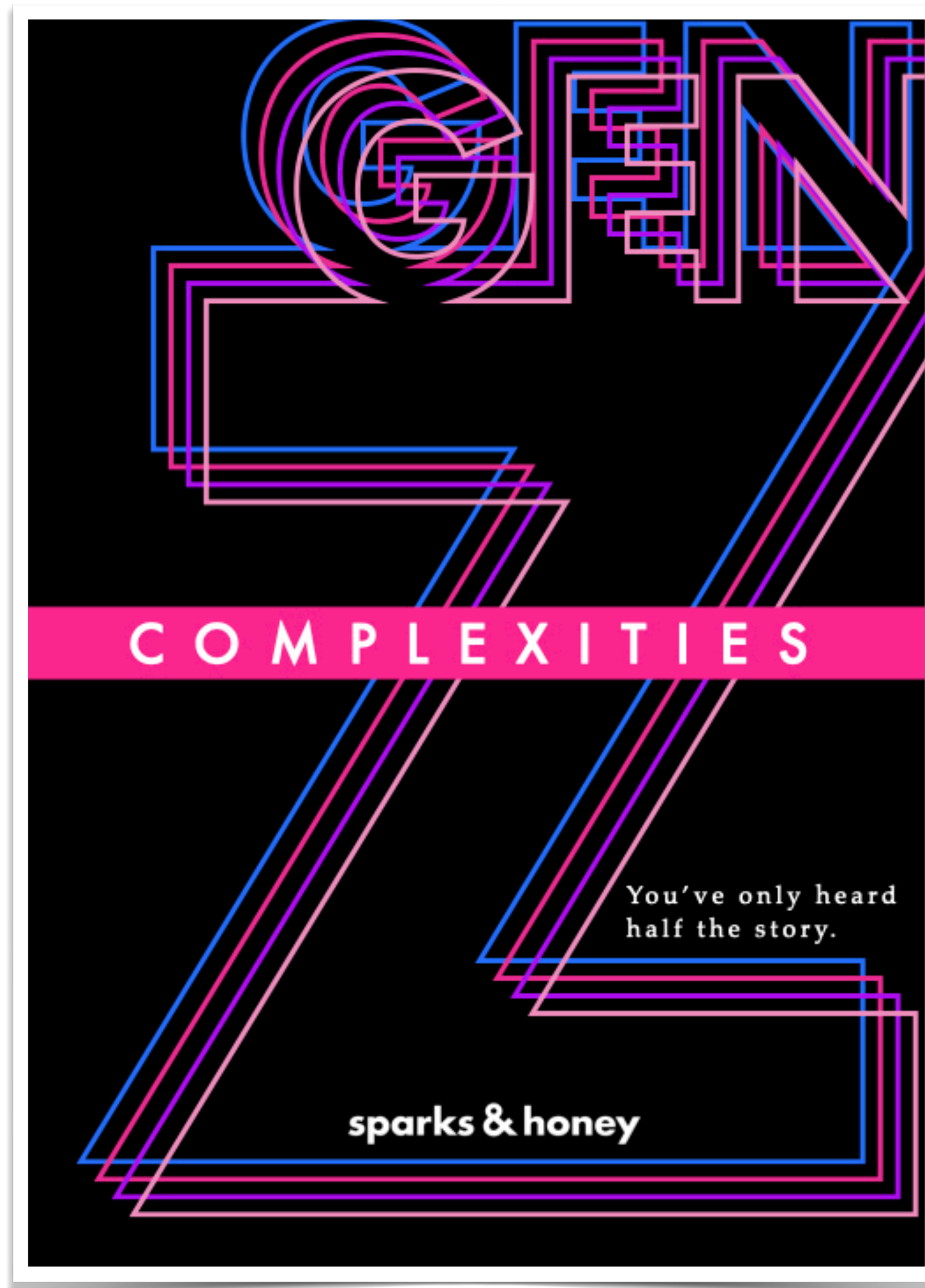


sparks & honey

The word 'COMPLEXITIES' is rendered in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font. Each letter is filled with a vibrant, multi-colored geometric pattern. The 'C' features concentric, overlapping circles in shades of blue, pink, and purple. The 'O' is a solid pink circle. The 'M' is composed of multiple overlapping, slightly offset rectangular outlines in blue, pink, and purple. The 'P' is a solid pink shape. The 'L' is a solid pink shape. The 'E' is a solid pink shape. The 'X' is a solid pink shape. The 'I' is a solid pink shape. The 'T' is a solid pink shape. The 'I' is a solid pink shape. The 'E' is a solid pink shape. The 'S' is a solid pink shape. The background is black, and the overall aesthetic is modern and abstract.

COMPLEXITIES

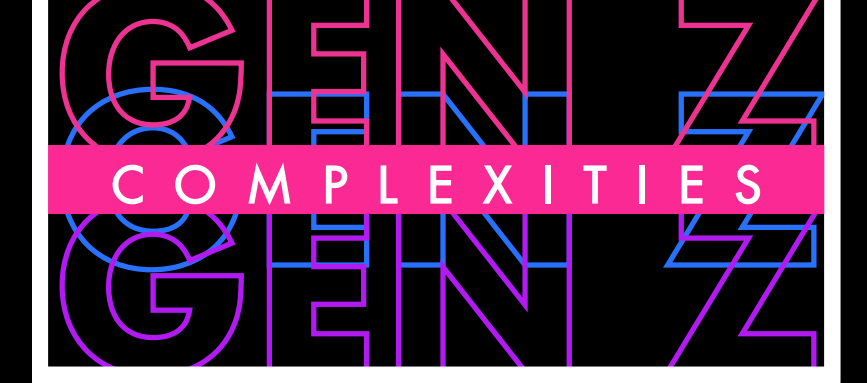
You've only heard half the story.



Gen Z Complexities: You've only heard half the story.

The one certainty today is uncertainty. Over two years into a global pandemic, along with rocketing inflation, climate disasters, and now, Russia's war on Ukraine, Gen Z is growing up and navigating a complex and uncertain world with the rest of us — but they're handling it all in surprising ways. Gen Z, young people born after 1997, is rethinking foundational elements of day-to-day life, from building decentralized networks of emotional support to advocating for greater responsibility from brands to questioning the role they want work, money and relationships to play in their lives.

Building on our [“Gen Z 2025” report](#), the sparks & honey [Youth Culture Practice](#) challenged the common assumptions of the Gen Z narrative, examining their related tensions and contradictions and revealing the nuanced behaviors and attitudes driving not just Gen Z's future, but those of your organization and the future leaders of tomorrow. As Gen Z gains economic, social, and political power, the changes they'll look to make will be structural, but not superficial.



Our Methodology

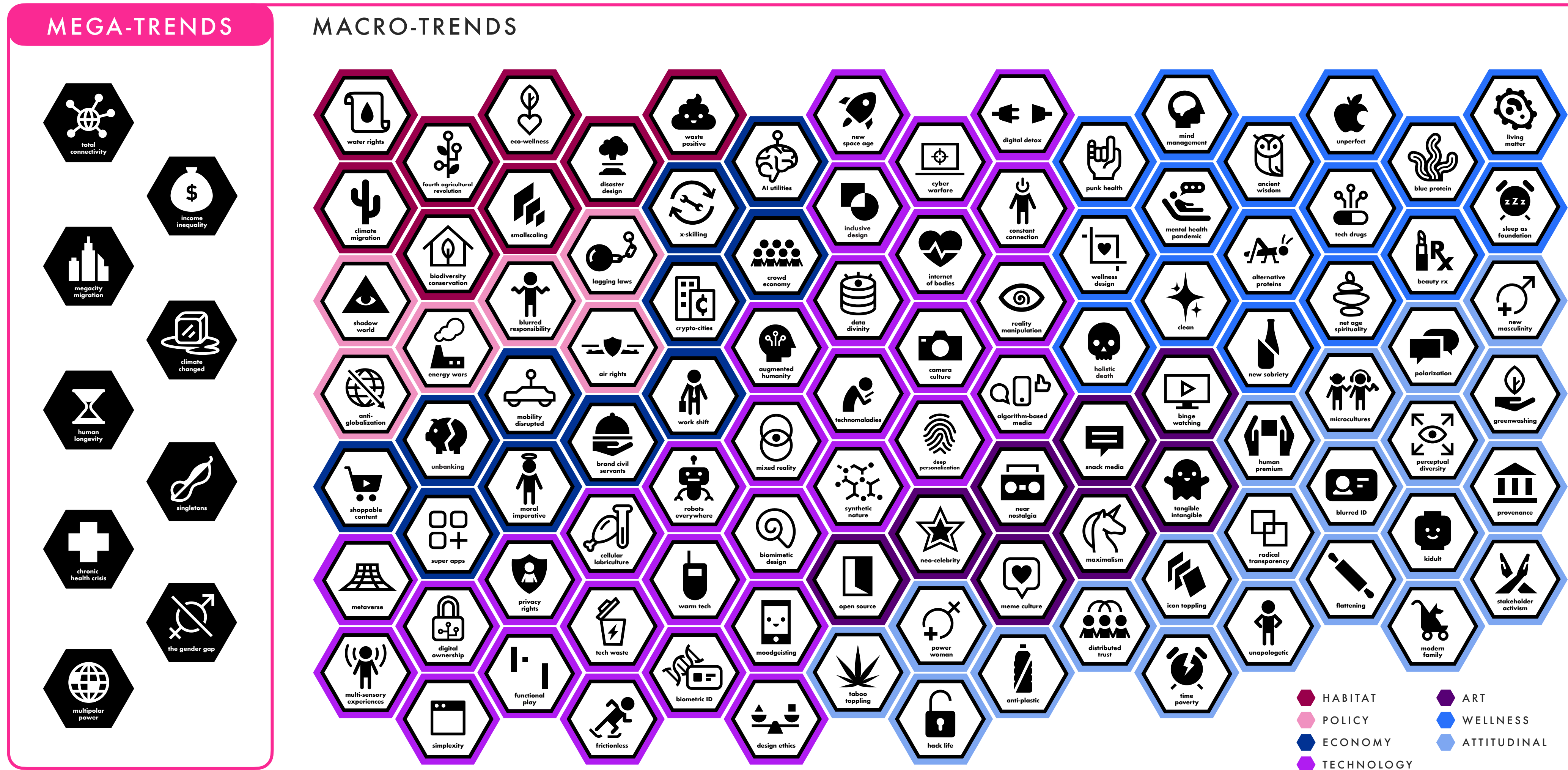
To establish our list of complexities for this report, we gathered and processed cultural data and human intelligence to identify patterns and shifts that evade the human eye. We leveraged our always-on AI-powered intelligence platform Q™ to collect signals from over a million global data sources from over 140 countries in over 16 languages — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Q™ translates the nebulous signals of culture into structured data.

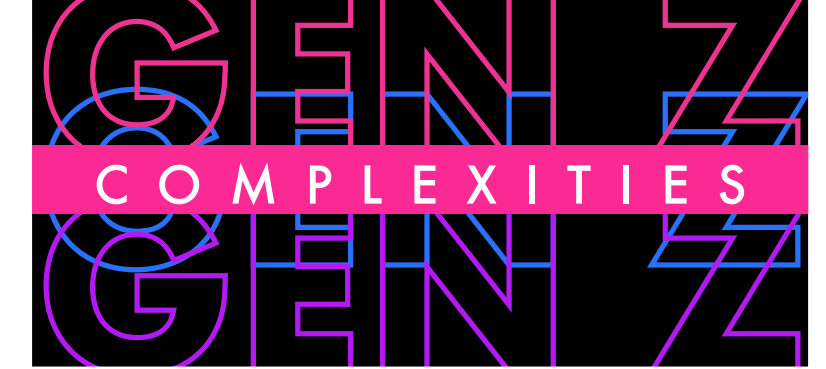
Q™ uses artificial intelligence to read, contextualize and organize millions of articles, media, patents, startups and other signals of cultural change.



Elements of Culture

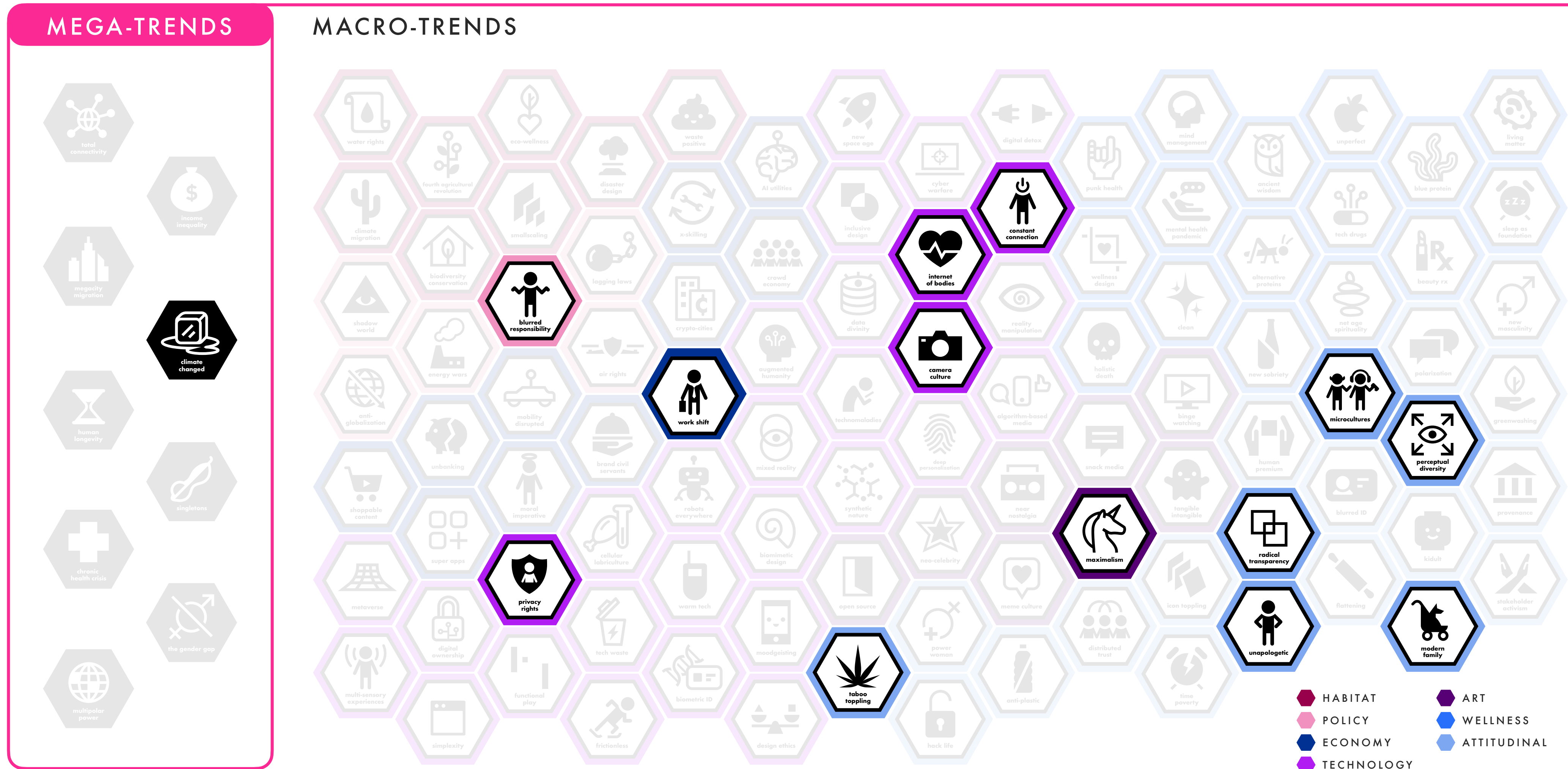
In QTM, our Elements of Culture (EoC) are used to identify the complexities that are shaping Gen Z in the next one to two years.





