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FRESHWATER

Mind the Gap: Gen Z Voters Research

The views of Gen Z in Australia

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Foreword

This research project, commissioned by News Corp, offers one of the clearest snapshots to date of the emerging social, political, and cultural divides within Australia's youngest voting cohort. Far from a unified generation, Gen Z men and women are moving through the world with sharply different priorities, pressures, and influences.

Young women are more pessimistic about the country's direction and more likely to prioritise cost of living, climate change, and healthcare. They report higher levels of stress, loneliness, and digital fatigue, and are more sceptical of AI, religious leaders, and conservative political figures. Their online habits skew toward Instagram and TikTok, and they are more likely to doomscroll, buy products based on content, and feel the mental-health strain of constant connectivity.

Gen Z men, meanwhile, show greater optimism, stronger engagement with gaming, YouTube, and user-generated content, and higher trust in the creators they follow. Their attitudes lean toward competition, economic individualism, and concerns about masculinity. They spend more time alone yet report larger friendship networks, and they are more open to traditional childcare arrangements.

These gendered differences reveal a generation diverging in values, identity, and lived experience. Anyone seeking to understand or engage Gen Z must recognise these splits; not overlook them.

Dr Michael Turner
Director at Freshwater Strategy

Methodology

The survey was conducted via online panel and interviews lasted around 15 minutes. The sample size was n=1,530 completed interviews with eligible voters in Australia, inclusive of a boost of voters aged 18-29 (total n=711). Fieldwork was undertaken on 15-20 October 2025. Data are weighted to be representative of Australian voters.

The margin of error ('MoE') is +/- 2.5% for topline results and is larger for subgroups.

Please note; throughout this research report, figures might not sum to 100% due to rounding. All polling is a snapshot in time and is not a prediction or guarantee of future outcomes.

Method note: Freshwater Strategy interviewed n=1,530 eligible voters in Australia, aged 18+ online, inclusive of a boost of voters aged 18-29 (total n=711), between 15-20 October 2025. Margin of Error +/- 2.5%. Data are weighted to be representative Australian of voters.

Four focus groups of n=32 young men and women aged 18-29 were conducted between the 15-17 September 2025 in Sydney and Melbourne. Young voters were recruited based on media consumption and political orientation.

Each group was approximately 90 minutes. Participants were reimbursed for their participation.

Executive Summary

Key findings from the research:

1. **National Direction & Issue Agenda:** Gen Z men are more likely to be optimistic about the country's direction, while young women are more pessimistic and their policy priorities diverge sharply, with women focused on cost of living and climate change, men on jobs and immigration.
2. **Social Media & Influencers:** Gen Z is deeply embedded in algorithmic media ecosystems that are pushing them in different directions. Gen Z women are more likely to report high rates of 'doomscrolling' and mental health concern, while Gen Z men are more likely to view content their parents would not approve of, and to trust the people they follow online over traditional media.
3. **Gender Roles & Values:** Gen Z have polarising views on gender roles: young women are more likely to view feminism positively and traditional roles as outdated, while young men increasingly see feminism as divisive and masculinity as under threat.
4. **Dating & Relationships**: Dating apps have bred disillusionment on both sides; women find the experience negative and are highly selective about partners with shared values, while men report difficulty getting matches. This is fuelling mutual frustration and declining trust between the sexes.
5. **Friendship & Loneliness:** Gen Z are more likely to report spending 6+ hours a day alone. Young women are more likely to report deeper feelings of disconnection from others, and from themselves.
6. **Housing & Work:** Homeownership feels out of reach for most Gen Z, with women especially pessimistic; at work, women are more likely to report higher stress and worse mental health impacts, while men feel more financially secure and socially connected with colleagues.

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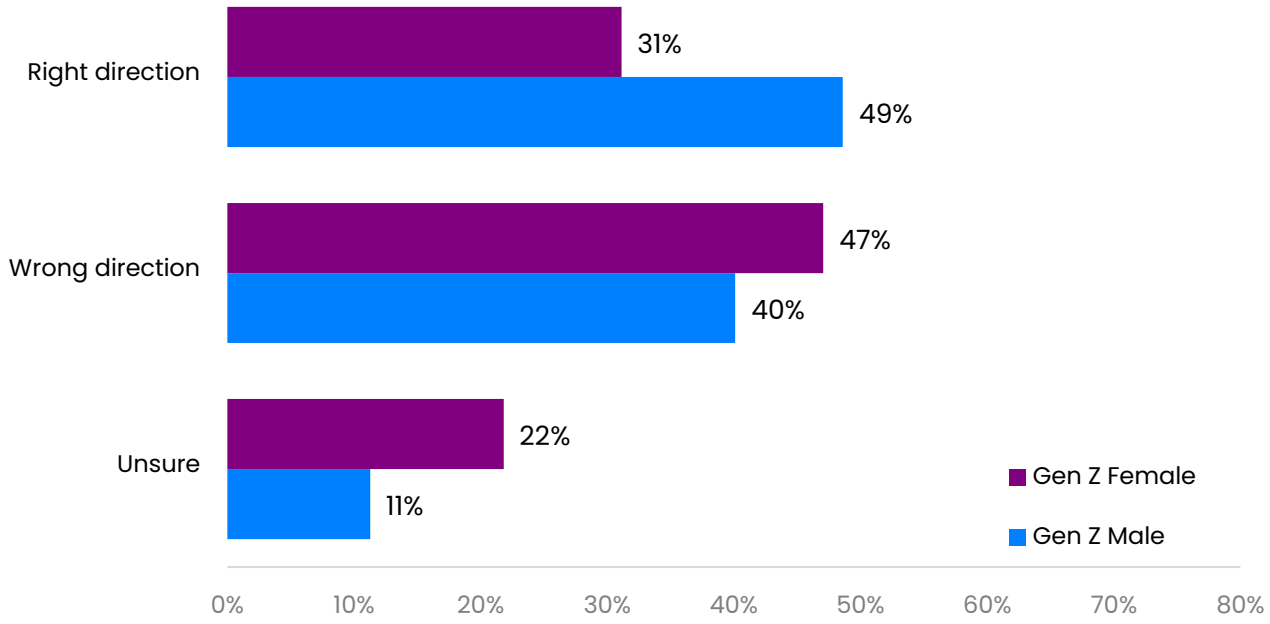
National Direction & Issue Agenda

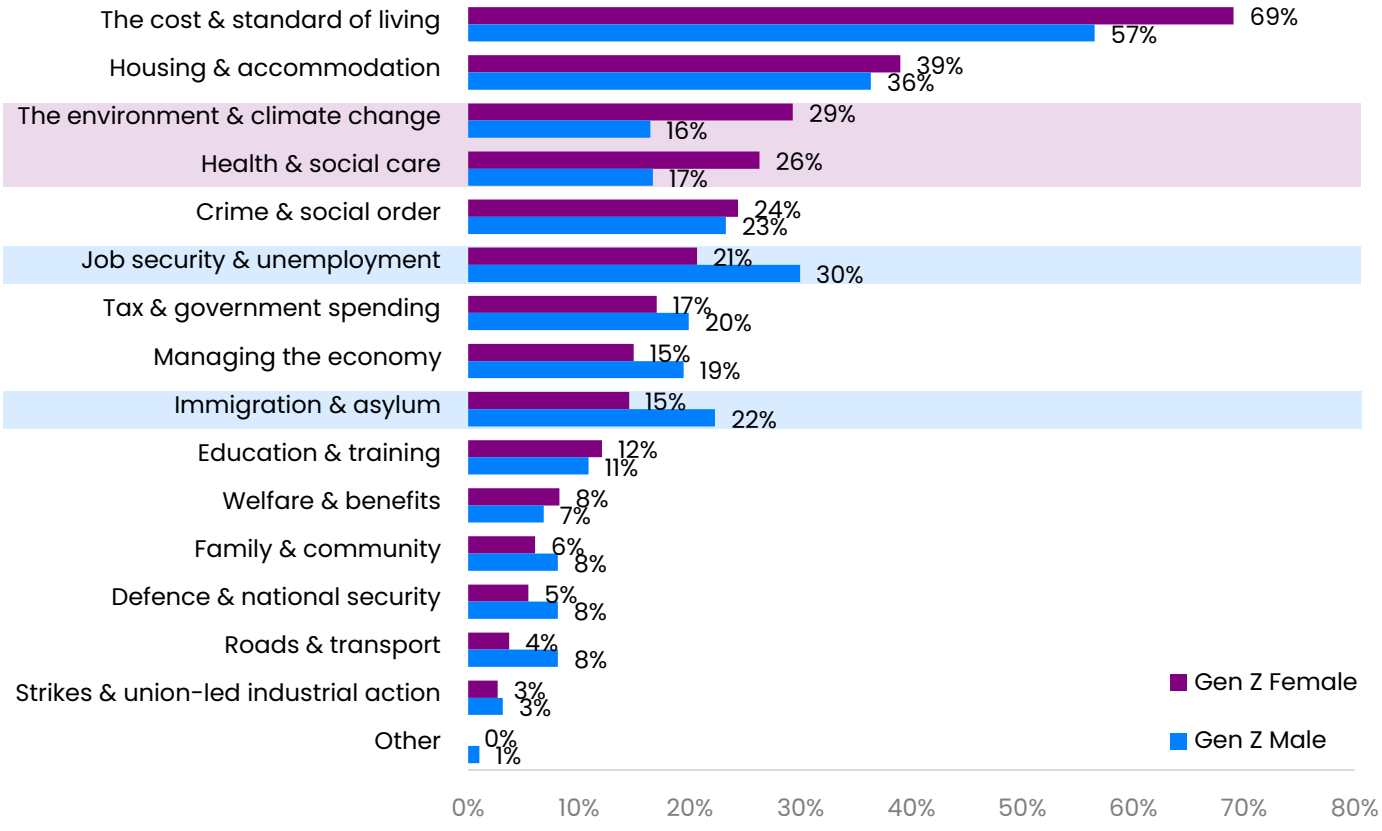
Gen Z men are more likely to believe that Australia is heading in the right direction, while women are more likely to say wrong direction

Figure 1. Q. Do you think that the country is heading in the right direction, or wrong direction at this time?



