



Do you really need a Gen Z workplace strategy?

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Generational thinking is a powerful idea...



Auguste Comte

"We should not hide the fact that our social progress rests essentially upon death... the successive steps of humanity necessarily require a continuous renovation ... from one generation to the next"

Not just inevitable, but *beneficial* – a type of “demographic metabolism” that prevents us becoming a “stagnant pond”

Today we get...

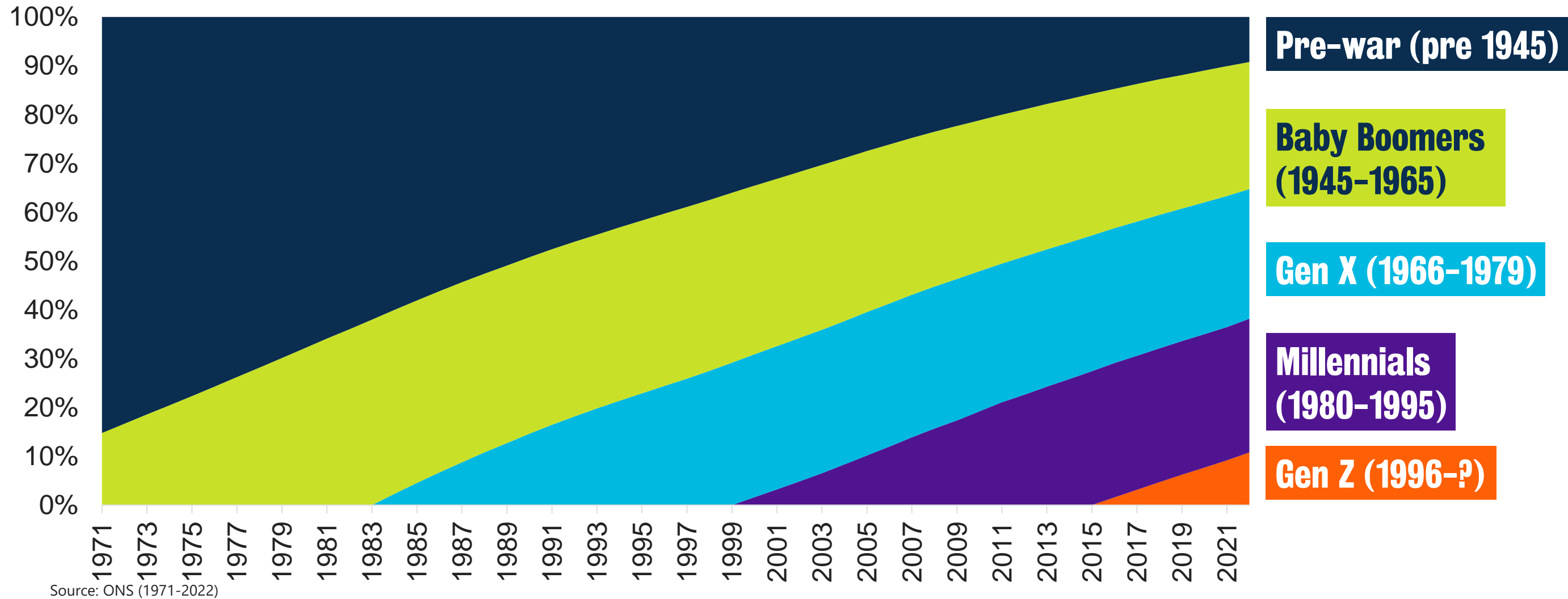
Millennials are killing the napkin industry

The Boomers Ruined Everything

Power-hungry hedonists? Survey reveals what drives generation Z

Can only understand future if understand generations...

% of UK individuals aged 18+ in each generation



Task in book: separate **period**, **lifecycle** and **cohort** effects



**The workplace is one of noisiest
engines of generational myths...**

Workplace generational “research” is often actively unhelpful...

‘Entitled’ Gen Z is the most difficult generation in the workplace: poll

How Gen Z are proudly shirking from home
– and taking the economy down with them

'I'm so upset.' Gen Z woman is devastated after her first day at a 9-to-5 office job.

Workshy Gen Z staff who can't be bothered to read their emails need a reality check

Gen Z need to understand that reading emails is part of the job – as is working hard

Why can't Gen Z cope with the real world? I'll tell you why...