Top EoC for Gen Z

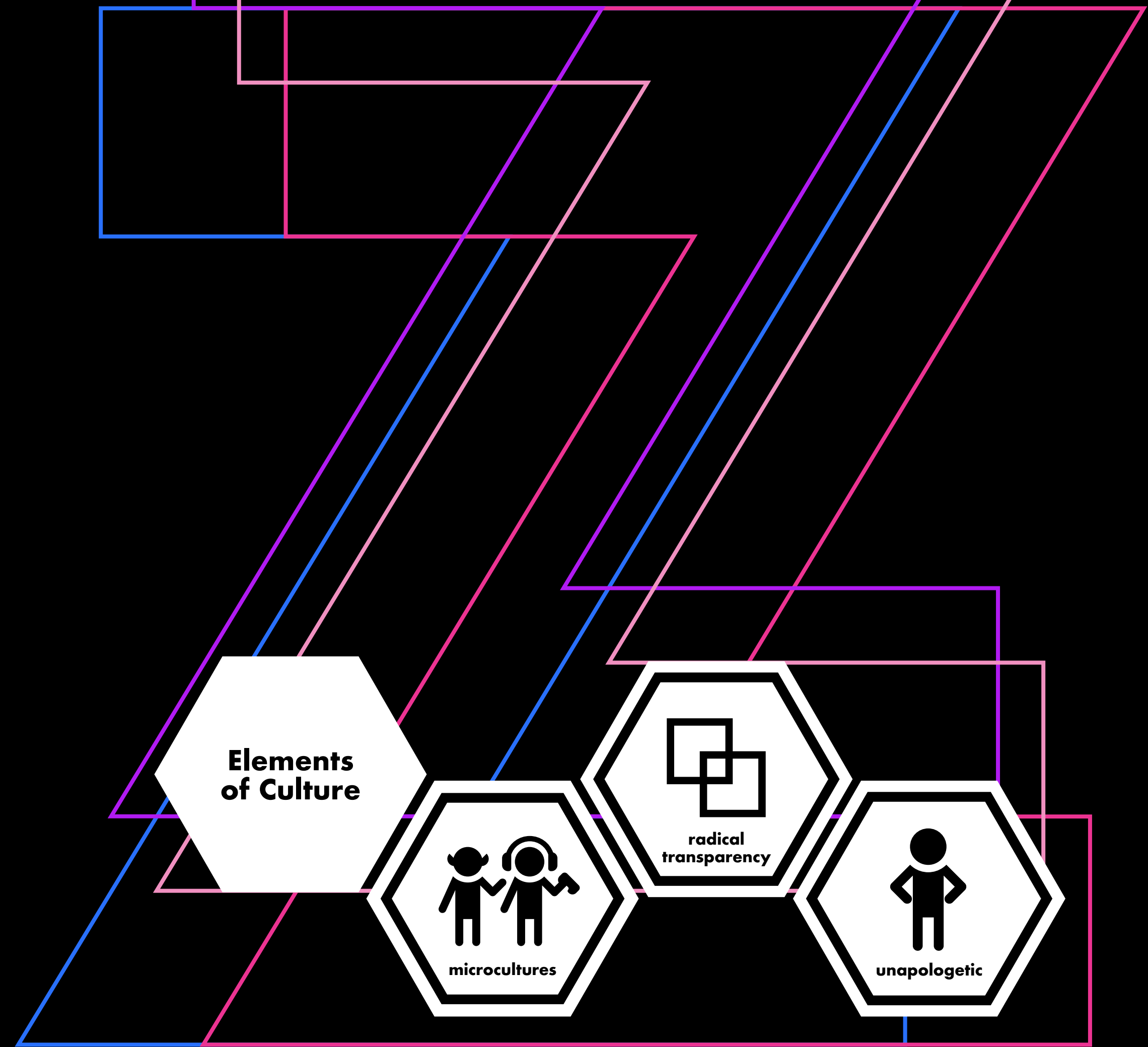
The top mega- and macro-trends shaping Gen Z's future, such as Climate Changed, Taboo Toppling and Maximalism.





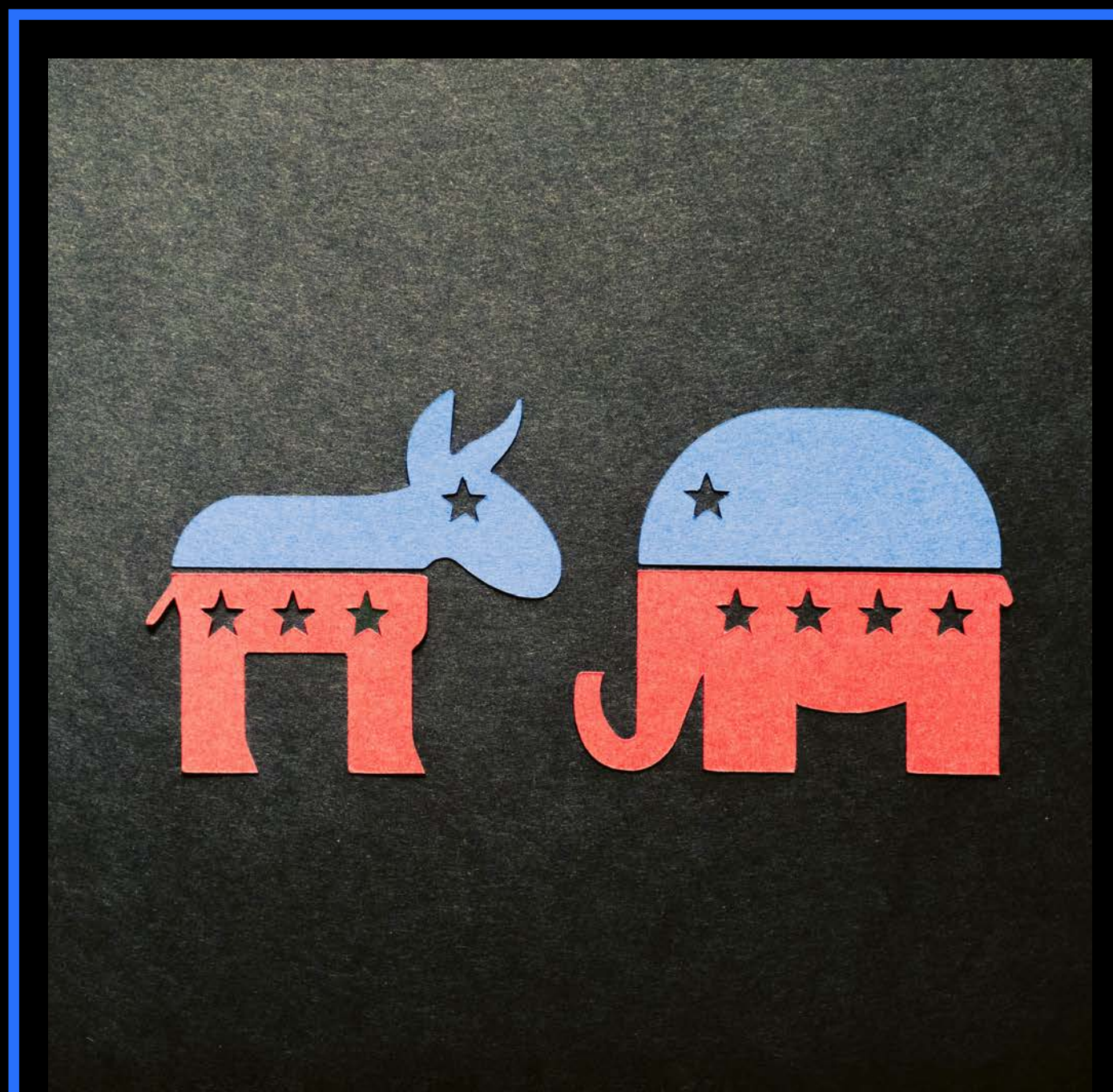
GEN Z and Politics

Mostly liberal, but not Democrats

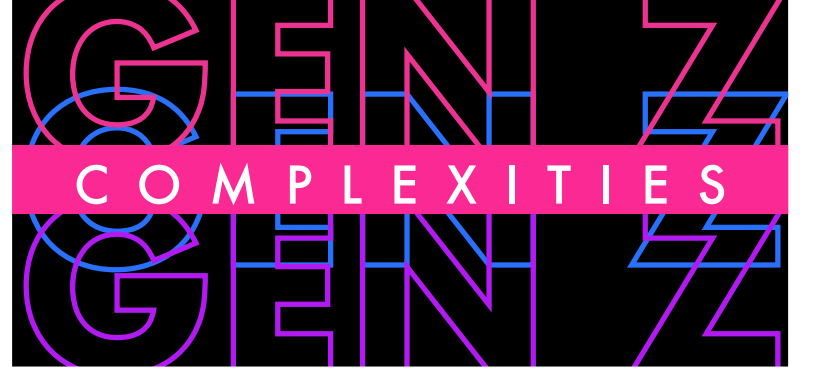




**Gen Z's politics
are interwoven
with identity**



**Gen Z doesn't
want your
(political) party**



Gen Z's politics are interwoven with identity

Gen Z doesn't want your (political) party

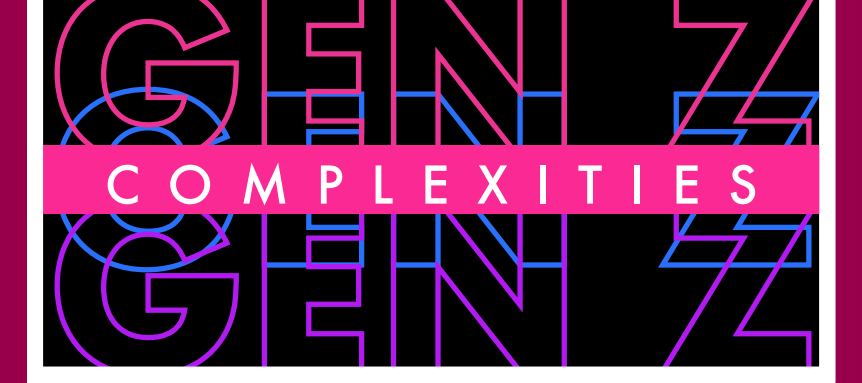


Gen Z is seen to be the hope of a liberal future, focusing on issues that resonate from their backyards to the world: social justice, climate activism, combatting inequities, gun safety, voting rights, and more. For Gen Z, a generation that increasingly identifies as LGBTQ+, world politics are inextricable from their identity politics, and they expect everyone from employers to brands to resonate with their values. Gen Z is a politically passionate generation, using technology platforms to organize, activate and energize their values to their peers and beyond.

In the 2018 midterms, when Gen Z became voters en masse, the youth vote doubled the historical average — a trend that continued in the 2020 presidential elections.

Even before they reach voting age, Gen Z has shown their political stripes in ways that have defied their elders. From speaking out on voting rights at age 13 to calling out inaction on gun violence, Gen Z boldly exceeds the expectations of their years.

Commonly, Gen Z's politics are seen to neatly fit under a liberal umbrella, setting up Gen Z to take on those progressive ideals. As more Gen Zers come of voting age and working age, they are touted as the hope for Democrats in the U.S., and in many cases, for democracy itself. The truth, however, is more complex. Just ask a Gen Zer.



Fluid identity politics of Gen Z

1 in 5

Gen Z adults identifies as LGBTQ+ – **1.5% higher** than just a year ago

Source: *Gallup, The Advocate*

Gen Z voters are a force for change

83%

of young voters say they believe young people have the power to change the country

Source: *Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement survey, 2020*

SIGNALS



Qasim Rashid, Esq. ✓
@QasimRashid



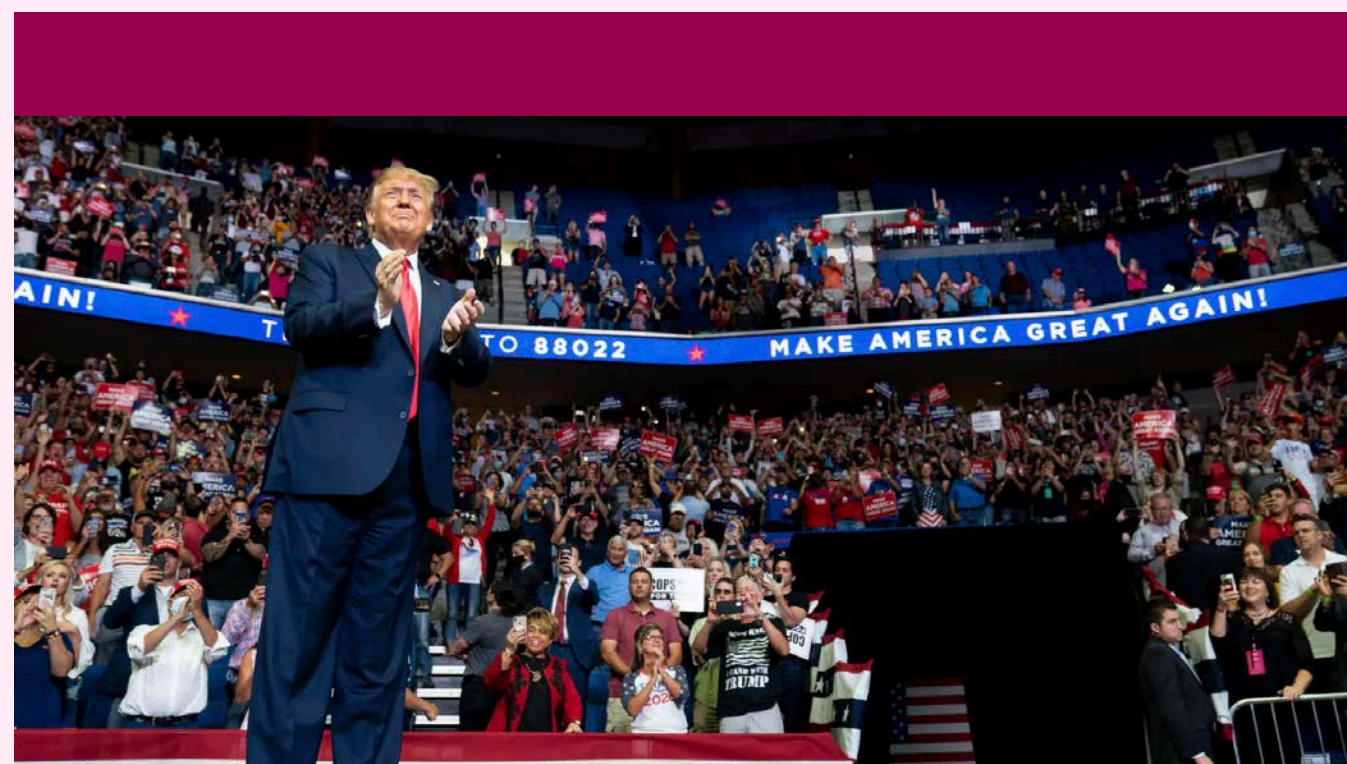
GOP VA Governor just set up a tip line to report schools & teachers who teach about racism.

