THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE
LEADING, LEARNING & LEVELING UP

SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

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VAL GRUBB

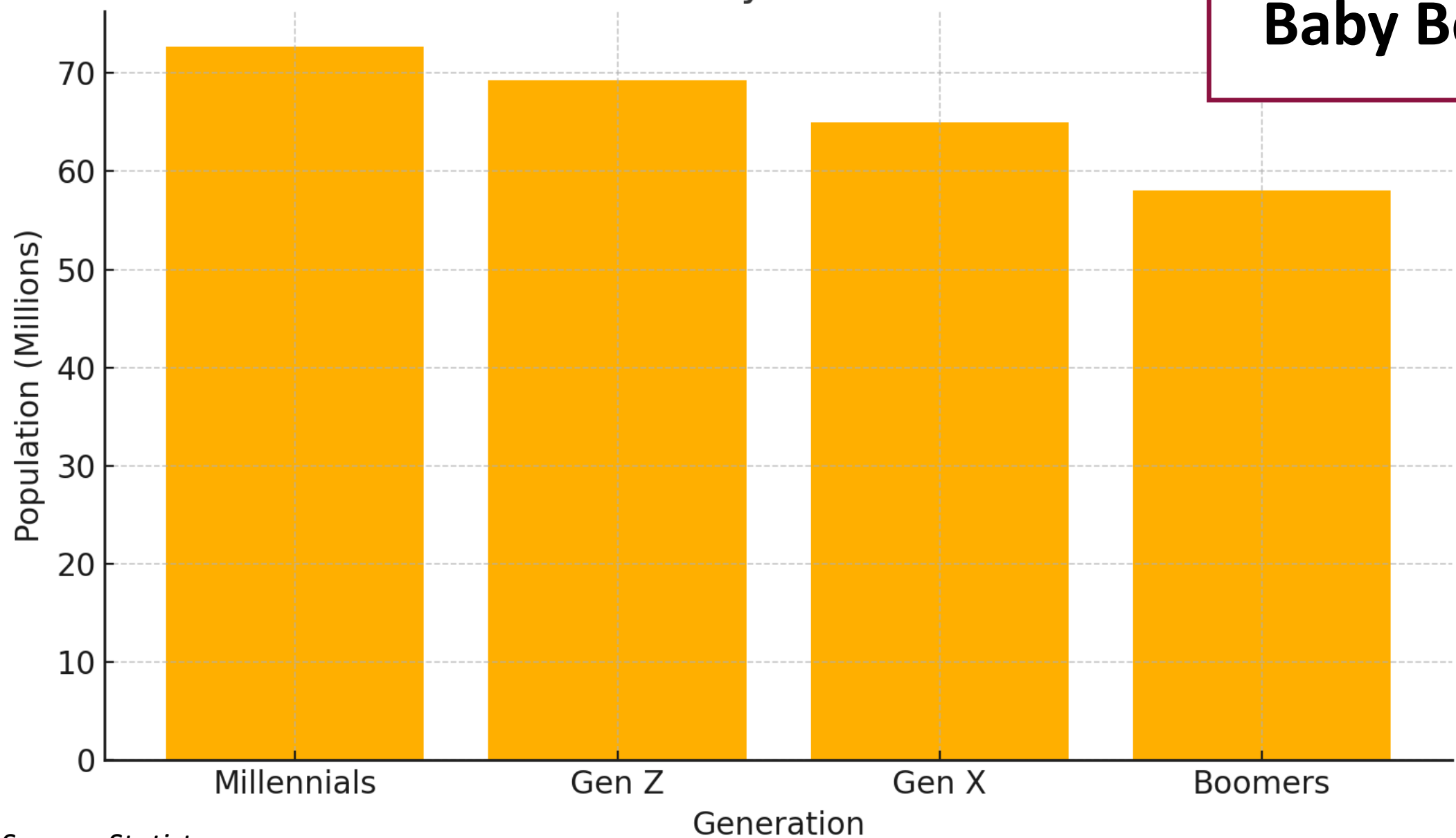Keynote Speaker | Executive Coach | Leadership Development

Agenda

Current Landscape
Hello Gen Z
Why they Join, Leave & Stay
Upping your Leadership Game

U.S. Workforce by Generation - 2024

Gen Z (1997–2012)
Millennials (1981–1996)
Gen X (1965–1980)
Baby Boomers (1946–1964)

U.S. Workforce by Generation – 2024

According to Deloitte's Global 2025 survey, GenZ and Millennials are projected to make up 2/3 of the workforce in the next few years.*

Source: Statista

*Mccrindle, "Building healthy intergenerational teams," Mccrindle, accessed April 30, 2025; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment projections: Civilian labor force by age, sex, race, and ethnicity," 8/29/24.