Thinking today's young are uniquely wrong or weird is a constant of history...

400 BC

“The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, they show disrespect for elders and love gossip in place of activity...”

– **Socrates**

1664

“Youth were never more sawcie, yea never more savagely sawcie”

– **Thomas Frank,
Minister of St
Margaret's Church**

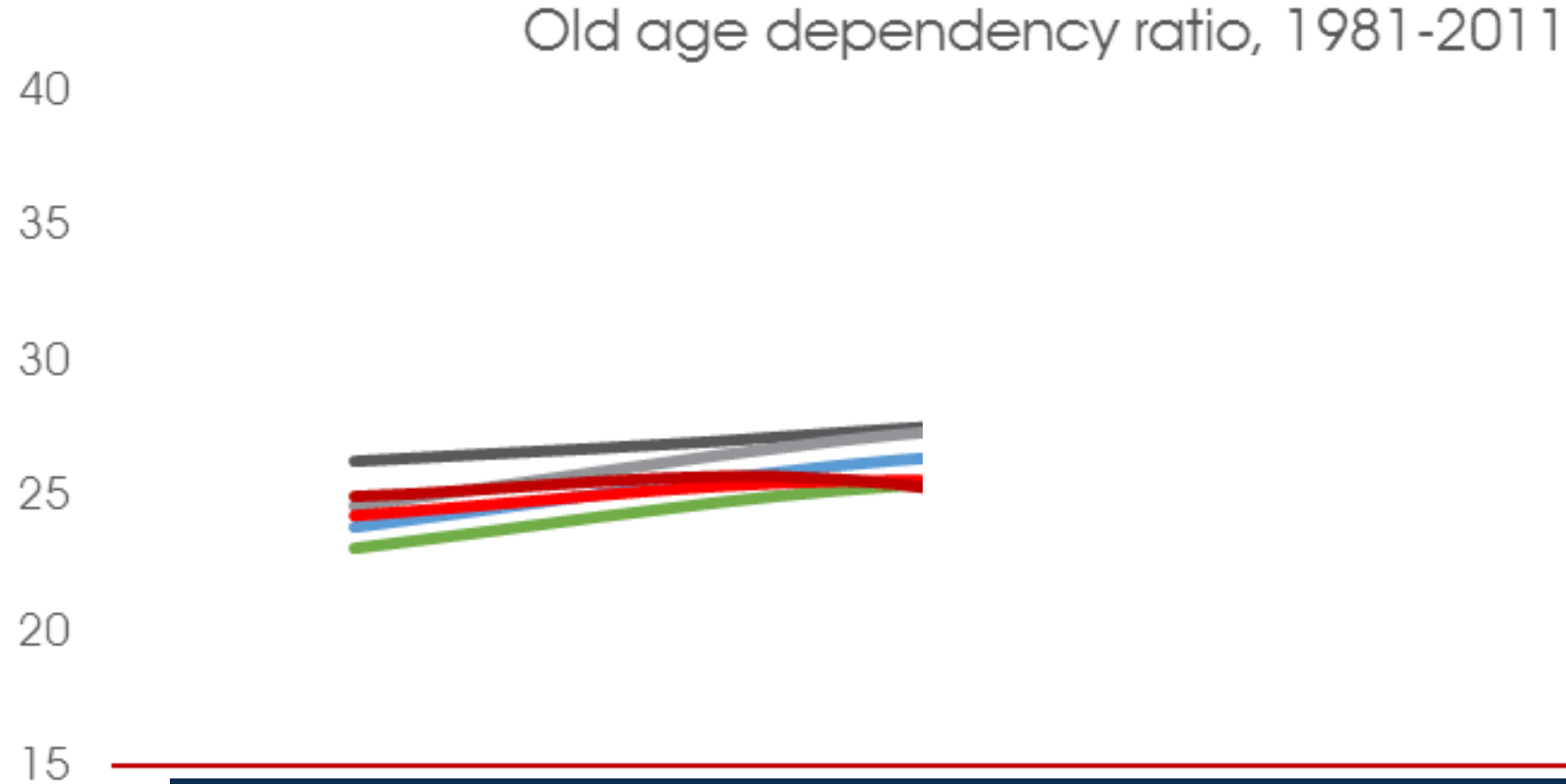
1771

“A race of effeminate, self-admiring, emaciated fribbles”

– **Letter in Town and Country magazine**

- ***Feels*** more divided now – for two main reasons...
- ...more fractious media, social media and politics...
- ... less noticed but just as vital: incredible increase in generational separation...