Email: helpeducation@governor.virginia.gov

Whatever you do, don't make a mockery of this with fake tips. That would be a terrible thing to

The Virginia Department of Education is being flooded with memes after creating a tip line to report schools teaching racism

Source: [Buzzfeed News](#)



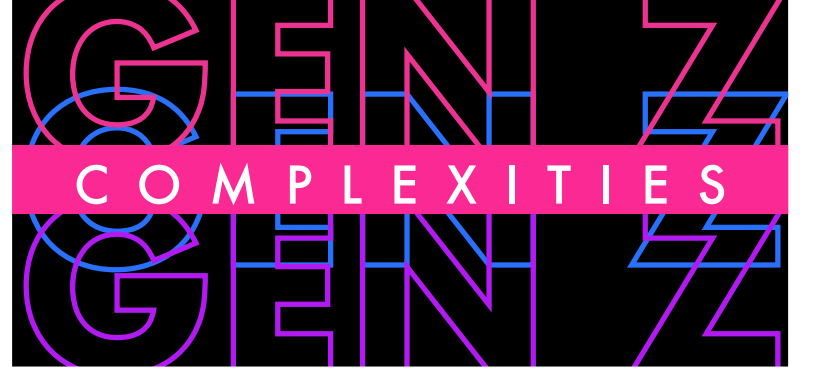
TikTok teens and Kpop stans say they sank Trump Rally

Source: [The New York Times](#)



'Vladdy daddy please no war' Gen Z posts on Russia-Ukraine tensions

Source: [Yahoo Finance](#)



Gen Z's politics are interwoven with identity

Gen Z doesn't want your (political) party

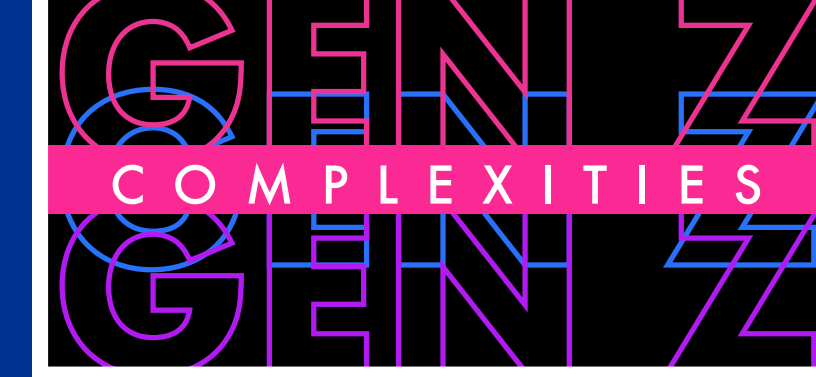


Gen Z is exhausted by politics, and research suggests that many are going the way of their Gen X parents — frustrated with the status quo of politics and preferring to not support either party. This frustration with the status quo is driving young Gen Z towards the polarities of democratic socialism — and for some, far-right politics. The ideals of some Gen Z groups, like the young girls attracted to the Tradwife movement, which highlights old-school values of being a conservative woman at home, are important to understand in the context of voting, too. And most young Americans believe that democracy is, in fact, failing, according to the Harvard Youth Poll 2021.

The platforms Gen Z uses for political and social purposes are bringing the gospel of a growing conservative youth to larger audiences, such as Christian TikTok, where the focus isn't just on one-sided politics, but educating their peers on their interests. Identity politics are also the focus of

both far-right and socialist TikTok, too, showing the fluidity of their political ideologies beyond party lines. Gen Z voices are also heard calling out ideologies they are firmly against, even if it's their own public-facing parents, like Kellyanne Conway's teenage daughter, Claudia Conway whose controversial public dissent against her conservative mother gained her a mass following on her social platforms.

According to a survey of 1,500 college students nationally, Gen Zers of college age have been alienated by the Republican Party — but that doesn't mean they have migrated to the Democratic Party. “Most students dislike both parties: Only 10% think that the Republican Party is moving in the right direction, and just 18% say that's true of the Democrats,” according to the LA Times.



Half of Gen Zers are disconnected from either party

47%

of Gen Z said there was no party that represented their views reasonably well.

Source: *2020 American National Election Study*

Diverse youth voters lean liberal

78% & 73%
Asian youth Black youth

are the most likely to support Biden. Meanwhile, almost three-quarters of youth who support Trump (72%) are White.

Source: *Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Understanding, Tufts University*

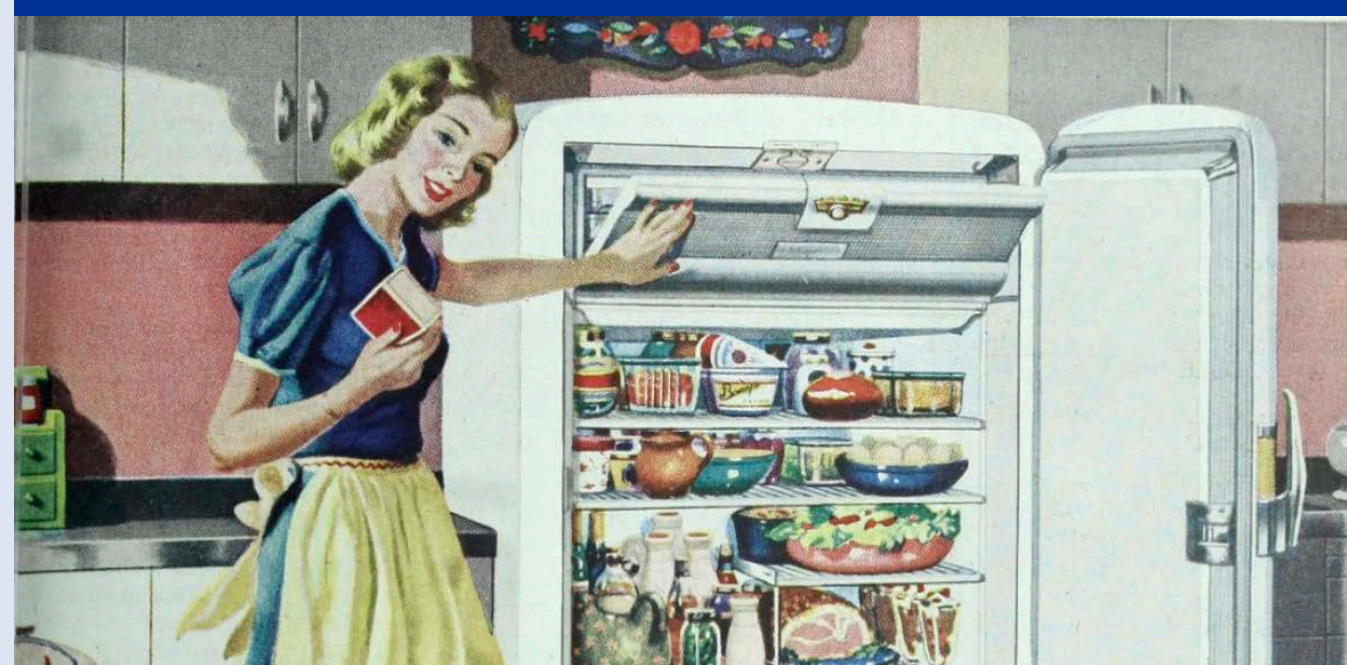


SIGNALS



Eat the rich! Why millennials and Generation Z have turned their backs on capitalism

Source: [The Guardian](#)



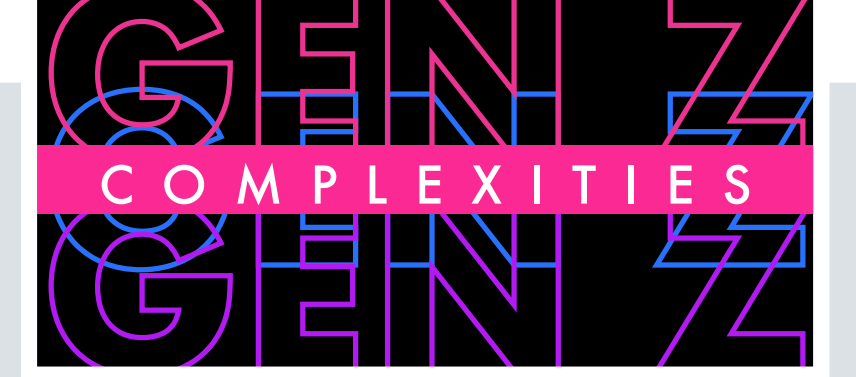
Why are Gen Z girls attracted to the Tradwife Lifestyle?

Source: [Political Research Associates](#)



Gen Z students seem to dislike both political parties

Source: [LA Times](#)



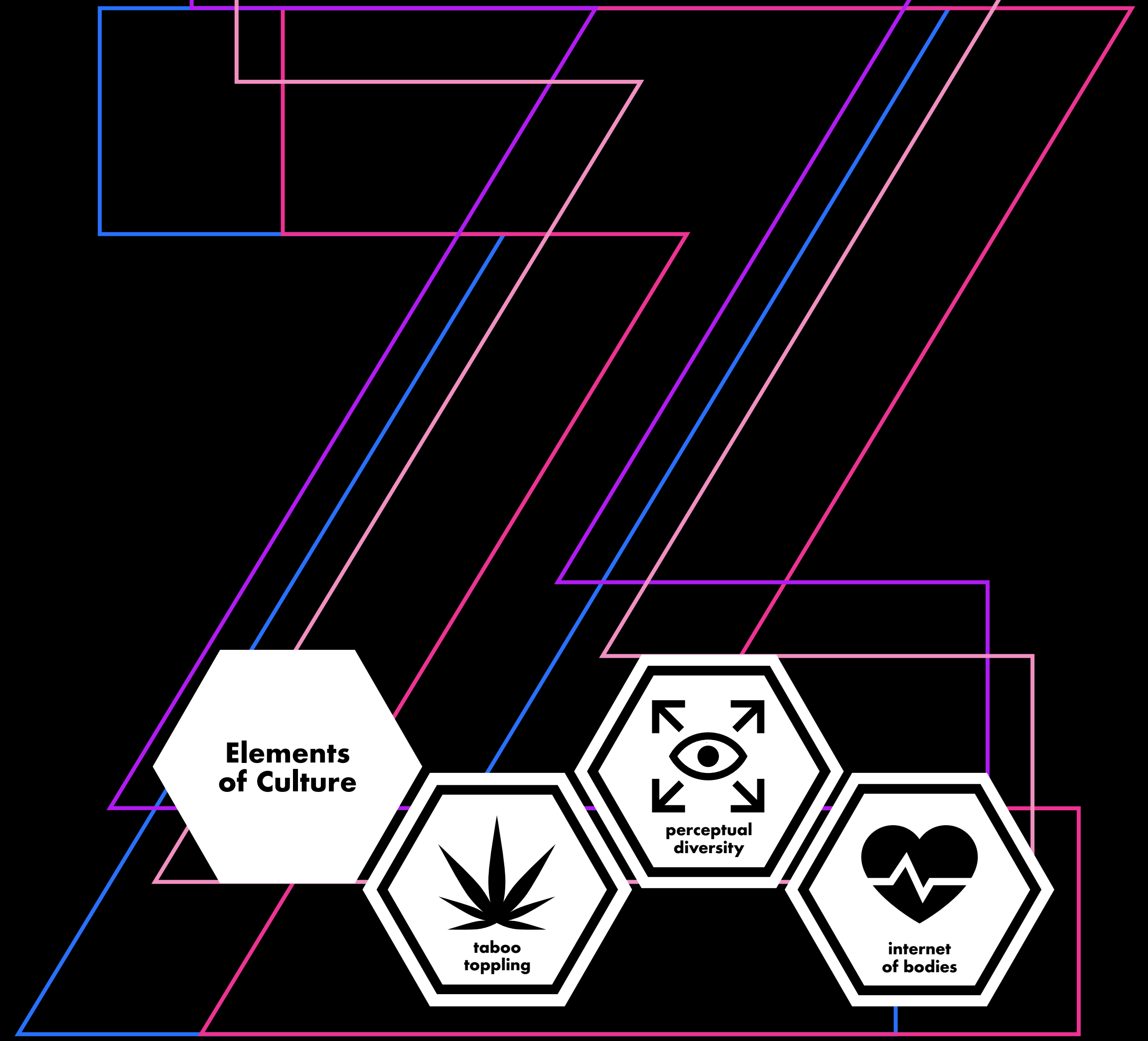
Takeaway

The fluid attitudes of Gen Z also resonate when it comes to politics: They won't just accept the status quo. Gen Z is skeptical that either political party can serve their interests. As Gen Z grows into voting age and older, we will need to reframe our understanding of political ideology beyond the binary politics of liberal versus conservative.



GEN Z and Money

Broke, but inventing new paths to cash in

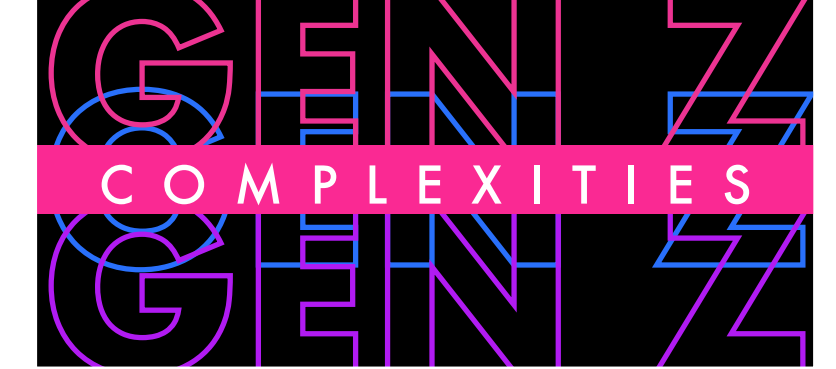




**Cash strapped,
but so what?**



**Gen Z has
financial chops,
and they are
ready for risk**



Cash strapped, but so what?

