



the gen z workplace blueprint

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executive summary.

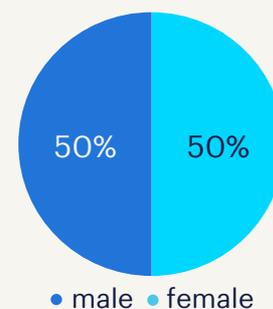
Gen Z in India are redefining the world of work by combining ambition with pragmatism. They are financially driven yet purpose-seeking, enthusiastic about technology yet anxious about career stability. Their approach blends side hustles, short tenures, and AI-enabled learning, creating both opportunity and volatility for employers.

India's Gen Z (born 1997-2007) cohort, comprising over 350 million individuals and representing about 27% of the country's population, is rapidly reshaping the workforce landscape.¹ As digital natives who have grown up amid economic liberalization, technological boom, and the gig economy's rise, Indian Gen Z prioritizes flexibility, skill-building, and financial security over traditional loyalty. This report draws on a survey of 750 Indian respondents, to highlight key trends in work preferences, career mindsets, retention drivers, and attitudes toward AI and learning.

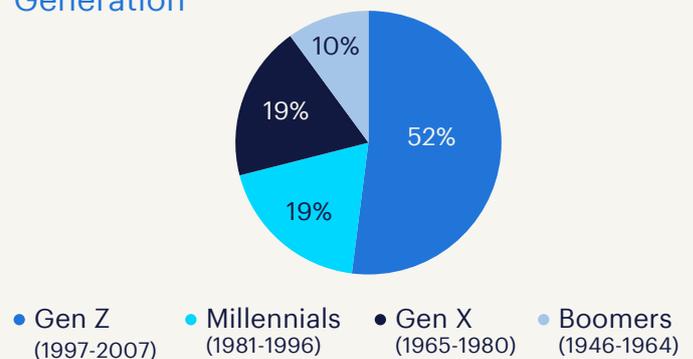
Key insights reveal a generation blending ambition with pragmatism. Indian Gen Z is redefining their career paths by seeking blended career paths way more compared to their global counterparts, seeking a balance between stability and entrepreneurial freedom. Pay stands out as the primary driver in choosing jobs, closely followed by the need for flexibility in where and when they work. This reflects a forward-thinking mindset, where long-term goals guide decisions, yet commitment to any single role remains fluid, with many eyeing short stints to explore better opportunities.

For retention, the focus shifts to fair compensation and continuous upskilling, set against a backdrop of enthusiasm for AI's potential, though not without worries about its impact on job security. To tap into this demographic's drive, employers are called to evolve embracing hybrid work setups, robust AI training, and transparent paths for growth. This adaptation is key amid India's robust economic expansion projected for 2025, fueled by the innovative spirit of its youth.²

Gender



Generation



¹ <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2024/india-the-2-trillion-opportunity-how-gen-z-is-shaping-the-new-india>

² <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-asia/indias-future-arenas-engines-of-growth-and-dynamism>

the indian gen z workforce in context.

Raised in a digital-first, startup-driven India, Gen Z aren't waiting for careers to happen – they are building them on their own terms.

India is already home to one of the world's largest Gen Z populations, and as they step into the labor market, they are carving out a defining role in the country's workforce. With 2025 underway, this group now forms a vital part of India's working population, likely hovering around the mid-to-high twenties percent, urging employers to adapt how they attract, grow, and retain this energetic cohort.

Their entry aligns with a time of sweeping change. Digital tools and artificial intelligence are redefining entry-level jobs, while India's thriving startup and gig scene opens new avenues for young people to earn, learn, and explore beyond the usual nine-to-five. Indian Gen Z are leading this charge, with many weaving together formal work and side ventures rather than locking into a single traditional career.

This restlessness among India's Gen Z isn't just a sign of disloyalty, it's a calculated move. Our survey reveals that 38% expect to stay with their current employer for less than a year, often chasing quicker career leaps or better pay rather than drifting aimlessly. It's a clear call for workplaces to deliver on growth and fair compensation.

What makes Indian Gen Z stand out is their natural comfort with technology. Compared to many global peers, they're notably at ease with AI, using tools like generative AI daily for schoolwork, creative projects, and job challenges. Surveys from 2024-25 across the nation and industries reveal this 18-28-year-old group is not only tech-savvy but also keen for training that fits their roles, presenting both a challenge and a golden opportunity for companies willing to invest.





work preferences
beyond
traditional roles.



