From Gen Z to Boomers

Hiring and Retaining
Multigenerational Talent

Linked in **Talent Solutions**

What's inside

This report combines survey results from more than 7,000 talent professionals in 35 countries, LinkedIn behavioral data, and interviews with experts to deliver informed recommendations on how to make the multigenerational workforce work for your company.

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A new era of age diversity

From Gen Z to Baby Boomers and beyond, good talent is proving ageless.

A multigenerational workforce makes your company more successful, according to nine out of ten talent professionals.

It's not hard to see why: teams with a wide variety of life experiences and perspectives are often more effective, providing a competitive advantage. And with the arrival of Gen Z and a trend towards later retirements, the workforce has never been so age diverse.

Your company can capitalize on this trend by understanding how to hire and retain talent of every generation. This report can help by exploring what makes each generation unique, what they value, and what it takes to overcome cross-generational conflicts.

Above all, it's essential to remember that generations are just generalizations that too easily devolve into stereotypes. Individuals are always more than their age. Inclusive leaders and organizations can help employees move past conflict by promoting respect and collaboration.

89%
of talent professionals say a multigenerational workforce makes a company more successful.

"Organizations that take the time to break through stereotypes and myths can create tremendous trust, teamwork, communication, and openness that unlock the potential of every generation."

Jason Dorsey
Generational expert and author

A snapshot of generations

The four cohorts comprising the bulk of today's workforce.

Other generations around the globe

The Gen Z–Boomer model is weighted by Western influence. Many countries have unique generations, like **South Africa's Born-Free Generation** (born after the fall of apartheid) and **Singapore's Pioneer Generation** (born before 1949 in the nation's early years).

2012			
	Generation Z	Current ages:[1] 7 to 22	**10%** of workforce*
1997			
	Millennial	Current ages: 23 to 38	**40%** of workforce*
1981			
	Generation X	Current ages: 39 to 54	**33%** of workforce*
1965			
	Baby Boomers	Current ages: 55 to 73	**15%** of workforce*
1946			

* Approximations from LinkedIn survey respondents; 2% are older than Baby Boomers.

Strengths in different skill sets

From tech to business to real estate.

Each generation has certain strengths in aggregate. Gen Z has a larger share of people with Python programming skills than any other generation. Older generations tend to have more people with business and real estate skills. New research from LinkedIn Learning also shows that **every generation is investing time to pick up new skills.**

But also remember there are strong, diverse skills within each cohort. While understanding generational trends and traits can be helpful, it's important to treat people as unique individuals who or may not fit into their generation's mold.

Skills through the ages

The skills each generation has in the highest proportion compared to other generations, per LinkedIn data.

Generation Z
1. Python
2. Cascading Style Sheets
3. Adobe Premiere Pro

Generation X
1. Sales management
2. New business development
3. Program management

Millennials
1. Adobe Photoshop
2. Data analysis
3. AutoCAD

Baby Boomers
1. Nursing
2. Residential homes
3. Investment properties

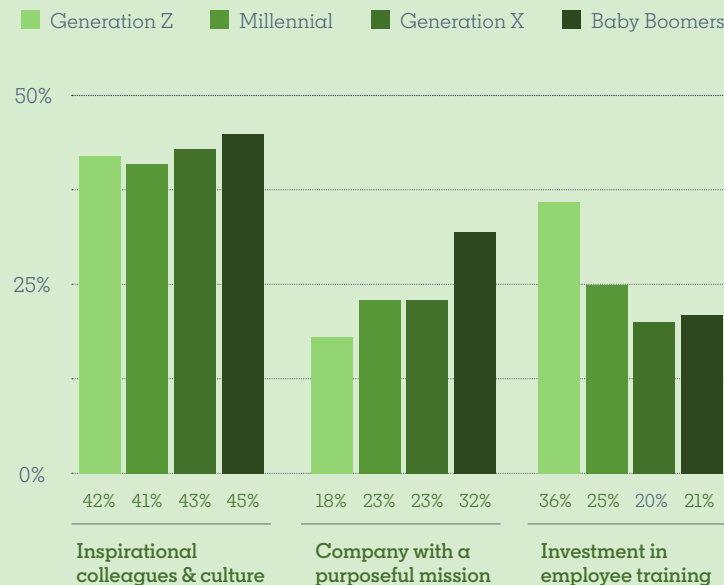# Gen Z wants training, Boomers crave purpose

And everyone loves inspirational colleagues.