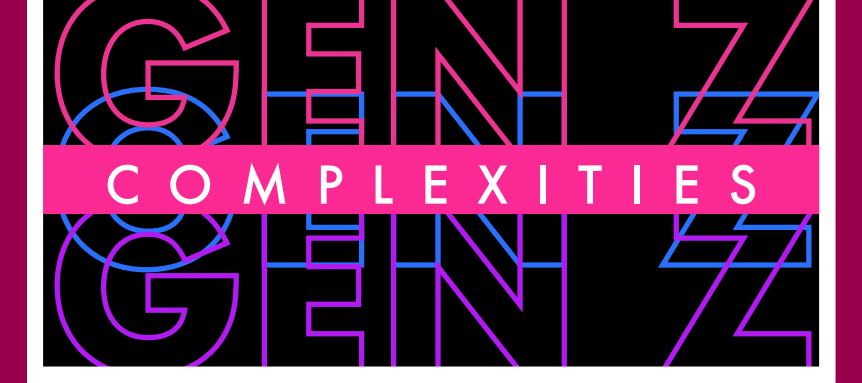
Gen Z has financial chops, and they are ready for risk



Gen Z doesn't have much money. But, who did at a young age? (This is not a question for the privileged). Headlines resound with doomsday prophecies for Gen Z, who is now battling student debt and rising inflation, and has been completely priced out of the housing market. The economic and financial turmoil Gen Z has witnessed, with their parents or as young workers themselves, has made uncertainty the norm by which they navigate their financial futures.

It's complicated by a distrust in institutions and employers, which Gen Z is becoming increasingly vocal about calling out. On paper, they are

economically burdened, considering their hefty student loan debts and that paying a \$400 emergency expense would hurt Gen Z the most. The weight of their collective finances is perhaps so large that Gen Z have begun to accept it as the norm, and they're unfazed by it. In the U.S., the long-term realities of financial stress are starting to manifest themselves in previously unseen behaviors such as choosing to simply give up, or, "lie flat," as the youth in China call it.



Money is a major stressor

75%

of U.S. Gen Z are stressed out about finances

Source: *2022 TIAA Financial Wellness Survey*

Gen Z is burdened with student debt – but far less than Millennials and Gen X

7.37%

Amount Gen Z carries of the total federal student loan debt of \$1.57 trillion.

Source: *Student Loan Debt by Generation, EducationData.org*

SIGNALS



Gen Z on battling soaring inflation for the first time

Source: *BBC*



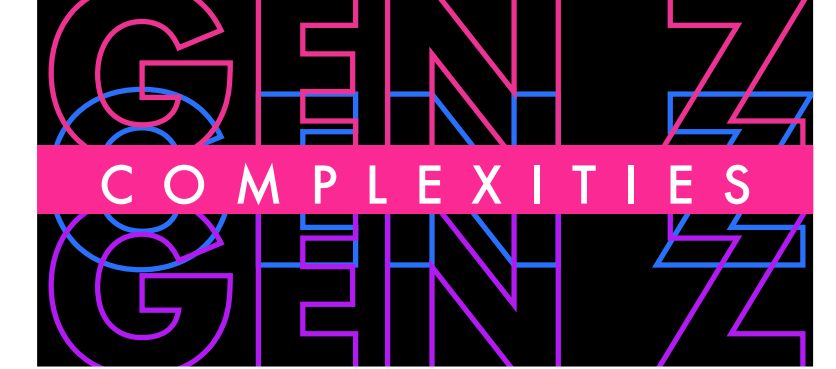
Young Chinese take a stand against the pressures of modern life – by lying down

Source: *Washington Post*



Gen Zers in finance trust robots more than their colleagues

Source: *Fortune*



**Cash strapped,
but so what?**

**Gen Z has financial chops,
and they are ready for risk**

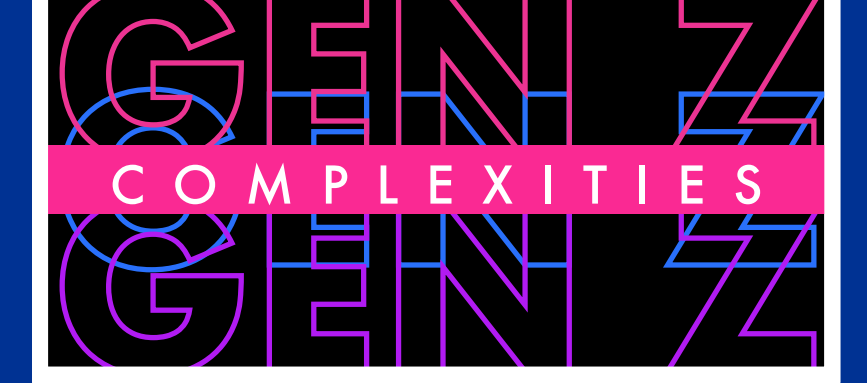


Gen Z is into risky business. While they may be pressed and stressed about money, Gen Z also has an appetite for novel financial pursuits outside of institutional norms. They are flocking to expensive cities, such as San Francisco and New York, far outnumbering the rental applications of their older counterparts. Even in a year where rents in major U.S. cities have skyrocketed up to 40%, it's Gen Z that is moving to urban centers, according to recent [rental application data](#). And Gen Z's trust in technology has forged a comfort level with fintech, digital currencies, and crowdsourcing platforms, where they can [directly support causes that reflect their values](#) with micro-donations, without a middleman charity or institution involved.

Combined with a sense of distrust in institutions and having witnessed the financial strife and worries of both their Gen X parents and Millennial peers, Gen Z is driven to approach finances in a fresh way. That can manifest itself in exploring money-making in novel ways, emphasizing short-term gains

over longer-term pains. That can mean intentionally job-hopping, skipping hefty student loans, or exploring digital alternatives, from [investing in crypto for retirement](#) to NFTs — even if [they don't fully trust them](#). A healthy, learned sense of skepticism underlies their financial motives.

Gen Z is using platforms like TikTok to elevate female finance voices, and educate their peers on all things money. Financial plans, even for retirement, can now be born from memes or “expert” influencers on Instagram or TikTok. Open platforms from TikTok to sub-Reddits are helping Gen Z rethink means of gaining wealth and saving for tomorrow. Sometimes the future may be too abstract for them: “Who cares about saving for retirement if the planet will implode by the time I'm 65?”



56%

of Gen Z adults (18+) say they are including cryptocurrencies or NFTs as part of their retirement strategy

Source: *Are younger generations redefining retirement?*
— [Capitalize](#)

PERSONAL FINANCE TIKTOK

Entrepreneurs of color are thriving with new platforms, from the investment-focused [Errol Coleman](#) to attorney [Delyanne The Money Coach](#), benefiting in part from an algorithm that avoids traditional forms of soft discrimination.

- [Ozy](#)

SIGNALS



Most Millennial and Gen Z investors say crypto is part of their retirement strategy

Source: [Money](#)



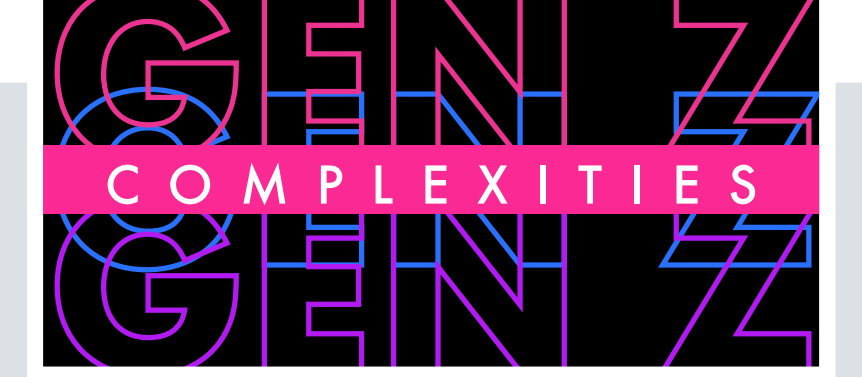
Gen Z's vibe shift is coming for investment banking

Source: [Business Insider](#)



Dating for financial gain: 86% rise in "sugar daddy" dating

Source: [MassLive](#)



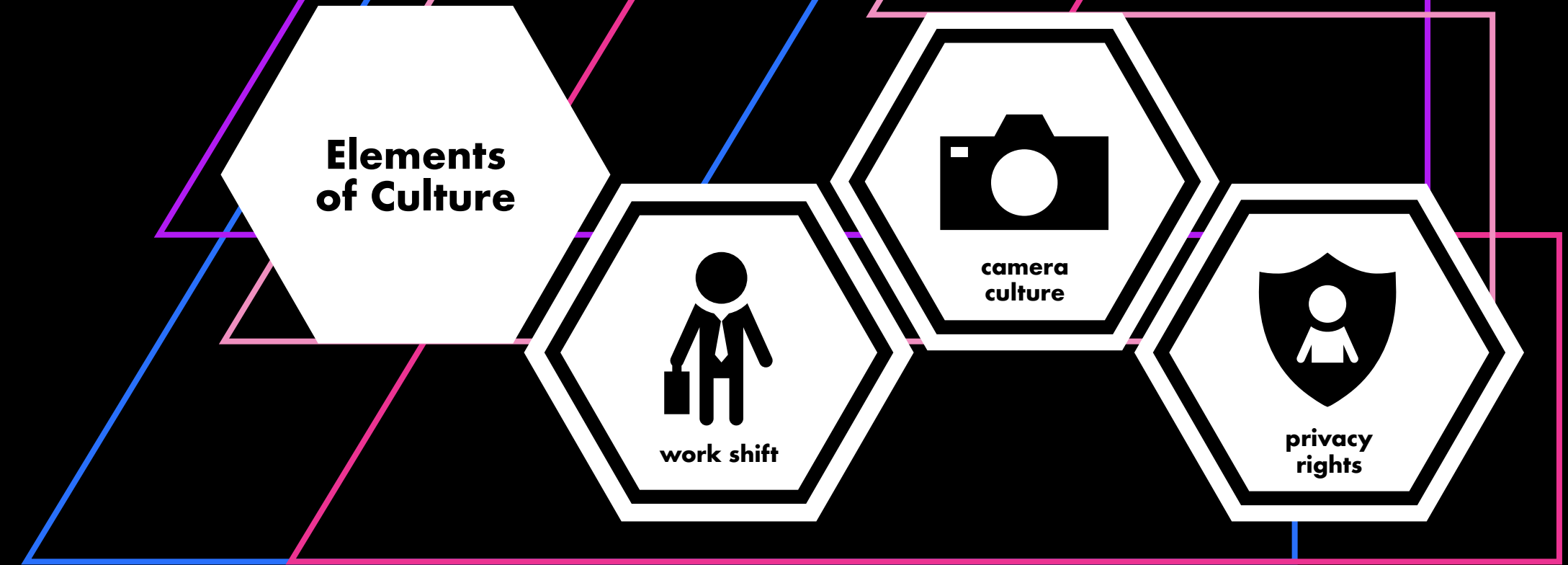
Takeaway

Faced with a widening economic gap and uncertain financial future, Gen Z is not willing to place all their faith in traditional institutions or paths to success. Instead, they are switching up their approach to gaining money and wealth, going so far as to reimagine the role finances play in their short-term or long-term goals.



GEN Z and Home

Home is a private sanctuary,
but also a visible brand

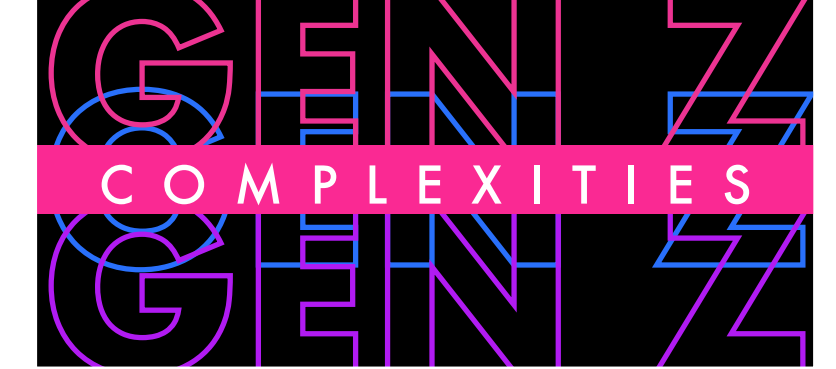




Gen Z designs home as a safe space



Home is also a public, personal brand visible to the world



Gen Z designs home as a safe space

Home is also a public, personal brand visible to the world



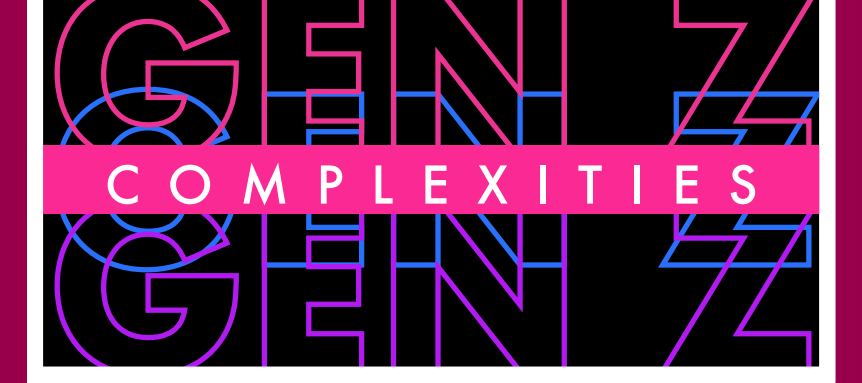
From Zoom-friendly decor to crashing on your sofa, Gen Z is revamping notions of home in different ways. The pandemic accelerated the need to create a safe zone of their own, away from uncertainty, social pressures or viral germs. The need for stability and safety is also fueled by growing feelings of loneliness and isolation, and the looming mental health crisis among Gen Zers, as the [CDC warned of a “steep decline” in teen mental health](#).

As many Gen Zers are drawn to their homes, they are creating spaces they never have to leave. Whether it's to zone out and do nothing at all or run a business from their bedrooms, Gen Z is defying expectations of their age and becoming homebodies, with over half of Gen Z and Millennials saying they will continue to stay at home most of the time, even after the pandemic, according to a Y Pulse Survey. The idea of home has become as fluid as its functionality for Gen Z, but the budding homebodies are creating comfort from their needs for expression and safety, when out in the world, there looms uncertainty and global chaos.

Gen Z's nonlinear approach to living and working, has started to influence how designers and architects are structuring future communities. While many Gen Zers are still young enough to be at home with their parents or caregivers, or in college dorms, Gen Z's flexible approach to working, socializing, and eating, among other activities, is set to change how we all live.

Industrial and home designers are starting to respond to Gen Z's needs, infusing subtle changes that support Gen Z's fluid home and work lives. Consider beds designed to hide your devices, because we know Gen Z sleeps with them anyway — [smartphone use in bed](#) contributes to the loss of circadian rhythm disruption and hence, poor sleep patterns in young people. Or, think about modular spaces designed to be changed according to the mood of the hour, and a growth in community-inspired living as a way of bringing Gen Z out of [increasing isolation](#) to intermingle with their peers and elders.