2033 Projected Employment

Chart 1. Total employment, 2003–23 and projected 2033

Legend:
— Total employment, 2003–23
● Projected total employment, 2033

Millions
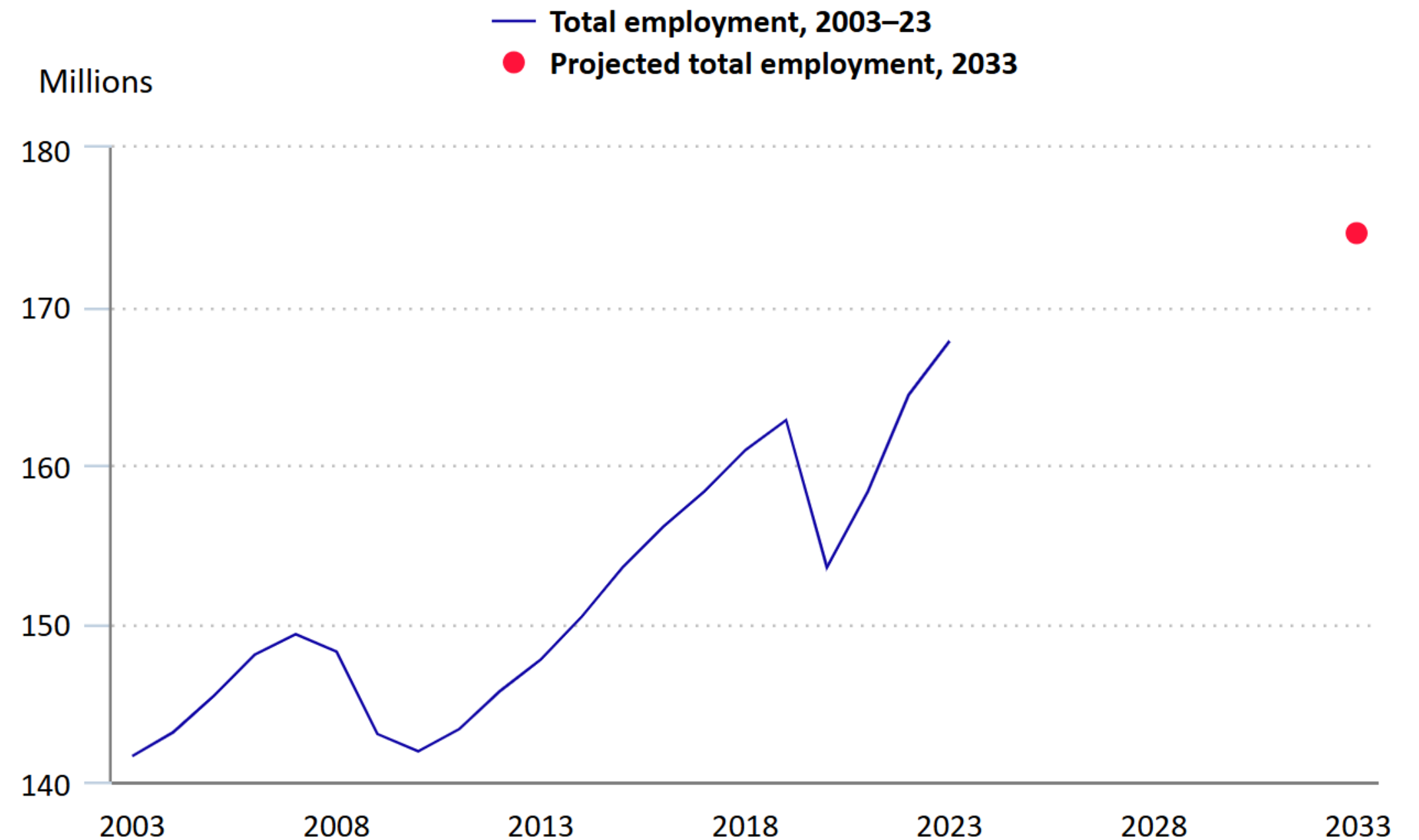
Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
Note: The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics does not project employment for interim years 2024–32.
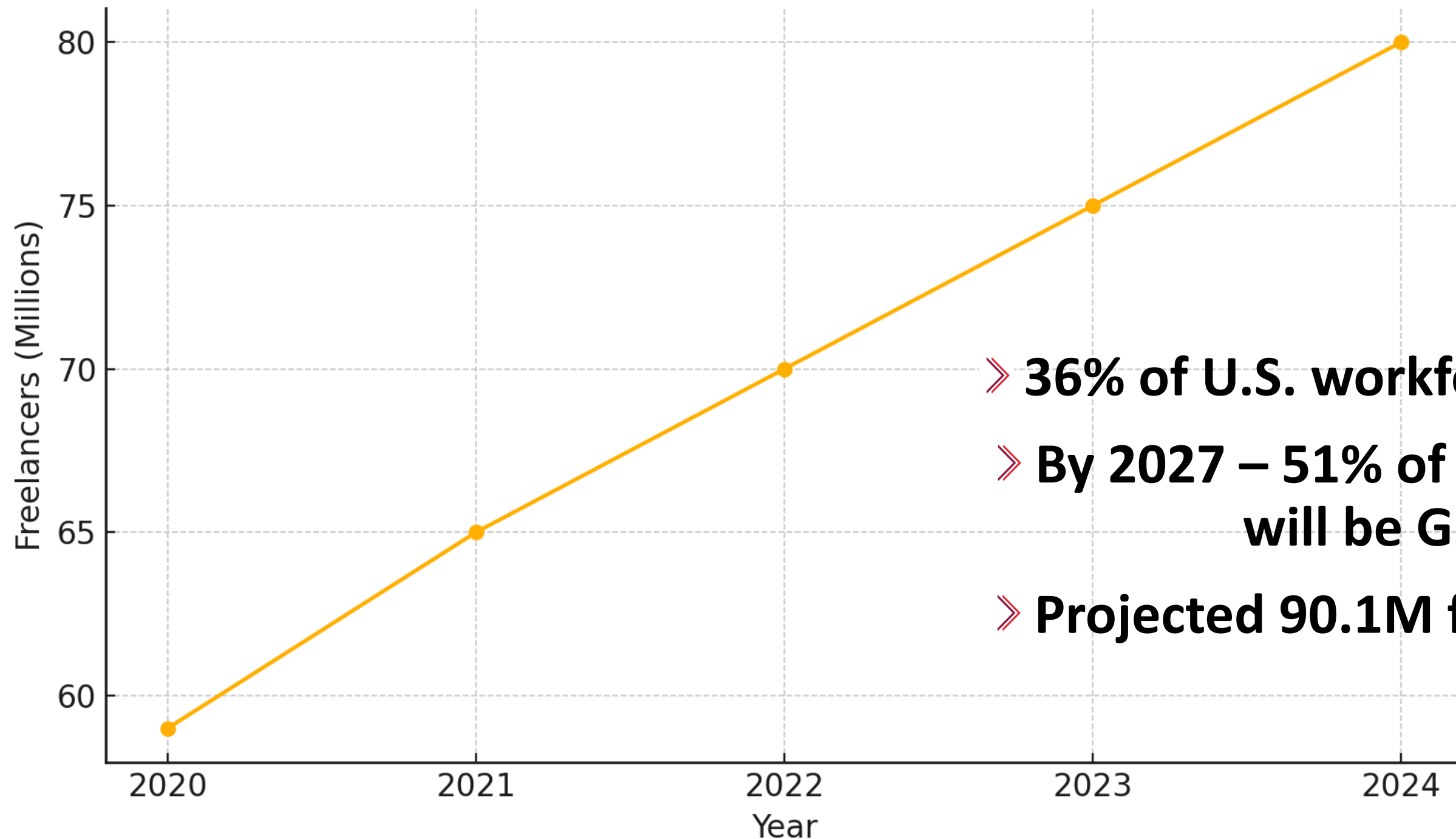Total employment refers to wage and salary employment and self–employment.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Contract & Gig Work – 2024 Landscape
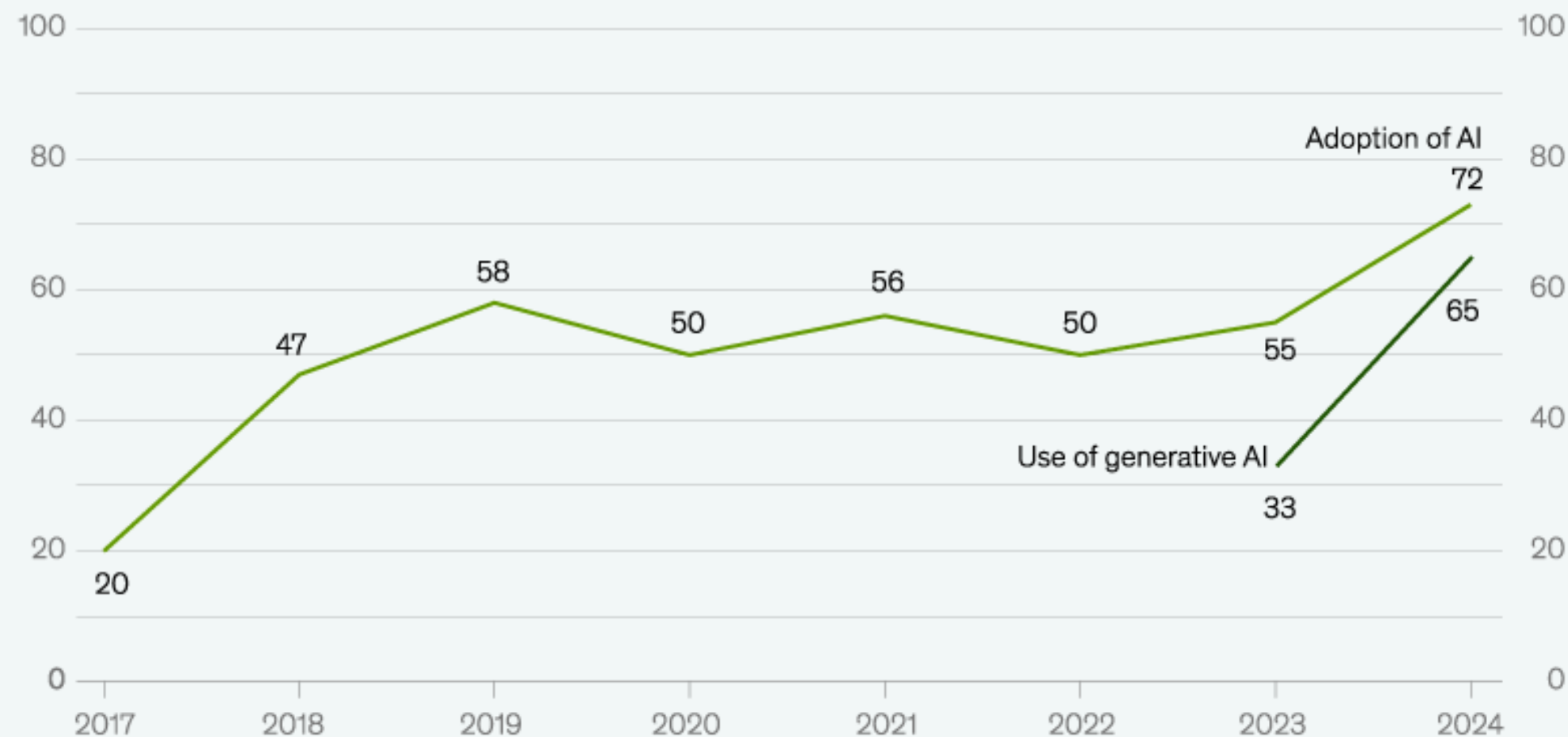
Growth of Freelancers in the U.S. (2020–2024)

Almost 40% of gig workers belong to the age group of 18-34

» **36% of U.S. workforce are freelancers**

» **By 2027 – 51% of total US Workforce will be Gig Workers**

» **Projected 90.1M freelancers by 2028**

Source: Upwork/Freelancers Union 2024, FinancesOnline

AI & Automation Are Accelerating

AI adoption worldwide has increased dramatically in the past year, after years of little meaningful change.