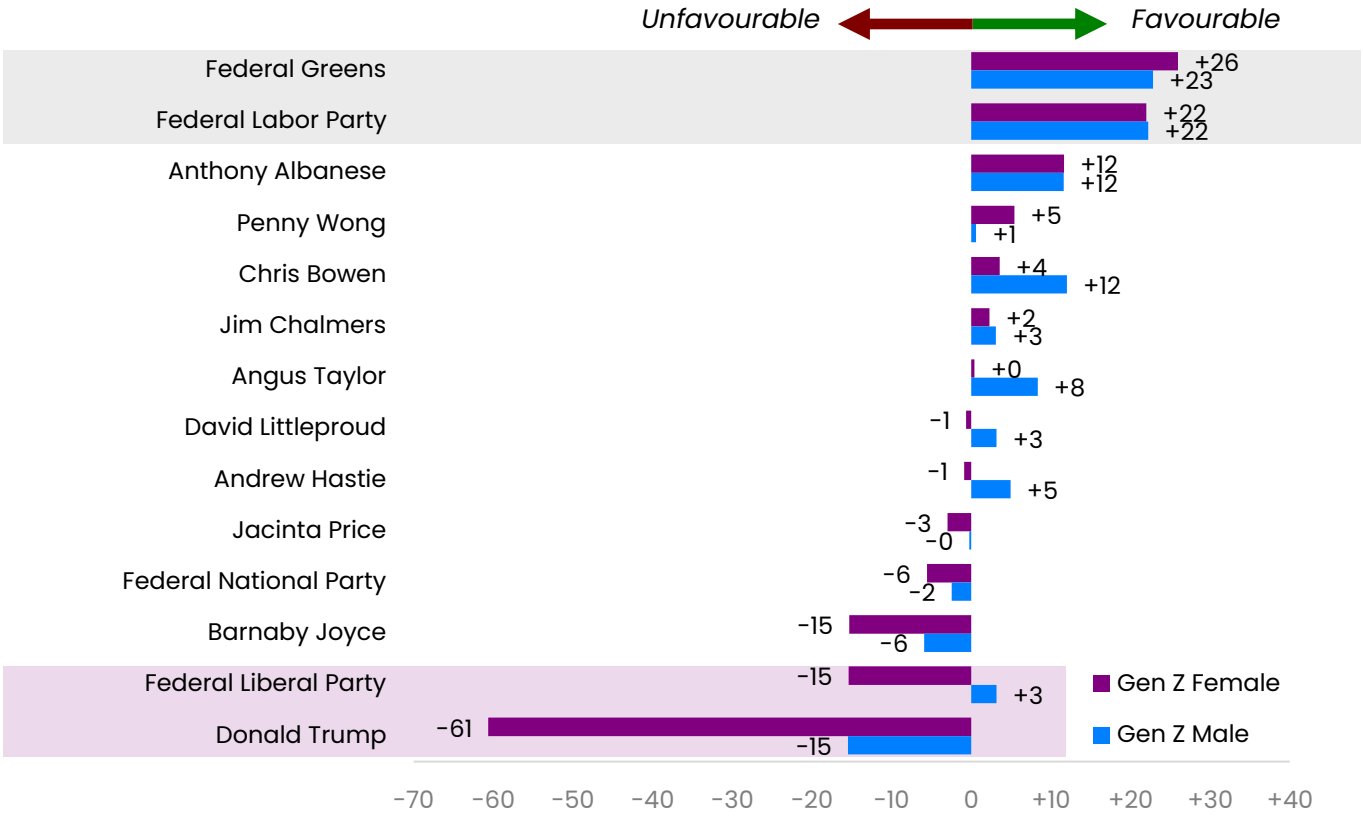
Gen Z women are more likely prioritise cost of living, the environment, and healthcare, while Gen Z men are more likely to prioritise job security and immigration

Figure 2. Q. Which of the following do you think are the most important issues for the Federal government to focus on at this time? Please pick up to three



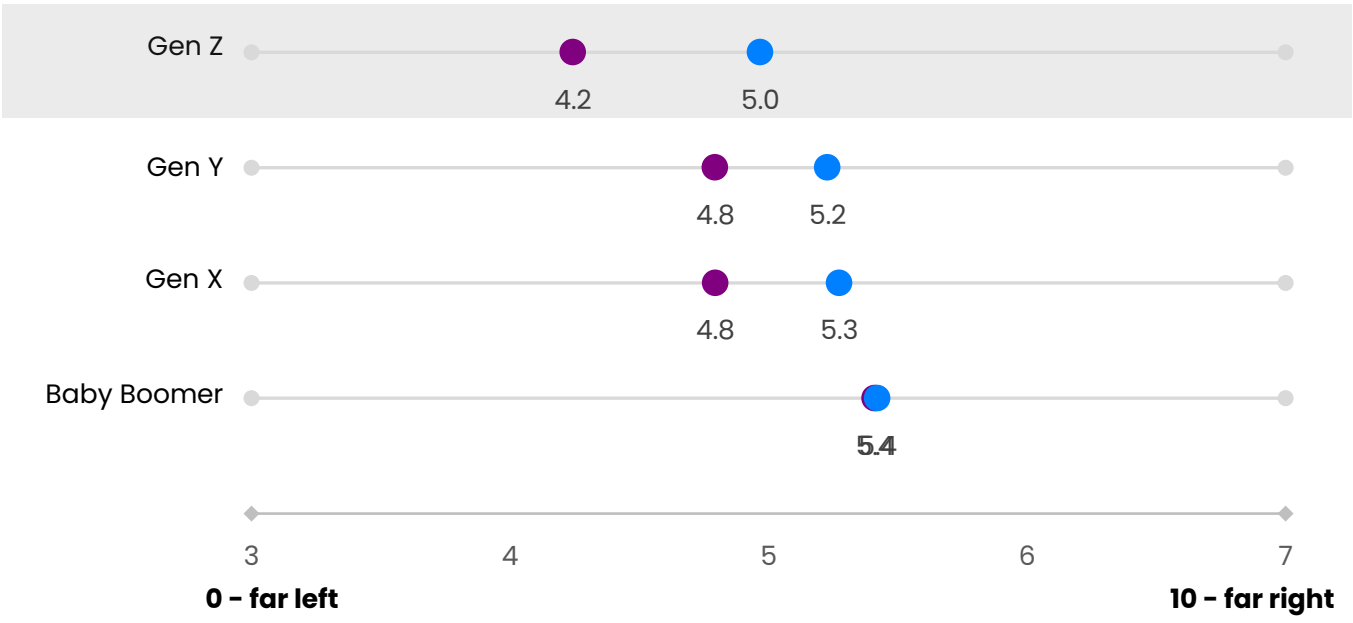
Gen Z women are more likely to hold unfavourable opinions of Donald Trump, Barnaby Joyce, and the Federal Liberal Party

Figure 3. Q. Below are a list of figures in Australian politics and culture. For each can you say whether you have heard of them, and if so, whether you have a favourable, unfavourable or neutral view of them? NET



Gen Z women are the most left-wing generation in Australia with respect to how they self-identify on the left-right political scale

Figure 4. Q. People sometimes talk about having 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' views In terms of your own views, where would you place yourself on a 'Left'-'Right' scale, generally speaking, where - means you have far left views, and 10 means you have far right views.



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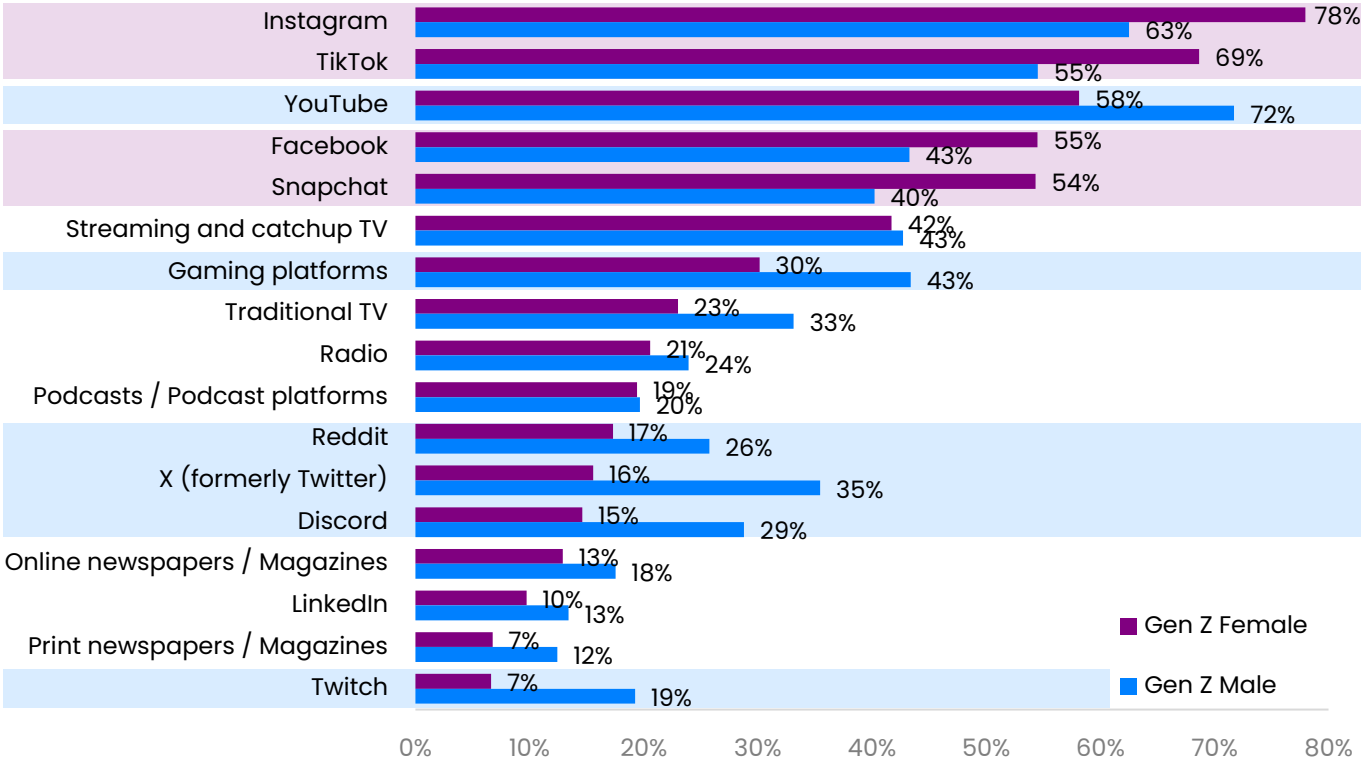
Social Media & Influencers