A “dangerous experiment” in age segregation...



Second key dimension: our *digital lives* are much more important today, and still very separate between generations...



Separation fuels stereotyping...

facebook A group where we all pretend to be boomers

MY GRANDSON FORGOT TO CALL ME ON MY BIRTHDAY. THANKS OBAMA.

Good home remedies for anal tremors?



BUT can be destructive... and we're losing the benefits of intergenerational connection



**Workplace increasingly key – should
be a key site for connection...**

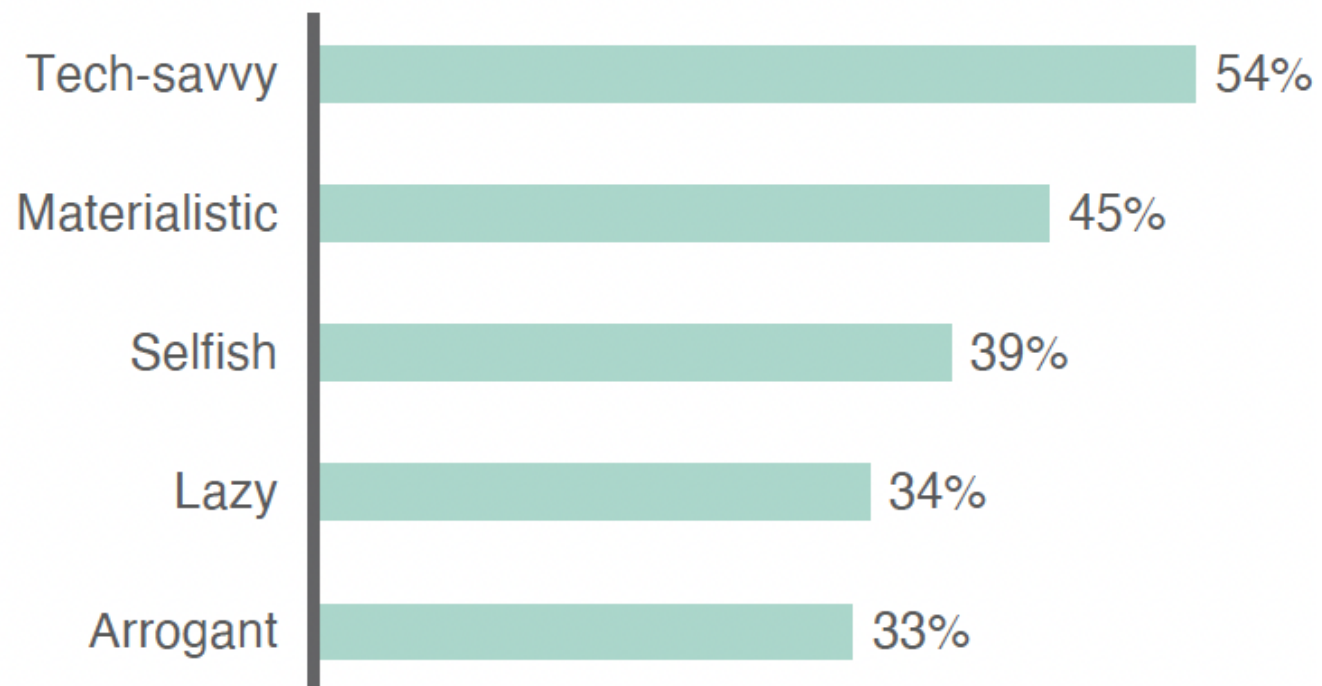
...but it often isn't...