Organizations that have adopted AI in at least 1 business function,[1] % of respondents

[Line chart showing two trends from 2017 to 2024:]

Adoption of AI (light green line): 2017: 20, 2018: 47, 2019: 58, 2020: 50, 2021: 56, 2022: 50, 2023: 55, 2024: 72

Use of generative AI (dark green line): 2023: 33, 2024: 65

[1]In 2017, the definition for AI adoption was using AI in a core part of the organization's business or at scale. In 2018 and 2019, the definition was embedding at least 1 AI capability in business processes or products. Since 2020, the definition has been that the organization has adopted AI in at least 1 function.
Source: McKinsey Global Survey on AI, 1,363 participants at all levels of the organization, Feb 22–Mar 5, 2024

McKinsey & Company

The state of AI in early 2024: Gen AI adoption spikes and starts to generate value

Sources: McKinsey 2024

AI to the Rescue

20 - 25%
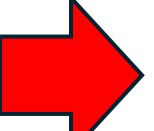
Have not adopted any sort of AI presence.

60%

> % of companies with more than 10,000 employees have already adopted AI.

Your AI Hit List

1. Reduce routine or repetitive tasks
2. Streamline cumbersome non-value add processes
3. Bolster learning and development
4. Gather, understand and act upon employee data
5. Redesign jobs and processes
6. Inspire creativity and innovation
7. Gain a better understanding of the employee experience
8. Create a competitive advantage
9. Perform workforce planning
10. Improve employee engagement
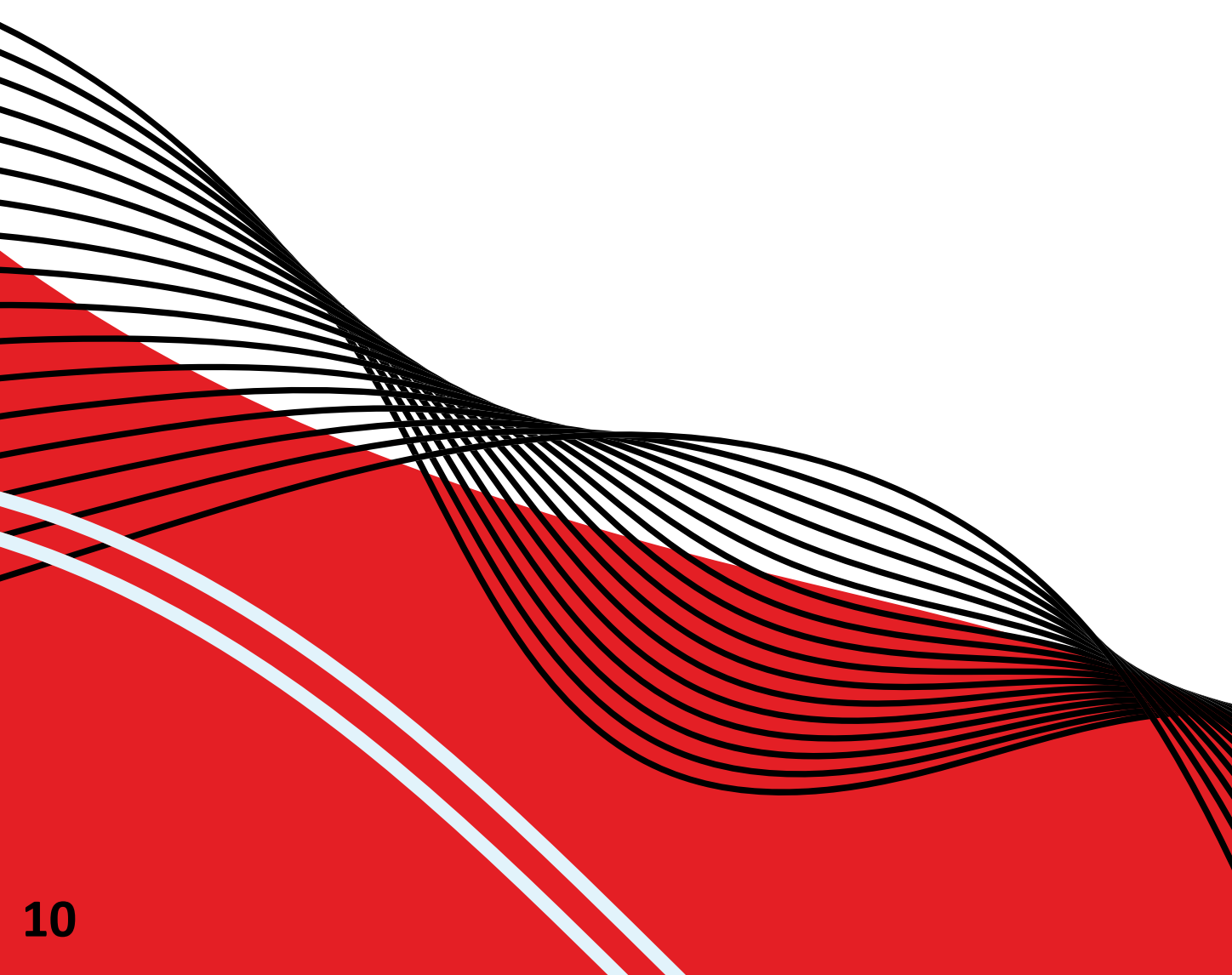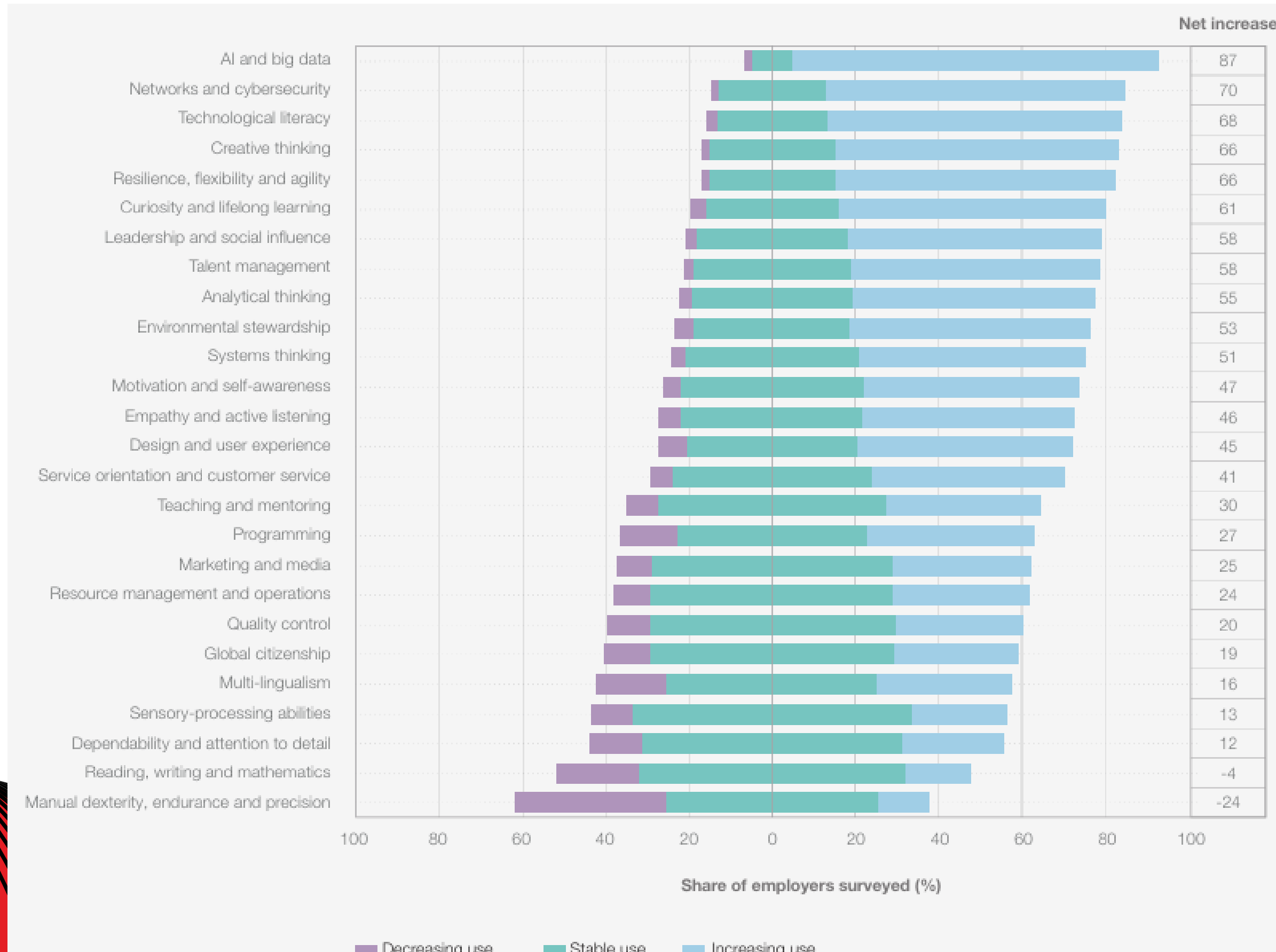
ADOPTION ➡ **ADAPTION**

Change in Labor Demand

> Healthcare and STEM lead the way in demand

> Food service, production work customer services and office support lead the decline.