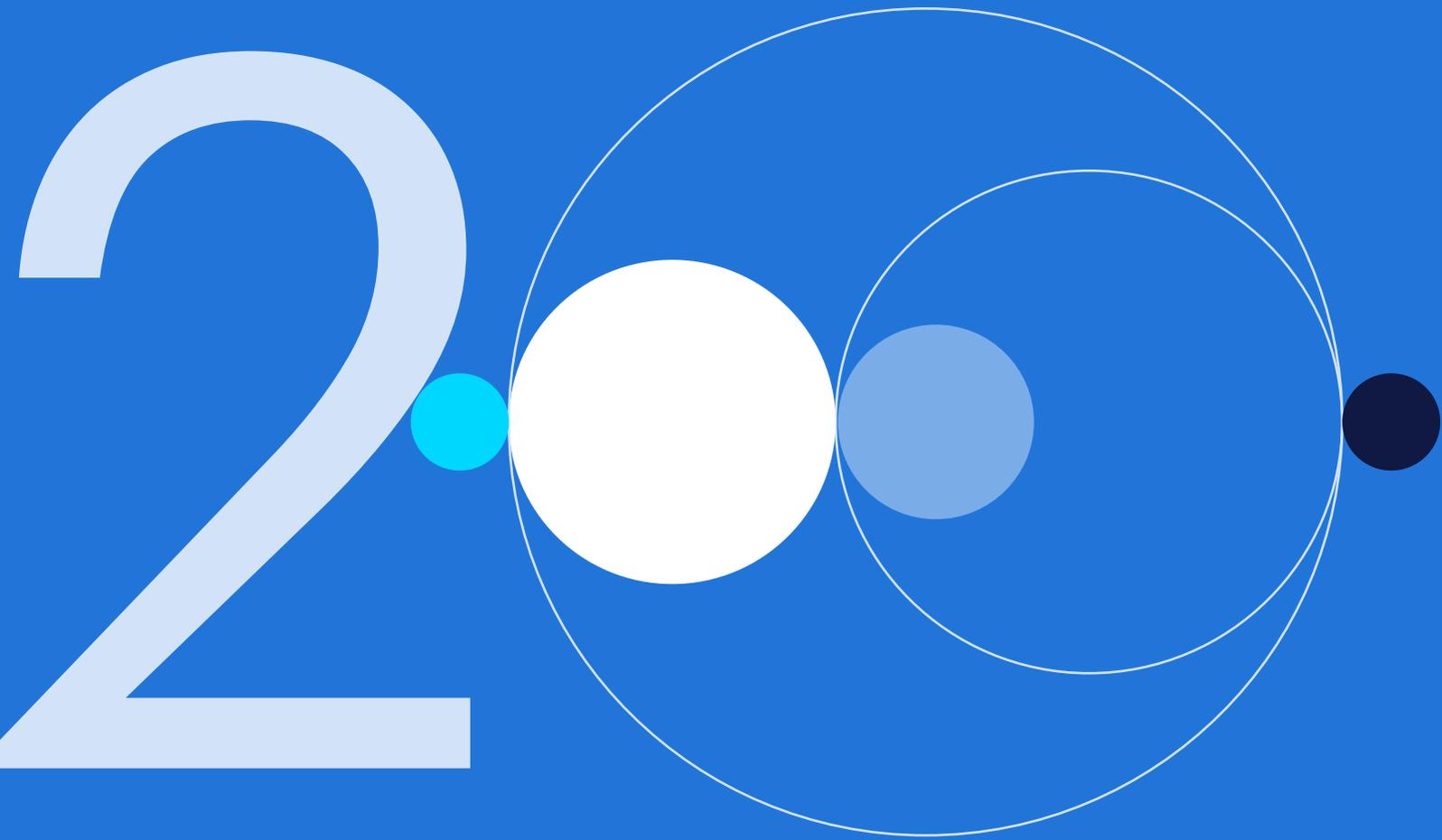
Indian Gen Z is breathing fresh life into the world of work, blending the security of steady jobs with the freedom of entrepreneurial ventures. They lean toward hybrid setups over the old-school 9-to-5 grind. While full-time roles still dominate, claimed by 53% of all respondents, only 16% of Gen Z see this as their dream setup, well short of the global 30%.

Instead, a striking 43% of Indian Gen Z are drawn to pairing a full-time job with side hustles, outpacing the global 31%, signaling a pivot to diversified income streams amid gig economy growth, driven in part by the sheer scale of India's youth bulge, where close to 12 million new workers enter the labor

market each year³, far outstripping the formal jobs available. This mismatch pushes many to supplement incomes through freelancing and gigs just to bridge the gap.

This shift marks a break from the past. Gen Z at 94% stands apart from Millennials (with 96% eyeing long-term goals) and Gen X (91%), showing less attachment to a single career track. Subtle gender differences emerge too where men edge toward side hustles (44% vs. 43% for women), while women hold a slight preference for the stability of full-time work (18% vs. 15%).

³ WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025



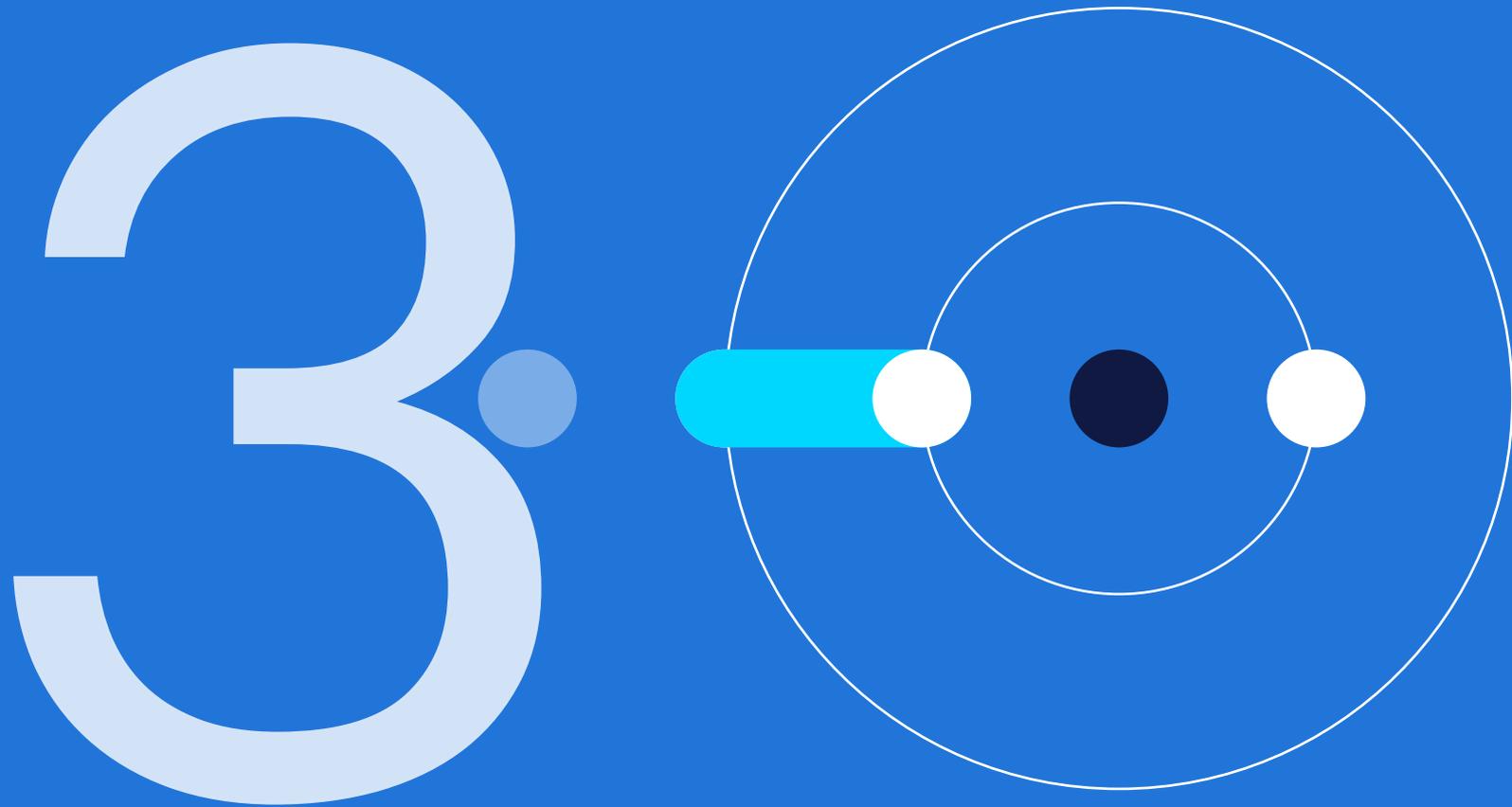
job priorities
pay
with flexibility.



When it comes to picking their ideal job, Indian workers, across the board, put pay at the forefront, with 28% calling it their top choice, a sentiment echoed by 29% of Gen Z, closely mirroring Millennials at 28% and Gen X at 26%. But it's not just about the paycheck. Work-life balance is stepping up, with 23% valuing the freedom to choose where they work and 15% cherishing flexible hours – figures that align with global Gen Z (17% and 19% respectively) and outpace the preferences of older generations.

Perks like extra leave days (just 2%) or time for personal passions (1%) barely

register, underscoring a pragmatic focus. This blend of priorities mirrors India's competitive job scene, where the push of urban migration and rising costs makes pay a must, while the shift to hybrid work post-pandemic has sparked a demand for adaptability to keep talent on board.

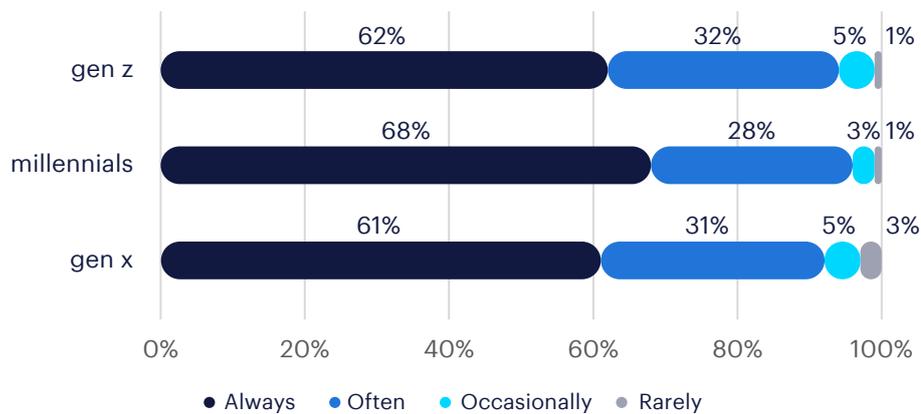


career mindset
eyes on
the horizon.