- **Separation** at work:
 - One in five Gen Z workers haven't even spoken to a colleague over 50 in past year...
 - ...two in five of those over 50 haven't spoken to a Gen Z colleague [LinkedIn research]
 - Emerging evidence that “intergenerationally inclusive” work practices are related to productivity, resilience, adaptability [OECD, LSE Inclusion Initiative/Protiviti]
- **Stereotyping** at work:
 - What is actually different in satisfaction, motivation and job moves? Very little: “...*the relationship between generational membership and work-related outcomes are moderate to small, essentially zero in many cases*”
- Young *are* different from older, need key framework: lifecycle, period and cohort effects...
- ... much of perceived change is our “*rosy retrospection*” about how motivated and amenable we were when entered workforce...

This is a lifecycle effect, not a cohort effect...

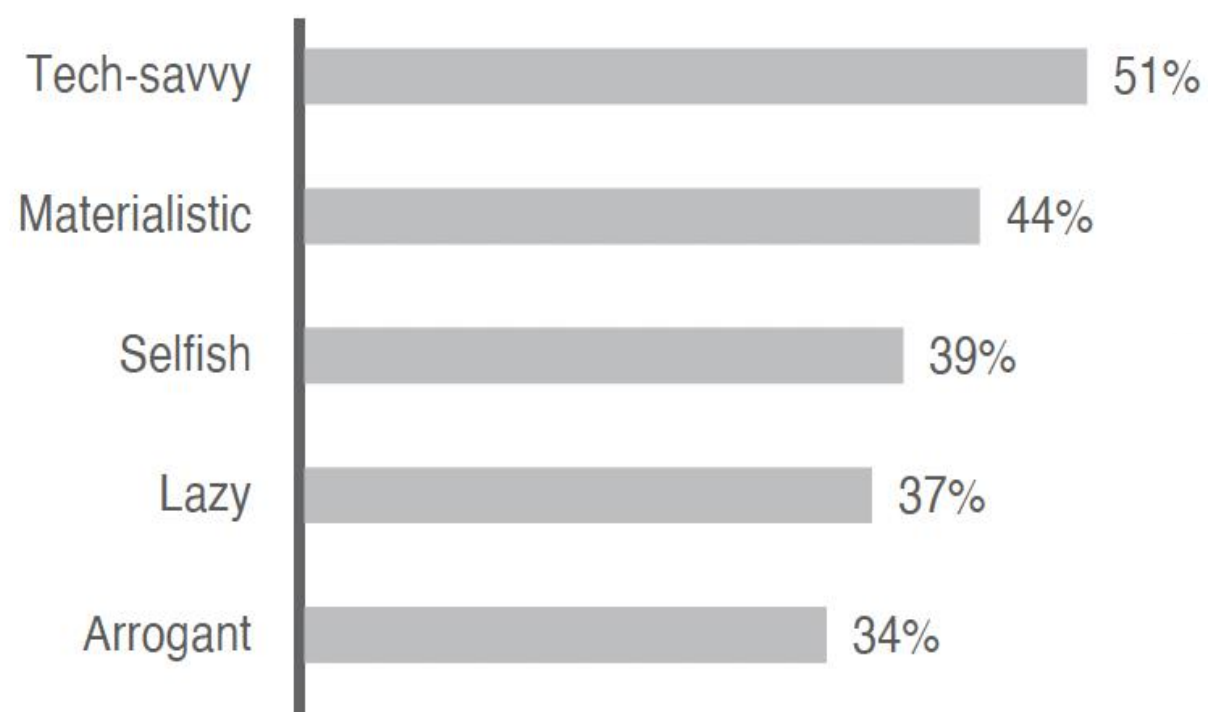
Millennials in 2017 versus 2019

2017 Millennials Top 5 Characteristics



Gen Z

Top 5 Characteristics





**There ARE real cohort differences
with younger generations...**

1. Economic pressures...

UK house price to earnings ratio

7.5

Kirstie Allsopp's property advice for young people sparks Twitter debate

VIEW 1 COMMENTS



2.0

1994

1999

2004

2009

2014

2019

2024

Source: Nationwide, ONS



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To be fair to Kirstie Allsopp, if you cancelled your Netflix and PureGym subscription and instead saved that £40 a month, as long as the housing market doesn't go up at all then in just 54 years you'll have enough for a deposit on an average house