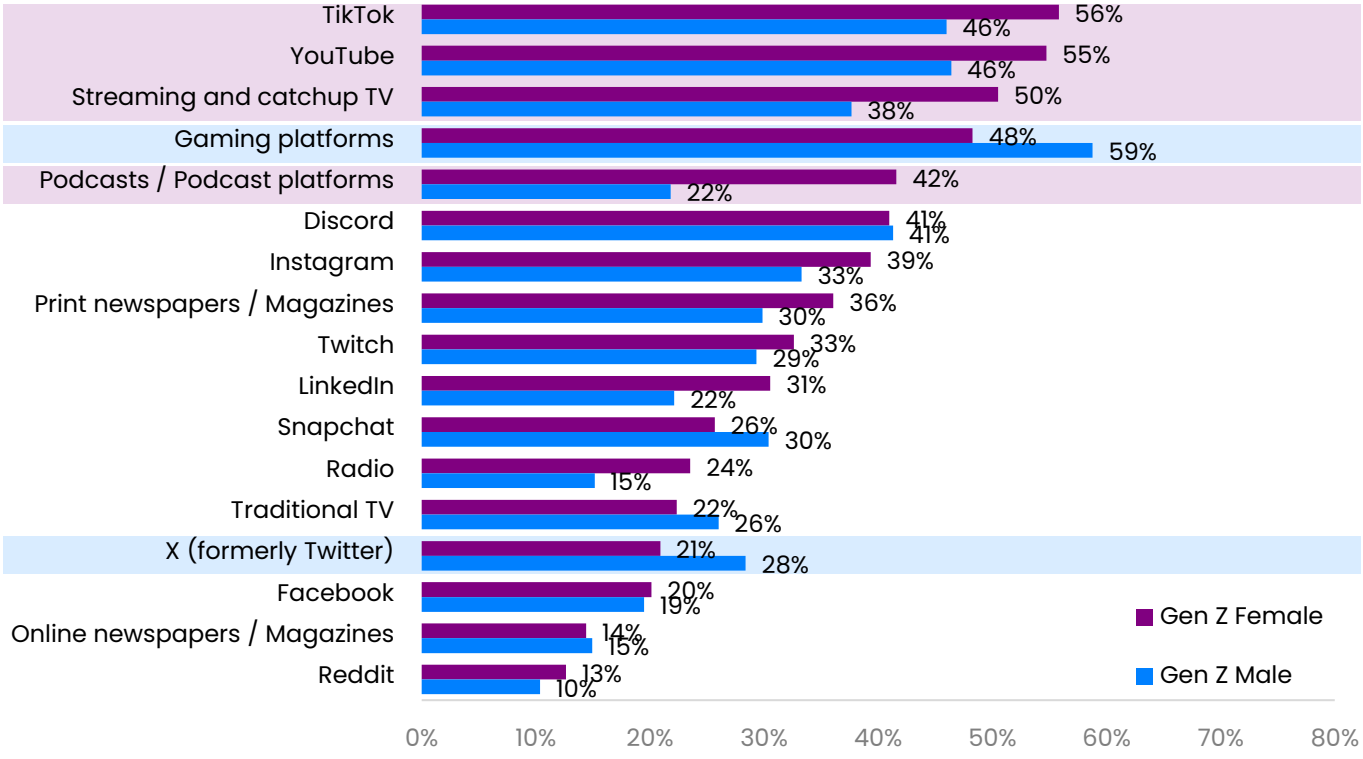
Gen Z women are more likely to use Instagram and TikTok, while Gen Z men are more likely to use YouTube, X, and gaming platforms

Figure 5. Q. How frequently do you use or engage with each of the following media channels or platforms? Please consider all elements of usage which includes watching, reading, interacting or otherwise engaging with each of the below. By once a day or more



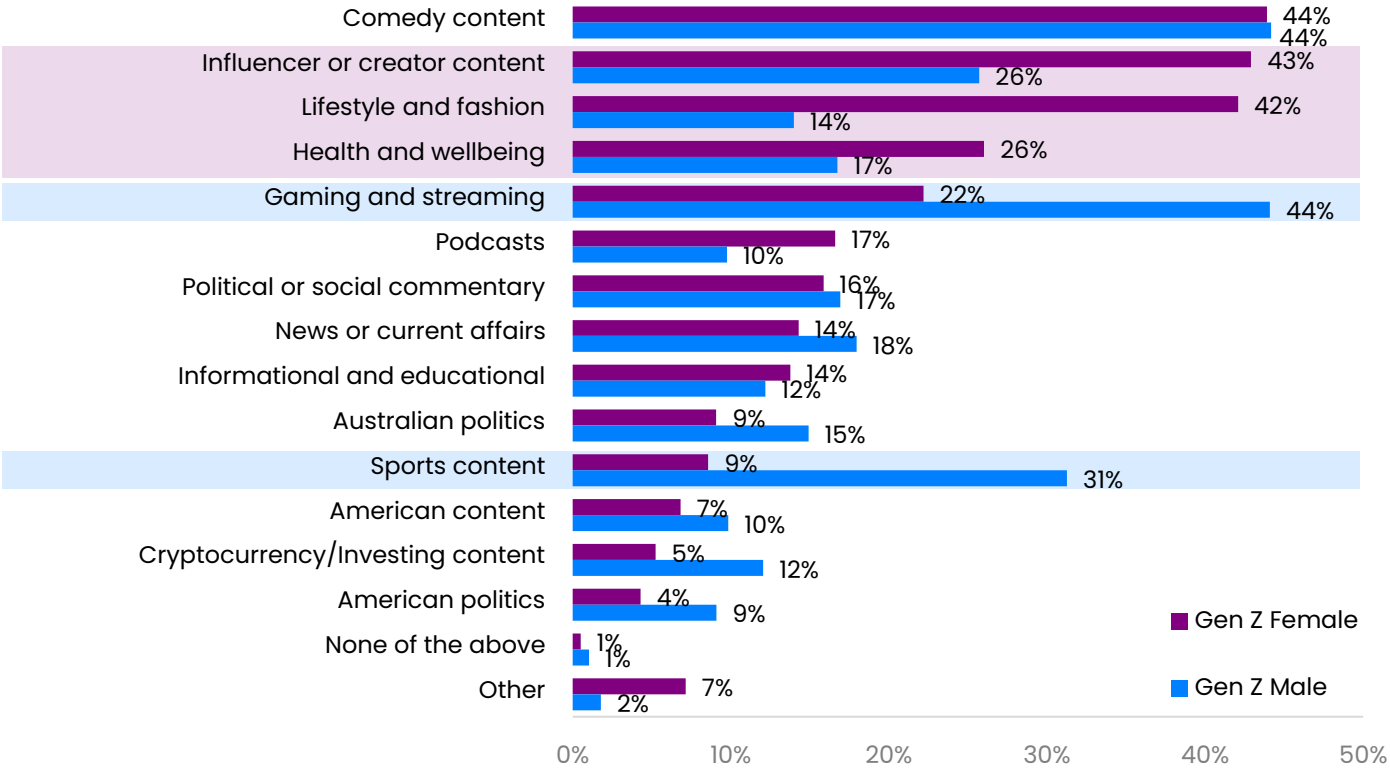
Gen Z women are more likely to be on social media platforms, and podcasts for 3hrs+ a day, while Gen Z men say gaming platforms

Figure 6. Q. On average, how much time do you spend on the following platforms per day? By over 3hrs Per Day



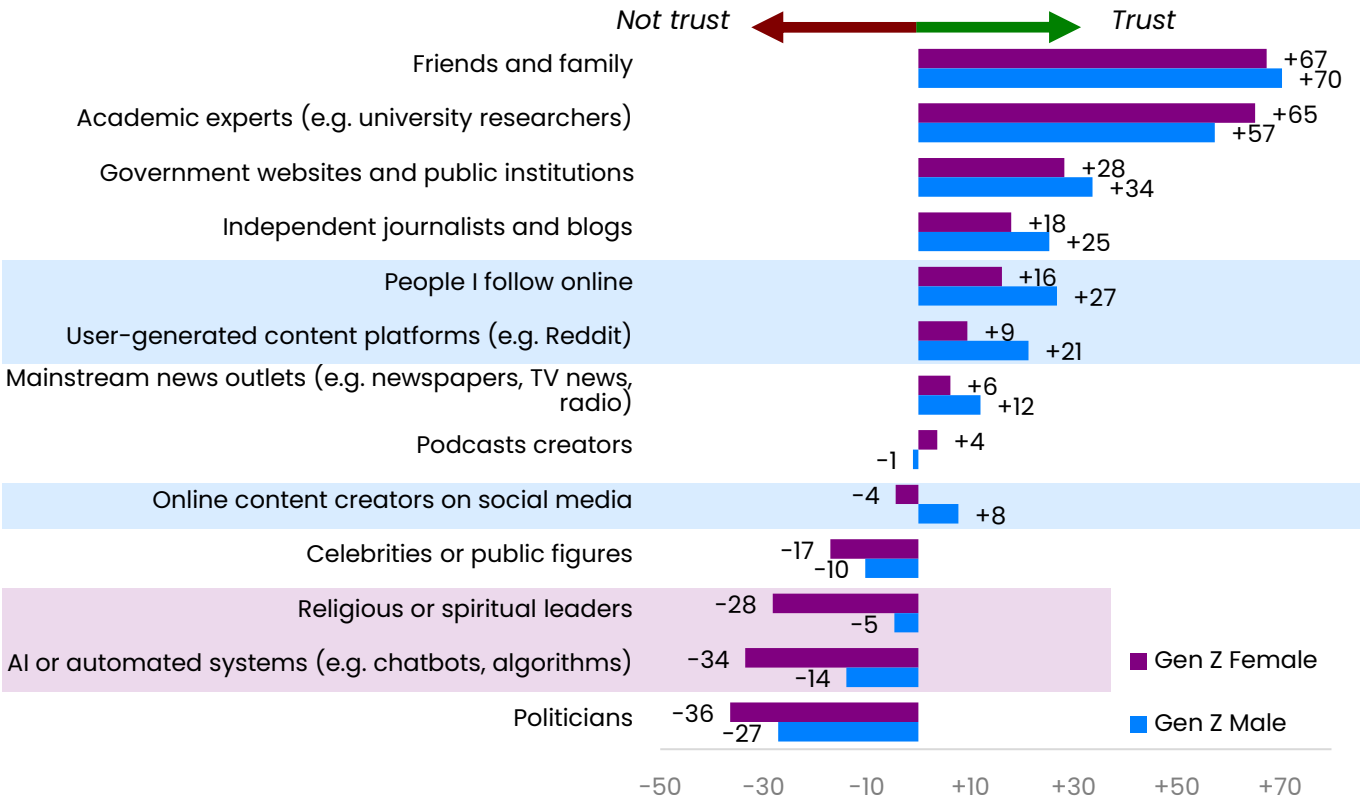
Gen Z women are more likely to consume influencer, lifestyle, and health content, while Gen Z men say gaming and sports content

Figure 7. Q. What types of online content do you typically engage with most often? Please select your top three