Indian Gen Z carries a spirited, forward-looking spirit into their career decisions, with an impressive 94% often or always weighing long-term aspirations when considering new paths, a figure that outshines the global 79% and nearly matches Millennials at

96% and Gen X at 91%. This vision steadies them through today's uncertainties, marking them as a key player in India's demographic edge, where their vitality and sheer numbers could power economic strides.

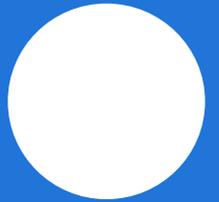
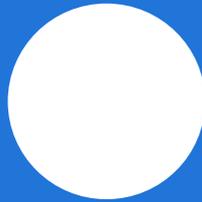
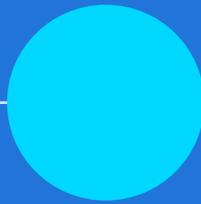
When making decisions regarding job changes, how much do you consider your long-term career goals?



Yet, this ambition comes with a twist: loyalty takes a backseat. Overall, 49% of respondents expect to linger with their current employer for 1-5 years, with a mere 8% eyeing a lifelong commitment, well under the global 17%. For Gen Z, the restlessness peaks, with 38% eyeing a stay of less than 12 months, outpacing Millennials at 23%, Gen X at 14%, and the global 33%, while 26% aim for a 1-2 year stint.

In sectors like Manufacturing (32% leaning toward 3-5 years) and IT (30%), there's a hint of stability, yet this itch to jump ship challenges employers to carve out clear routes for advancement to hold their interest.

4



retention drivers

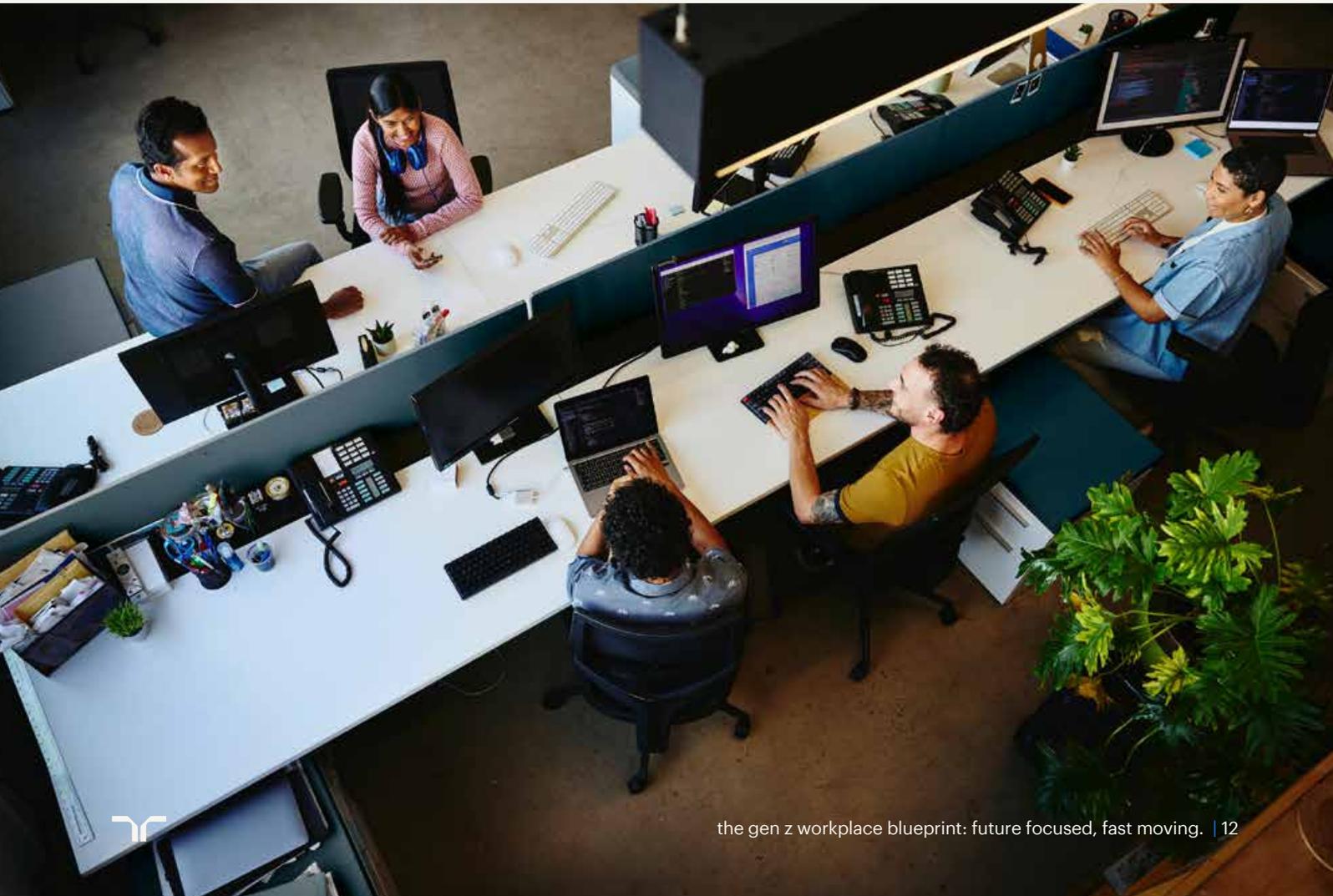
prioritizing value
over perks.