7:29 PM · Feb 6, 2022



14.8K



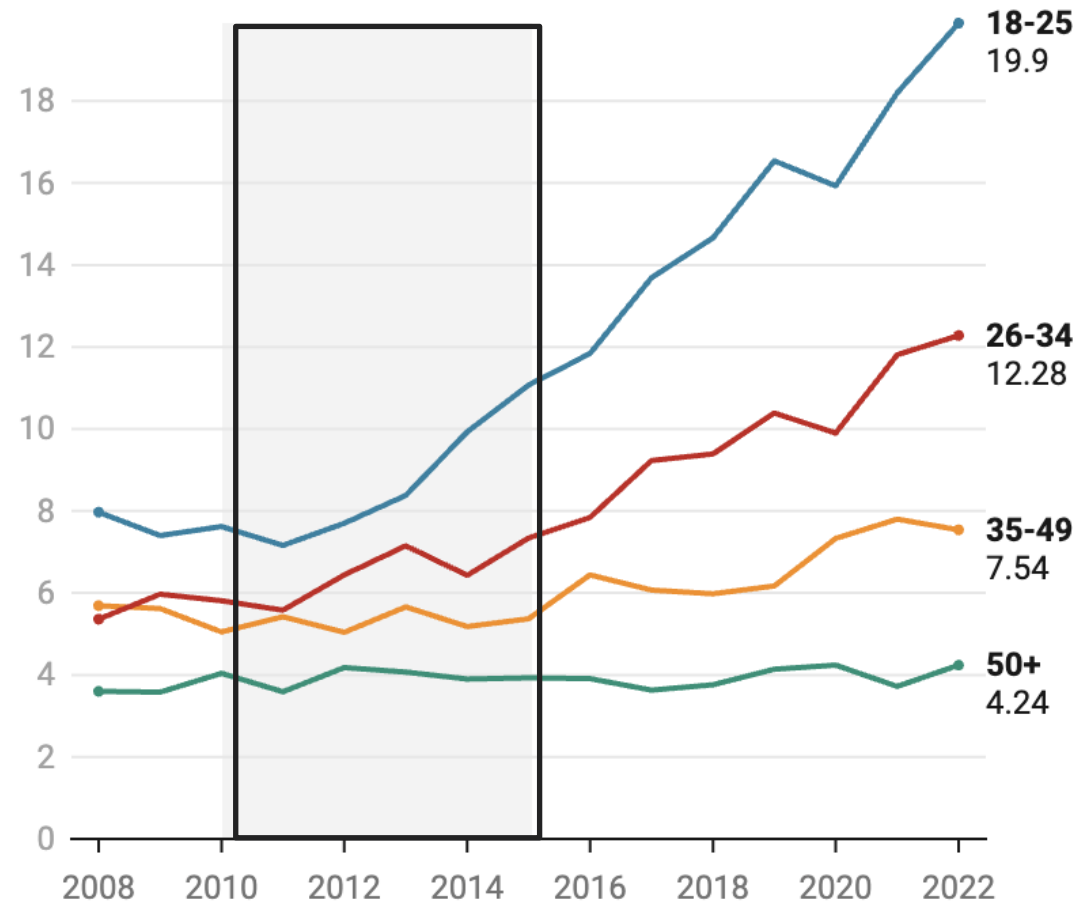
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