

GENERATIONS AT WORK: UNLOCKING POTENTIAL IN A MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKPLACE

AUGUST 2025



Introduction: Bridging Generations to Build the Future

The modern workforce is more generationally diverse than ever before, spanning five distinct generations and preparing to welcome a sixth, Generation Alpha. This incredible range of experiences, values and perspectives offers organizations a unique opportunity to innovate and thrive. To truly harness the potential of this diversity, leaders must rethink traditional approaches, adapting workplace designs, leadership styles, communication strategies, and motivational systems to meet evolving needs. Each generation brings its own strengths, or "superpowers," that can fuel creativity, drive resilience and spark groundbreaking ideas.

While generational differences exist, the core desires of employees remain universal. Across all ages, individuals seek opportunities to contribute, grow and feel valued. By honoring these shared aspirations and recognizing the nuances each generation brings, organizations can create thriving environments that inspire collaboration and success. Those who lead with vision, empathy and inclusiveness will not only adapt to change but define the future of work by building workplaces rooted in respect, purpose and endless potential.

Generational Insights: Unlocking the Strengths of Every Age Group

To create a workplace where all generations can thrive, it's essential to understand the distinct characteristics, values and strengths each group brings to the table. While every individual is unique, key generational traits can offer valuable insights into how people communicate, lead and collaborate. By recognizing these patterns and appreciating the "superpowers" each generation offers, leaders can foster greater connection, spark innovation, and build stronger, more cohesive teams.

| Generation | Unique Characteristics | Values | Work Style | Leadership Style | Communication Preferences | Recognition Preferences | Superpower |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Silent Generation 1928-1945 | Disciplined, loyal | Respect for authority, loyalty | Hierarchical, formal | Command-and-control | Face-to-face, written | Tangible rewards, recognition | Experience |
| Baby Boomers 1946-1964 | Optimistic, competitive | Teamwork, stability, commitment | Structured, team-oriented | Directive, authoritative | Face-to-face, phone calls | Promotions, job titles | Problem solving |
| Generation X 1965-1980 | Independent, resourceful | Autonomy, work-life balance | Flexible, independent | Hands-off, supportive | Email, phone calls | Flexibility, work-life balance | Strategizing |
| Millennials 1981-1996 | Tech-savvy, collaborative | Purposeful work, diversity | Collaborative, flexible | Coaching, participative | Texting, social media | Continuous feedback, development | Change ready |
| Generation Z 1997-2012 | Digital natives, entrepreneurial | Innovation, social responsibility | Remote, tech-integrated | Inclusive, adaptive | Instant messaging, video calls | Experiences, skill development | Entrepreneurial |
| Generation Alpha 2013-present | Highly connected, tech-dependent | Innovation, inclusivity | Tech-driven, collaborative | Collaborative, nurturing | Digital platforms, apps | Gamified rewards, instant feedback | Tech-savvy |

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Designing for Collaboration Across Generations

Bringing together the unique strength of a multigenerational workforce requires more than acknowledgment; it calls for intentional strategies that unite and inspire. From thoughtfully designed workplaces that foster collaboration to adaptive management approaches that bridge generational expectations, every element plays a crucial role. Clear, purposeful communication ensures ideas flow seamlessly across age groups, while personalized motivation drives engagement and productivity. The following sections explore how design, leadership, communication and motivation can create workplaces where all generations thrive and maximize the potential of a diverse and dynamic workforce.

Designing for Inclusiveness and Collaboration Across Generations

Creating work environments that meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce demands adaptability, creativity and a focus on well-being. Thoughtful, intentional design can foster inclusion, encourage collaboration, and support productivity for employees at every stage of their careers

Key Design Considerations

Commute and Arrival: Covered drop-off zones, secure bike storage, EV charging stations and intuitive wayfinding in welcoming lobbies.

Entry Experiences: Touchless entry systems, bright lobbies with soft seating, local art and hospitality-style receptions.