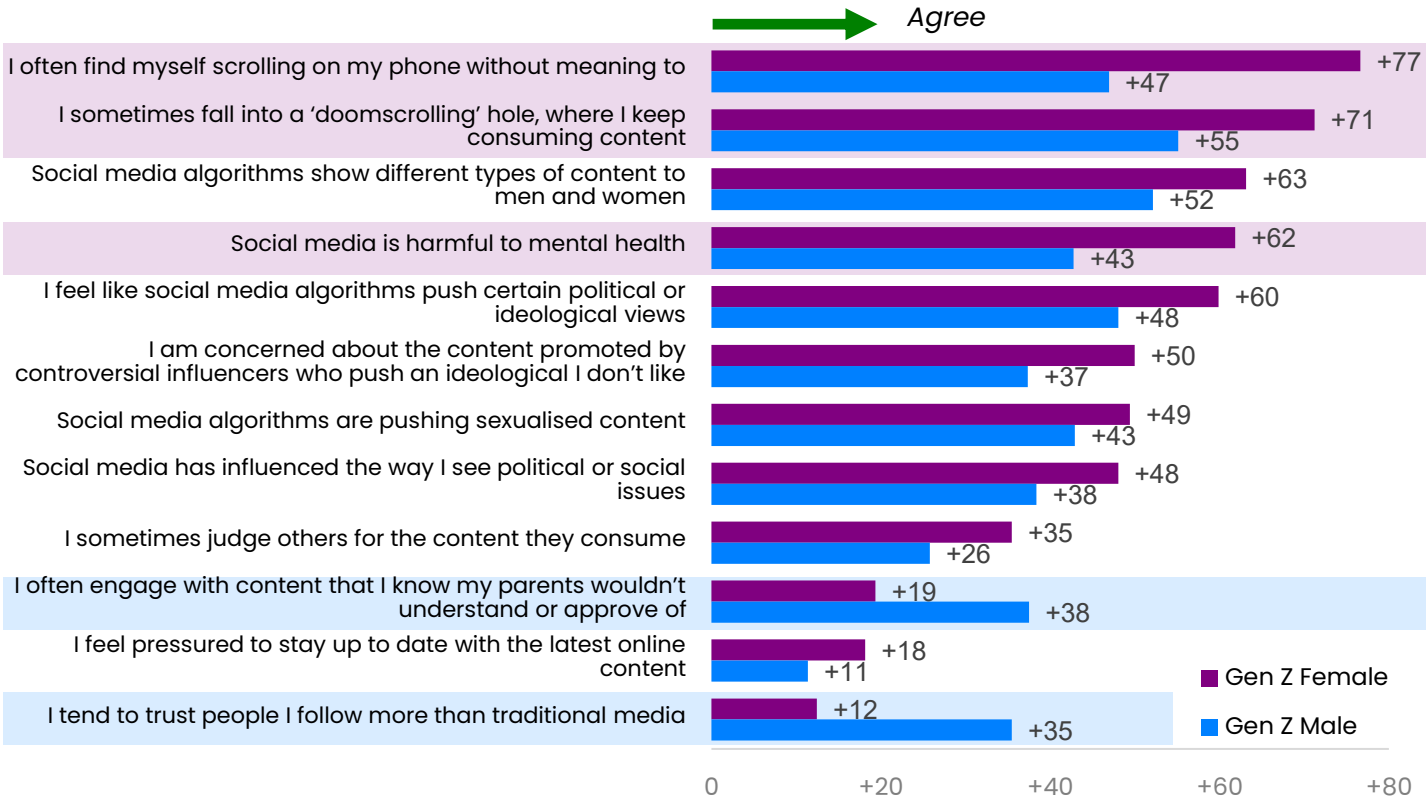
Gen Z women are less likely to trust AI and religious leaders; young men are more likely to trust user-generated content

Figure 8. Q. To what extent do you trust or not trust each of the following for information and opinions? NET



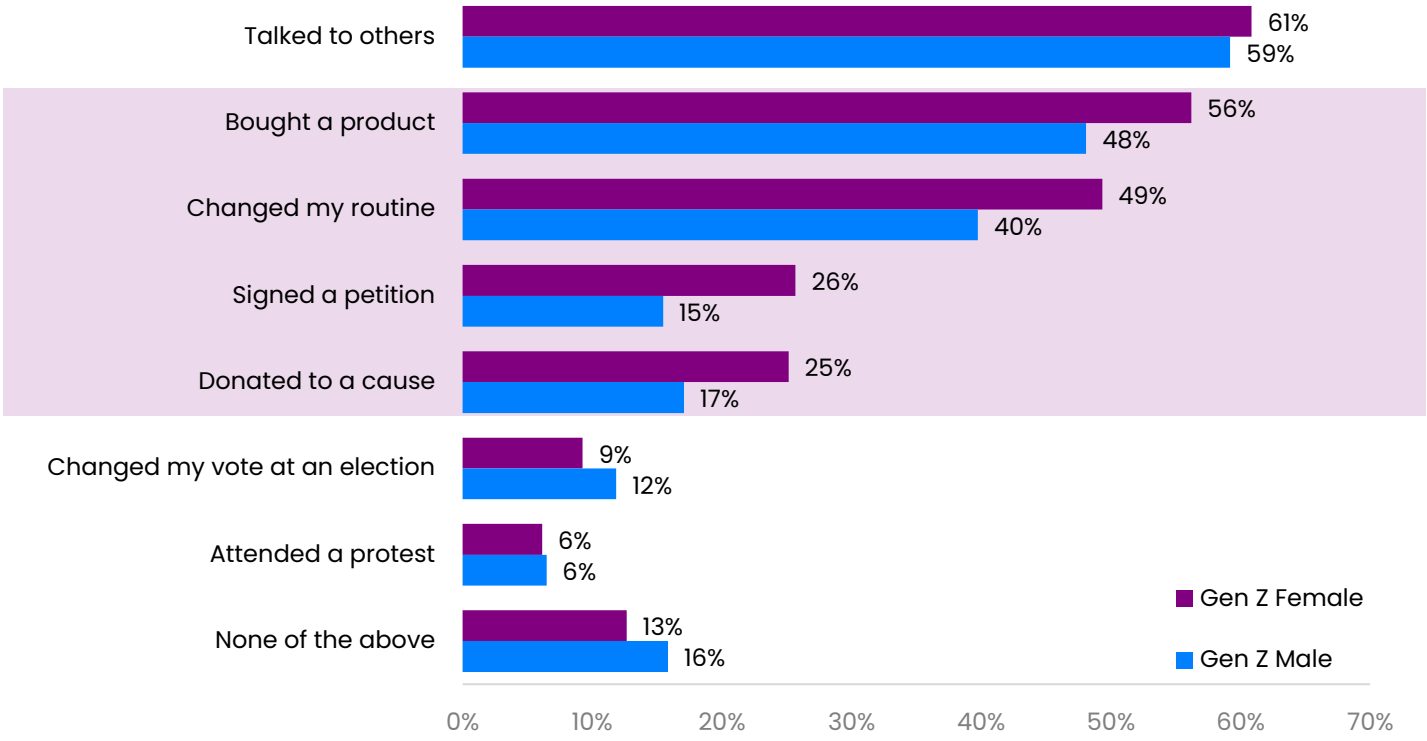
Gen Z women are more likely to 'doomscroll,' Gen Z men are more likely to view content their parents would not approve of, and to trust the people they follow online over traditional media

Figure 9. Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? NET



A majority of Gen Z, in particular women, are more likely to say they have bought a product because of content they have seen online

Figure 10. Q. Have you done any of the following in the past 12 months because of something you saw or read online? Please select all that apply.



Gen Z Australians are becoming highly engaged with American politics and influencers like Andrew Tate, who are seen as almost unavoidable on mainstream platforms

Quotes from focus groups

"I follow American politics. I feel like American politics nowadays has bled so much into the world politics that it's hard to ignore."

– Young female, Melbourne

"It's just been shoved into our faces, everyday really. Mainly since Trump has been in power. You can't avoid it."

– Young male, Sydney

"In a way algorithms are kind of brainwashing. Sometimes you don't get a choice. Andrew Tate comes up on your feed and eventually it becomes more like white noise, but then you start to think slowly like him, which I've kind of realised it's happening to me."

– Young male, Melbourne

"If someone is watching Joe Rogan, they're also probably consuming like red pill stuff."

– Young female, Melbourne

"I'm seeing more radical female influencers. I saw this one called The Wizard Liz. I think you could kind of position her as a female version of Andrew Tate. That's pretty scary. I think radical influencers like that is a reason why these days the two genders have a bit less unity than previously."

– Young male, Melbourne

"On Instagram I used to try to look for business ideas. But overtime, my feed kind of leaned to right wing stuff, like if you want to achieve success you need to stop talking to all the women in your life because they are holding you back, that kind of stuff. I even saw one guy who was selling a bootcamp where it's like 'no women allowed'."

– Young male, Melbourne

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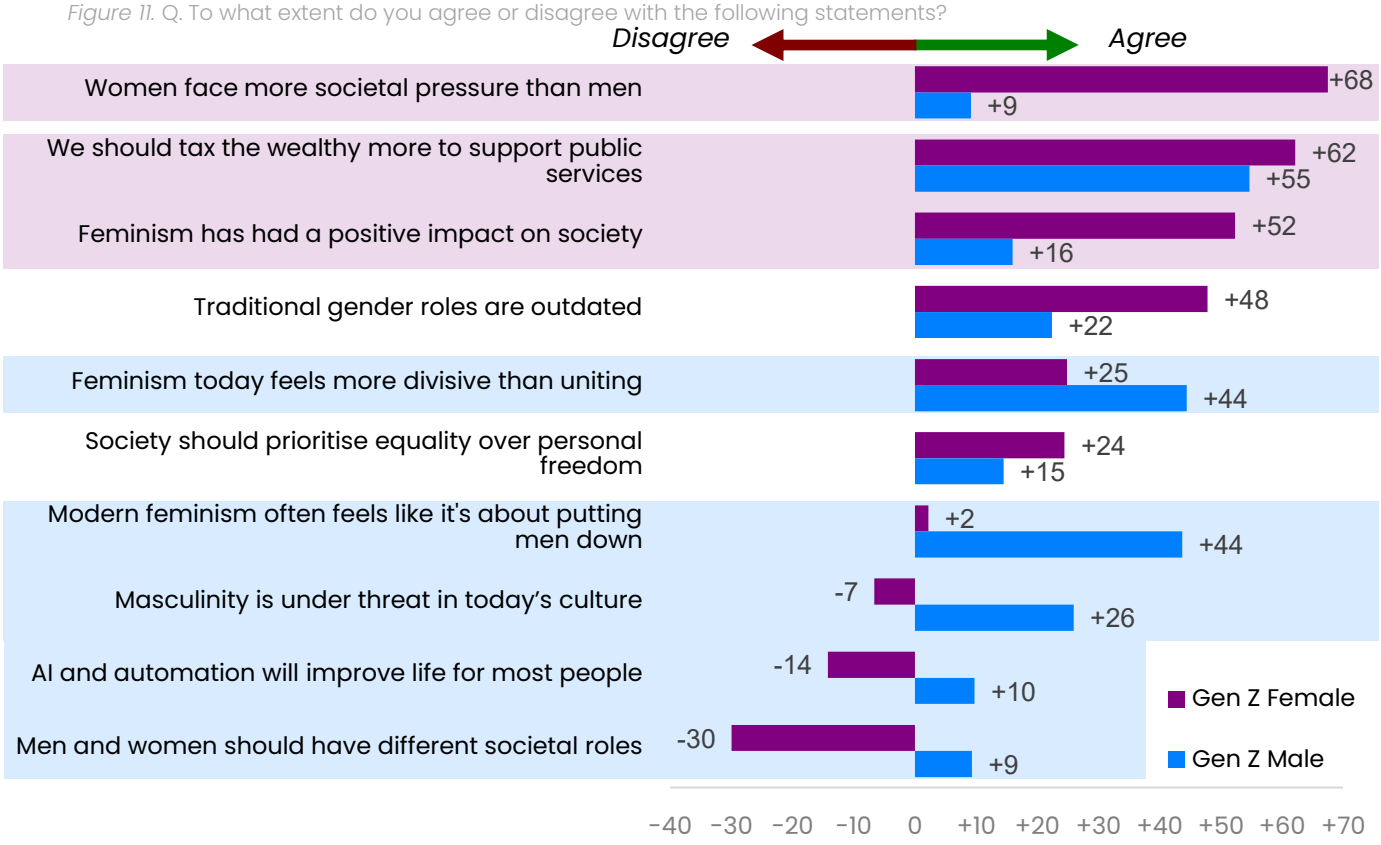
Gender Roles & Values