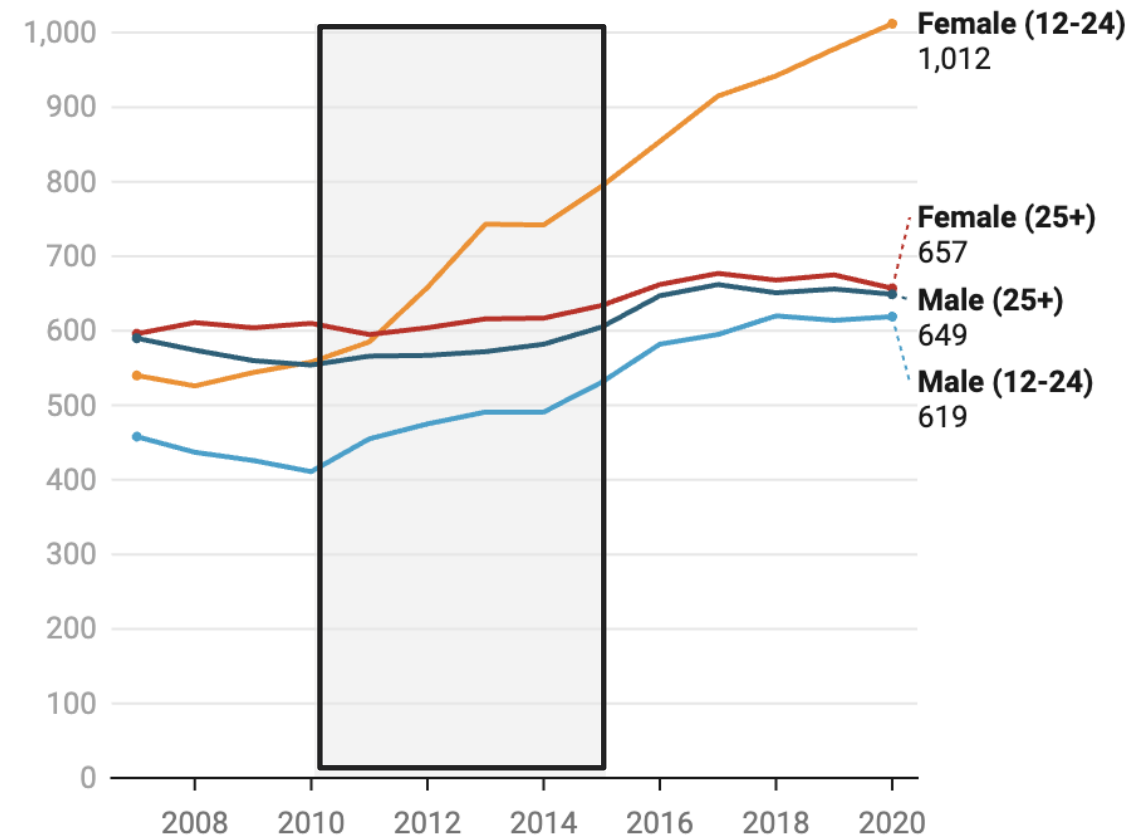
2. Increase in mental ill health...