Workspaces: Flexible zones (quiet pods, collaborative spaces), ergonomic furniture, layered lighting and enhanced air quality.

Wellness and Retreat Spaces: Mindfulness rooms, outdoor terraces, onsite fitness areas, and inclusive spaces like mother's rooms or sensory retreats.

Community Zones: Multipurpose assembly areas, daylit café hubs, and reflective libraries with open layouts that encourage connection.

End-of-Day Design: Locker areas near exits, clear transit wayfinding, and lighting that transitions naturally to promote evening rhythms.

Technology Integration: Plug-and-play AV systems, wireless power stations and accessible tech for seamless collaboration.

By merging flexibility, inclusiveness and wellness into workplace design, organizations can cultivate environments where employees feel supported, connected and empowered to thrive across generations. Thoughtful spaces pave the way for meaningful collaboration and a stronger shared future.



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Leading with a Multigenerational Mindset

Great leadership brings out the best in every generation by leveraging unique strengths and shared goals. With targeted strategies, leaders can create a workplace where collaboration, innovation and productivity thrive.

Key Leadership Strategies

Leadership Training

- Debunk generational myths and stereotypes.
- Build active listening skills to resolve conflict.
- Balance tech-savvy approaches with face-to-face communication.
- Adapt to workplace changes with storytelling and agility.
- Set shared goals to align diverse teams.
- Create feedback loops through regular check-ins.

Tailored Employee Development

- Facilitate team brainstorming on values and inclusivity.
- Highlight shared priorities like growth, collaboration and success.
- Offer personalized training paths and mentoring programs.
- Raise awareness of generational dynamics in teamwork.
- Provide rotational opportunities to build cross-generational networks.

Flexible Work Policies

- Offer compressed work weeks, flexible hours and hybrid location options.
- Introduce benefits for diverse life stages, from tuition aid to wellness stipends.
- Promote lifelong learning programs.
- Maintain transparent compensation structures.

By equipping leaders with the tools to understand and address generational needs, organizations foster stronger collaboration, deeper connections and a culture of growth that spans every age group.

Connecting Through Purposeful Communication

Clear and purposeful communication is essential for closing generational gaps and building a collaborative, connected workplace.

Strategies Include

- Storytelling sessions (career journeys, company history, cultural insights)
- Feedback systems (surveys, focus groups, town halls)
- Multichannel communication (text, video, articles, live sessions)
- Clear goals for generational collaboration

Empathy and active listening are essential skills for strengthening connections across generations. By understanding diverse perspectives and listening fully, employees build trust, reduce misunderstandings and enhance teamwork. Training, mentorship, and inclusive feedback opportunities can nurture these critical abilities, helping create a workplace where all voices are heard and valued.

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Empowering Through Personalized Motivation

Motivating a multigenerational workforce means tapping into shared values while respecting individual differences. Recognition and growth are universal drivers, but tailored approaches unlock true potential and engagement.

Key Motivation Strategies

Cross-Generational Mentorship: Coffee chats, skill swaps and tech tutorials to build connections.

Shadow Programs: Foster empathy and diverse perspectives through hands-on learning.

Innovation Tanks: Encourage fresh ideas and pair employees with senior leaders.

Growth Opportunities: Offer roles in project leadership or skills-based expertise.

Personalized Recognition: Provide options like bonuses, time off or skill-building experiences.

Continuous Feedback: Deliver ongoing performance insights and rewards.

Legacy Projects: Empower employees to make lasting contributions.

At every stage, people want to feel seen, valued and challenged. Organizations that personalize motivation while honoring generational nuances will build cultures that inspire growth, drive innovation and attract talent across all ages. By nurturing these connections today, we pave the way for a thriving workforce of tomorrow.

