Gen Z also lets their money do the work. Even if their disposable income does not (yet) reach the heights of that of Gens Y and X, **almost 3 in 4 have made investments** in the past year (84% Gen Y, 75% Gen X, 59% baby boomers). Traditional products like **gold** (23%), stocks (21%), **mutual funds** (21%) and **health plans** (16%) take a big share in Gen Z's investment portfolio.

73%
OF GEN Z
HAS
INVESTED
IN THE
PAST YEAR



TOP INVESTMENT PRODUCTS



DEBT AVERSENESS

In comparison to Gen X and baby boomers, Gen Z is more debt-averse. The majority (63%) avoids buying on credit, which could explain the popularity of **buy-now-pay-later (BNPL)** options with this generation.

GEN Z x FINANCE

DIGITAL FUELING FINANCIAL LITERACY

66% of Gen Z states their interest in financial planning and/or investing has increased in the last 2 years. Rather than following expensive business courses, they **self-educate online**, for example by following influencers on social media, aka fin-fluencers, for financial advice (66%).

THE RISE OF THE 'FIN-FLUENCER'

Gen Z increasingly consults social media such as Weibo and Douyin for financial education. While social media **empowers Gen Z** to take financial literacy in their own hands, following so-called 'fin-fluencers' also comes with a huge **risk of misinformation**. Without any financial background or legitimation, anyone can present themselves as an expert and trick Gen Z.

66%
**OF GEN Z
FOLLOWS
INFLUENCERS
FOR
FINANCIAL
ADVICE**



GOLD IS COOL AGAIN

Gen Z and young Millennials are contributing to the comeback of gold. According to the China Gold Association, the country's gold jewellery market went up 45 percent from 2020 to 2021, with 75 percent of customers aged 25-35. Guochao, the 'heritage made hip' movement has played a vital role in gold's revival. Seen as the mainland's traditional jewel par excellence, gold still dominates some of the country's most important cultural moments today. The growing sense of nationalism means that younger consumers now look on these customs with a renewed sense of appreciation.



ZINVEST x STOCK-TRADING FOR YOUNG INVESTORS

Gen Z expects brands to support them with building financial resilience by providing accessible and actionable advice.

Zinvest, a commission-free stock trading app, focuses on allowing young investors to pursue their financial goals through enhanced market accessibility. Users can invest in stocks, IPOs, bonds, ETFs, options, and other assets through US, HK, and Chinese markets.



03
GEN Z x
METaverse
WHAT IS IT LIKE ON THE OTHER SIDE?

GEN Z x METaverse

CONQUERING THE METaverse

Seamlessly blending physical and digital worlds, Gen Zers are born digital citizens. For this 'always-on' generation, social media plays a central role in their everyday lives. **58% even feels anxious if they (must) disconnect for a day.**

Being a **visual- and video-driven** generation, Xiaohongshu, Weibo, Douyin and Bilibili are the most popular platforms. While they turn to Bilibili for **entertainment and tutorials**, Douyin provides a creative outlet for **memes and viral content**.

Next to these more traditional social-media platforms, Gen Z is fully exploring the metaverse, together with their Millennial allies. Hanging out with friends in virtual worlds, creating an avatar and spending money on virtual outfits is nothing extraordinary to them. In fact, almost 4 in 5 have already engaged in metaverse activities, ranging from gaming (37%), or watching e-sports (31%) to using a VR headset (18%).



79%
**OF GEN Z
HAS
ENGAGED
IN
METaverse
ACTIVITIES**

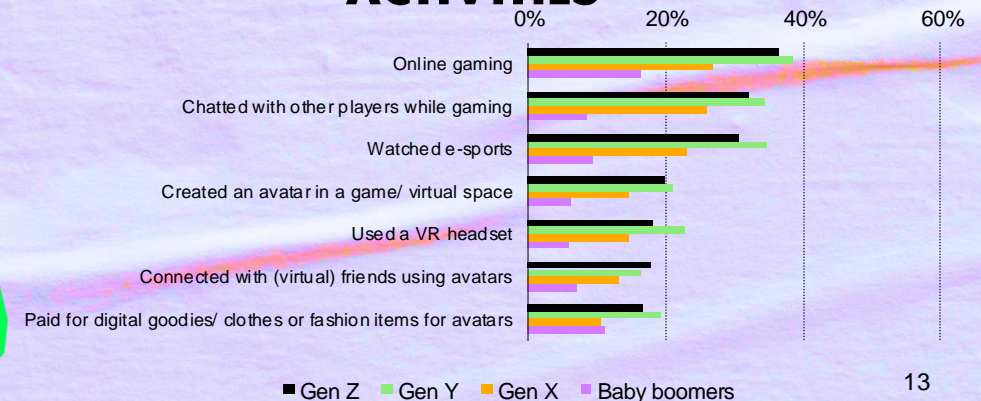
PEPSI x VIRTUAL CONCERT

Soft drink brand Pepsi has taken its concept store dedicated to China's young generations to the metaverse. Alongside the digital launch, the brand also teamed up with TMELAND (China's first virtual festival) to curate its first virtual concert. Titled 'Pepsi Live House', the online event tapped into the creativity of the youngsters by inviting users to co-create a theme song. This has enabled the brand to leverage its musical gene while resonating with its target audience more effectively.