McKinsey Global Institute: A new future of work: The race to deploy A and raise skills in Europe and beyond, 5/21/24

Net expected change in labor demand, Europe[1] and US, faster/midpoint scenario,[1] 2022–30

Occupational category	Europe[2] Employment change vs 2022, million	Employment change vs 2022, %	US Employment change vs 2022, million	Employment change vs 2022, %
Health aides, technicians, and wellness	3.3	25.2	3.5	29.7
STEM professionals	2.3	16.7	1.8	23.1
Health professionals	1.5	23.6	2.0	30.1
Managers	1.1	9.1	1.1	11.3
Business or legal professionals	1.0	6.9	1.1	6.6
Builders	0.7	6.9	0.8	11.9
Transportation services	0.5	7.9	0.5	9.5
Property maintenance	0.4	5.3	0.5	10.3
Creatives and arts management	0.4	8.6	0.2	10.7
Community services	0.3	3.5	0.4	6.6
Educator and workforce training	0.2	1.6	0.3	2.6
Mechanical installation and repair	0.1	1.2	0.5	7.0
Agriculture	−0.2	−3.8	0	2.3
Food services	−0.3	−3.3	−0.3	−1.9
Production work	−0.9	−5.3	−0.1	−0.7
Customer service and sales	−1.7	−12.1	−2.0	−13.4
Office support	−5.0	−18.3	−3.7	−18.5

Skills on the Rise (2025 – 2030)

Net increase

Skill	Net increase
AI and big data	87
Networks and cybersecurity	70
Technological literacy	68
Creative thinking	66
Resilience, flexibility and agility	66
Curiosity and lifelong learning	61
Leadership and social influence	58
Talent management	58
Analytical thinking	55
Environmental stewardship	53
Systems thinking	51
Motivation and self-awareness	47
Empathy and active listening	46
Design and user experience	45
Service orientation and customer service	41
Teaching and mentoring	30
Programming	27
Marketing and media	25
Resource management and operations	24
Quality control	20
Global citizenship	19
Multi-lingualism	16
Sensory-processing abilities	13
Dependability and attention to detail	12
Reading, writing and mathematics	-4
Manual dexterity, endurance and precision	-24

Share of employers surveyed (%)

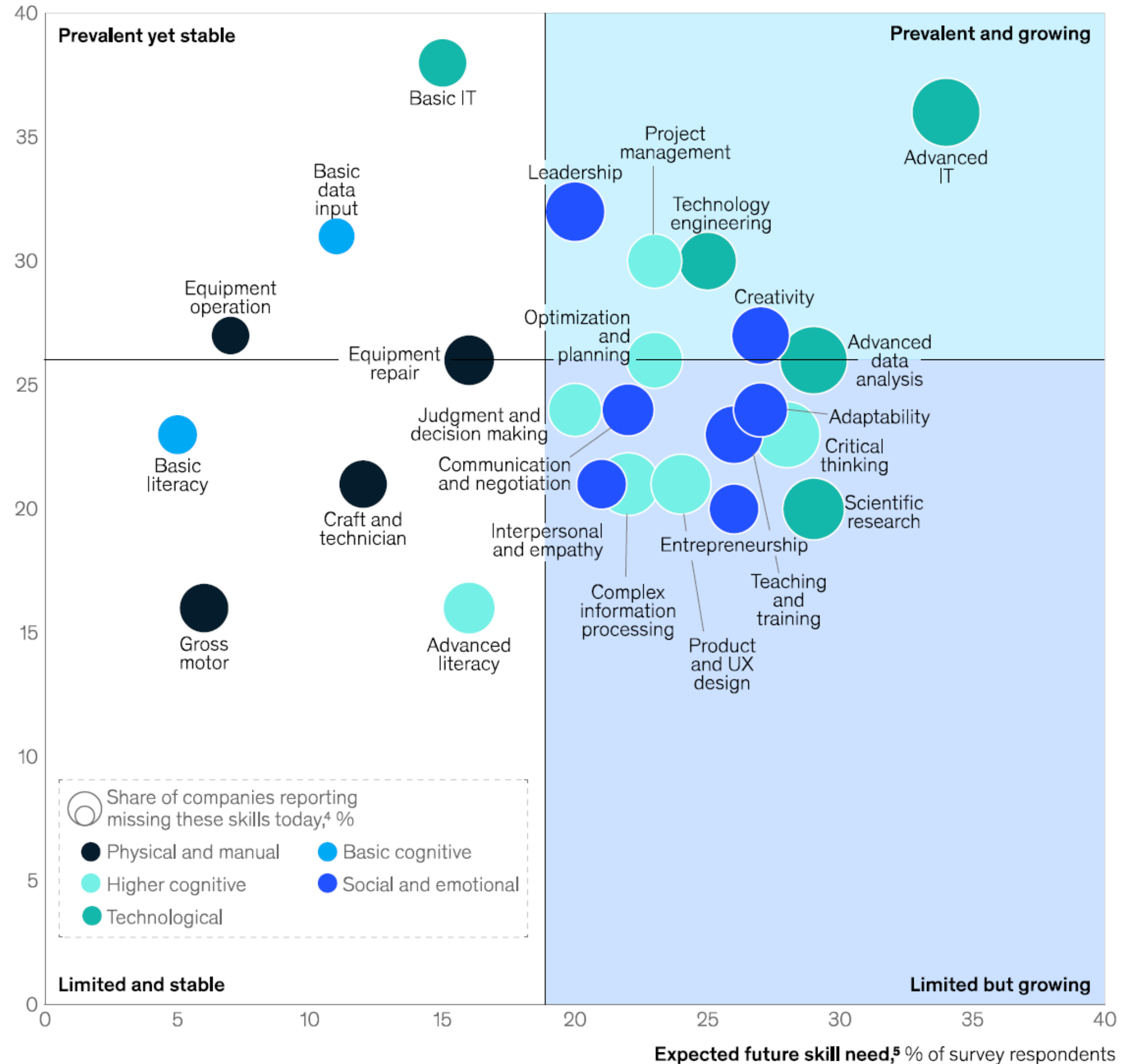Decreasing use   Stable use   Increasing use

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Change in Skills to Keep Pace

Rising demand for:

》 technological skills
》 advanced cognitive skills
》 social/emotional skills

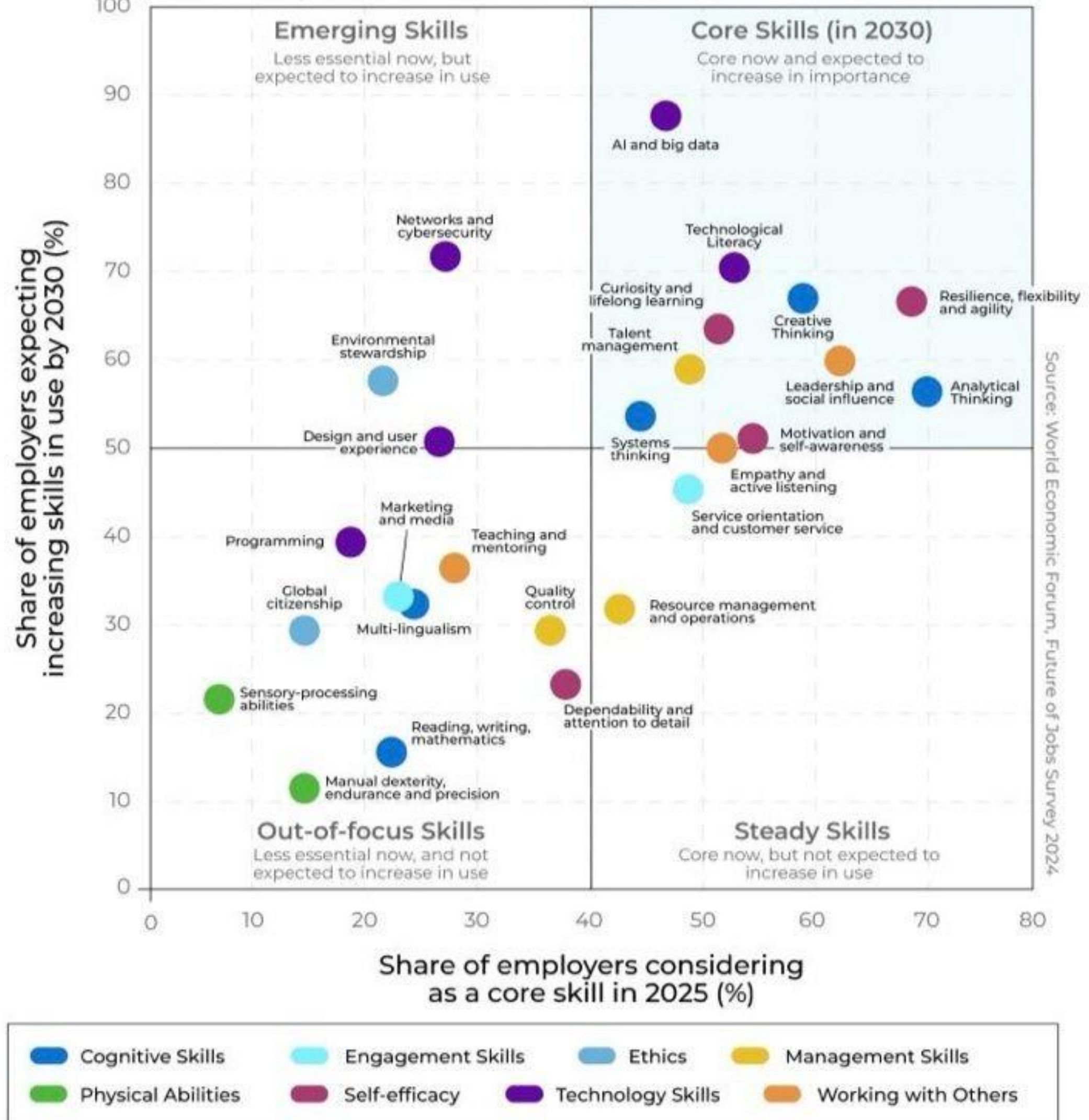Skills[1] of today vs skills of tomorrow in Europe[2] and the US, %

Most widely used skills today,[3] % of survey respondents

Change in Skills to Keep Pace

World Economic Forum – Future of Jobs Report 2025

Say HELLO to Gen Z

›Purpose-driven work

›Flexibility

›Mental health support

›Career growth & entrepreneurship

›Tech fluency

Sources: Deloitte 2023 Gen Z & Millennial Survey, Harvard GSE (2023)

Say HELLO to Gen Z

>> They want to make the world a better place.

>> They want whoever they work for to make the world a better place too.

>> 31% of Gen Z would turn down an offer if a company had poor sustainability and ethics.
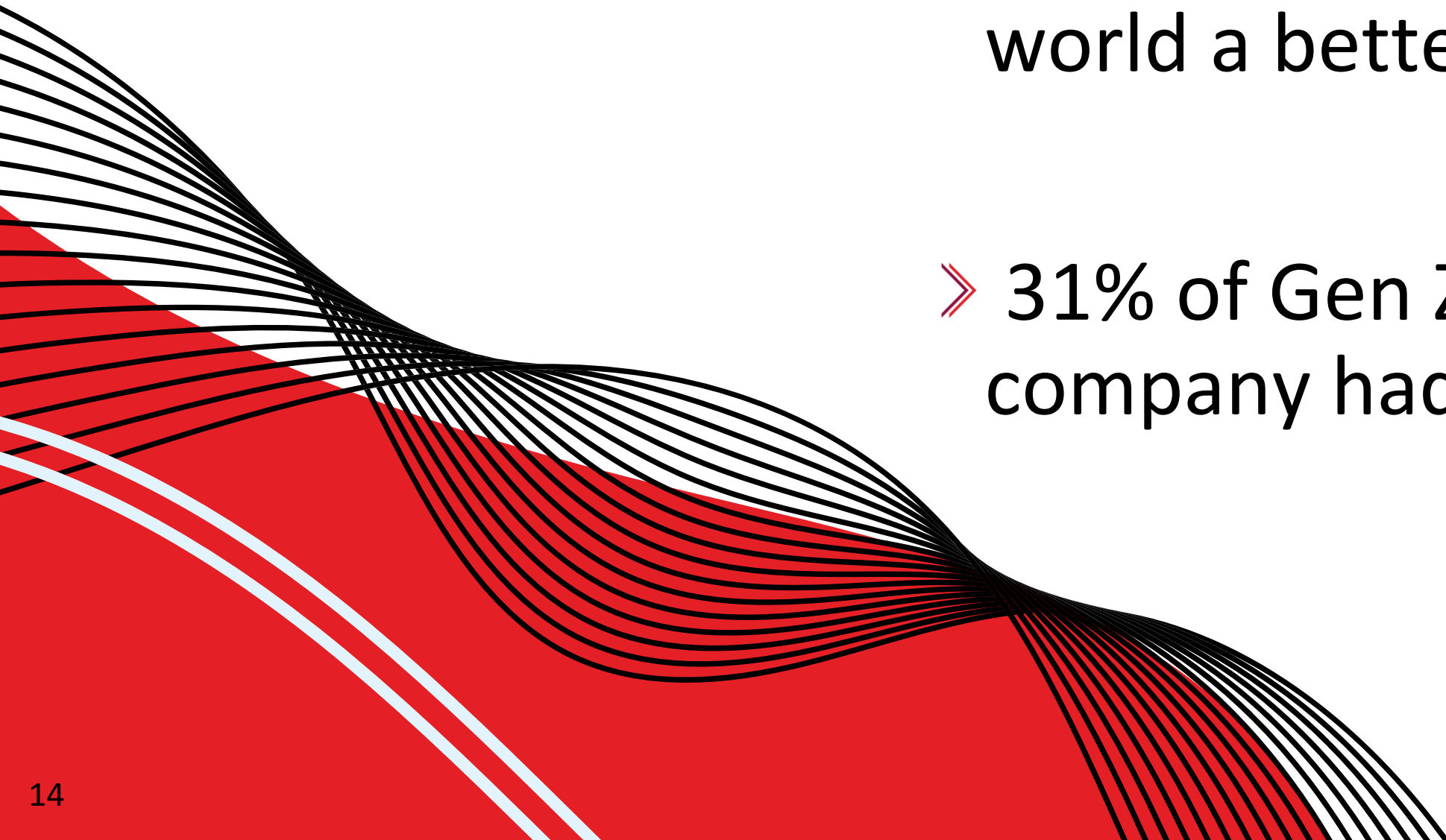
Say HELLO to Gen Z

» Gen Z is now the most entrepreneurial generation ever, with 62% of Gen Zers indicating they have started—or intend to start—their own business.

» 31% of Gen Zs (and 32% of millennials) indicated they are not pursuing higher education.

Say HELLO to Gen Z

Gen Z adults have double the depression and anxiety of teens...