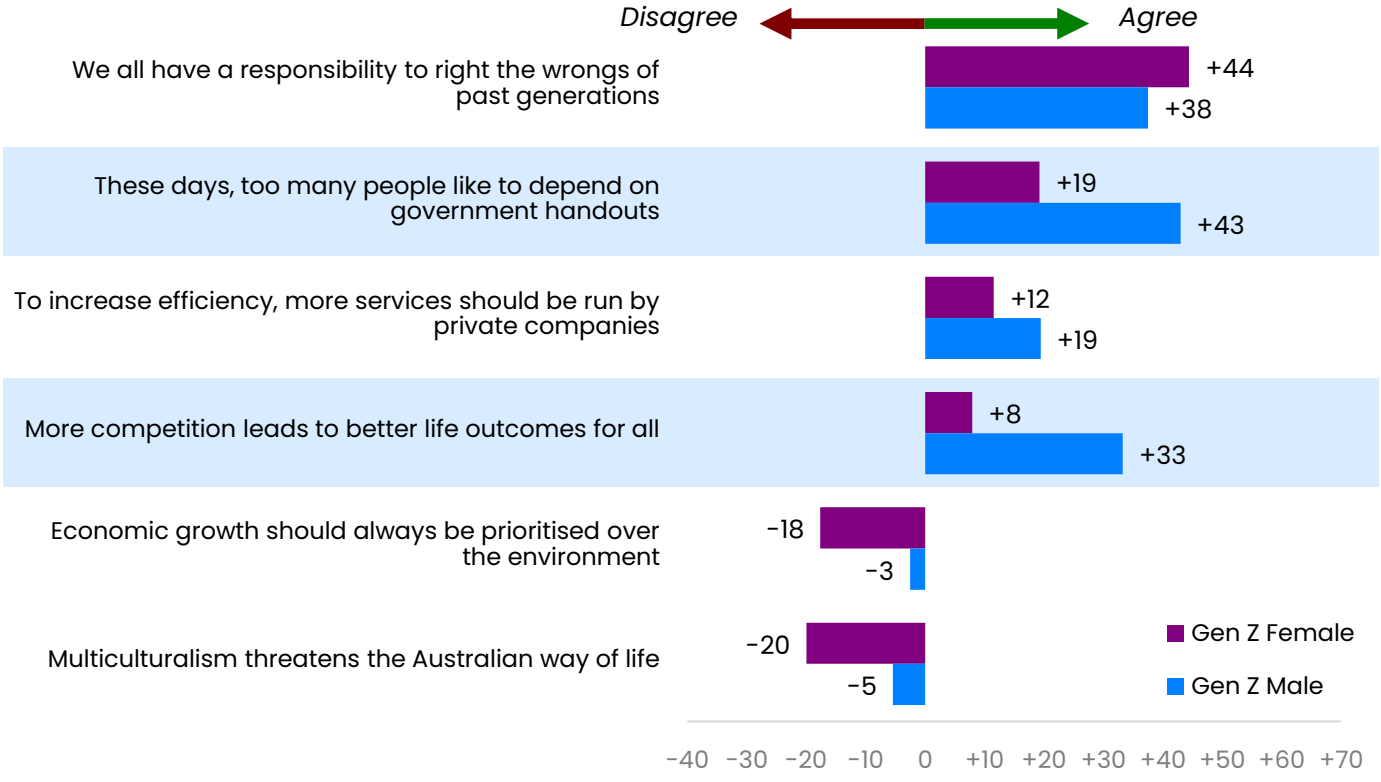
Gen Z women are more likely to say they feel greater societal pressure, and see traditional roles as outdated, while young men view feminism as divisive, and feel masculinity is under threat

Figure 11. Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



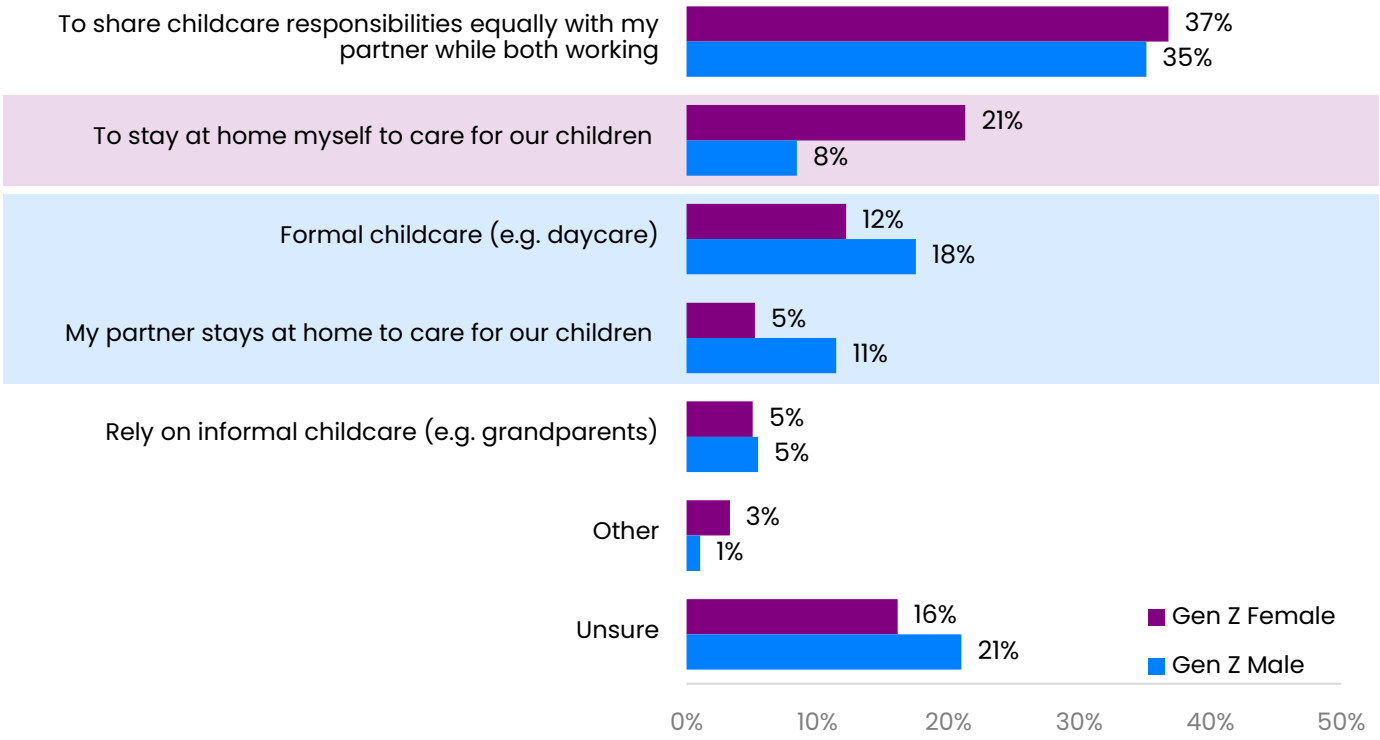
Gen Z men are more likely to agree that more competition leads to better outcomes and that too many people depend now on government handouts

Figure 12. Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



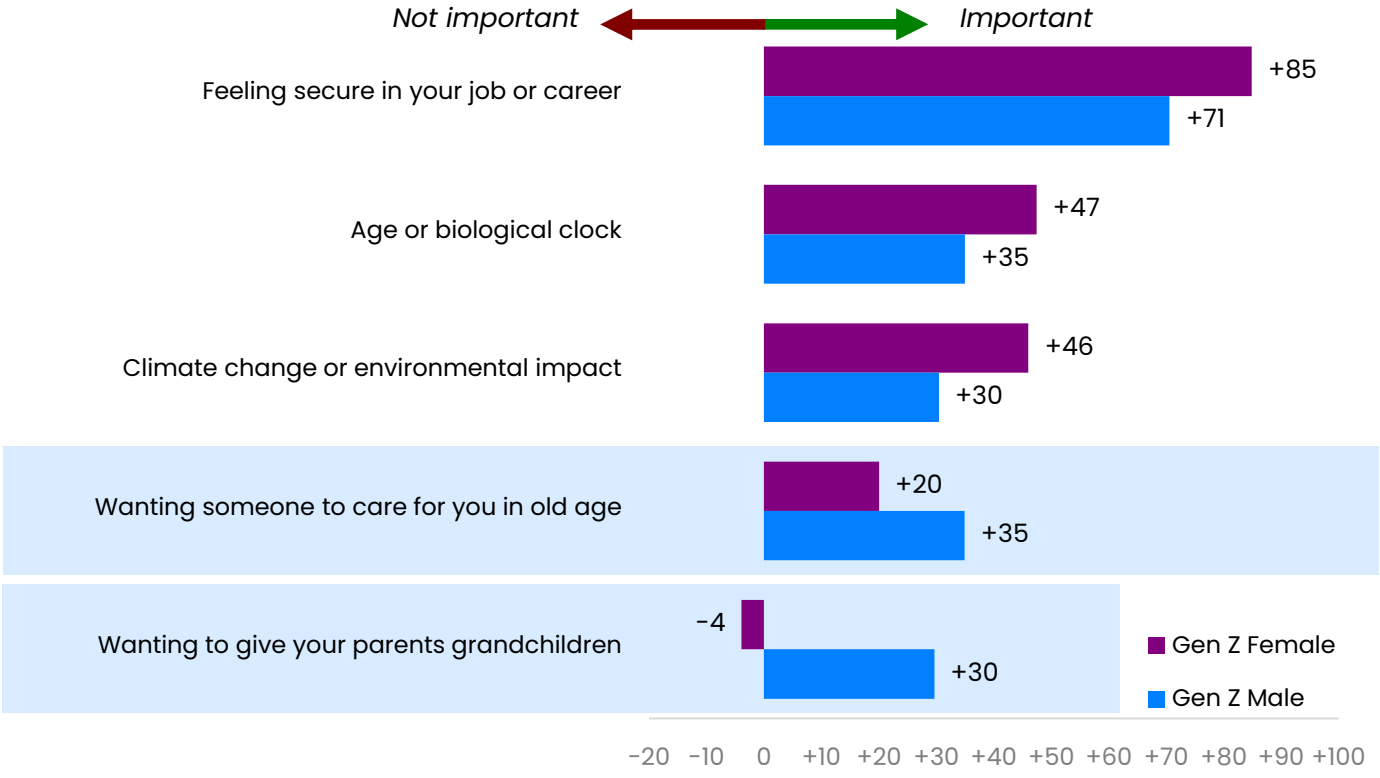
Gen Z men are more likely to say they prefer formal childcare or for their partner to stay at home to care for their children, while Gen Z women are more likely to prefer staying at home themselves