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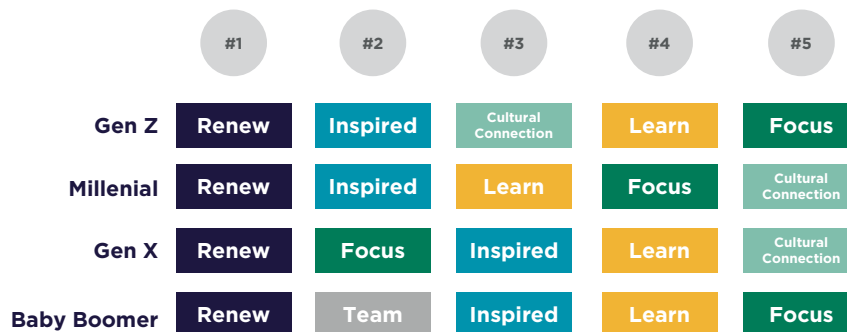


Supporting Workplace Engagement Drivers

| Driver | Ideas to Support |
|--|--|
| RENEW (Energized throughout the day) | Flexible schedules, quiet zones, fitness options, outdoor breaks, fun spaces |
| INSPIRED (Motivated by purpose) | Innovation challenges, creative workshops, recognition for impact, art and color |
| CULTURAL CONNECTION (Connected to company culture) | Celebrations, cultural exchange, storytelling |
| LEARN (Continuous development) | Cross-generational mentorship, online learning, lunch-and-learns, causal collaboration spots |
| FOCUS (Productivity in focused work) | Productivity workshops, task management tools, distraction-free spaces, focus rooms |
| TEAM (Productivity in collaboration) | Cross-functional teams, buddy systems, open collaborative spaces, moveable furniture |

Leveraging the Engagement Drivers

Feeling energized throughout the workday stands out as a shared top engagement driver across generations. However, distinct preferences among Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers highlight the unique needs of each group.



Each driver color-coded as below

RENEW

Feeling energized throughout the workday day.

LEARN

Continuously learning and developing.

INSPIRED

Feeling inspired at work.

FOCUS

Feeling productive when one needs to do concentrative work.

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Feeling connected to company culture.

TEAM

Feeling productive when one needs to collaborate.

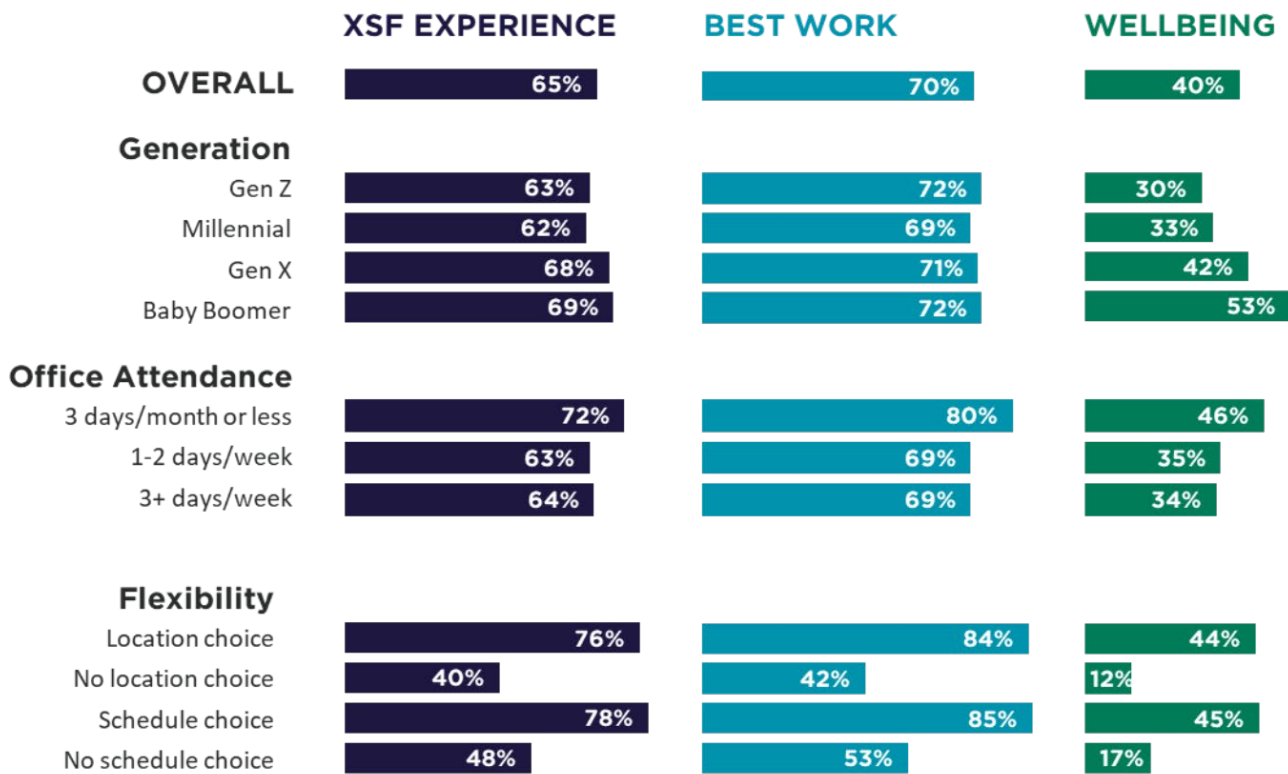
Source: C&W Experience Per Square Foot™ survey, results from Q1 2023 – Q1 2024. Baby Boomer (n=522), Gen X (n=2,230), Millennial (n=3,117), and Gen Z (n=850). Top drivers of wellbeing for each generation determined by regression analysis.