> 29% of young adults reported experiencing depression
>
> 36% reported anxiety
>
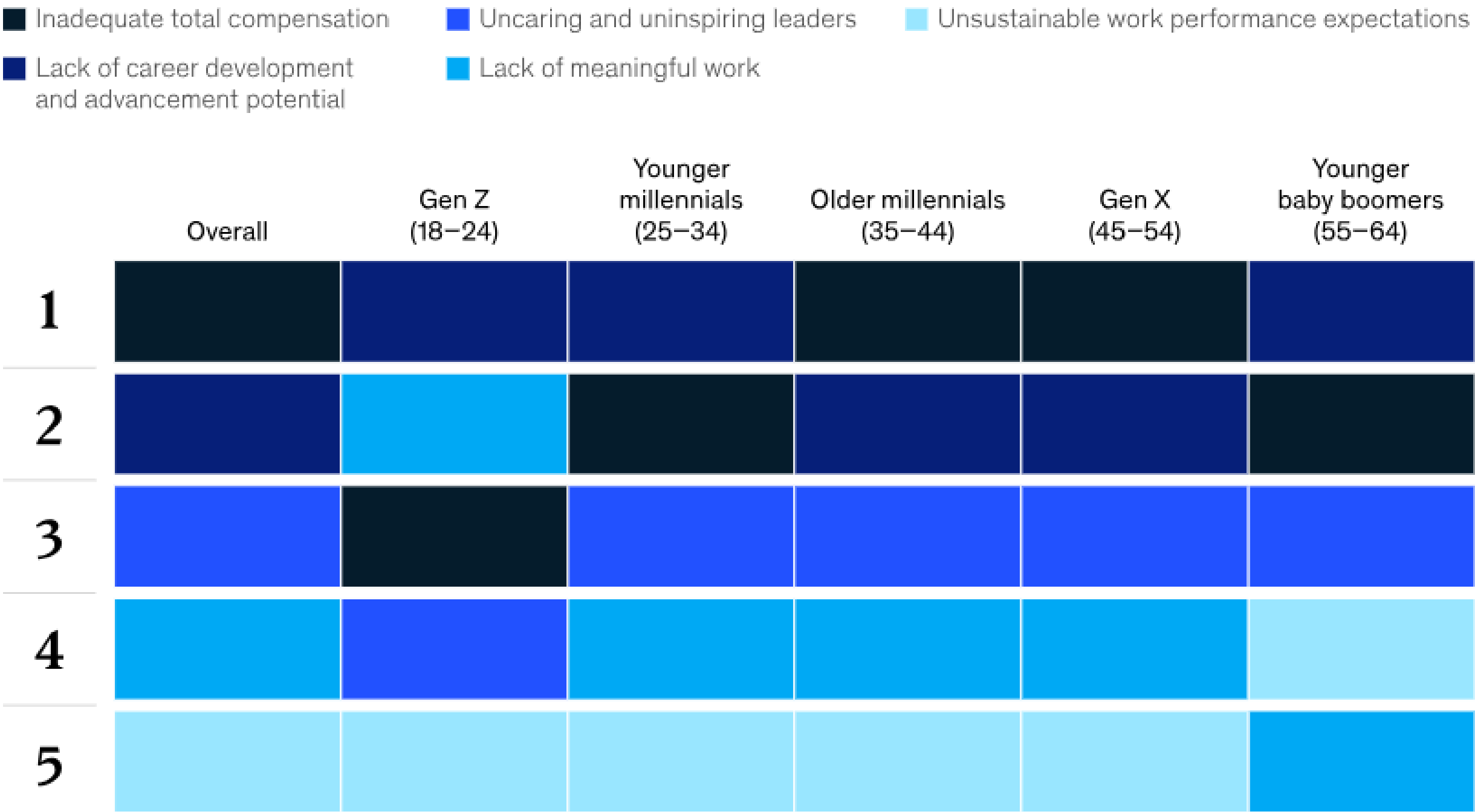> 58% of young adults reported experiencing little or no purpose or meaning in their lives

Why They LEAVE

Reasons for leaving a previous job are largely the same across age groups, suggesting that certain attitudes toward work are normalizing.

Top reasons why respondents left their previous jobs, by age group[1]

- ■ Inadequate total compensation
- ■ Lack of career development and advancement potential
- ■ Uncaring and uninspiring leaders
- ■ Lack of meaningful work
- ■ Unsustainable work performance expectations

	Overall	Gen Z (18–24)	Younger millennials (25–34)	Older millennials (35–44)	Gen X (45–54)	Younger baby boomers (55–64)
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

[1]Out of 12 answer choices that were offered in the original question. Analysis includes only respondents reporting a traditional employer–employee relationship, in which an employer hires the employee, pays them directly, and manages their work. Total, n = 8,961; Gen Z, n = 1,170; younger millennials, n = 2,624; older millennials, n = 2,185; Gen X, n = 1,579; younger baby boomers, n = 1,403.

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Why They JOIN

As with quitting, workers of all ages consider similar factors as the most important when taking a new job.

Top reasons why respondents took new jobs, by age group[1]

- ■ Adequate total compensation
- ■ Career development and advancement potential
- ■ Meaningful work
- ■ Workplace flexibility
- ■ Reliable and supportive people at work
- ■ Safe workplace environment

[1]Out of 12 answer choices that were offered in the original question. Analysis includes only respondents reporting a traditional employer–employee relationship, in which an employer hires the employee, pays them directly, and manages their work. Total, n = 17,566; Gen Z, n = 2,058; younger millennials, n = 4,825; older millennials, n = 4,565; Gen X, n = 3,742; younger baby boomers, n = 2,376.

McKinsey & Company

Why They STAY

1. **Workplace flexibility**
2. **Career development & advancement potential**
3. **Meaningful work**
4. **Reliable and supportive people at work**
5. **Safe workplace environment**
6. **Adequate total compensation**

When workers stay, their top preferences vary much more by age—and Gen Z is motivated by more than money.

Top reasons why respondents chose to stay in current job, by age group[1]

- ■ Adequate total compensation
- ■ Workplace flexibility
- ■ Meaningful work
- ■ Reliable and supportive people at work
- ■ Safe workplace environment
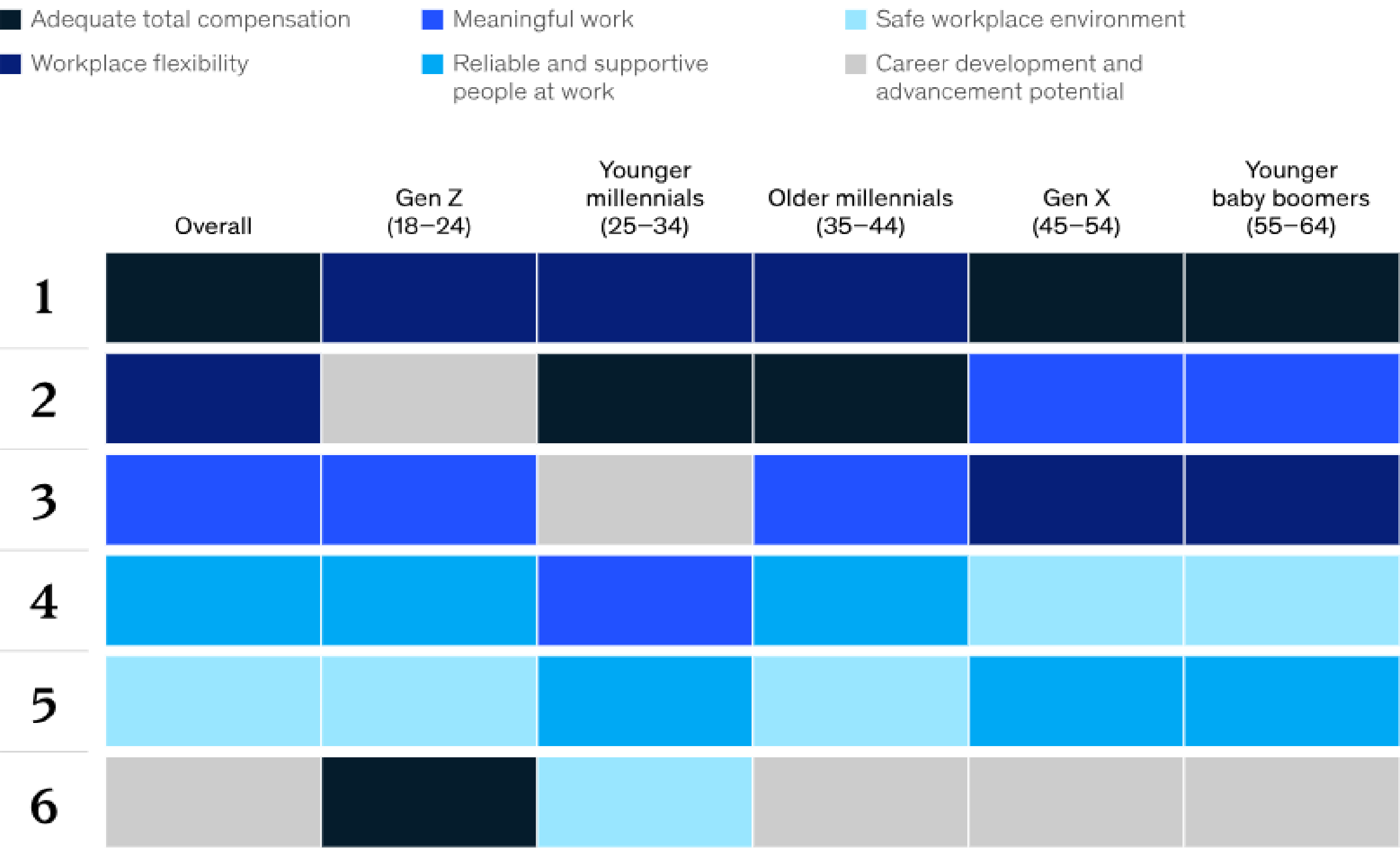- ■ Career development and advancement potential