Figure 13. Q. When it comes to childcare, which of the following best reflects your preference?



Gen Z women are more likely to weigh-up career security and climate change when deciding whether to have children; Gen Z men are more likely to say wanting someone to care for them in old age and giving their parents grandchildren

Figure 14. Q. How important, if at all, are each of the following factors are when people decide whether or not to have children?



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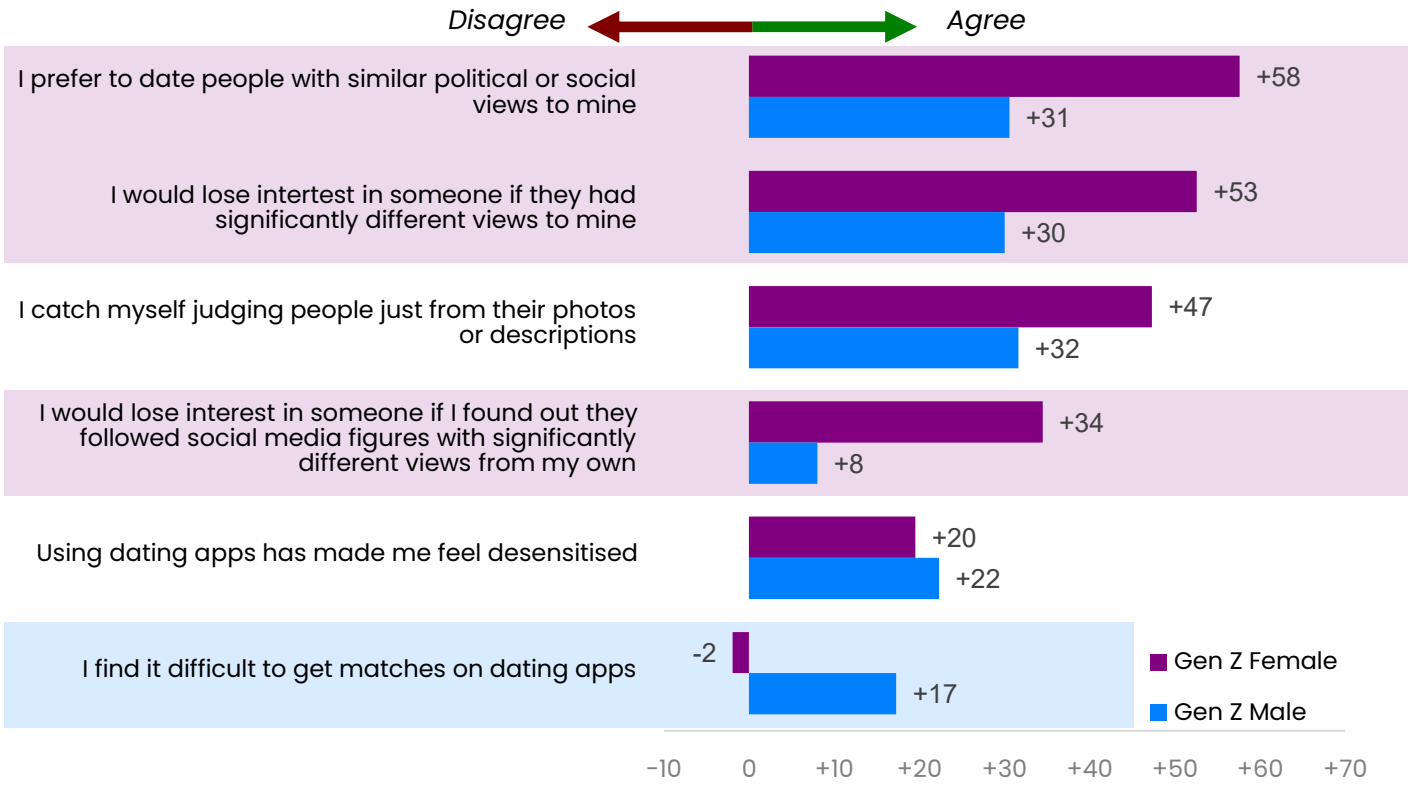
Dating Apps & Relationships

Gen Z women are more likely to say they prefer dating someone who shares their political views

Figure 15. Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? NET



Gen Z women are slightly more likely to have used Tinder, Hinge, and Bumble; their overall experience is more likely to be negative

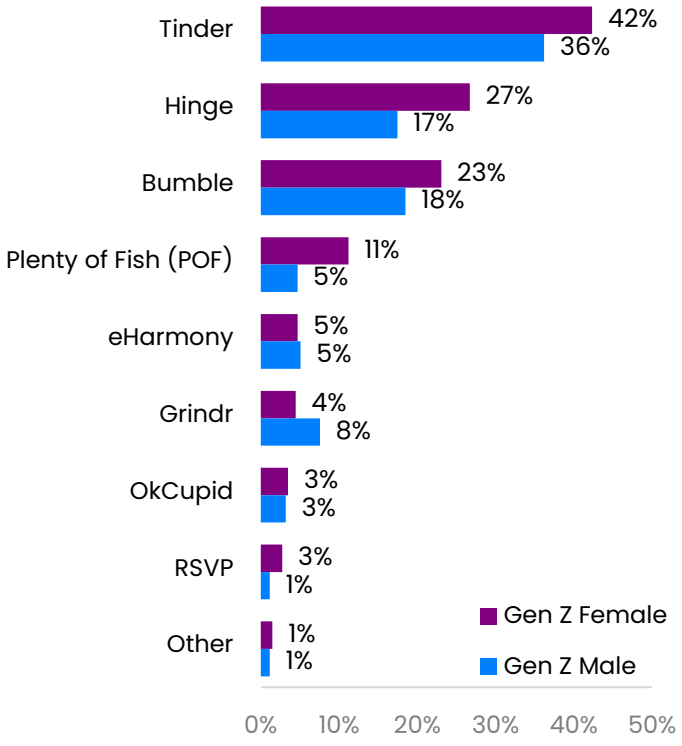


Figure 16. Q. Out of the following dating apps, which, if any have you used?

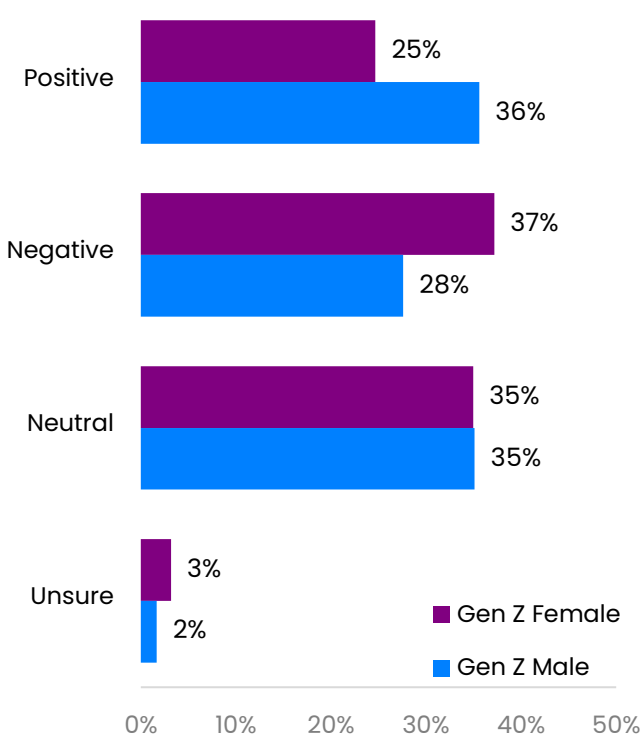


Figure 17. Q. How would you describe your overall experience using dating apps?

Gen Z women say that men on dating apps appear less emotionally available, more interested in casual, and commitment-free hookups, Gen Z men say they struggle simply to get matches

Quotes from focus groups

"It [online dating] feels like I'm in a circle of hell and it's like I'm a recruiter and I'm being inundated with subpar applications, because people are just exhausted and they've kind of forgotten that there's a human on the other end of the line."

- Young female, Sydney

"There are men that are at the very top in terms of how appealing they're to women. And then the rest are sort of left in the dark."

– Young male, Sydney

"It [dating apps] just has made it so much harder to actually form meaningful connections."

– Young male, Sydney

"I really don't know many couples around me who have met in person."

– Young female, Melbourne

"I think there is a general perception that dating apps are more casual."

– Young male, Melbourne

"I'm terrified of dating apps. Both my mates who have used dating apps, he's referred to those relationships as speed dating. So, it's like you do everything in the first three months before you breakup."

– Young male, Melbourne

"I think there is a lot of distrust towards men nowadays. I think it's definitely a lot to do with our modern culture of dating."

– Young male, Melbourne

"It really hasn't had a good impact on dating culture as a whole. It has probably affected the way I look at relationships. I'm kind of always like 'oh you seem really cool, that was a fun date', but I could find someone better if I swipe a little bit more. It's a general kind of attitude."