Pepsi has also introduced four virtual idols to form a digital artist group called SHANE FU, who performed the first theme song *Pepsi Cypher* in the futuristic sphere.



PARTICIPATION IN METaverse ACTIVITIES



GEN Z x METAVERSE

ONLINE EXPERIENCES WITH AN OFFLINE TOUCH

Gen Z spends a lot of time online – even more during the pandemic when real-life interactions were put on hold. It helps them to **stay connected with the world and escape their everyday reality**. For example, by watching a movie or a series with friends ‘apart together’, which is something 40% of this generation does regularly. But they also make new friends in this digital space that they deem more equal (68%). Another 62% states they have online friends they have never met face-to-face. Despite the friendships they build and maintain online, 74% of this generation says the pandemic made them realize the importance of in-person interaction, which is in line with the sentiment of the older generations. So, it’s about combining online and offline interactions.



40%
OF GEN Z
**REGULARLY
WATCHES A
MOVIE OR
A SERIES
'APART
TOGETHER'**

M.A.C x META-VERSE THEMED POP-UP STORE

Gen Z embraces brands that are present in the metaverse, but also enjoy offline interactions. The future will be about creating exciting experiences that seamlessly integrate the online and offline world.

To launch its product line 'Lightful C3', make-up brand M.A.C Cosmetics created a meta-verse themed pop-up shop in Shanghai, and set up a collaboration with Ayayi (China's first virtual meta-human influencer), who used M.A.C's magic and luminous makeup effect to create a magic trick and explore virtual makeup in the metaverse beyond reality. M.A.C. also used a branded social media hashtag #MetaverseGlow to create buzz around its new product line.





04 GEN Z x BRANDS

EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS BRANDS

GEN Z x BRANDS

BRANDS THAT TAKE A STAND

When it comes to brand decisions, Gen Z pays attention to brand attributes that focus on people and planet. This also translates into a willingness to pay more for brands that try to have a positive impact on society (76%), use inclusive practices (75%), or run their business in a sustainable way (74%). But also offering financial security (75%) and supporting people in their life goals (74%) are aspects that increase Gen Z's willingness to pay more.

76%

OF GEN Z
**WOULD PAY
MORE FOR
BRANDS WITH
A POSITIVE
IMPACT ON
SOCIETY**

GEN Z's WILLINGNESS TO PAY MORE FOR BRANDS THAT



LUX x SMASHING LABELS

Unilever's personal care brand LUX created a campaign to encourage women in China to 'Smash the Labels' that they receive online via its 'Unstoppable' campaign. Featuring the popular artist Dylan Xiong, its music video has since gone viral and was performed on the reality show *Sisters Who Make Waves*. The message — to inspire women to rise above derogatory terms — resonates not only deeply with women audiences but raises awareness of prejudice amongst their male peers.



GEN Z x BRANDS

DATA IN EXCHANGE FOR PERSONALIZATION

Gen Z's expectations towards brands go beyond sustainability efforts. When considering a purchase, they pay attention to authenticity (76%), but also **personalization & co-creation** (72%). They look for brands that care about values that are important to them (76%) and **understand them** (71%). Gen Z does realize this comes at a cost, and they are willing to **pay for personalized experiences with their data** (97%).

ON A QUEST FOR HUMOUR AND PLAYFULNESS

In light of the pandemic, Gen Z also turned to brands for a spark of humour and playfulness helping them cope with their gloomy reality. 71% is even **willing to pay more for brands that have a sense of humour and playfulness**.



BOSIE x NO Gender No Border

Brands can win Gen Z's hearts by showing they understand what this generation cares about, allowing to create products that reflect their identity.

Bosie's mission is to help people pursue a beautiful genderless fashion experience. They specialize in creating unisex clothing with diverse styles and unique designs. The brand explores fashion styles suitable for both men and women, irrespective of ages and regions, breaking boundaries through retro and fun products.

Founded in 2018, Bosie has set a new benchmark as a fast fashion clothing brand that has successfully formed an offline/online sales model in China. Next to an offline flagship store in Shanghai that feels like a futuristic amusement park, the brand is present on online retail website Tmall. It became an instant hit and turned into the new domestic brand with the fastest monthly sales of men's clothing on Taobao and Tmall, which exceeded 10 million yuan. Bosie also launched co-branded series with French children's literature "The Little Prince" ; Japanese childhood partner "Doraemon", and Disney's "Toy Story". In fact, the launch of the Little Prince co-branded jacket sold nearly 10,000 pieces in 10 minutes on Tmall.





