

'Generation Z' will respect authority and seek stable career, survey predicts

Youth now aged 5 to 21 will likely 'work a little bit more within the system,' Giselle Kovary says

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Youth born between 1996 and 2012 are optimistic for their future and want steady jobs, a new survey has found.
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A new generation of young people are optimistic about their future — and seek job security above all else, according to a new survey on workplace attitudes.

Generation Z, which covers youth born between 1996 and 2012, also shows signs of respecting and valuing authority, said Giselle Kovary, report co-writer and president of consultant company n-gen People Performance.

Her company ordered a poll from Environics Analytics that interviewed children as young as five up to age 21.

[Her Toronto-based team found generation Z builds on but differs from](#) from the slightly older millennial generation that gained notoriety for wanting to [make their mark and change workplace culture](#), she said.

Kovary spoke with [Calgary Eyeopener](#) host David Gray on Wednesday.

Q: Describe this generation for me. What are your key findings?

A: One of the key insights that we found that all of us, and my co-author Dr. Robert Pearson, were surprised by is how optimistic this generation is.



Giselle Kovary has been studying generation demographics for almost 15 years. (n-gen People Performance)

They're optimistic about their future, and one could say, "well, we're always optimistic when we're young," but they're also bringing a very balanced and realistic view.

They're bringing back some very traditional values around loyalty, security and really understanding the need to respect authority in the workplace.

Q: Why? What are their influences other than their boomer parents or I guess gen X parents?

A: So 59 per cent of them have gen X parents. Twenty-three per cent had baby boomer parents.

I think that is one of the key drivers here, is that gen Xers — and I'm an Xer myself — we tend to be very independent and individualistic in our viewpoints.

The pendulum may be swinging away from that helicopter parenting style that millennials had, where the parent hovered over them, to one that's much more referred to as free-range parenting.

I think that this is a generation recognizing that there are winners and losers even though people were getting trophies on the team regardless of what they were doing. They're going to bring in this more realistic perspective into the work environment.

Q: Whenever we talk about these generalizations of a generation, we get ourselves into trouble because people immediately start sending us messages, "Why do you have to put people into different boxes?" I mean, that happens. Why did you find this such an interesting field of study, that you went out to try to find out what they're thinking?

A: It's really not about recognizing that there are differences. It's about recognizing, how do we maximize the strengths of each generation while managing the differences so we can have more productive, collaborative, high performing teams.

'Gen Zs come in and work a little bit more within the system.'

- Giselle Kovary

It's never going to replace the need to have to understand somebody at the individual level. But what we see across generations is really similar values.

They also bring in this rigour around authority. I think they're going to recognize and demonstrate in the work environment some more traditional values as it relates to that. So 84 per cent said they think it's important to follow company rules, and 74 per cent of them said it's important to do what your boss tells you to do.

'The millennial side hustle.' not stable job. is the new reality for university grads

We are seeing a shift here. Millennials, I think, were coming in and saying, 'I want to impact the environment right away, I want to be able to change things, I want to influence the outcome.'

I think we're going to see gen Zs come in and work a little bit more within the system.

Q: Please excuse my skepticism but there's a part of me saying, how would they know? You're talking about teenagers here.

A: That is part of it. We could all say we were that way when we were young.

People say, "Well, I used to be like that until I got a dog and house and mortgage and some kids and then I had to suck it up."

Introducing Generation Z: A Special Edition of The Current

Life stages come into play, but what we're finding over the years is that core values of the generation remain consistent over time.

I think we're going to see some of these things remain consistent. Again, what's going to differ is whether or not this generation can execute on those, whether there is an environment, an economy, a work structure that allows them to tap into what really motivates them.

With files from Elizabeth Withey and [the Calgary Eyeopener](#)