Early exits tell a story: 41% cite low pay for leaving within a year (above the overall 35%), with misaligned values (13%) and stalled growth (12%) close behind. For Gen Z, low pay drives 50% of departures, a clear signal they're weighing worth carefully. Their workplace spirit blends boldness and balance, 81% feel strong in their roles while exploring options, beating the global ~68%, yet only 82% feel valued, trailing Millennials at 93% and Gen X at 89% compared to the global 60%, suggesting a need for deeper connection.

Keeping talent on board starts with better pay, which tops the list at 15% for all Indian respondents, though it lags behind the global 24%. While Gen Z prioritizes pay at 16%, upskilling at 10%, and career progression at 9%,

Millennials lean slightly lower on pay (~14%) with modest interest in upskilling (~8%) and progression (~7%), and Gen X trails further with pay at ~12%, upskilling at ~6%, and progression at ~5%, reflecting a generational shift toward skill-driven growth.

When picking their top three priorities, 37% settle on pay, 25% on flexible hours, and 22% on work-life balance, showing a clear preference for real rewards over perks like extra leave, which only 11% value compared to 22% globally.

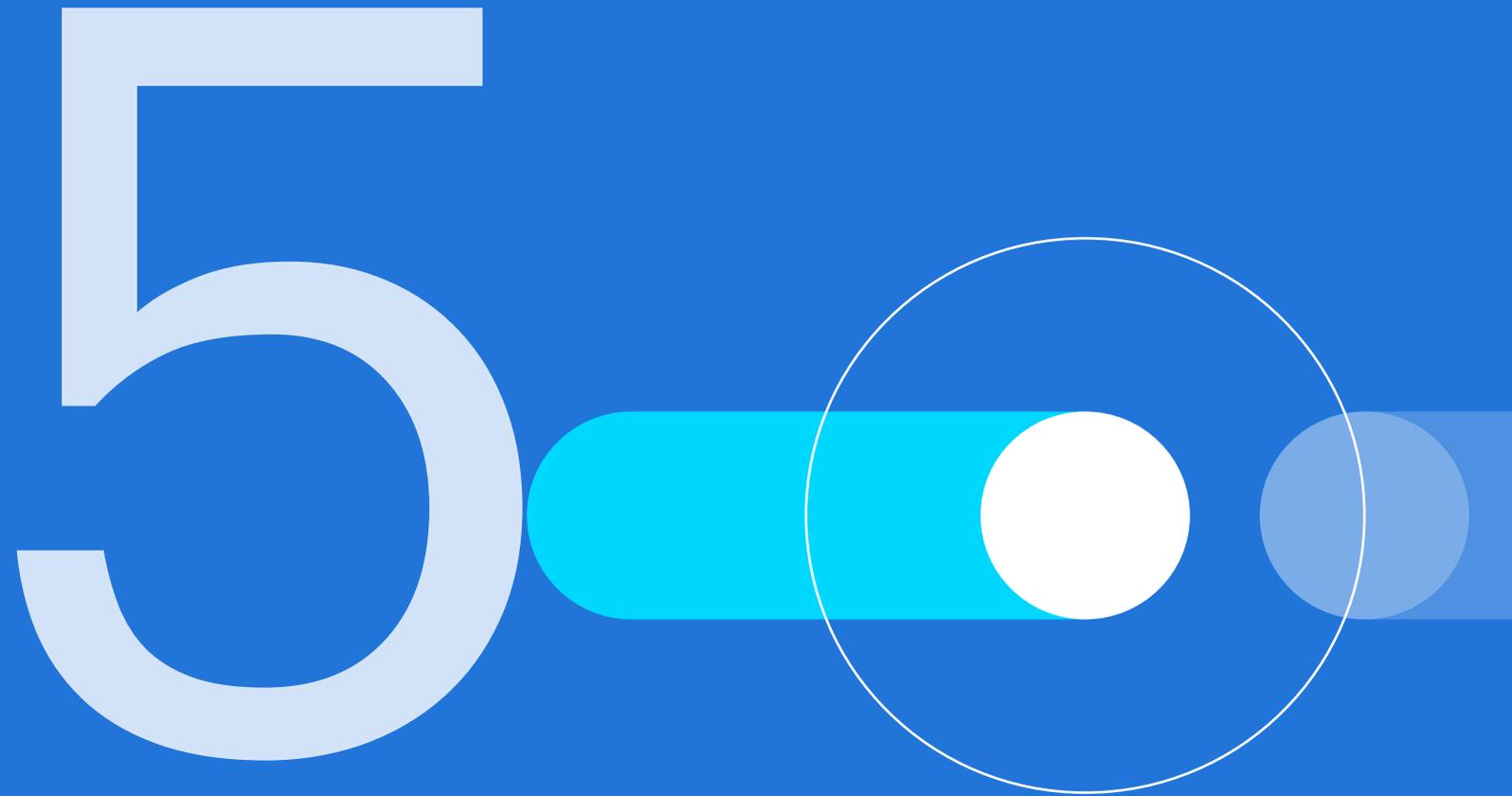


The top three factors that would make Gen Z more likely to stay at their company long-term (over 3-5 years)



In Manufacturing, upskilling (37%), pay (34%), and greater responsibility (32%) lead, reflecting a mindset that trades effort for reward amid economic challenges. Retail leans on pay (38%), flexible hours (33%), and responsibility (29%) for quick adaptability in a fast-paced setting, while Financial Services (BFSI) pushes career

progression (34%), pay (36%), and flexible hours (29%) for structured growth in a competitive arena. Employers must offer fair wages, clear paths, and flexibility to fuel Gen Z's ambitions, highlighting their quest for value in India's tight market.



employee attitudes

motivated,
optimistic.



India's workforce buzzes with energy, with 86% feeling engaged, well above the global 69%, a testament to a country brimming with ambition. Gen Z, though, dips slightly to 81%, trailing Millennials at 92% and Gen X at 91%, perhaps hinting at a generation still finding its footing, possibly due to workplace biases like ageism or fewer

opportunities that match their unique aspirations and priorities. When it comes to dream jobs, 77% of Gen Z see their current role as a match, just below the overall 81% but soaring past the global 58%, hinting at cautious optimism amid early career challenges.