The cultural shift of Gen Z is a subtle one that evokes sentiment from structure and comfort, a feeling of both a dynamic and yet a safe space away from the uncertainty and stress of the world. And the very word “aesthetic” has come to signify “cool” among Gen Zers, and its counterpart, “cheugy,” denoting anything decidedly uncool. Contrary to the perfection aesthetic and mid-century modern boom associated with Millennials, [Gen Z is drawn to bold and contrasting color](#) palettes. For Gen Zers still living in their bedroom or own place, seeking an environment that reflects their varying needs for comfort, with an aesthetic to match, will inform their tastes will develop as they do.



Gen Z embodies the homebody

52%

Of 13- to 39-year-olds in the U.S. say that even after the pandemic is over, they will be spending most of their time at home.

Source: *After Corona Survey, Y Pulse, 2020*

A safe space is vital for Gen Z's mental health

4 in 10

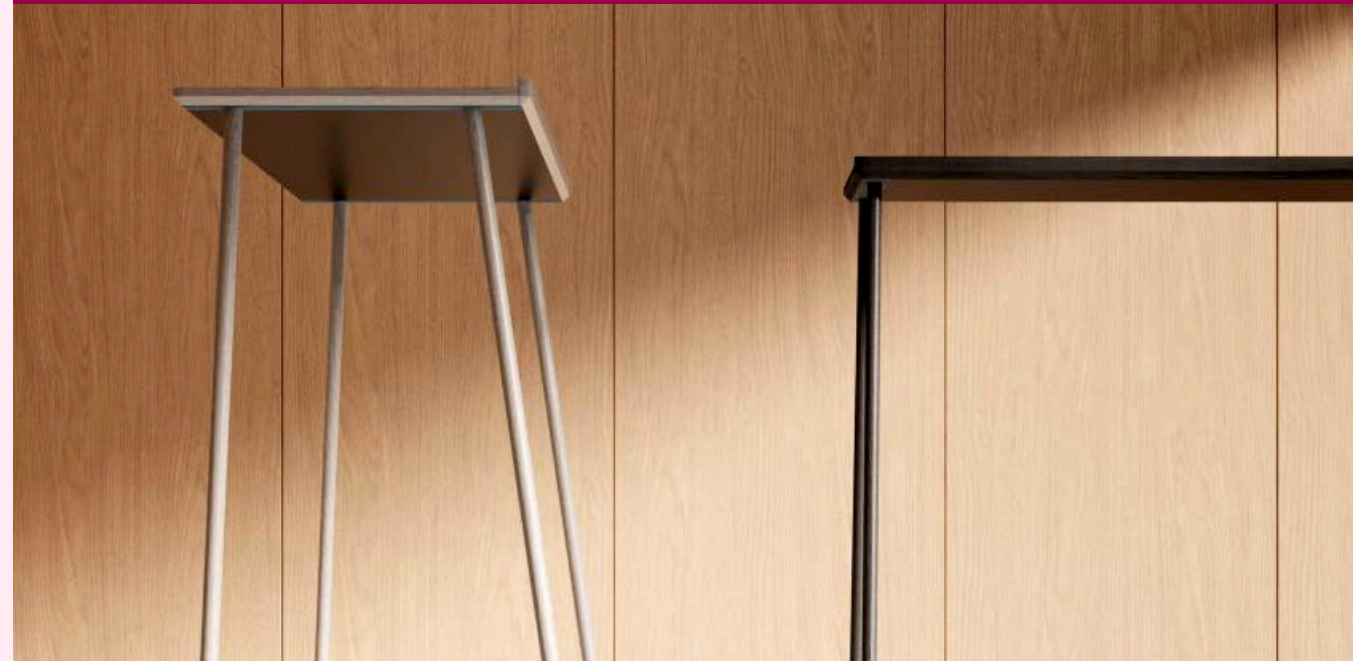
Gen Z report feeling "persistently sad or hopeless"

1 in 5

have contemplated suicide.

Source: *CDC study of 1,700 teens in first six months of 2021, Washington Post*

SIGNALS



Gianfranco Vasselli designed a wooden shelf to sit over the head of a bed like a canopy, with an OLED screen built under the platform.

Source: [Dezeen](#)



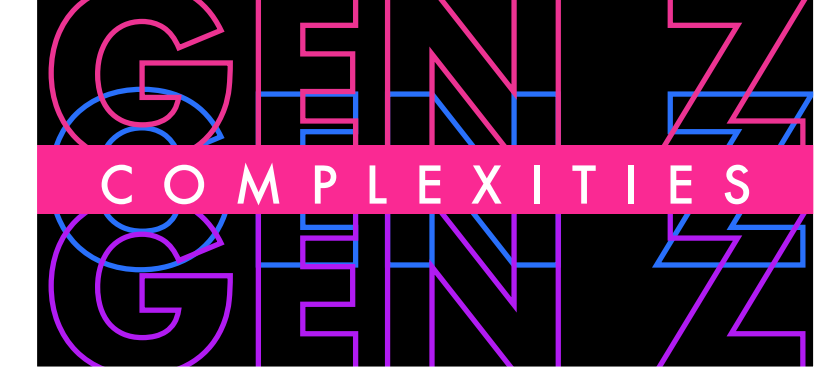
CDC warns of a mental health crisis: Many teens report emotional and physical abuse by parents during lockdown

Source: [The New York Times](#)



Student housing for Gen Z will emphasize digital technology and 'alone together' spaces

Source: [KWK Architects, Building, Design and Construction](#)



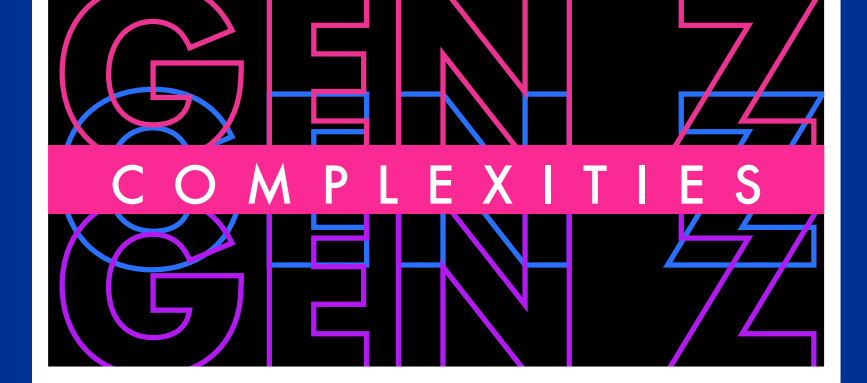
**Gen Z designs home
as a safe space**

**Home is also a public, personal
brand visible to the world**



All the time spent at home is actually beamed into the outside world via technology, creating a tension between the private aspects of Gen Z's spaces and the public-facing ones, including Zoom, TikTok, IG Stories, or the newest social out there, the [Be Real app](#), which gives users just two minutes a day to post two pictures, forcing a quality of realness to all interactions. The significance of camera culture, in which the visuals become the motivator of an activity or expression, is the backdrop to Gen Z's bedrooms or homes.

It has also spawned the [side hustle bedroom](#), a place where interior design, work, living and personal branding co-exist. There, Gen Z's interior lives blend with the visual cues they send out to the world. Their home spaces then have to not only serve up a sentiment of comfort and safety, but also the public-facing visage of who they are in connection with their friends, feeds, social lives, and most authentically, themselves.



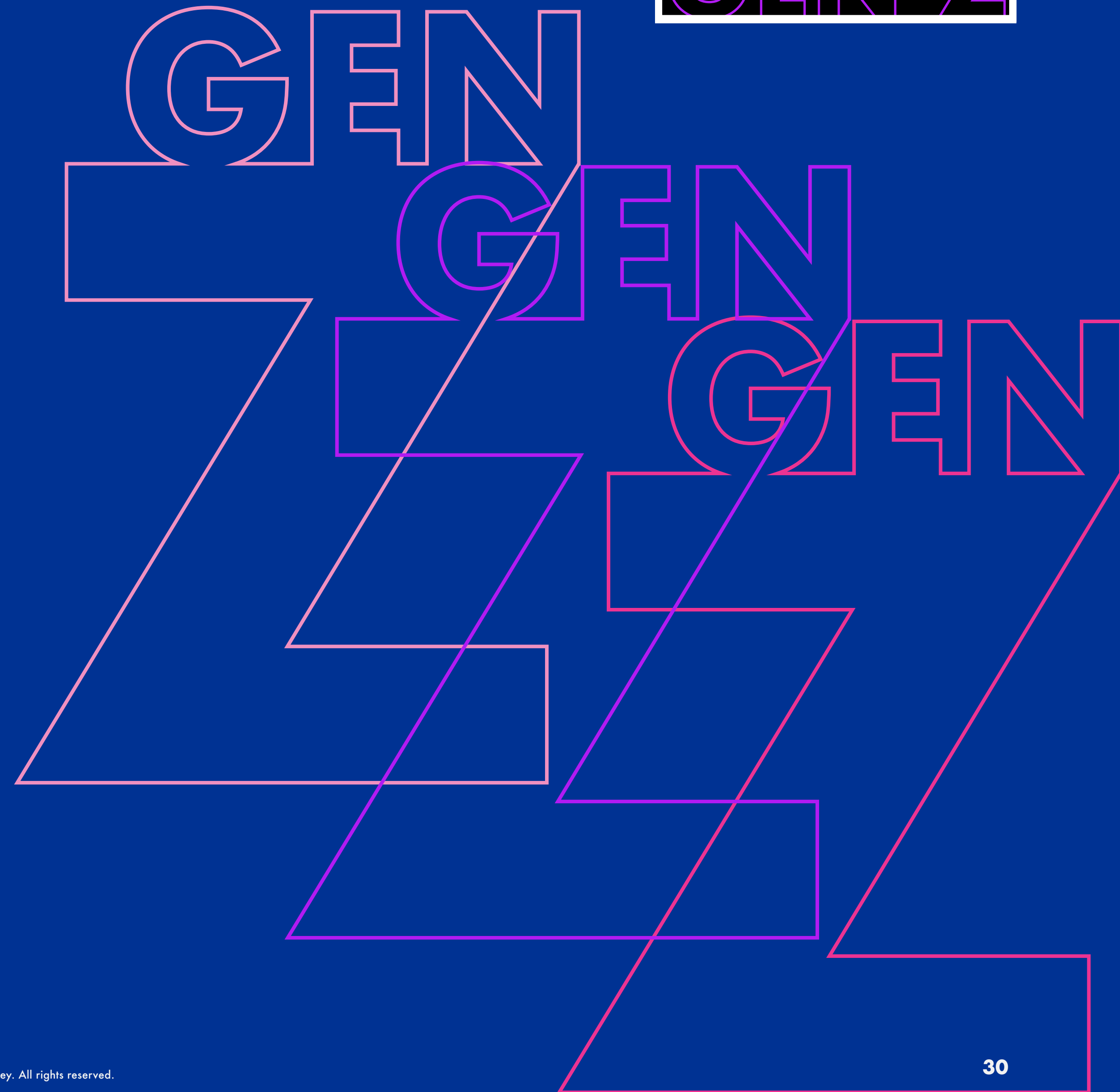
“

AESTHETIC?

The term “aesthetic” is Gen Z semantics for a “stylized life,” the overly perfect and airbrushed scenes on social platforms that they eschew for a more relaxed and real portrayal that is Gen Z.

— Romper

”



SIGNALS



The problematic rise of Gen Z
'side-hustle bedrooms'

Source: [Refinery29](#)



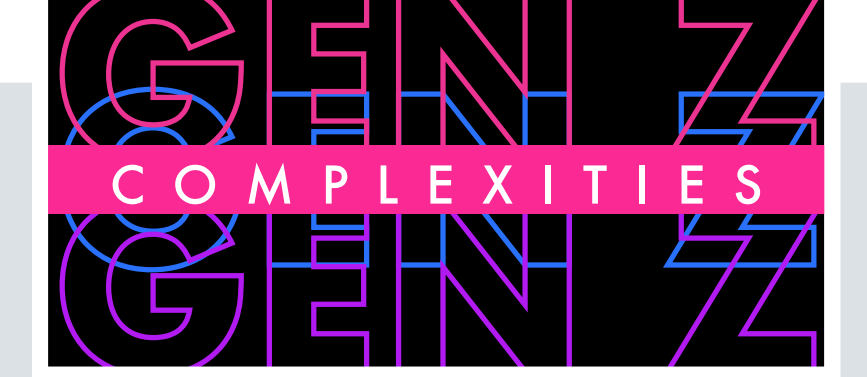
Gen Z, Millennials are flocking to
the new *Be Real* app

Source: [The Street](#)



Thanks to remote work, many in
Gen Z will never work in an
office

Source: [The Wall Street Journal](#)



Takeaway

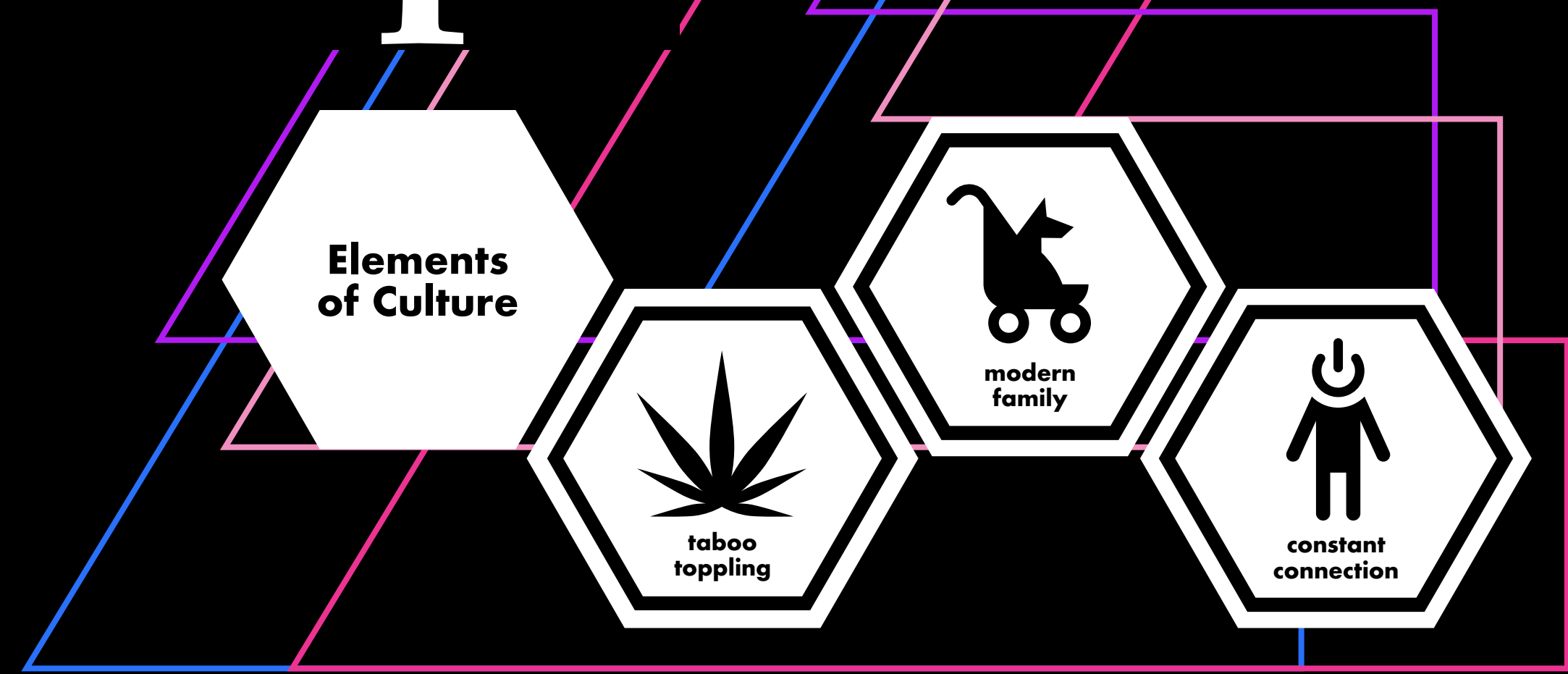
As Gen Z grows up from the bedroom and beyond, their evolving homes create comfort, safety and flexibility, amid the chaos and uncertainty of the world. The home is their very private space, but also somewhat public space. What Gen Z may crave in terms of space is countered by a growing need to take control of their lives, setting up boundaries with work and socializing in a firm way that stands in contrast to the mutable spaces they have created as a home.