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Three Critical Employee Outcomes Across Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers



Source: C&W Experience Per Square Foot™ survey results from Q1 2024 – Q4 2024. XSF Experience Scores (Overall n= 11,212; Gen Z n= 1,028; Millennial n= 2,910; Gen X n= 1,670; Baby Boomer n= 352; 3 days/month or less n=853; 1-2 days/week n=2,063; 3+ days/week n=3,311; Location choice n=2,236; No location choice n=277; Schedule choice n=1,895; No schedule choice n=326); Best Work (Overall n= 9,775; Gen Z n= 795; Millennial n= 2,302; Gen X n= 1,295; Baby Boomer n= 248; 3 days/month or less n=641; 1-2 days/week n=1248; 3+ days/week n=2,908; Location choice n=2,148; No location choice n=264; Schedule choice n=1,830; No schedule choice n=305); Wellbeing (Overall n= 8,774; Gen Z n= 627; Millennial n= 1,801; Gen X n= 1,070; Baby Boomer n= 232; 3 days/month or less n=543; 1-2 days/week n=944; 3+ days/week n=2,306; Location choice n=1440; No location choice n=185; Schedule choice n=1,185; No schedule choice n=193)

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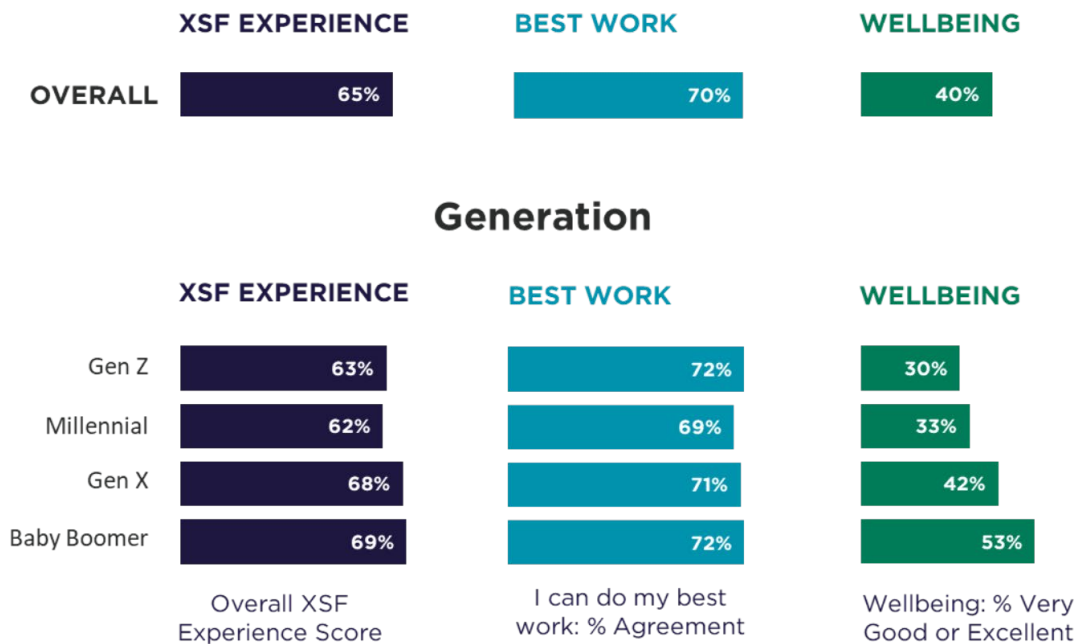
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Variance in outcomes across demographics