**05
GEN Z x
SUSTAINABLE
FUTURE**

UNCERTAINTY & INCLUSIVITY

GEN Z x SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

FIGHTING INJUSTICE THROUGH THE POWER OF CLICKS

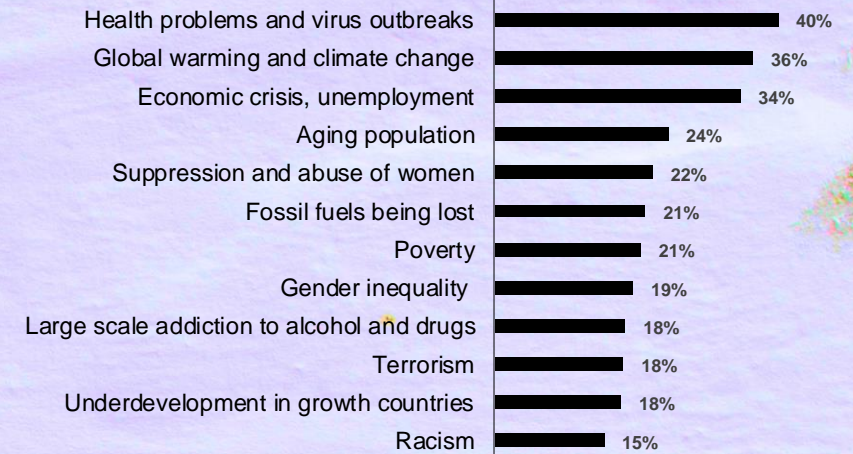
Gen Z shows the **highest levels of uncertainty about the future** in comparison to their older counterparts. More than 1 in 2 is struggling with this feeling of uncertainty. This is not surprising, considering how the pandemic has caused a lot of turbulence in their journey towards adulthood.

We also see the impact of the pandemic on the top global issues this generation wants to tackle. **Health problems** and the **economic crisis** are high on their list, as well as environmental issues and social inequalities. Gender (**stereotypes**) is another topic that is more present in the daily lives of the Gen Z and Millennials, unlike with older generations. 70% of Gen Zers state that gender identity is something that can change over time, 67% agrees there are still too many gender stereotypes, and 65% personally knows someone who prefers to be addressed with gender-neutral pronouns. Another 70% doesn't want to be put in a box/labelled by gender or sexual preference.

60%

OF GEN Z FEELS UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE FUTURE

TOP GLOBAL ISSUES GEN Z WOULD TACKLE



LA MER x GIVING BACK TO THE MARINE WORLD

Six days before World Oceans Day skincare brand La Mer and Tencent Music Entertainment Group presented an online concert featuring Chinese music talents. The two brands also launched the Blue Heart program. This invites WeChat and QQ users to donate their 'steps' in exchange for points, which can be used to upgrade a virtual sea area via biology-themed cards. Those who successfully unlock all the cards will have a chance to win the brand's Ocean Day limited-edition face cream. The campaign hashtag #BlueHeart garnered 27 million views on Weibo within a week thanks to the virtual concert's livestream. As La Mer has built a brand image characterized by the ocean, it remains dedicated to its core belief: giving back to the marine world.



IN-COMPANY PRESENTATIONS & WORKSHOPS

Looking for a fresh dose of inspiration on Gen Z for your company's marketing or innovation teams?

Starting from the insights from our 2022 global proprietary quantitative research, Joeri Van den Bergh's new keynote 'Are you OK, Zoomers?' highlights how Gen Z shapes future consumer behaviour and what this means for brands.

Available in different workshop and presentation formats, this new thought-provoking keynote spotlights five future-proof platforms for innovation, branding and marketing to the world's largest generational cohort.

So, are you ready for the Zoomers?

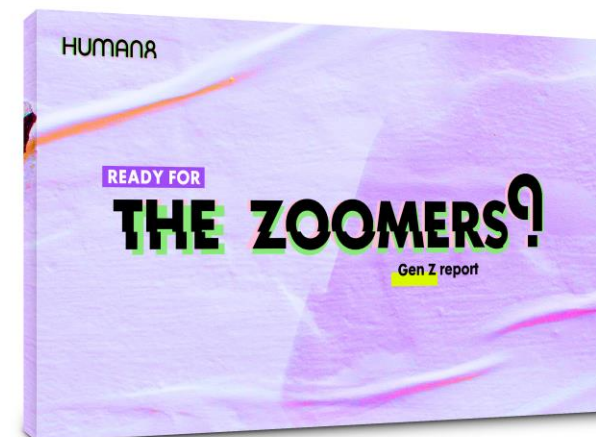
Email joeri.vandenbergh@wearehuman8.com for more information and bookings.



Joeri Van den Bergh is **Future Consumer Expert** at Human8 and has extensive experience of all aspects of **marketing to teens and young adults**. His clients include global customers such as eBay, Coca-Cola, Spotify, Danone, IKEA, Heineken, Converse, Nestlé, AXA and Unilever for whom he has provided advice on how to target the youth market. He is an **AMA-awarded global thought leader and marketing** author on the impact of NextGen on marketing, on business and on consumer trends.

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