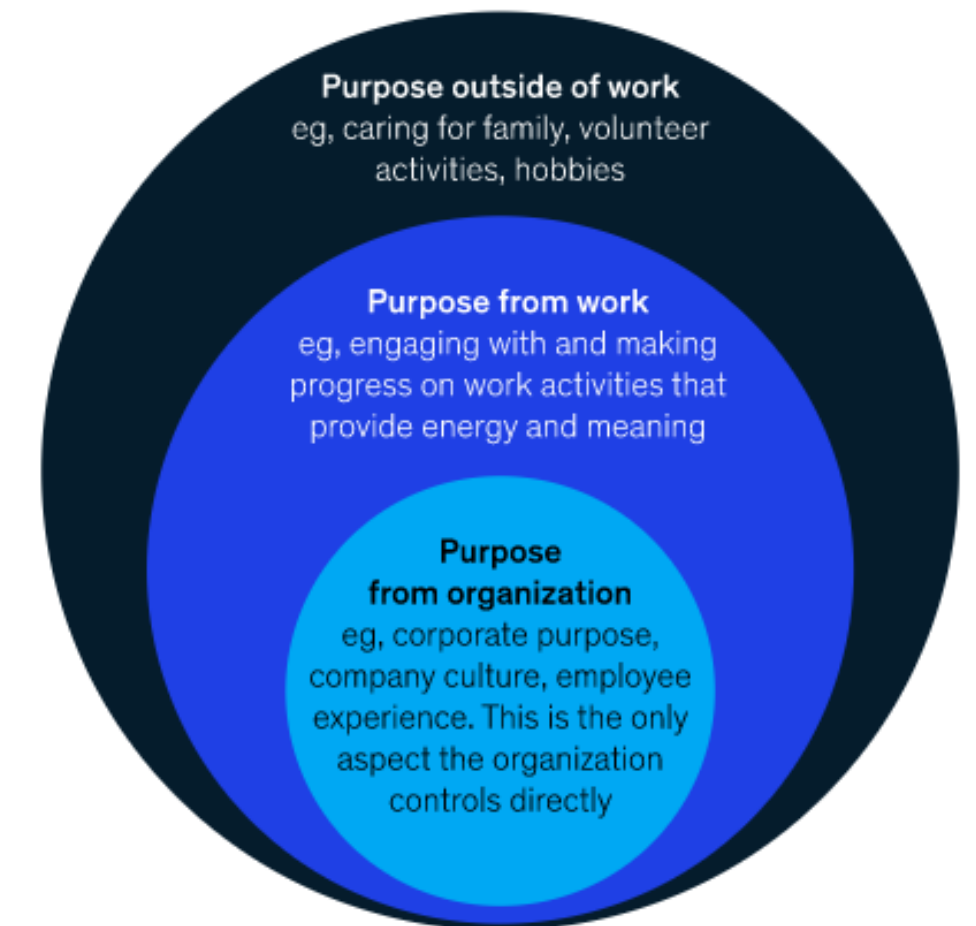[1]Out of 12 answer choices that were offered in the original question. Analysis includes only respondents reporting a traditional employer–employee relationship, in which an employer hires the employee, pays them directly, and manages their work. Total, n = 15,975; Gen Z, n = 1,280; younger millennials, n = 3,629; older millennials, n = 3,946; Gen X, n = 3,930; younger baby boomers, n = 3,190.

McKinsey & Company

Why They STAY

The relationship between individual purpose and work

> Research reveals that the most influential driver of G Zers' *happiness* is their sense of purpose both at wor in their personal life.

> At least 6 in 10 Gen Zers who are happy also say they they do something interesting every day (60%) both work and in their personal lives.

Purpose outside of work
eg, caring for family, volunteer activities, hobbies

Purpose from work
eg, engaging with and making progress on work activities that provide energy and meaning

Purpose from organization
eg, corporate purpose, company culture, employee experience. This is the only aspect the organization controls directly

Agenda

Current Landscape
Hello Gen Z
Why they Join, Leave & Stay
Upping your Leadership Game

Upping Your Strategic Leadership

Trust Building: Trust fuels influence; credibility unlocks budget and backing for every lever.

Change Management: Change stalls when people lag; leaders must run the change initiatives, not chase it.

Long-Term Focus: leaders map goals and objectives to the strategic 3–5-year horizon.

Innovation Leadership: Leaders ignite company-wide innovation—not just small iterative tweaks.

Customer Understanding: Customer pain-point intel drives staffing, skilling, and rewarding teams to drive loyalty and revenue.

Competitive Analysis: Spotting rival advantages guides leaders to plug skill gaps fast and keep the company ahead.

Decision-Making Agility: With only 70% of the data, leaders still have to decide fast.

Business Landscape Awareness: Inflation, regulation, and tech shifts redraw talent economics; leaders must spot trends first.

Profit Understanding: You can't lift margins without knowing the profit levers—price, volume, cost, risk.

1
2
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Elevate Your Communications

Close with Confidence

Lead with the "Why

Speak in Headlines

Elevate to Strategy

Anticipate Objections

Cut the Clutter

Quantify the Value

Frame for Decision-Making

Upping Leadership Across Generations

START Continue STOP
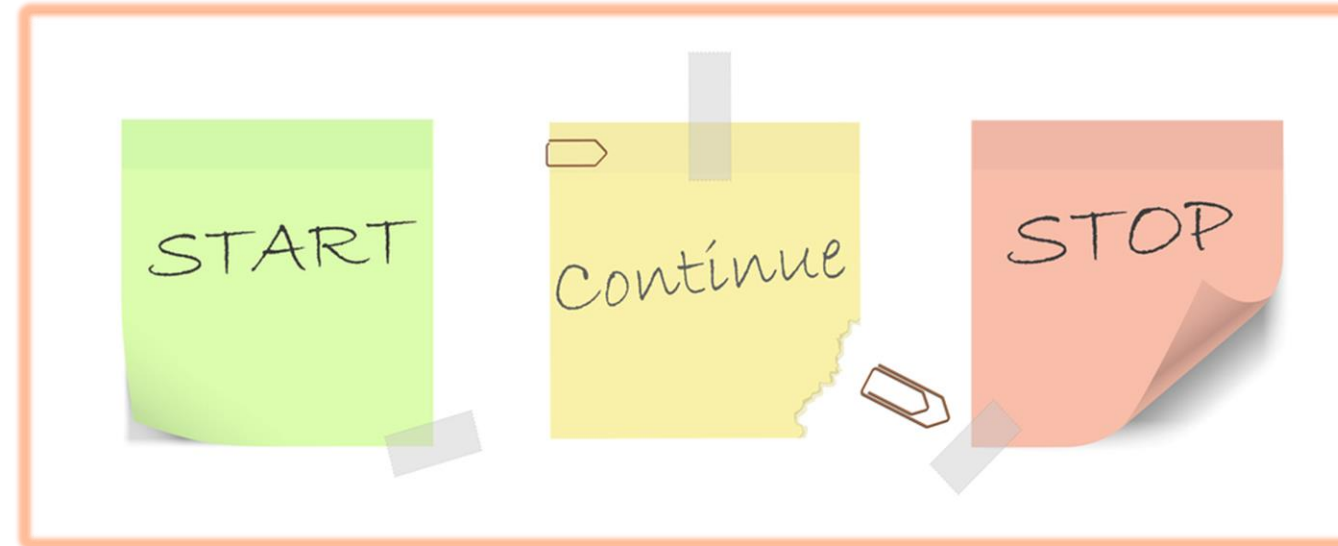
≫The most successful leaders recognize that no one generation has all the answers.