Younger generations report lower workplace experience scores and much lower wellbeing than older generations. Remote workers report the highest scores across all three critical employee outcomes, while hybrid and office workers report similar scores. Employees without choice and flexibility report significantly lower scores on all three outcomes compared to employees with choice in where and when they work.

Older Generations Report Higher Well-being and Experience than Younger Employees



Source: C&W Experience Per Square Foot™ survey results from Q1 2024 – Q4 2024. XSF Experience Scores (Gen Z n= 1,028; Millennial n= 2,910; Gen X n= 1,670; Baby Boomer n= 352); Best Work (Gen Z n= 795; Millennial n= 2,302; Gen X n= 1,295; Baby Boomer n= 248); Wellbeing (Gen Z n= 627; Millennial n= 1,801; Gen X n= 1,070; Baby Boomer n= 232)

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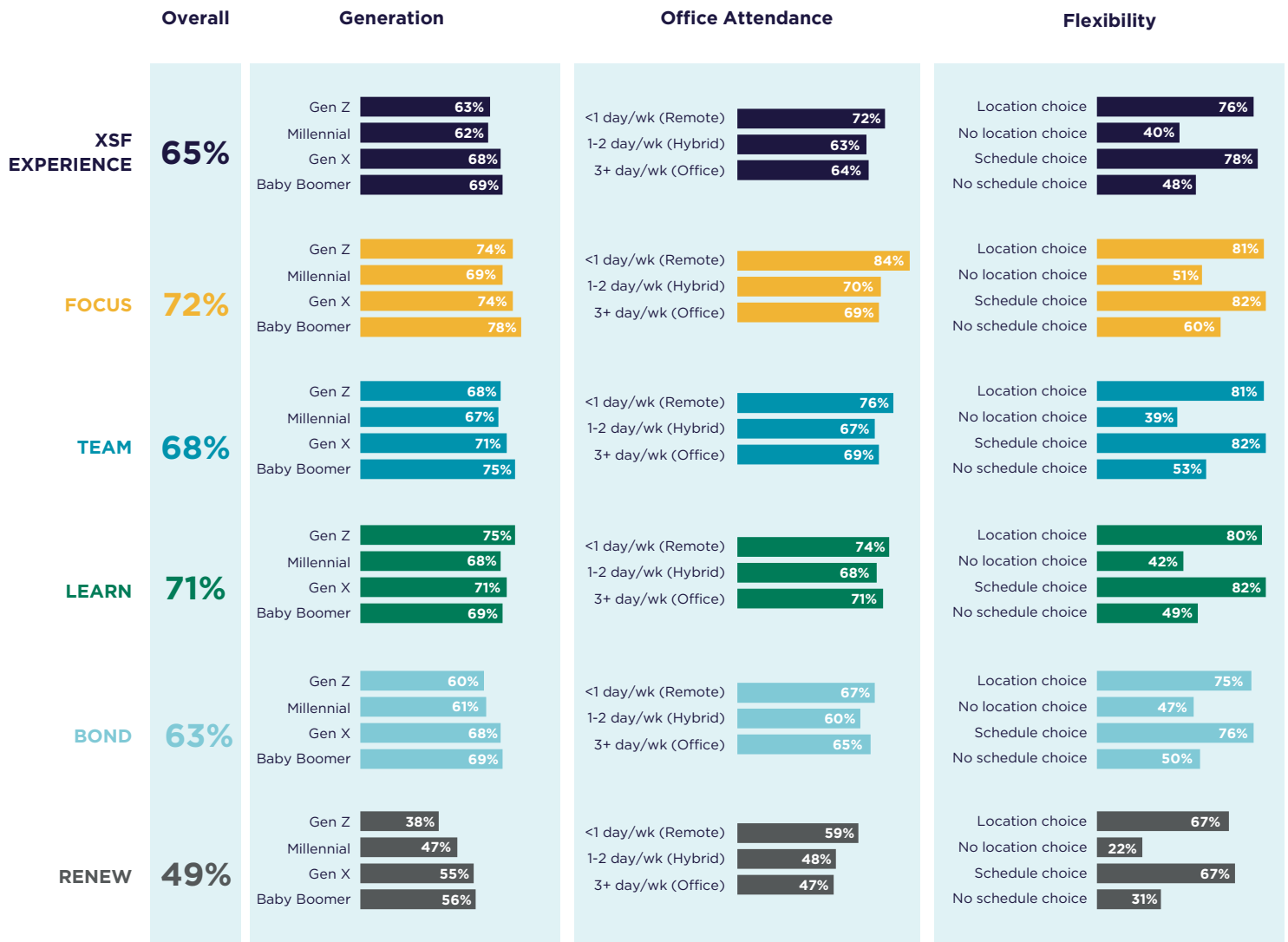
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Younger generations report lower well-being and experience outcomes.