– Young female, Sydney

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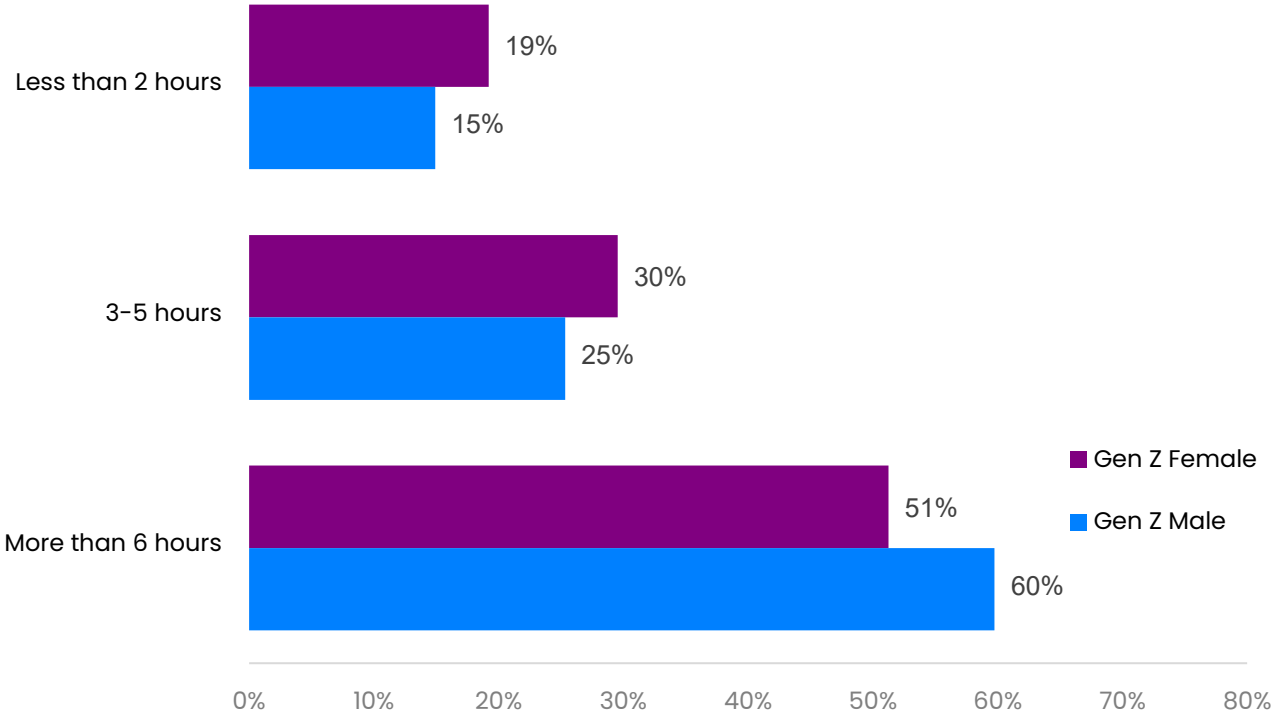
Friendship & Loneliness

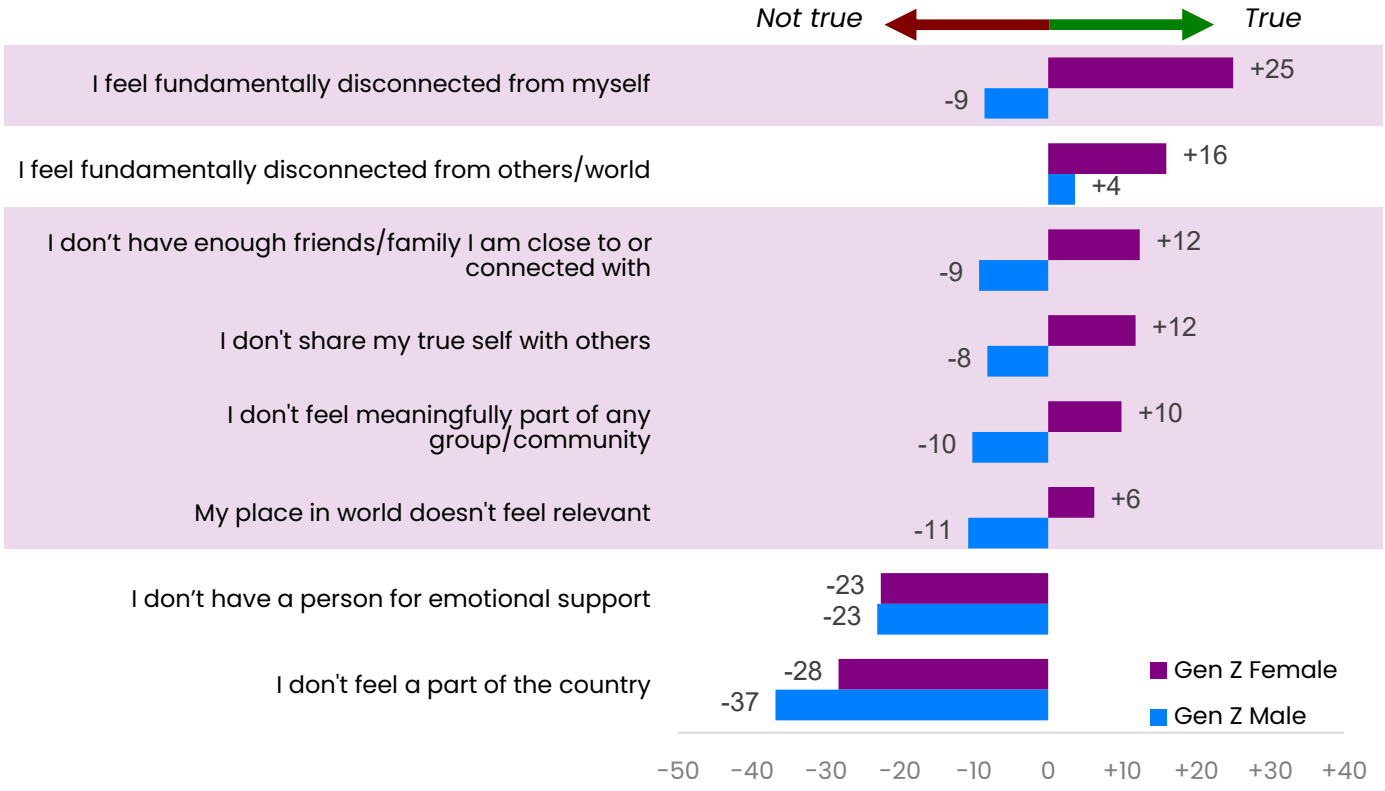
A majority of Gen Z voters, in particular men, are more likely to report that they spend more than 6 hours per day alone

Figure 18. Q. On average, how many hours per day do you spend time alone?



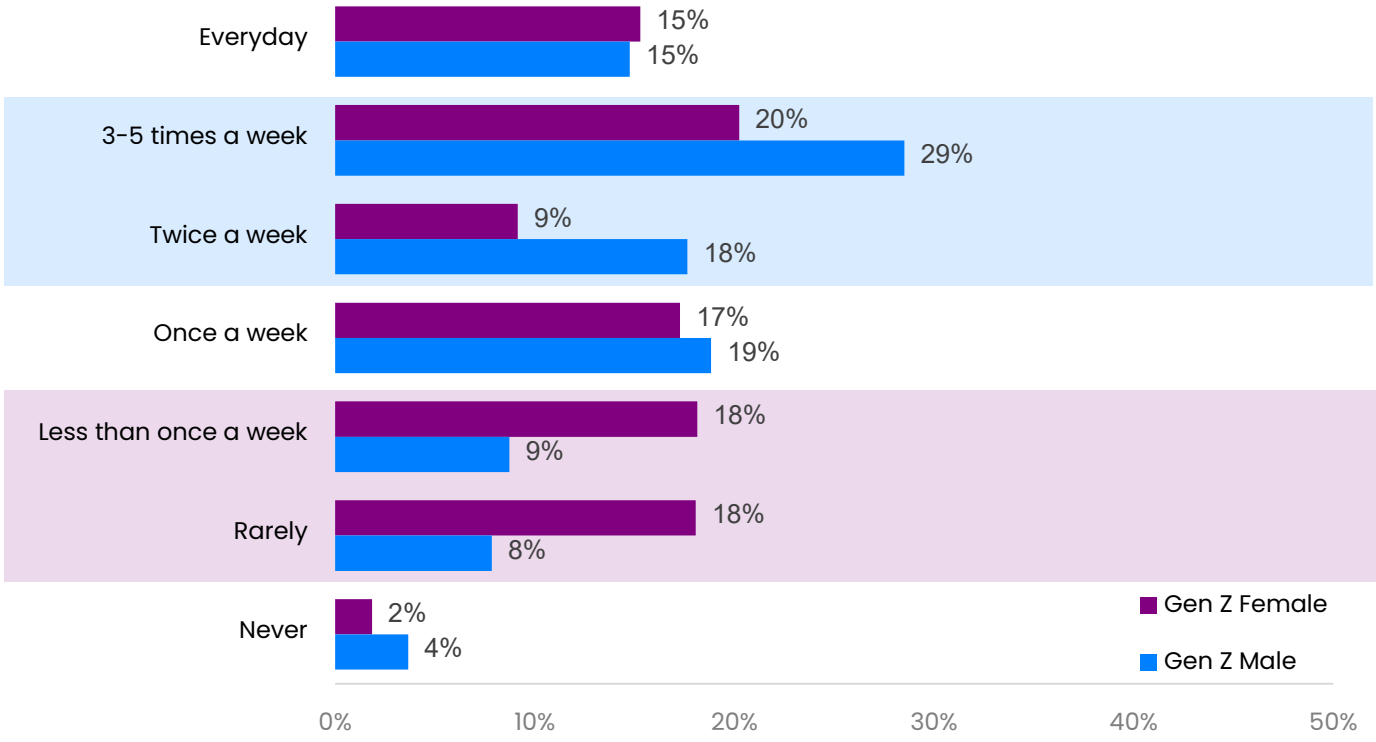
Gen Z women are more likely than men to feel disconnected from themselves and others/the world, lack close friends, hide their true self, and feel they aren't meaningfully part of a group or community

Figure 19. Q. To what extent do you feel the following statements are true, if at all, based on your current circumstances? NET