GEN Z

and Relationships

Resisting relationships, but seeking new kinds of fulfillment and connection

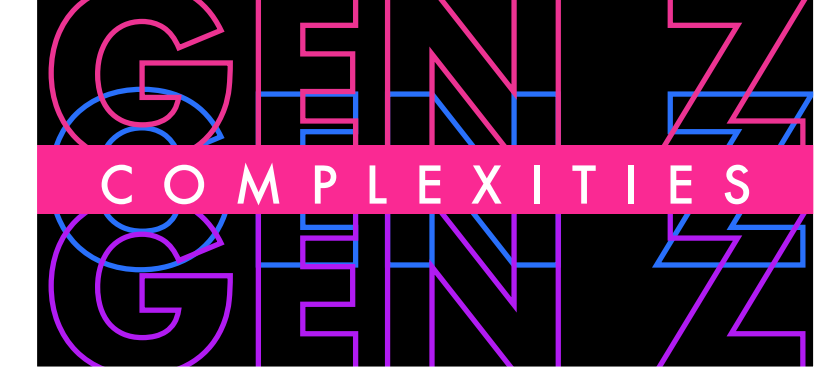




**“Pureteens” and
the return of slow
dating**



**I’ll do me
before
I’ll do we**



“Pureteens” and the return of slow dating

I’ll do me before I’ll do we

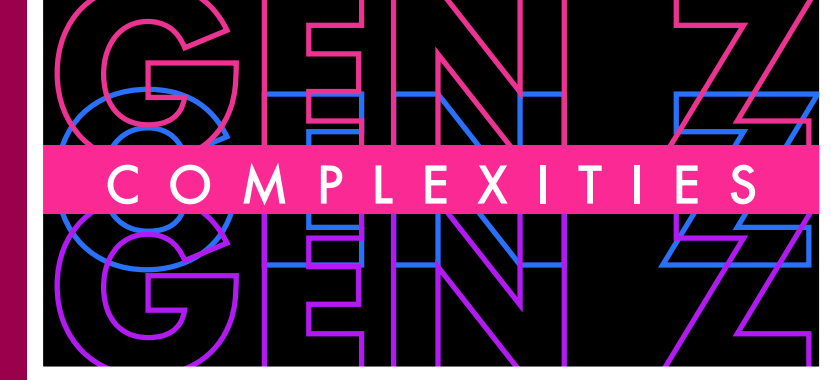


Gen Z has acquired the label pureteens for their lack of teenage-level sexual behaviors that were prevalent in earlier generations. While Gen Z is often called sex-negative, the perspective echoes out-dated ways of considering intimacy and relationships, when Gen Z is reframing how they want to engage in sex with more consent and mutual pleasure and less misogyny. That might include critiquing the role of porn, as seen in TikTok’s #canceporn movement or eschewing casual sex altogether.

Gen Z is having less sex by the end of high school and opting for sober activities over alcohol-fueled revelry, and even dating in the wild — perhaps on an IRL breakfast date (81 percent of Gen Z are breakfast-eaters). Their approach to connection and relationships follows patterns in their work and lives, turning what was once the norm for their age on its head. They have freedom to explore in ways that weren’t available to others before them.

And those who are exploring are doing it differently: while Tinder data suggests that over half of their users are Gen Z, they are trading in swipe-culture for a return to slow dating, where in-depth conversations and real-world interactions are elevated.

We’ve seen that Gen Z has had to grow up earlier, taking up jobs and otherwise dealing with real life issues at a young age, a shift that is marked around the world, from the U.S. to China. Life has become serious business, and young Gen Zers in couples are considering their togetherness in the same vein, as evidence suggests many young couples are seeking therapy. It shows a generational shift of self-awareness that moves things like relationship therapy away from a crisis scenario, into something that is maintained on a regular basis, much like the daily watering of a plant.



Gen Z: biggest decline in sexual behavior in 30 years

38%

of high schoolers have had sex



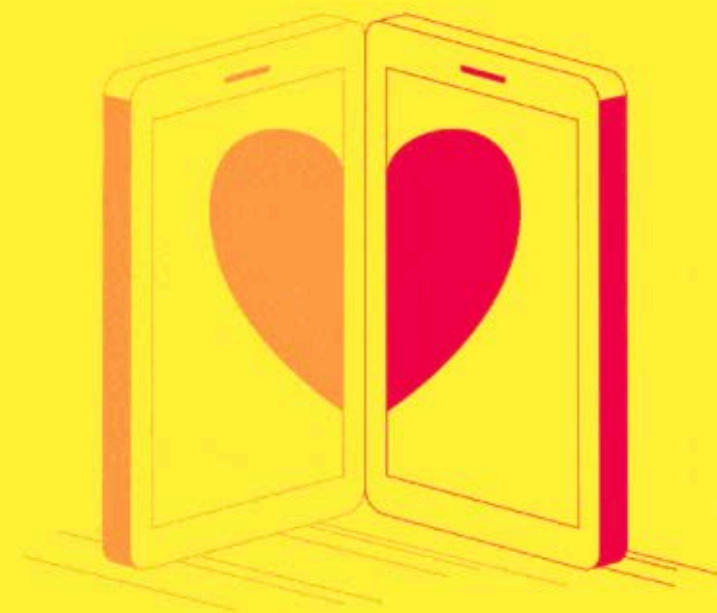
30 years ago,

50%

of high schoolers had had sex now

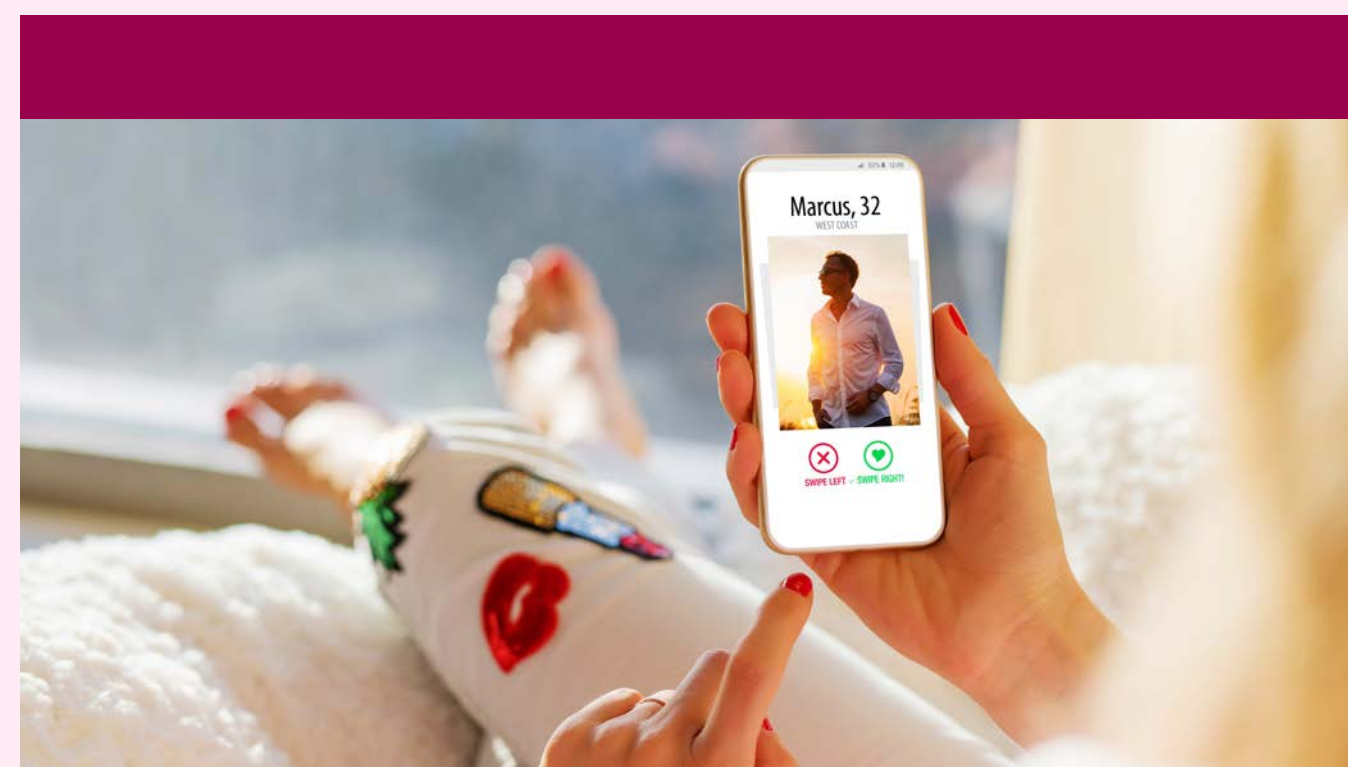
Source: *Why sex is no longer a teen commodity*, [Ozy](#)

SIGNALS



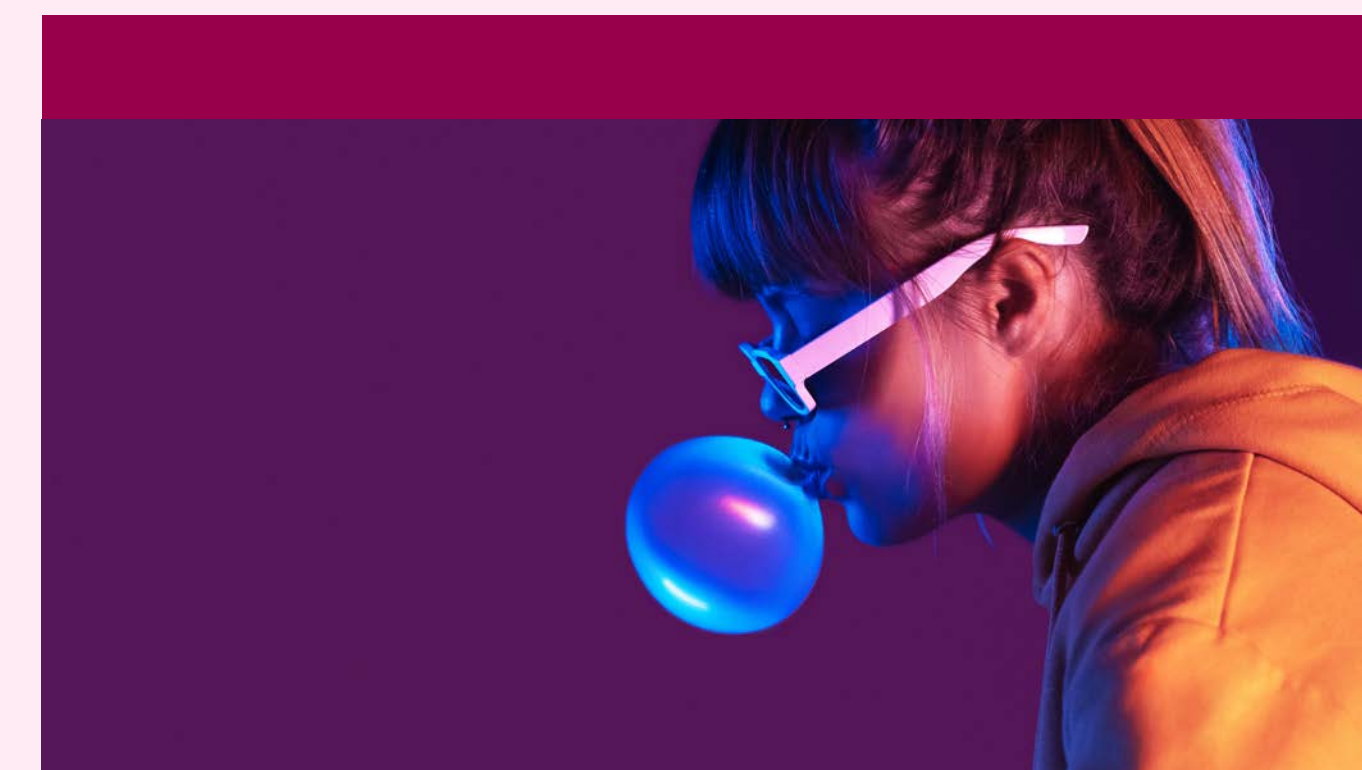
Ghosting on this Gen Z dating app will literally make you invisible

Source: [Fast Company](#)



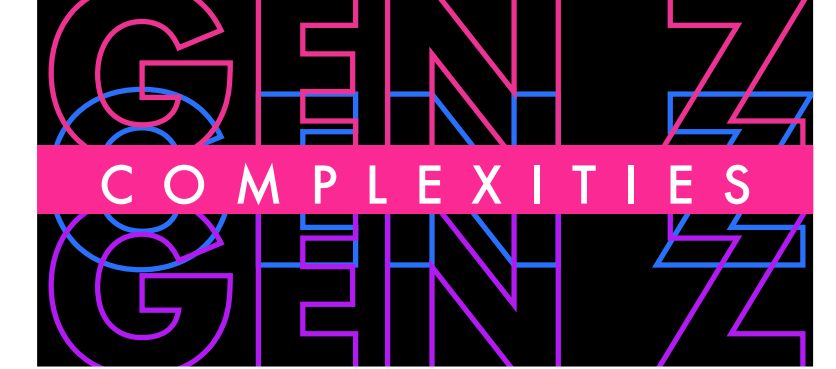
Gen Z is ready to break up with Tinder – and these new dating apps are here for the rebound

Source: [LA Times](#)



How the pandemic has changed sex for Gen Z

Source: [The Irish Times](#)



“Pureteens” and the return of slow dating

I’ll do me before I’ll do we

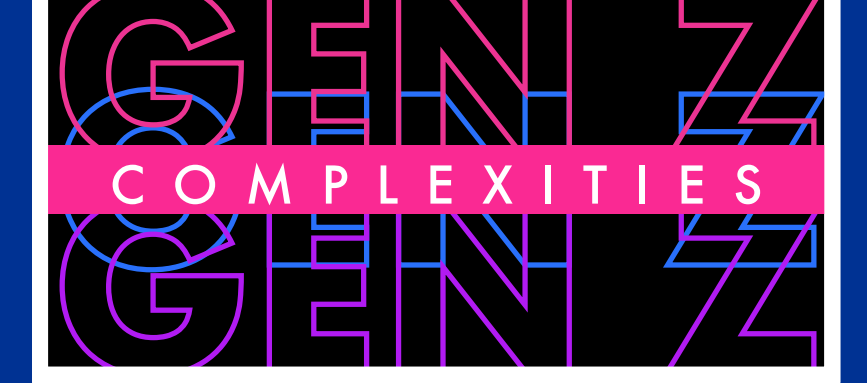


It’s not that Gen Zers don’t want relationships — they do. They’re lonely, and they’re human. But, feeling fulfilled on their own terms takes precedence, in addition to Gen Z being very specific about what they may be seeking in the first place. Gen Z doesn’t shy away from putting off their relationship aspirations until they feel more solid in their own skin. The experimentation of young Gen Zers and fluidity of expression are core traits that will define not just who they are today, but at 25, 35, 45 and beyond, ultimately shaping what it looks like to be part of a family structure.