I am fully motivated and engaged in my current role



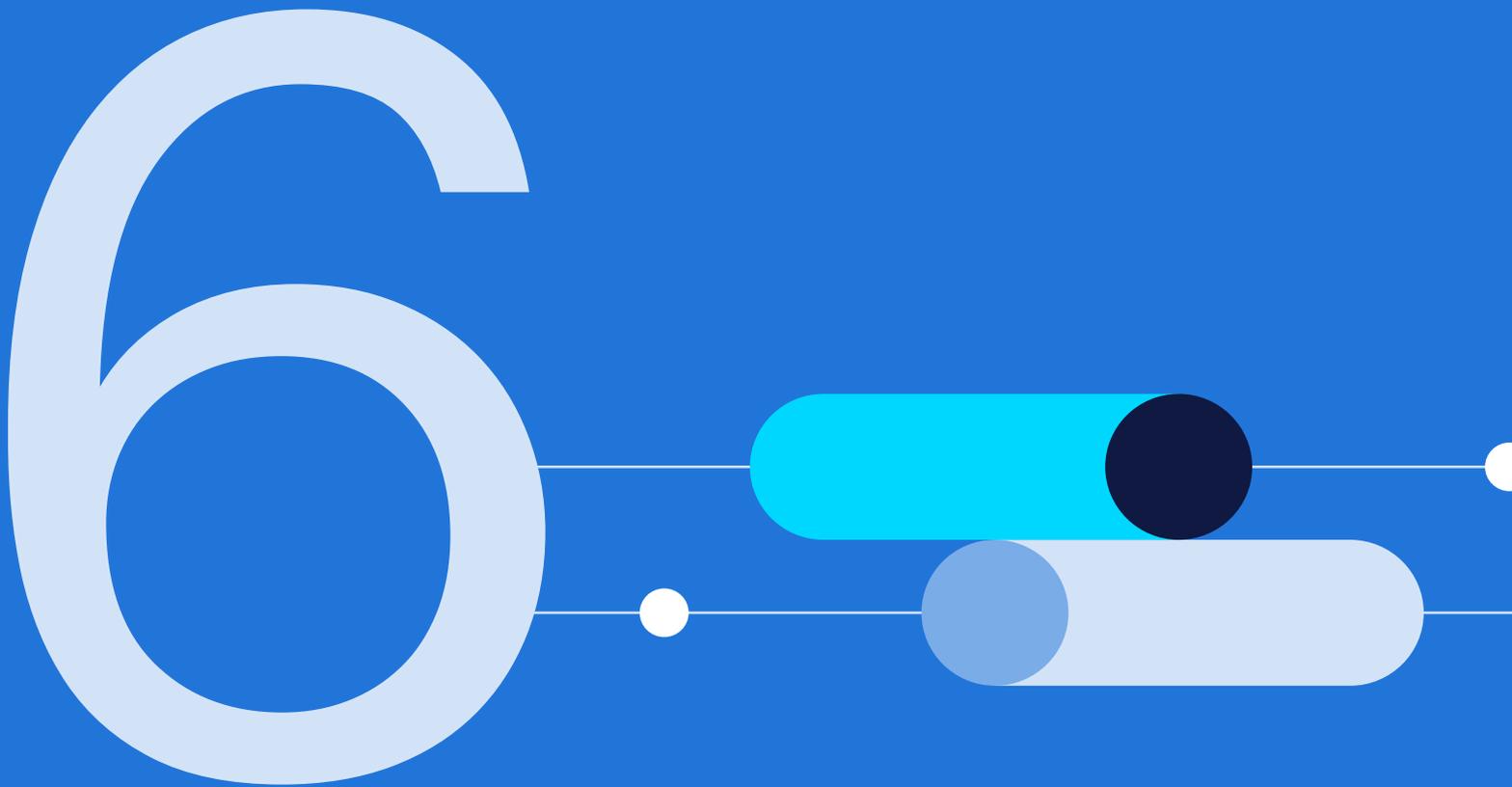
Gen z



Millennials



Gen X



AI and learning

tech-driven
pragmatism.

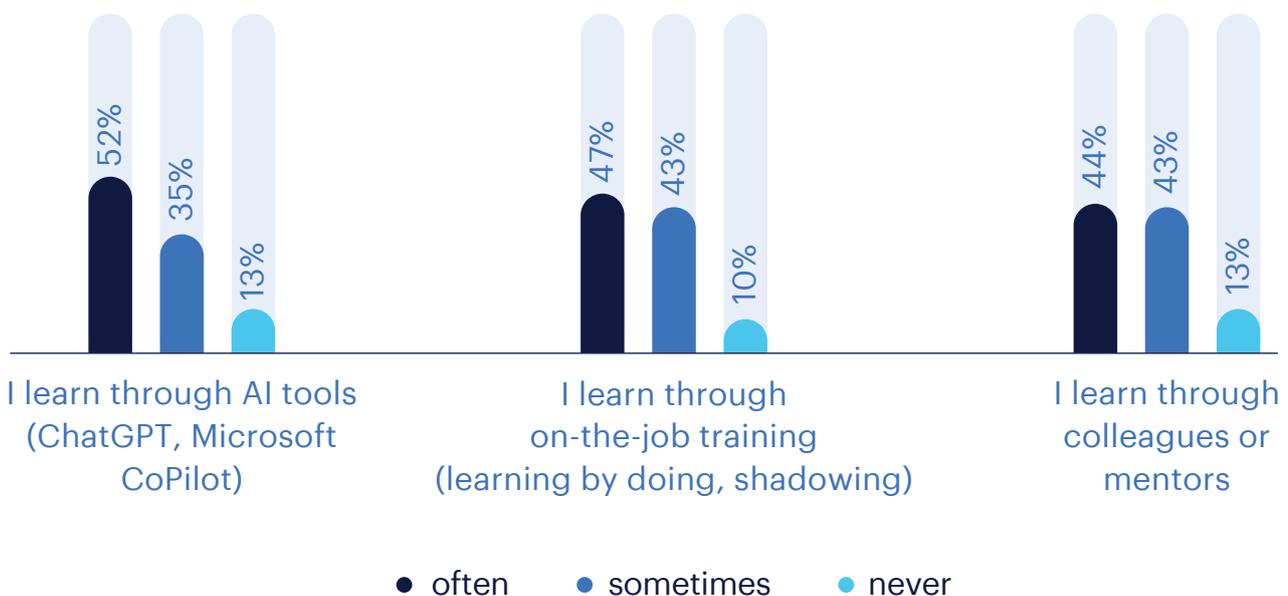
AI ignites a spark, with 85% across India excited and 64% trained, almost twice the global figure of 37% trained, reflecting a country quick to embrace tech’s promise. Gen Z leads this charge, with 82% excited, 83% using AI for problem solving at work, and 63% having received AI training at work, showcasing their knack for turning tools into advantage. Yet, a shadow of doubt remains with 44% of gen Z worrying about job security, edging past Millennials at 42% and Gen X at 36%, with women voicing more concern at 47% versus men’s 41%.

Training gaps between genders are minimal, with 64% of men and 62% of women having received AI training, though the slight difference highlights a need for more equitable access. Meanwhile, 63% of Gen Z would swap values for better pay, aligning with the

62% of older generations, revealing a pragmatic streak that shapes their career choices. Men pull ahead with higher motivation (86% vs. 80% for women) and a brighter AI outlook, hinting at confidence in tech roles.