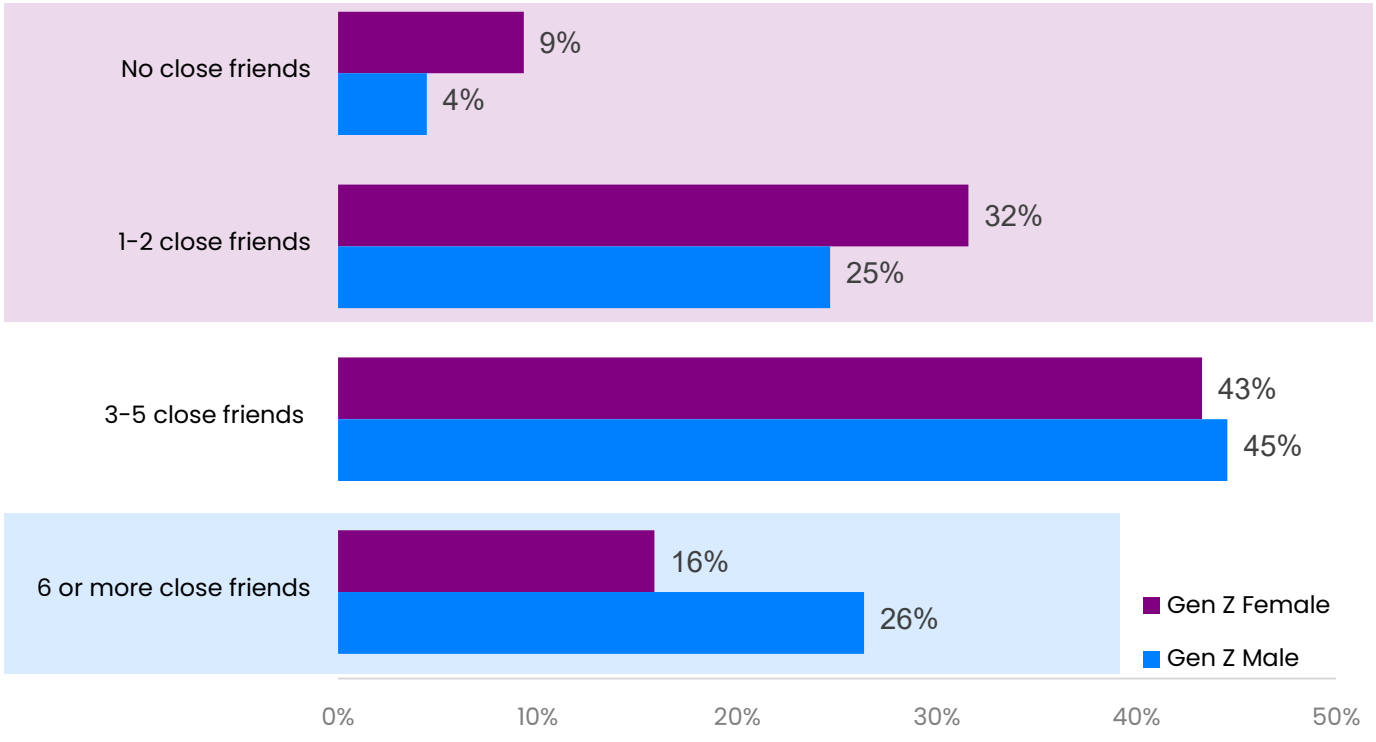
Gen Z women are more likely to report that they meet up with friends or family less than once a week or rarely, while Gen Z men are more likely to do so a few times a week

Figure 20. Q. How often, if at all, do you get together with friends, family or neighbours?



Gen Z women are more likely to report having one or two close friends or none at all; Gen Z men are more likely to say they have six or more close friends

Figure 21. Q. Thinking about your personal friendships, how many close friends do you currently have in your life?



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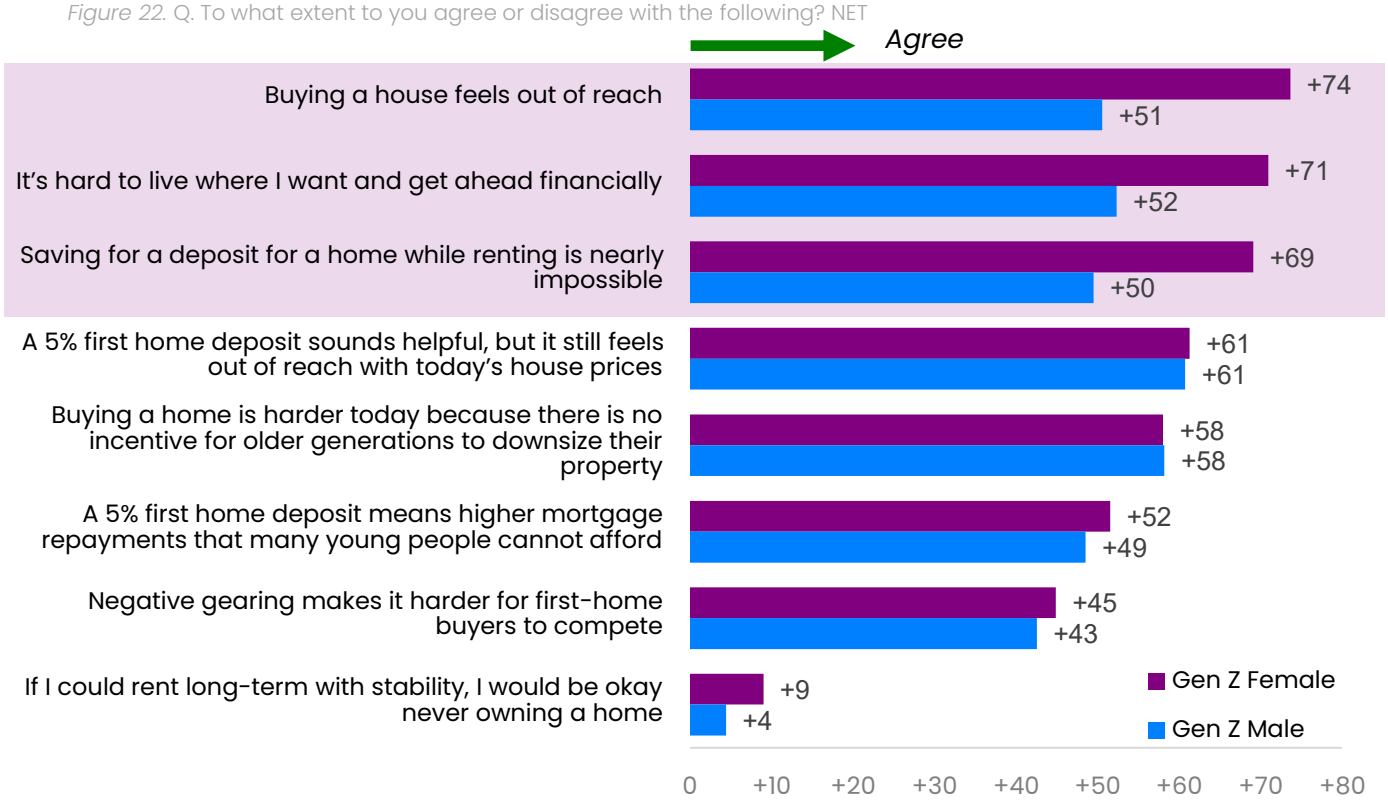
Housing & Work

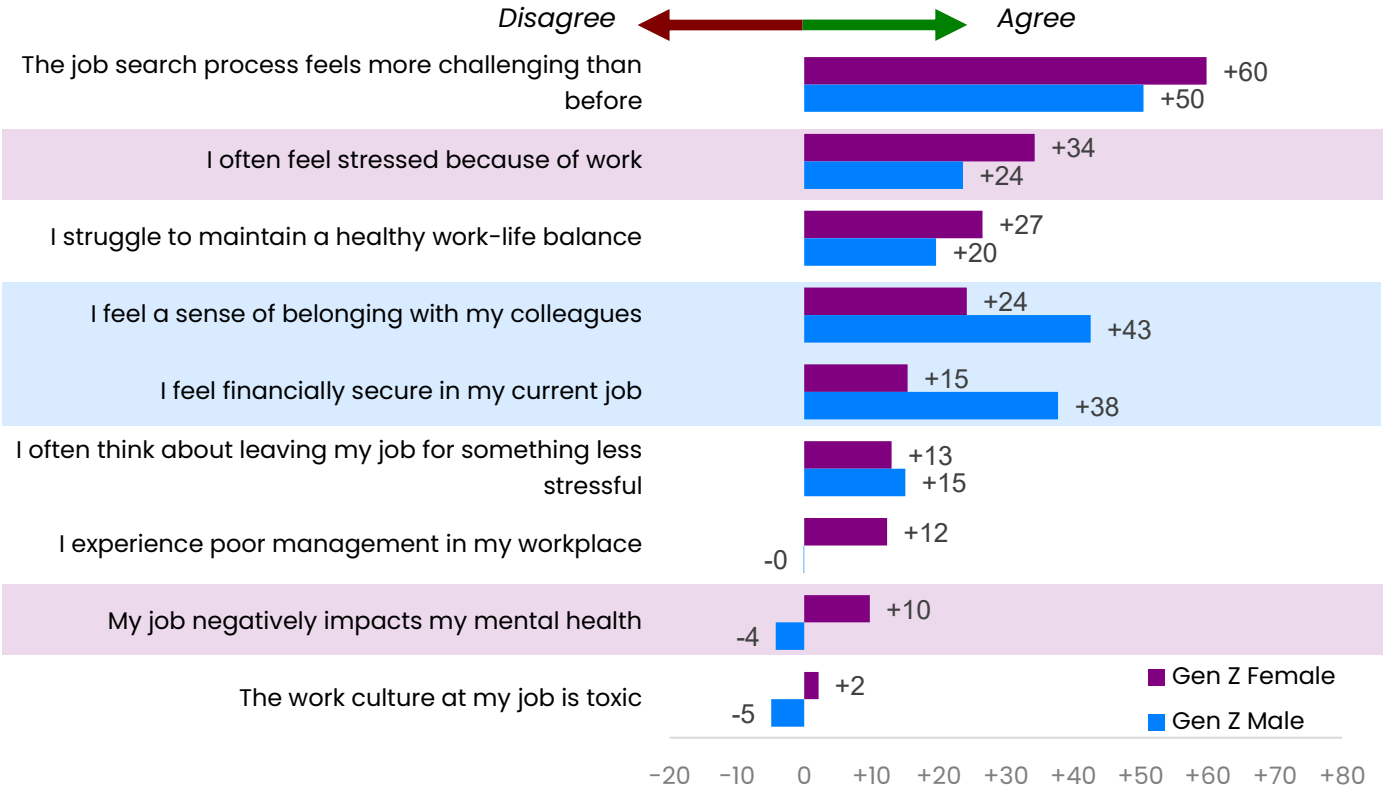
Gen Z women are more likely than men to agree that buying a house feels out of reach, that they struggle to advance financially, and believe that saving for a home deposit is nearly impossible

Figure 22. Q. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following? NET



Gen Z men are more likely to have a stronger sense of belonging with colleagues and be financially secure, while Gen Z women are more likely to say that their job impacts their mental health

Figure 23. Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current work situation? NET



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