In 2024, Baby Boomers' well-being scores were 23 points higher than those of Gen Z employees. Baby Boomers and Gen X also reported slightly higher experience scores compared to younger employees.

XSF Experience Scores and Experience Outcomes



Source: C&W Experience Per Square Foot™ survey results from Q1 2024 – Q4 2024. XSF Experience Scores (Overall n= 11,212; Gen Z n= 1,028; Millennial n= 2,910; Gen X n= 1,670; Baby Boomer n= 352; 3 days/month or less n=853; 1-2 days/week n=2,063; 3+ days/week n=3,311; Location choice n=2,236; No location choice n=277; Schedule choice n=1,895; No schedule choice n=326)

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LEARN

BOND

RENEW

Overall **71%**

63%

49%

Generation

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| Gen Z | 75% |
| Millennial | 68% |
| Gen X | 71% |
| Baby Boomer | 69% |

60%

61%

68%

69%

38%

47%

55%

56%

Office Attendance

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| <1 day/wk (Remote) | 74% |
| 1-2 days/wk (Hybrid) | 68% |
| 3+ days/wk (Office) | 71% |

67%

60%

65%

59%

48%

47%

Flexibility

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| Location choice | 80% |
| No location choice | 42% |
| Schedule choice | 82% |
| No schedule choice | 49% |

75%

47%

76%

50%

64%

22%

67%

31%

Source: C&W Experience Per Square Foot™ survey results from Q1 2024 – Q4 2024. XSF Experience Scores (Overall n= 11,212; Gen Z n= 1,028; Millennial n= 2,910; Gen X n= 1,670; Baby Boomer n= 352; 3 days/month or less n=853; 1-2 days/week n=2,063; 3+ days/week n=3,311; Location choice n=2,236; No location choice n=277; Schedule choice n=1,895; No schedule choice n=326)