Generations share more similarities than differences when it comes to what they value at work. Everyone loves good compensation and benefits, work-life balance, and a positive work culture. After that, each generation does show subtle differences, yielding clues to their overarching attitudes.

While all generations value companies with purposeful missions, it's Boomers who are most likely to call it a top priority. Meanwhile, it's Gen Z that's most likely to value training—36% call it a top factor when considering a new job.

What generations prioritize in a job

Percentage of people who selected the following as a top factor when considering a new job.

■ Generation Z   ■ Millennial   ■ Generation X   ■ Baby Boomers

	Inspirational colleagues & culture				Company with a purposeful mission				Investment in employee training			
	42%	41%	43%	45%	18%	23%	23%	32%	36%	25%	20%	21%

# Recruiters eye Millennials and Gen Z

Attention on younger workers reflects population trends.

Millennials and Gen Z make up roughly half of the world's population,[2] and as the newest generations on the scene, it makes sense that companies are disproportionately focused on them.

Some recruiters may look at this chart and see hidden treasure: Older workers are a rich talent pool with valuable business skills and experience. Turn the page to learn how some companies are capitalizing on seasoned talent.

Recruiting focus through 2025

Percentage of talent professionals who say their company plans to focus on recruiting any particular generation over the next 5 years.

Generation	Percentage
Generation Z	56%
Millennials	73%
Generation X	35%
Baby Boomers	10%

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%
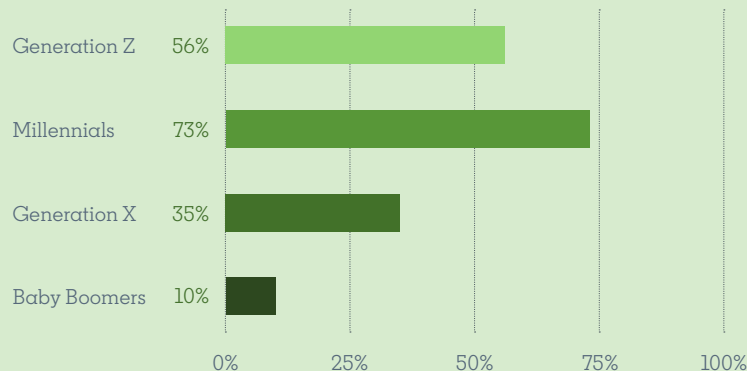
56% of companies say they've recently updated policies to appeal to a multigenerational workforce.

Some companies are capitalizing on older talent

They're not letting wisdom get away.

The idea that people should retire at age 65 dates back to when 65 was the average life expectancy. Those days are long gone.

Some companies are developing "longevity strategies" to jump on the fact that older workers continue to seek engaging work and purpose. In return, older workers offer seasoned experience, professionalism, and an engaged work ethic.

Pfizer made headlines with a 70-year-old intern. CVS Health has a program called "**Talent is Ageless.**" Hewlett Packard Enterprise offers a **career reboot**. The term "returnships" has been coined to describe these efforts that invite folks back from retirement or other career breaks.

# Younger workers are less likely to have full-time roles

Part-time and contract work most common for Gen Z.

Many Gen Z workers are students or they've recently won their first entry-level job, so it makes sense that those in Gen Z are 135% more likely than Baby Boomers to be in a part-time or contract role.

These numbers may also speak to the fact that more companies are choosing to use contract labor or "gig economy" workers to quickly respond to fast-moving conditions. Baby Boomers and Gen X have been in the workforce longer and are more likely to have greater stability with full-time roles.

Part-time/contract work by generation

Percentage of each generation working full-time vs. part-time/contract, according to LinkedIn data.