Percent U.S. Anxiety Prevalence



Overnight Mental Health Hospitalizations, Australia

Rate per 100,000 Population



3. “Delayed adulthood”

- % of 25-34-year-olds living with parents increased by a third 2006-2024 (now 1 in 5, 450k)
- Getting married c8 years later, on average
- Having kids c4 years later, on average

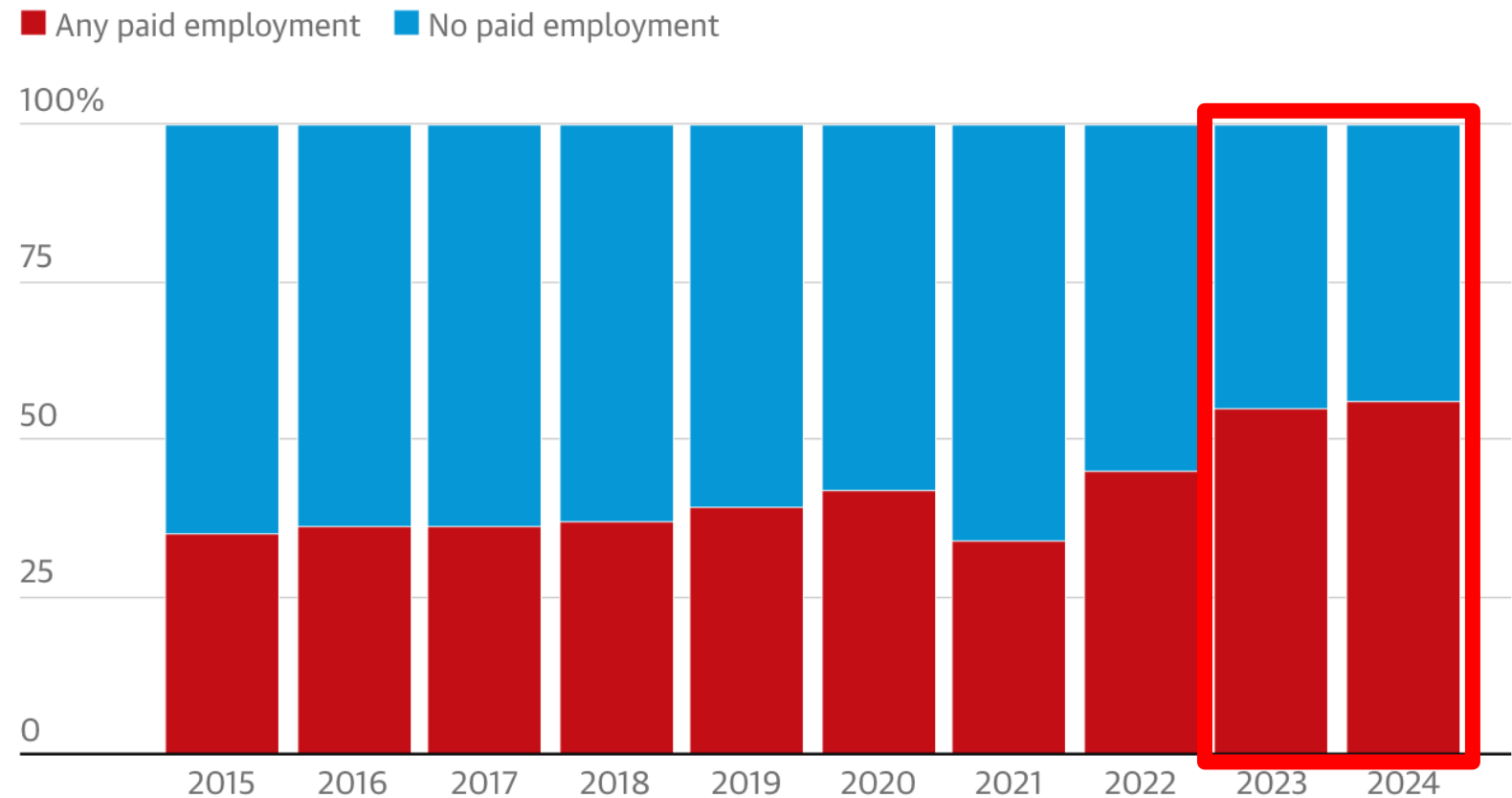
The Death of the Saturday Job %
of 16-17 year olds working

Older Millennials in 1997 48%

Middle Gen Z in 2019 25%

Source: Resolution Foundation

Share of UK undergraduate students in paid employment



Guardian graphic. Source: Higher Education Policy Institute, Student academic experience survey 2024

Generational perspective important – what's right?

My Mum

Born 1945

Left school at 15...
...straight into full-time job in factory

Me

Born 1972

Jobs by 17:
Paper round, washing dishes in hotel, corner shop, Sainsbury's, Boots, crate washing in factory, office removals for very dodgy temp agency

My Daughter

Born 2008

Jobs by 17:
Selling stuff (we bought her) on Depop



DON'T build a Gen Z workplace strategy – build an intergenerational strategy...

- so many myths**
- separation exaggerates difference**
- even real differences are average trends, not defining or exclusive to Gen Z**
- increasing evidence of benefits of intergenerational connection**

Four pillars of an intergenerational workplace strategy

Age-inclusive recruitment

- Starts with getting people in and earliest signals

Age-inclusive policies, practices, training and culture

- Need core practical infrastructure of inclusive practices, support, leadership and comms

Meaningful intergenerational networks and groups

- A mix of approaches: around a purpose, to share views, purely social/ casual

Meaningful individual intergenerational connections

- Mentoring, reverse mentoring, mutual mentoring

Evaluate, learn and adapt

- ...Harvard Business Review study: organizations implementing intergenerational mentoring programs saw 30% increase in employee engagement and a 20% reduction in turnover
- “***We are all a step ahead in different ways***” Sophia, “*5 Generations at Work*” book

Generational thinking is vitally important in the workplace...

- ...but most workplace generational analysis is mix of fake conflict and astrology...



Over 400 “Millennial consultants”

Only 22 “Gen Z Whisperers” so far...

- Ditch the labels ***AT WORK***... keep the framework: lifecycle, period, cohort – AND focus on intergenerational connection...



Jonathan Walker ✓

@jonwalker121

I am neither a millennial nor a boomer. I come from a generation so irrelevant that people can't even be bothered to hate us

Thank you

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generations-book.org

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