Gen Z is taking to social media to share or demystify real and authentic portrayals of their relationships, whether it’s [Gen Z moms](#) shedding light on the realities of family life or [Bella Thorne popularizing throuples](#). The

satisfaction and connection typically assigned to relationships can come from anything, including romantic (or non-romantic) relationships, but also includes the celebration of friendships, non-binary relationships, or an online swipe turned into a hang. Being part of a meaningful relationship is defined by an immediate need for connection, community, and finding ways out of a growing feeling of isolation in a chaotic world.

Gen Z is eschewing old patterns of expected behavior, and they may be the generation to finally debunk a world designed for couples and the nuclear family, forming found-family connections, and relationships on their own, with friends, romantic or not.



Marriage, not into it

Marriage registration hit a

17-year-low

during the pandemic in China.

Source: State media says Gen Z ready for marriage.
They say, not really. — [Sixth Tone](#)

“

How do I become a stay-at-home?
Not a mom. **Just a stay-at-home.**
No work or anything.

- [@circleofidiots](#)

”

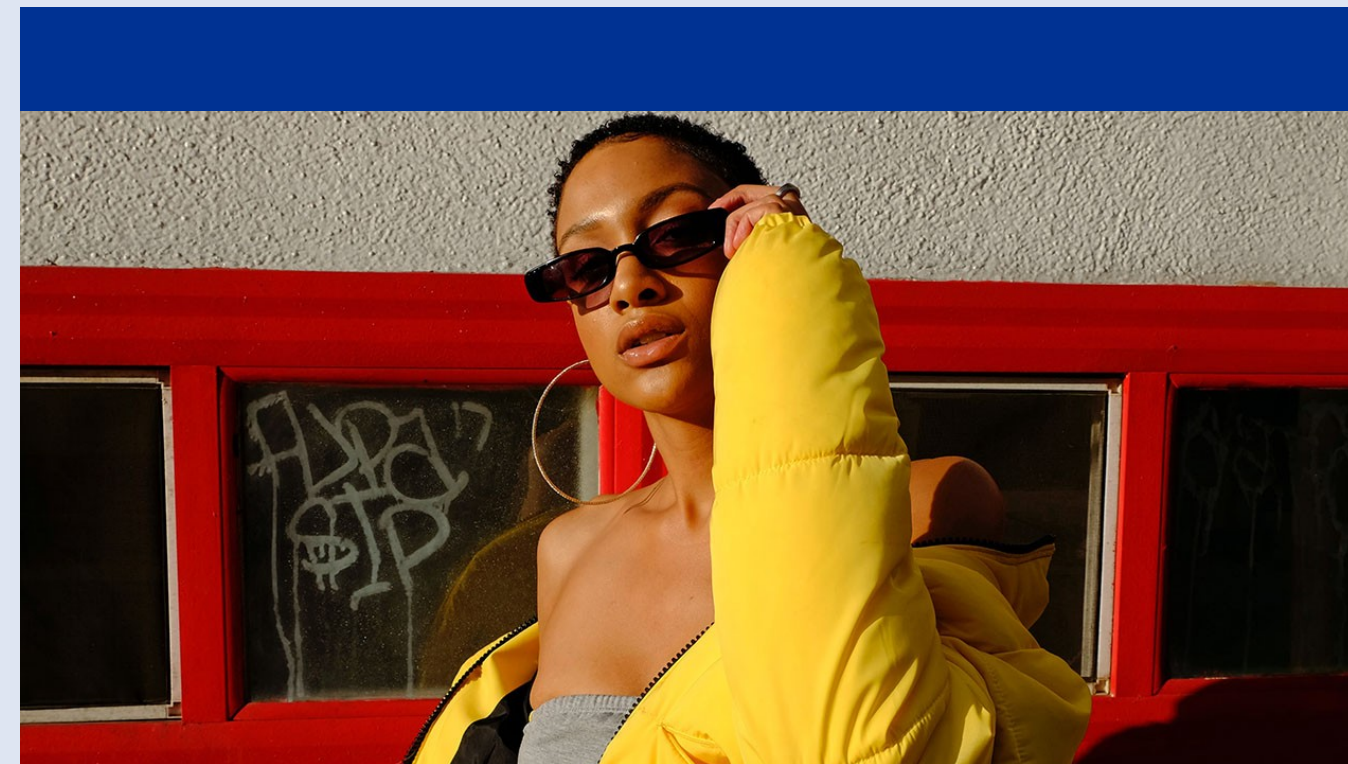


SIGNALS



The young moms of TikTok work hard to keep it light

Source: [*Romper*](#)



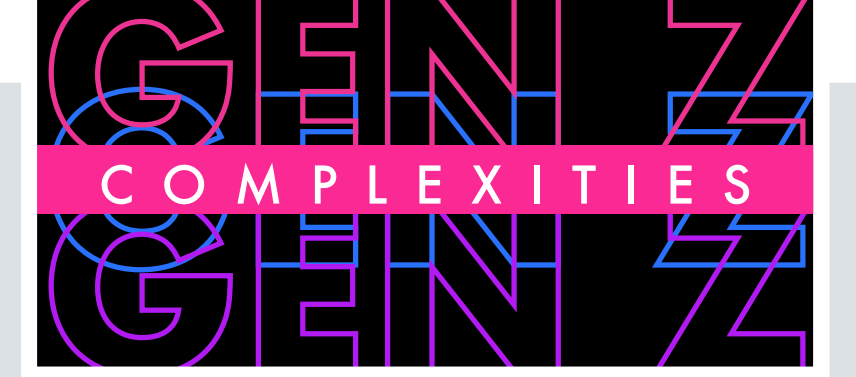
Has Gen Z canceled marriage due to Covid?

Source: [*Hypebae*](#)



What does Gen Z have against motherhood?

Source: [*The Spectator*](#)



Takeaway

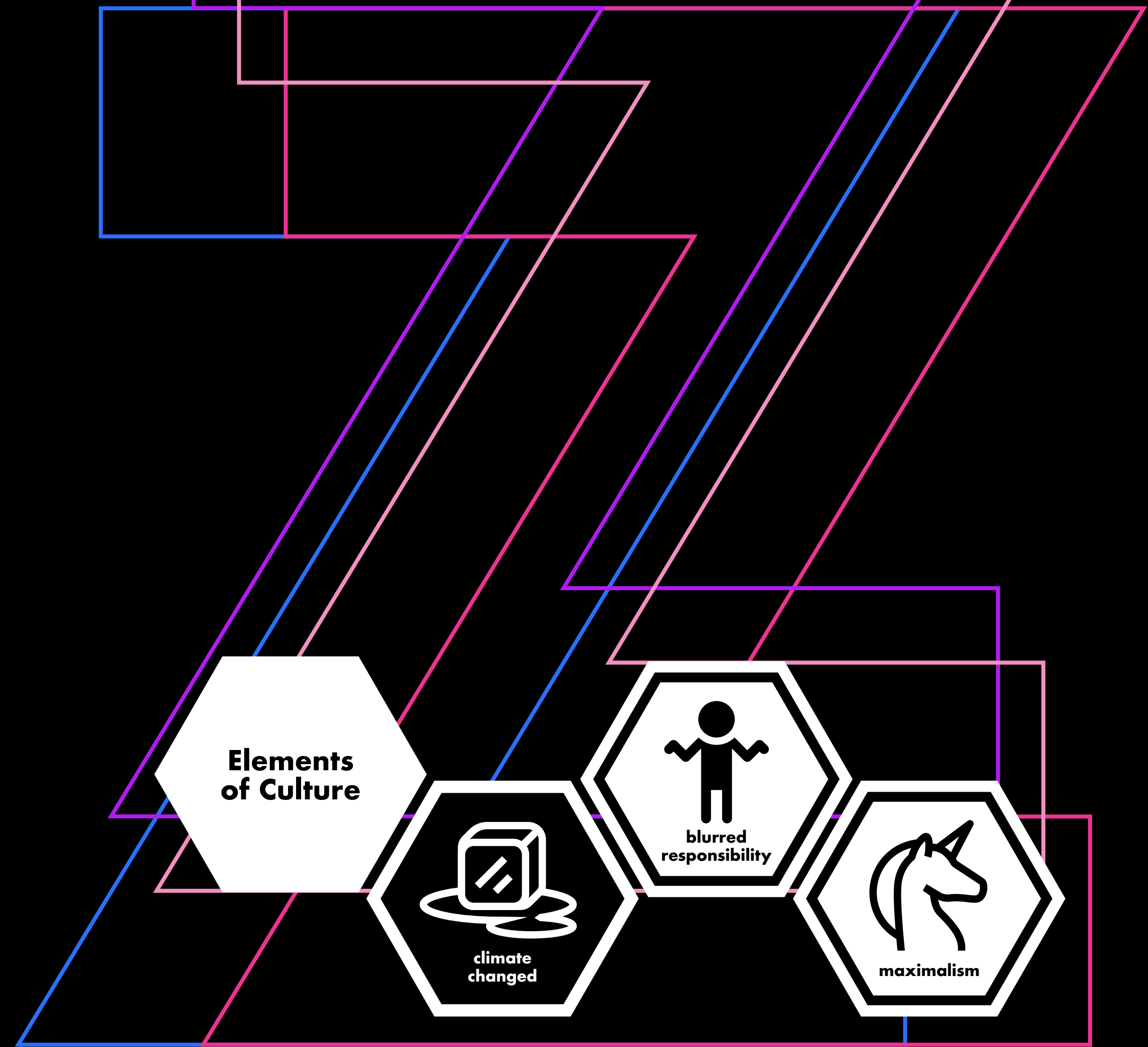
When it comes to emotional and physical connections, Gen Z is highly aware of their own needs, which they express with great specificity — and they are willing to wait to have those needs met. Gen Z is comfortable mixing friendships, romantic relationships, or sexual “situationships,” and community connections as the perfect balance to meet their own emotional and physical needs.



GEN Z

and Climate

Anxious to save the planet,
but there's YouTube to watch

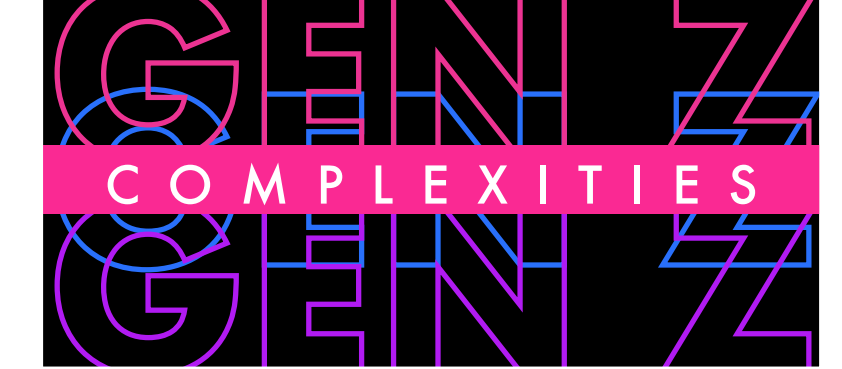




**Doomsday and
Gen Z's urgency
to act**



**Gen Z fuels
environmentally
unfriendly
industries**



Doomsday and Gen Z's urgency to act

Gen Z fuels environmentally unfriendly industries



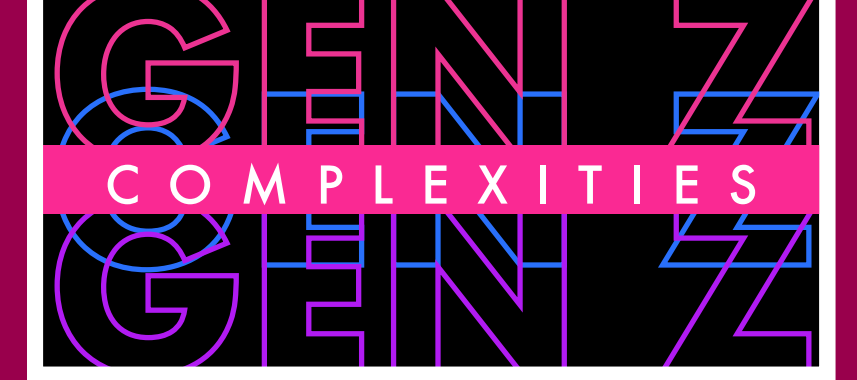
Gen Z is responding to the planet's rapidly changing climate by committing their lives to finding a solution, changing their career trajectories and lifestyles in the process. Young people are incorporating climate-conscious behaviors into their day-to-day lives, including eco-friendly diets — buying “ugly foods” in the store or opting out of meat — and choosing environmentally conscious employers to work for and brands to support. Gen Z's focus on climate and environmental action is a long-haul effort. It's a noted shift from their older peers, who time and again are seen as less concerned over the demise of the planet — but Gen Z will be around much longer.

Gen Z has grown up witnessing the realities of climate change, from flooding to other natural disasters. It's no wonder the threat of climate inaction is a major cause of concern for Gen Z. Globally, three-quarters of young people are alarmed about their future due to climate change. While Gen Z is working hard to take action on the climate, they are also showing clear stress from the responsibility on their shoulders. As they struggle to

save the planet, even amid a laissez-faire attitude from politicians and Boomers, Gen Z will have to show as much concern for their individual health as for climate stress. Gen Z has spearheaded eco-anxiety moving into the mainstream, changing perceptions of mental health from the therapy room into organizations.

Even among conservative-leaning Gen Zers, nearly half say action to reduce the effects of climate change needs to be prioritized, even if that means fewer resources to deal with other important problems, according to Pew Research.

The need to address the resounding climate alarm is affecting Gen Z career choices. College campuses across the country are now finding new ways to help students integrate climate studies across various disciplines, and in M.B.A. courses, classes about climate finance, impact investing and social entrepreneurship are among the most popular.