Generation	Percentage
Generation Z	37%
Millennials	26%
Generation X	18%
Baby Boomers	16%

0%   25%   50%
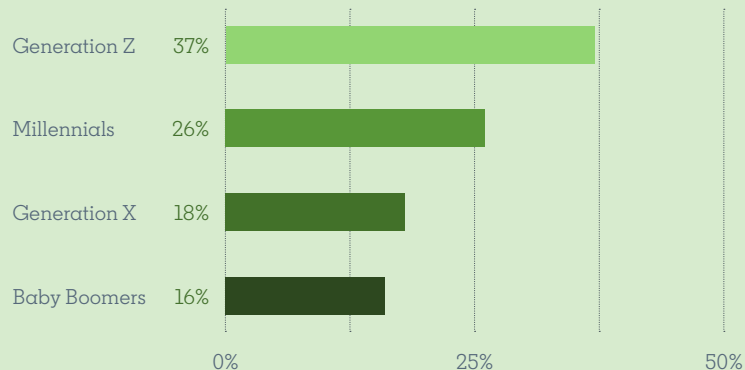
Gen X and Millennials get the retention spotlight

Attention reflects ongoing need for seasoned talent.

As more Boomers retire or dial down their careers, companies will need seasoned mid-career pros to maintain institutional knowledge and step into vacated leadership positions. Maturing Millennials will be invited to step up. And Gen X—famous for being sandwiched between the population explosions that define Baby Boomers and Millennials—may have a moment to shine.

Retention focus through 2025

Percentage of people who say their company plans to focus on retaining any particular generation over the next 5 years.

Generation	%
Generation Z	25%
Millennials	56%
Generation X	60%
Baby Boomers	36%
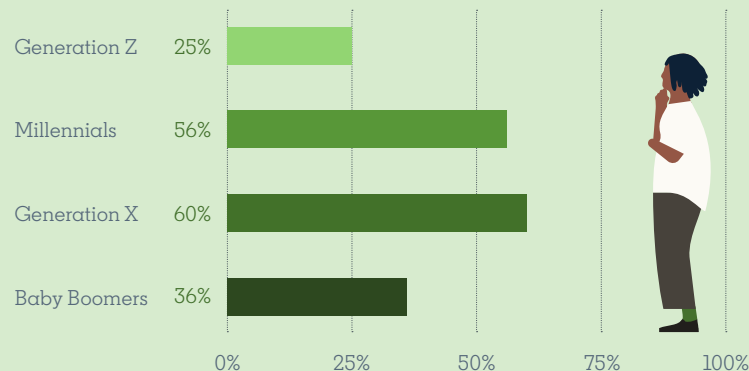
How the generations stick around—or not

**Baby Boomers are happy to hang out, Millennials are most likely to hop.**

It's not surprising that tenure increases with experience. Workers who've had more time to climb the career ladder are more likely to have found their happy place where both compensation and the work itself are satisfying.

Baby Boomers stay 18% longer than the average employee, and Gen Xers stay 22% longer than average, providing retention stability. Their median tenure is almost twice as long as Millennials', which is 34% shorter than average.

Employee tenure by generation

Average employee tenure of each generation compared to the overall average, according to aggregated LinkedIn data. Gen Z not included due to limited history in the workforce.

⊷ Average (median) employee tenure

Gen X stays almost 2x longer than Millennials

Millennials   Generation X   Baby Boomers
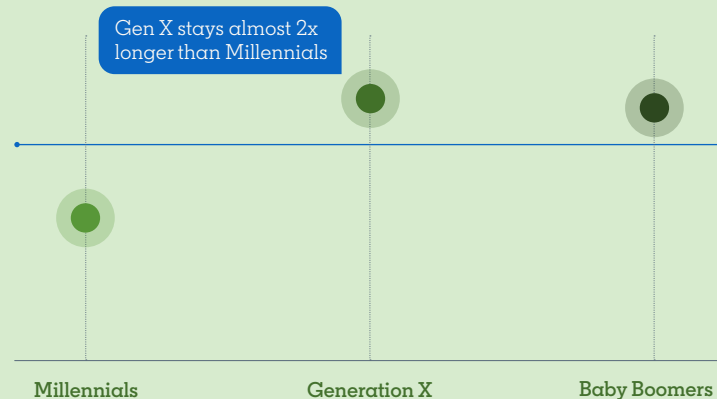
Retain Millennials with compensation, Boomers with challenge

Advancement ranks high for Millennials and Gen X.