Gen Z in India dives into learning with a hands-on, need-driven mindset, with 52% turning to AI tools, close to Millennials at 56% and Gen X at 51%, showing a shared tech lean. They also lean on on-the-job training (47%), pick up tips from mentors and colleagues (44%), and often upskill only when a role demands it (46%), proving their knack for seizing the moment. This down-to-earth, digital-first style fits India’s skilling landscape perfectly, favoring quick, practical gains over the slower pace of formal programs.

Gen Z and AI in workplace



conclusion & recommendations.

As India's Gen Z steps up to anchor the workforce, their mix of bold ambition, quick adaptability, and tech fluency is set to reshape how we think about productivity and innovation. Shaped by a whirlwind of digital shifts and economic ups and downs, they are not just riding the wave, they are steering it, carving out flexible careers that blend steady jobs with side gigs while always plotting their next big move. Still, their excitement for AI and strong engagement carry a weight of worry about job stability and fit, highlighting the need for workplaces that truly back their energy. With India's economy powering ahead in 2025, tapping into Gen Z's strengths isn't just smart, it is vital to securing the country's demographic advantage and forging a solid future.

for employers.

- **Build in hybrid and flexible setups.** Design roles that support flexibility for personal pursuits alongside full-time responsibilities, appealing to the 38% of Gen Z who value adaptable work arrangements over traditional perks.
- **Focus on fair pay and clear growth tracks.** Start with solid compensation, the leading retention factor at 16%, and lay out straightforward career ladders with upskilling options (10%) to tackle short stays and exits tied to low pay (half of Gen Z leavers).
- **Commit to AI training and well-being support.** Roll out easy-access AI tools and skills building, while tackling job worries (44%) with cultures that skip stereotypes and boost mental health.
- **Cultivate inclusive environments.** Narrow gender divides in drive and AI outlook by guaranteeing even training access (64% men vs. 62% women) and syncing company principles with Gen Z's practical swaps (63% open to trading values for stronger benefits).

for talent (gen z).

- **Grow a broad skill set ahead of time.** Capitalize on your tech ease by chasing AI and hands-on training honing skills that transfer easily to steer through brief roles and match jobs to your ideal path.
- **Temper ambition with smart planning.** As you chase side gigs balance long-term aims against fast switches – build networks in booming areas like IT and manufacturing for steadiness amid the 38% tendencies for brief tenures.
- **Advocate for your needs.** Hunt for positions with flexibility and decent pay, yet stay flexible on values for advancement; let your AI buzz shine in interviews and daily challenges.
- **Chase mentorship and balance.** Link up with guides to push back on doubts, and pick employers who back work-life harmony to keep your strong motivation going in a tough market.

about Randstad

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Headquartered in the Netherlands, Randstad operates in 39 markets and has approximately 40,000 employees. In 2024, we supported over 1.7 million talent to find work and generated a revenue of €24.1 billion. Randstad N.V. is listed on the Euronext Amsterdam. For more information, see www.randstad.com.

about Randstad India

Randstad India is a leading talent company providing services across four key specializations -operational talent solutions, professional talent solutions, digital talent solutions, and enterprise talent solutions. The organization is committed to providing equitable opportunities to people from all backgrounds and helping them remain relevant in the rapidly changing world of work. Randstad India has a deep understanding of the labourmarket to help clients create high-quality, diverse, and agile workforces they need to succeed. In the process, the organization helps talent secure meaningful roles, develop relevant skills, and find purpose and belonging in their workplace.

Randstad India has been a leading player in the industry for more than 30 years and continues to deliver innovative and specialized talent solutions to clients across sectors. Randstad is a global talent leader with the vision to be the world's most equitable and specialized talent company, active in 39 markets across the globe. For more information, see: www.randstad.in.



partner for talent.

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your
thoughts.

let's start a conversation

Our research has many insightful, but complex insights so we'd love the opportunity to walk you through this document, share our thoughts and answer any questions you might have.

research

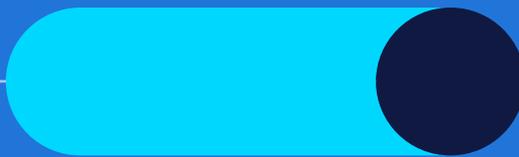
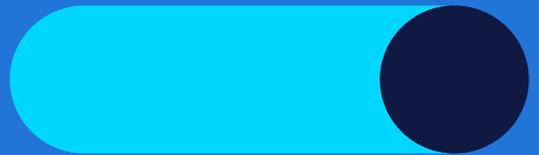
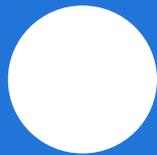
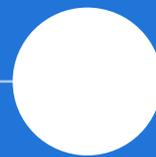
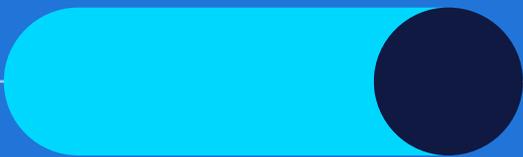
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