GEN

Global alarm of Gen Z

75%

of 16- to 25-year-olds in 10 countries say they “believe the future is frightening.”

Source: *Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey* — [The Lancet](#)

“

Eco-anxiety refers to a fear of environmental damage or ecological disaster

”

- [Medical News Today](#)

Growing demand for new environmental, social and governance jobs

up 68%

since 2014, global sustainable investment topped \$30 trillion in 2019, according to McKinsey, creating more jobs in the field.

Source: [The New York Times](#)

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SIGNALS



'Ok Doomer,' and the climate advocates who say it's not too late

Source: *The New York Times*



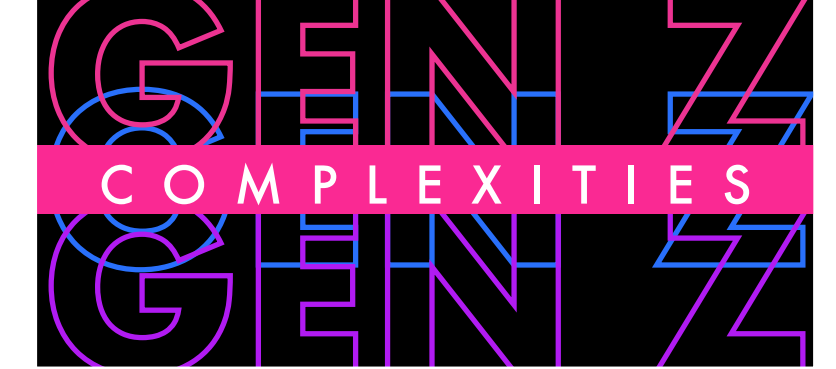
Climate change enters the therapy room

Source: *The New York Times*



Gen Z workers willing to reject jobs based on climate change values

Source: *Financial Review (Australia)*



Doomsday and Gen Z's urgency to act

Gen Z fuels environmentally unfriendly industries



Sure, Gen Z is eco-conscious and they are among the most vocal activists when it comes to taking firm climate action. The crux of the matter, however, is that many lifestyle and consumption habits of Gen Z feed into industries that are actively detrimental to the environment, such as their love of fast fashion to supporting beauty business icons like Kylie Jenner. From their lifestyle choices to financial ones, young people are driving cryptocurrencies or NFTs, but their environmental effects are just starting to be discussed. And Gen Z's nonstop connectivity and streaming habits online contribute to a skyrocketing digital carbon footprint. Gen Z's streaming, chatting, TikToking, and Twitching add up. Data storage on the Cloud has a greater carbon footprint than the airline industry, revealed an MIT Schwarzman College of Computing study.

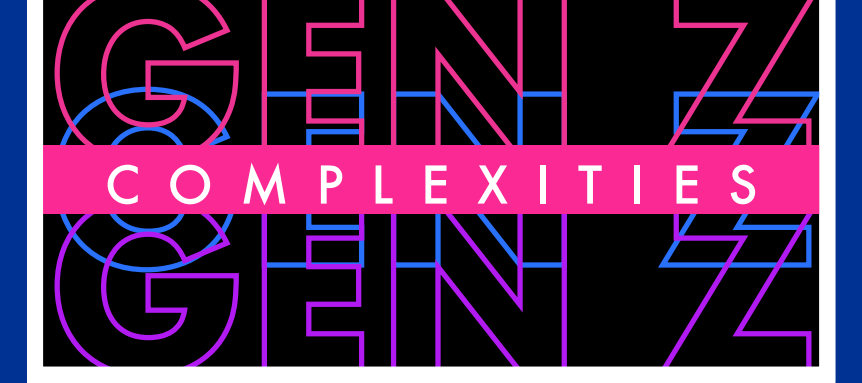
When it comes to saving the planet, Gen Z is loudly aspirational, but the realities of how they live and consume tells another story.

It's what they wear, too. Although "reloved or reused" clothing has a firm hold on Gen Z style, particularly in the U.S. and Nordic countries, Gen Z still maintains a taste for environmentally unfriendly fast fashion. Chinese retailer

Shein, a fast fashion brand, became one of the most downloaded fashion apps in the U.S., surpassing Amazon last year. The brand's clothing items are priced around \$30 or less, to the delight of cash-strapped Gen Zers, who have helped make Shein one of the most talked-about brands on TikTok and YouTube around the world.

Gen Z's viewing habits are adding up to environmentally unfriendly digital footprints. Data from the U.S. Media Consumption Report 2021 reveals that 33 percent of Gen Z scroll social media for more than four hours a day, while 44 percent say they stream video content for more than three hours a day, with another 15 percent of Gen Z admitting to Netflixing for more than five hours a day.

Eco-conscious consumption does play into Gen Z's shopping decisions, and also what they expect of others, from brands to employers. While research suggests that over half of Gen Z (54%) are willing to pay more for sustainable products, their habits may well cancel out their environmentally conscious efforts in the end.



Gen Z's digital carbon footprint adds up

Video streaming causes

75%

of global data traffic

Source: myclimate.org

Nearly

50%

Of Gen Z buy "most of their clothes" from fast fashion brands

Source: [Vogue Business Survey, 2020](#)

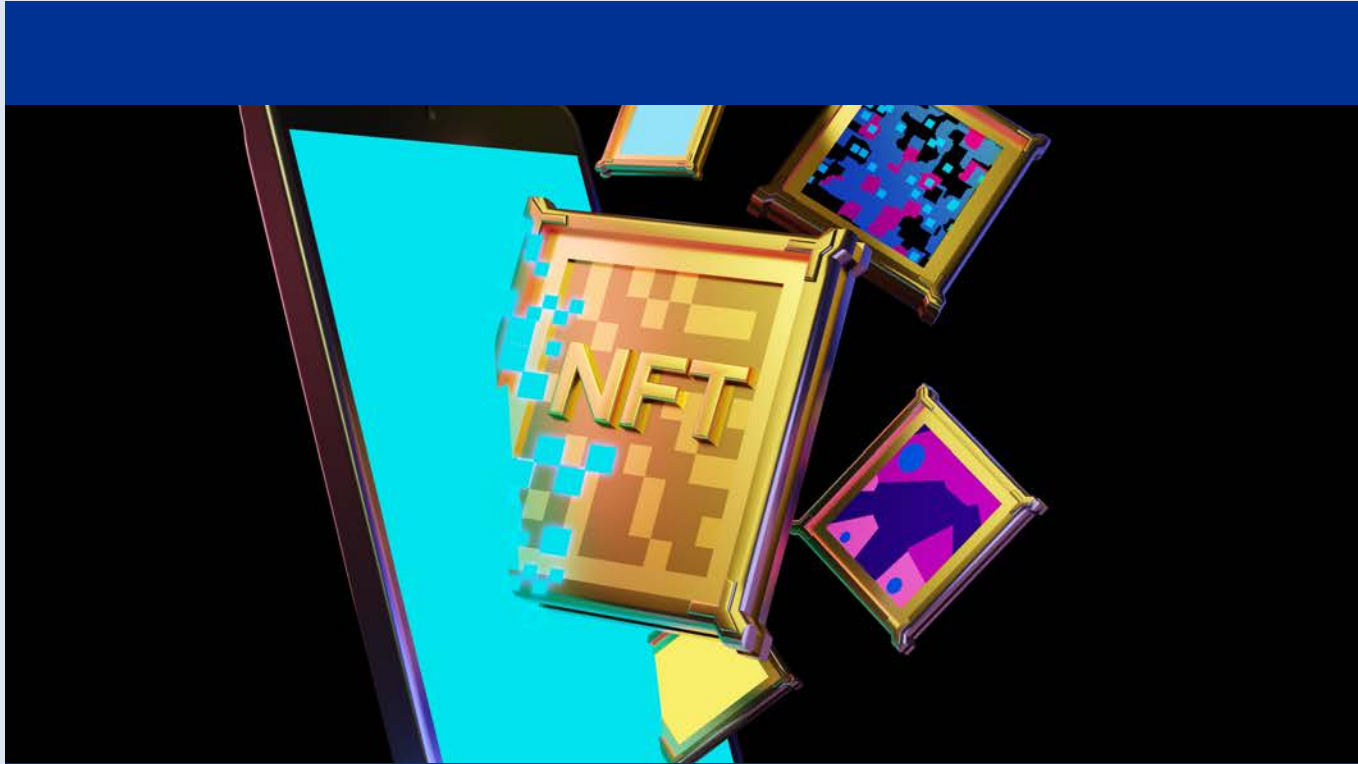


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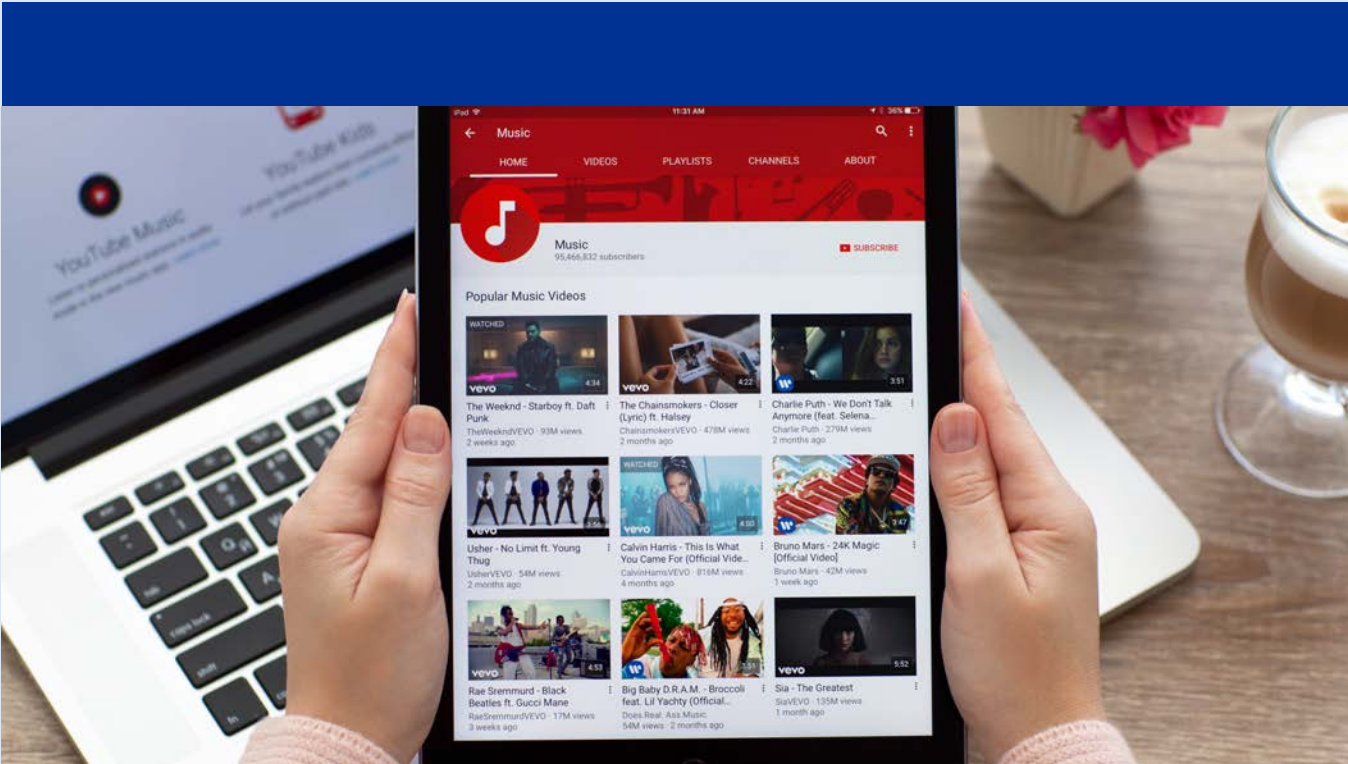
Out of style: will Gen Z ever give up its dangerous love of fast fashion?

Source: *The Guardian*



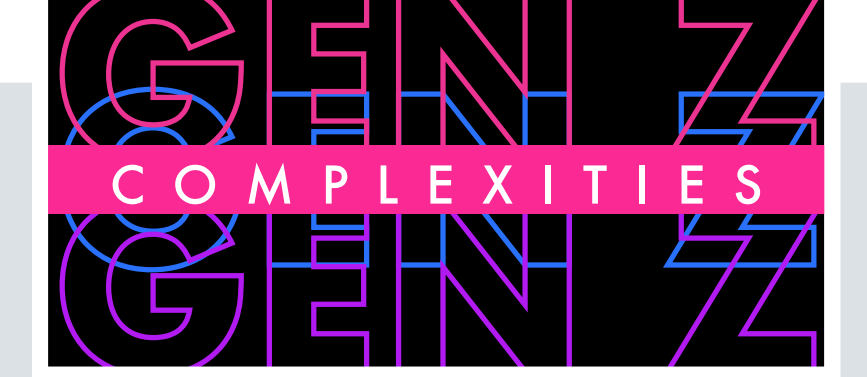
Environmental concerns have cast doubt on NFTs – but that’s changing

Source: *TIME*



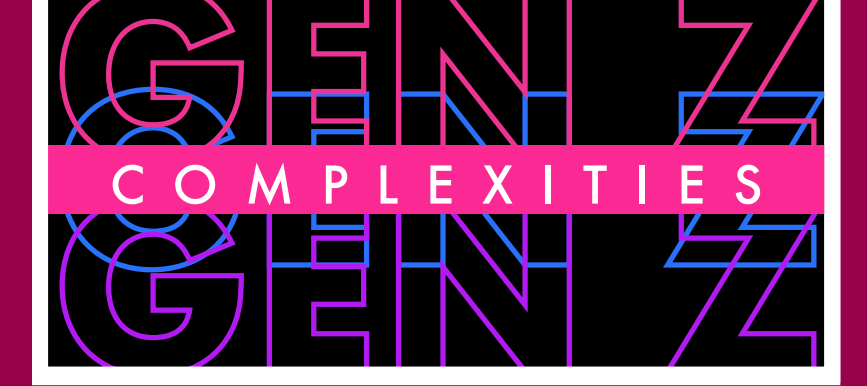
YouTube alleged to be world’s ‘highest emitting website’

Source: *Energy News*



Takeaway

Gen Z is driven by environmentally conscious values and action, but their lifestyle habits and pocket books don't always support their overt aspirations to save the planet. Gen Z is aware of this complexity. Brands that can create environmental action at a low price point will create lifelong customers in Gen Z.



REPORT

Anna Sofia Martin
Editorial Director & Author

Hannah Hickman
VP, Client Strategy & Head of Youth Culture Practice

Moiketsi Thipe
Junior Cultural Strategist

Kyle Snarr
Director of Marketing

CREATIVE

Eric Kwan Tai Lau
Director of Visual Intelligence

Mohammed Nadeemuddin
Sr. Art Director

Julian Acevedo
Visual Designer

LEADERSHIP

Terry Young
CEO & Founder

Camilo La Cruz
Chief Strategy Officer

Kristin Molinari Cohen
Chief Marketing Officer

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