To stem attrition, it pays to understand the top reasons why different generations leave their jobs. Millennials are likely still climbing the ladder. It's not surprising that they cite comp and benefits as the number one reason to change jobs.

Baby Boomers yearn for more impact, better fit, and, in the top spot, more challenge. Gen X is in the middle—they want more challenge and more compensation. As you continue to evolve your company's employer value proposition, consider how to touch on these unique generational motivators.

Why employees leave jobs

The top three reasons why employees left their job, by generation, according to a LinkedIn survey. Gen Z not included due to limited sample size.[3]

Millennials	Generation X	Baby Boomers
1. Better compensation and benefits	1. More challenge	1. More challenge
2. More advancement	2. Better compensation and benefits	2. Better fit for skills and interests
3. More challenge	3. More advancement	3. More impact

Common conflicts can be overcome

Leaders need to promote understanding.

Generational contrasts can create sparks of energy, creativity, and innovation. Or they can be the source of negative friction.

Leaders have a responsibility to move past potential conflicts by fostering respect, inclusion, and collaboration. Clear, solution-oriented conversations are especially important around the biggest perceived danger zones.
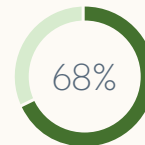
Top intergenerational conflicts

Percentage who say generational differences are significant challenges for their company in these areas.
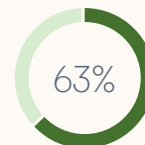
Management style — 69%
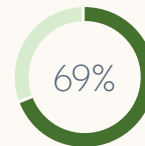
Work-life balance expectations — 68%

Communication style — 63%

Management style can make or break the team.

More dialogue—and inclusive decision-making —can help.

A Gen Z worker might expect her boss to act differently than a Gen X'er would. A millennial leader might struggle to manage in a way that appeals equally to Boomers and Gen Z'ers.

Young managers will need to learn how to lead older workers with nuance and sensitivity, while older workers need to learn how to work well with a younger boss. Seasoned leaders may need to change the way they've managed previous generations, while those entering the workforce will have to learn to meet their managers' expectations.

Regardless of generation, it's helpful to cultivate the qualities most valued in a boss: problem solving, time management, decisiveness, empathy, and compassion.

Tip:

Managers can help themselves and their teams by regularly asking for feedback to uncover opportunities to improve how they serve their people. They can also help their teams by clearly communicating their own expectations to their direct reports.

59%
of candidates don't ask about the management style of the person they'd be reporting to when interviewing for a new job[4]

Clarity around work-life balance is key

It's important to be on the same page.

Work-life balance doesn't mean freedom from working hard, but it does mean having time to recuperate on weekends and vacations. It also means having adequate time to attend to family and personal needs.

It's a high priority for all generations—all age groups were more than twice as likely to prioritize work-life balance over working with high-caliber talent, for example.

But generational differences do show up. Millennials and Gen X are most likely to value work-life balance when choosing a job, while Boomers were the least likely. Transparency is key: everyone benefits from clearly stated policies with well-articulated rationales.

Prioritizing work-life balance

Percentage of people from each generation who selected good work-life balance as a top factor when considering a new job.

Generation	%
Generation Z	56%
Millennials	60%
Generation X	59%
Baby Boomers	51%

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%
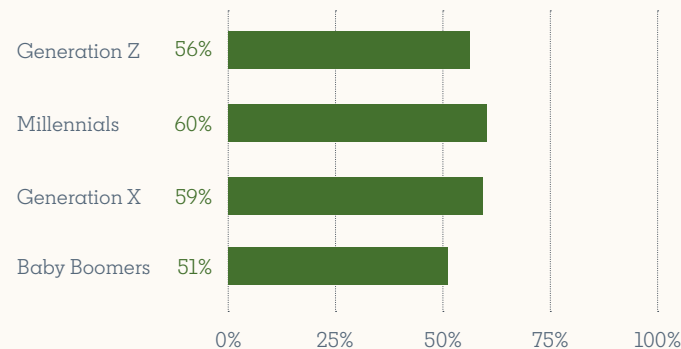
Communication channels can be crucial

Know your tools and share your tips.