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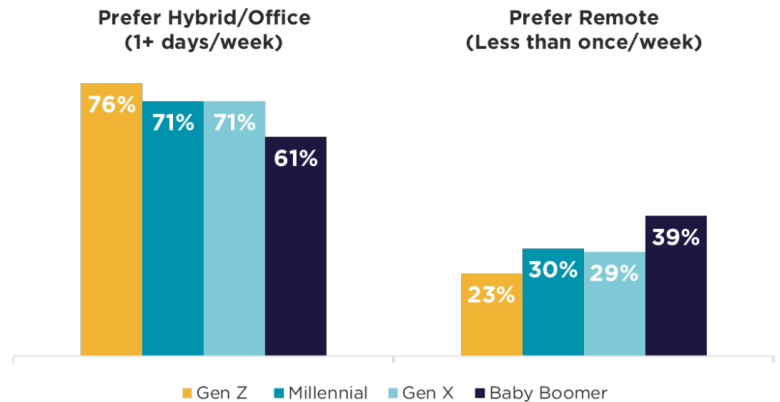


Generational Differences in Office Preferences and Well-Being

Younger Employees Seek More Office Time

Younger generations show a stronger preference for working in the office compared to their older colleagues. Notably, 76% of Gen Z employees want to be in the office weekly, compared to just 61% of Baby Boomers. This preference stems from a desire to learn, connect with colleagues, and build relationships with leaders and mentors. For junior and younger talent, an active in-person presence from managers and leaders is key to fostering professional growth and cultural connection.

How often would you like to come into the office?

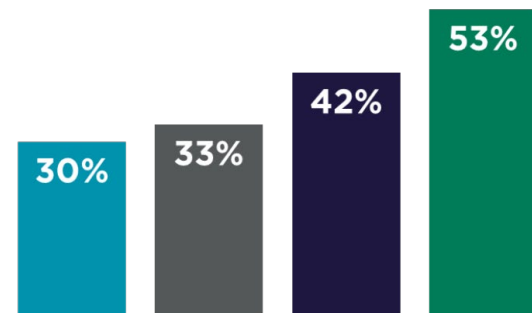


Source: C&W Experience Per Square Foot™ survey results from Q1 2024 – Q4 2024. Desired Office Attendance (Gen Z n=251; Millennial n=1,176; Gen X n=698; Baby Boomer n=115)

Well-Being Levels Vary Dramatically Across Generations

Generational differences extend beyond where employees prefer to work to how they feel about their well-being. Younger employees, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, report the lowest levels of well-being. Only one-third of employees in these groups express high well-being (defined as very good or excellent).

Meanwhile, Gen X fares slightly better at 42%, while Baby Boomers lead with just over half reporting high well-being. It's worth noting, however, that Baby Boomers represent only 6% of respondents in 2024. By understanding these patterns, organizations can better tailor workplace strategies to meet the distinctive needs of each generation.



Source: C&W Experience Per Square Foot™ survey results from Q1 2024 – Q4 2024. Gen Z (n=627), Millennial (n=1,801), Gen X (n=1,070), and Baby Boomer (n=232). High Wellbeing includes survey respondents who reported "Very Good" or "Excellent" wellbeing. *Percentages are portions of respondents answering both the generation and wellbeing questions; the remaining 3% are of the Traditionalist or "other" generations

Unlocking Potential Across Generations

The presence of five generations in today's workforce, with a sixth on the horizon, marks an unprecedented moment for organizations to reshape their future. By adapting workplace designs, leadership approaches, communication methods and motivational strategies, businesses can meet the needs of this diverse talent pool and thrive in ways previously unimaginable. Each generation brings unique attributes that, when harnessed effectively, can spark creativity, foster innovation and enhance resilience across teams.

Despite the distinctions among age groups, a common thread unites employees of all generations: the desire to contribute meaningfully, grow professionally and feel truly valued. Organizations that recognize and honor this balance between universal drivers and generational strengths will create workplaces defined by collaboration, innovation and shared achievement. By acting with foresight, empathy and inclusiveness leaders can position their organizations not just to survive this era of rapid change but to thrive, inspiring a future fueled by respect, purpose and boundless potential.

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