"Communication is really complicated today, no matter what generation you're talking to," says **Lindsey Pollak**, a multigenerational expert and author of The Remix. "That's because we just have so many more ways to keep in touch and there are very few rules."

Younger workers might be quicker to embrace tech-based communication like instant messaging. Older employees might be more likely to value face-to-face talks. By stepping out of their comfort zones and exploring new channels, all employees can learn to collaborate better.

Tip

Leaders can help by being clear about their personal expectations. Consider listing your preferred communication channels and have other team members do the same.

"Next time you ask yourself, 'what was that person thinking?'—just go ahead and ask them what they were thinking."

Lindsey Pollack
Generational expert and
author of The Remix

5 tips
to make the most
of a multigenerational
workforce

Tip #1

Don't put anyone in a box.

While understanding generational trends and traits can be helpful, it's important to treat each person as a unique individual who or may not fit into their generation's ethos. Older workers typically call upon decades of experience to make more methodical and careful decisions, but the 60-something member of your team could easily be your fastest, wildest, most creative thinker.

Tip #2

Seek wisdom everywhere.

Consider asking employees who, beyond the boss, they seek out for advice. Certain employees may emerge as helpful counselors with specific areas of expertise that can be made known to an even larger audience. "It won't always be the older people," says **Chip Conley**, founder of the Modern Elder Academy.

Tip #3

Realize that everyone wants their work to matter.

Having a strong organizational purpose makes people feel part of something valuable regardless of their age, rank, or span of control. Social media has heightened the pressure for everyone to be a superstar. Being part of a larger mission helps ease the tension to change the world all by yourself.

Tip #4

Promote informal interactions across generations.

People tend to gravitate toward others in their own demographic. It doesn't hurt to remind folks to seek out conversations with other generations at conferences, networking events, or even in the cafeteria or on the train. The conscious choice often yields new perspective.

Tip #5

Create safety for all workers to share their knowledge.

It's not unusual or unfounded for senior employees, scarred by downsizing and outsourcing, to feel threatened by the younger generations. Younger workers may feel insecure about sharing advice with more experienced colleagues. Often the response is to hoard knowledge instead of sharing it. It's important to create the psychological safety for everyone to spread key learnings.

Case studies
in multi-generational workforces

Humana
boosts engagement
with multigen
resource group

"GenUs is helping provoke different types of
conversation and raise overall consciousness
of our multigenerational workforce."

Maria Hughes
Chief Inclusion & Diversity Officer at Humana

Opportunity

Humana, a U.S. health insurance company headquartered in Kentucky
with about 40,000 employees, recognized the increasing age diversity of
its workforce and wanted to break down generational barriers. Humana
also recognized that a workforce of engaged intergenerational teams
could provide better service to its growing population of senior customers.

Action

In 2018, Humana added the GenUs Network to its list of employee
resource groups with the goal of listening to and encouraging teamwork
between the different generations. The group is open to all employees
and meets for informal conversation about intergenerational
collaboration as well as formal programs with outside speakers, such as
Chip Conley, founder of the Modern Elder Academy, and Donna Butts,
executive director of Generations United. The resource group also helps
members find mentors with skills and insights to share, whether that's
older employees offering advice to younger workers or vice versa.

Outcome

The GenUs Network Resource Group (NRG) started with 15 members
and became one of the company's quickest-growing NRGs, acquiring
1,200 participants within the first few months. GenUs participants enjoy
having a safe and supportive environment to raise issues for discussion.
And, like other NRG participants, they have significantly higher
engagement scores than the workforce as a whole. Because the group's
enthusiasm level is so high, Humana is doing more research to
understand and reinforce the group's success.

Virgin Australia
supports diversity through flexible work options

"Inherent always is our belief that having people from diverse backgrounds will create a more innovative, responsive, and customer-led organization."

Lucinda Gemmell
Chief People & Culture Officer
at Virgin Australia

Opportunity

Virgin Australia is the largest airline to use the Virgin brand. Based in Brisbane, the company wanted to ensure that its workforce is representative of the communities in which it flies—including multiple generations. They also wanted to attract and retain talent in a highly competitive industry requiring very specific skill sets.

Action

The company reviewed its policies and decided to upgrade recruiting and retention by offering lots of choices around flexible work. Leaders believed that offering more options would expand its pool of age-diverse applicants. Examples for nonoperational team members include a nine-day fortnight, later start or early finish times, and a half day every working week. Requests for ad hoc flexibility are viewed through a "why not" rather than a "why" lens. Operational team members can also access flexibility, including job-sharing, part-time opportunities, and bidding for their preferred roster.

Outcome

The company expects the refreshed policies will lead to increased diversity in retention and recruiting. The company also correlates flexible options with team members' health, happiness, and work-life balance, driving positive business outcomes, such as increased productivity, employee retention, and an excellent employer brand. Virgin Australia has earned numerous awards, including a five-star rating from the Airline Passenger Experience Association.

The Estée Lauder Companies' reverse mentorships drive strategic innovation

"The reverse-mentor program has helped us stay on the pulse of what's happening outside of our own company and has inspired us to create and innovate in new ways."

Ana Tereza Guimaraes
Executive Director, Executive Management Initiatives at Estée Lauder Companies

Opportunity

Millennials and Gen Z are highly engaged with beauty and are some of the industry's most avid consumers. To design and market products that are relevant to these consumers, The Estée Lauder Companies wanted to ensure that executives had the tools to stay on the pulse of the next generation of consumers' modern values, lifestyles, and consumer behavior.

Action

Four years ago, the company created a reverse-mentorship program that pairs high-performing Millennial and Gen Z talent with executive leaders to help them stay current in the latest digital, social media, and shopping preferences of these consumers. The first activity was a retail immersion day for mentors and mentees to compare insights while shopping together. Now the program has grown to have two facets: regular one-on-one mentoring and advisory boards made up of Millennial and Gen Z employees who work on strategic projects for brands, regions, and functions across the company.

Outcome

The program now has over 470 reverse-mentor participants, with 300 executives in over 22 countries, including the U.K., Canada, and Japan. Reverse mentor advisory boards have tackled 120 strategic projects, and they now gather for annual global summits where they work on strategic business projects for a particular brand or region and engage in professional development sessions.

Where the multigen workforce is most important

Percentage of talent professionals who say the multigenerational workforce will be "very important" in shaping the future of HR and recruiting.
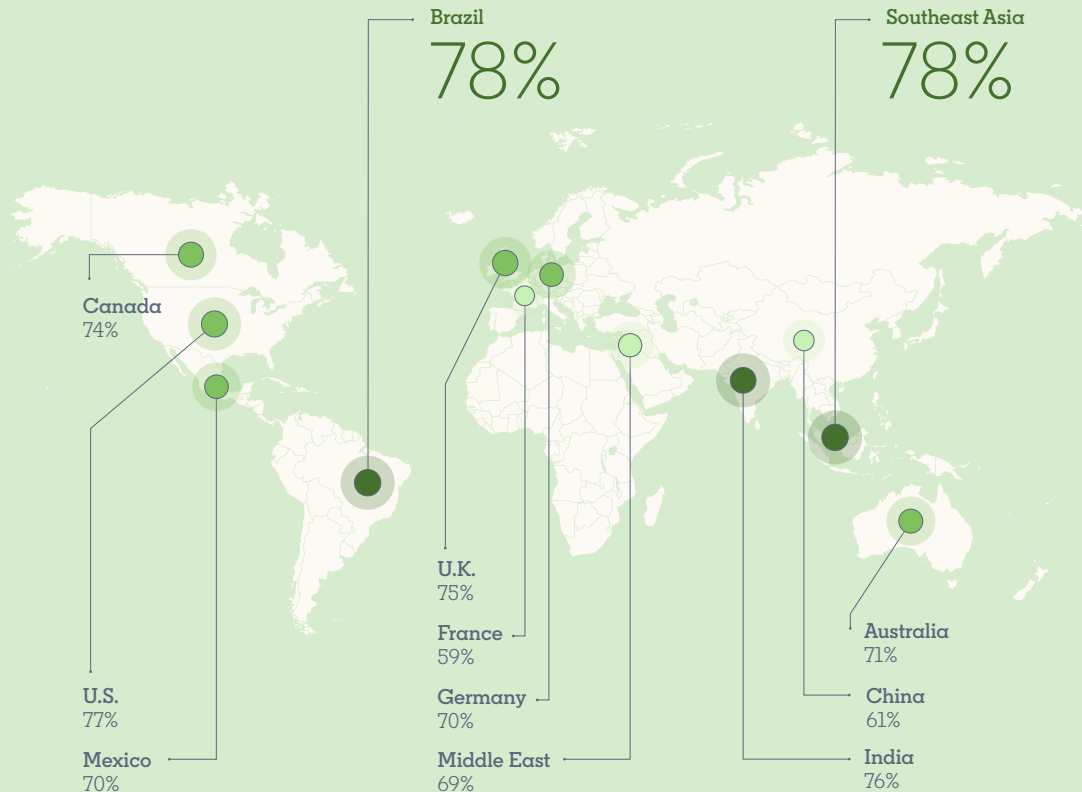
Global Average

70%

- ● Top 3
- ● Mid-range
- ○ Bottom 3

Brazil
78%

Southeast Asia
78%

Canada
74%

U.S.
77%

Mexico
70%

U.K.
75%

France
59%

Germany
70%

Middle East
69%

Australia
71%

China
61%

India
76%

Reinventing how generations work together

Age diversity should enrich your teams, not divide them.

As organizations work to unlock the value of age-diverse teams, they need to abandon outdated practices. Those that do will be best-positioned to compete for tomorrow's top talent.

The past	The future
Oldest employees hold most senior positions	Age diversity exists at all levels of the organization
Younger workers are mentored by older workers	All employees share and learn skills from each other
40-hour work week	More flexible scheduling options
Retire by age 65	Employees work as long as they need or want to
Generations bicker and scoff at one another	Inclusive cultures promote empathy and respect
Senior employees tapped to be mentors	Reverse mentorships allow learning to flow in multiple directions

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Methodologies

Survey

We surveyed 7,089 talent professionals and hiring managers who self- identified as either talent professionals who self-identified as either talent professionals who work in a corporate HR/TA department or hiring managers who have some authority over hiring decisions for their team. These survey respondents are LinkedIn members who were selected based on information in their LinkedIn profile and contacted via email between August 24 and September 30, 2019.

Behavioral insights

Behavioral insights for this report were generated from the billions of data points created by more than 660 million members in over 200 countries on LinkedIn today. These analyses were performed from May to December 2019.

Other notes

Member age is inferred based on education information and other self-reported data on public LinkedIn profiles. Members whose age we could not confidently infer based on complete profile information were excluded from this analysis. Top skills for each generation are those where a generation had the highest proportion of members with that skill when compared to other generations, based on skills listed on their LinkedIn profile or inferred from other self-reported information. Percentages of each generation who prioritize various employer value propositions when considering a new job are derived by responses from LinkedIn's 2018 Talent Drivers Survey. Employee tenure was calculated as the median employee tenure by generation across the duration of a member's employment, based on self-reported information on public LinkedIn profiles. This calculation excludes students and only includes members with at least 5 years of total work experience.

Notes

1. According to Pew Research, the end point for Gen Z has not yet been officially set.

2. Johnny Wood. "Generation Z Will Outnumber Millennials This Year." World Economic Forum. August 23, 2018

3. LinkedIn's Job Switchers Survey. April 2017.

4. Based on LinkedIn survey conducted by Censuswide "National Boss's Day: Find the Right Boss (and Job!) For You."

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