≫Information flows in all directions in a learning organization.

≫Leaders find a way to let every generation be heard.

Time: "Why are today's young people so skeptical?"

Newsweek: "The Whiny Generation"

Washington Post: "Grow Up, Crybabies"

New Normal

These are headlines from the early 80's decrying the arrival of Gen X!

Fostering Teamwork

✓ **Everyone wants to feel valued and respected.**
✓ **Everyone wants to feel like they are a part of something.**

Upping Leadership Across Generations

- ✓ See and be seen by all
- ✓ Assist everyone to maximize their potential
- ✓ Generously praise (4-to-1 ratio and ↑)
- ✓ Give staff time to do their job
- ✓ Ensure your team feels valued, supported and safe
- ✓ Be inspirational, approachable and friendly
- ✓ Make someone's day *every* day

Do's and Don't's of Leading Gen Z

DO…

- Mentor, coach and train them
- Give both positive and constructive feedback
- Embrace new technology
- Encourage and validate their thoughts and opinions
- Accommodate work/life balance
- Create a culture that values fairness
- Ensure they understand their role in the value they bring to the organization
- Provide professional *and* personal development opportunities

DON'T…

- Micromanage them
- Give only negative/constructive feedback
- Try to replace human appeal with technology
- Dismiss them or their thoughts or just not engage
- Force them to mold their workstyle to fit a "traditional" one
- Value only the chosen few
- Fail to define their purpose and why what they do matters
- Only focus on development that's good for the organization

Leading each Generation

	Baby Boomers	Generation X
Workplace Values & Preferences	• Value job security and advancement • Prefer in-person communication • Appreciate recognition for their contributions	• Value work-life balance • Prefer flexible work arrangements • Appreciate direct and honest communication
Work Style & Ethics	• Team-oriented and collaborative • Goal-driven and results-focused • Crave specific deadlines	• Prefer to work alone and place a high value on individual freedom • Self-reliant and resourceful • Embrace a work-hard-play-hard mentality • Want immediate and clear feedback
Ideal Workplace Environment	• Opportunities for career advancement • Respect and recognition of their experience and contributions • Comfortable working alone (although not preferred) and don't need as much feedback.	• Career development not as important as they will figure it out on their own! • Flexibility and autonomy • Opportunities for skill development • Fully embrace work from home
Attracting & Retaining Talent	• Provide opportunities for professional development • Acknowledge and reward their dedication	• Offer flexible work schedules • Emphasize growth opportunities

Leading each Generation

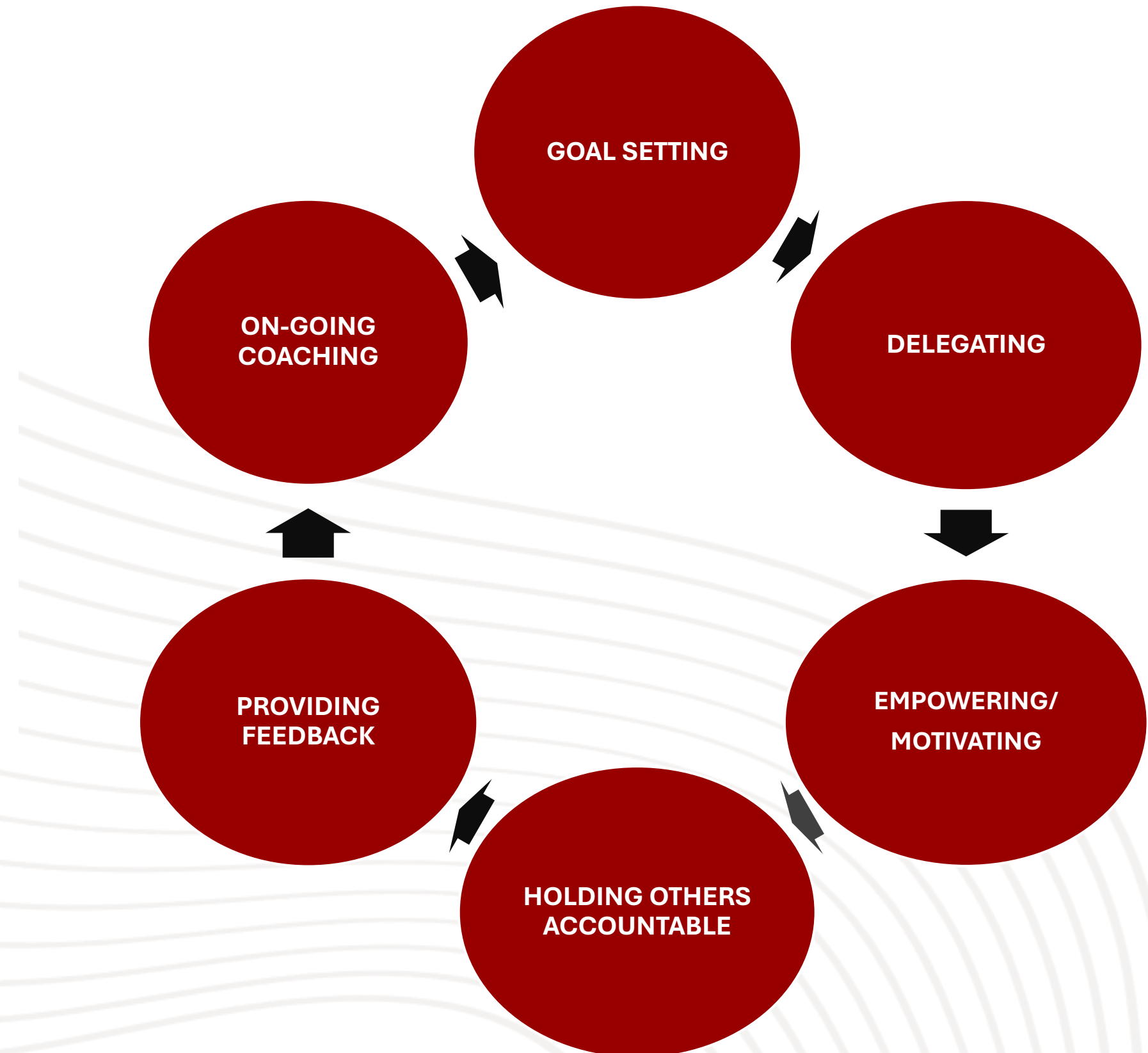|	**Millennials**	**Generation Z**
Workplace Values & Preferences	• Looking for career advancement (and $!) • Want something other than profits from their company • Prefer diverse and inclusive workplaces • Appreciate open and transparent communication	• Looking for their dream job • Value diversity & inclusion • Prefer a tech-enabled work environment • Appreciate authenticity & transparency
Work Style & Ethics	• Tech-savvy & collaborative • Prefers working in teams and brainstorming • Value innovation and creativity • When they come to the office, they prioritize teamwork and socializing. • Enjoy working as a group, brainstorming ideas with their colleagues, and learning from each other	• Independent and entrepreneurial • Seek opportunities for creative expression • Looking for a company that encourages and validates their input • Enjoys being with people/requires in-person interactions (more than Millennials), but prefer to work individually
Ideal Workplace Environment	• Inclusive and diverse culture • Opportunities for career growth & mentorship • Freedom to make their schedules/work remotely • Considered the most educated generation; continuous learning is part of their identity	• Tech-driven and collaborative • Opportunities for rapid advancement • Zoom calls and 1-on-1 interactions • Boss that regularly coaches and provides feedback
Attracting & Retaining Talent	• Embrace diversity and inclusion initiatives • Provide opportunities for skill development & mentorship • Time to make "real" money although benefits are important as well	• Provide access to cutting edge technology • Offer opportunities for social impact • Mentorships, wellness programs and career opportunities are critical to this generation

Do's & Don'ts of Leading ALL Generations

Be great at the basics!!!

- GOAL SETTING
- DELEGATING
- EMPOWERING/ MOTIVATING
- HOLDING OTHERS ACCOUNTABLE
- PROVIDING FEEDBACK
- ON-GOING COACHING

Teach/require your managers to give feedback & coach their direct reports.

Gen Z and millennial workers want mentorship from their managers, but organizations may need to rethink manager roles to make that happen

Please compare what you believe the key role of supervisors should be in the workplace as well as your actual experience in dealing with supervisors
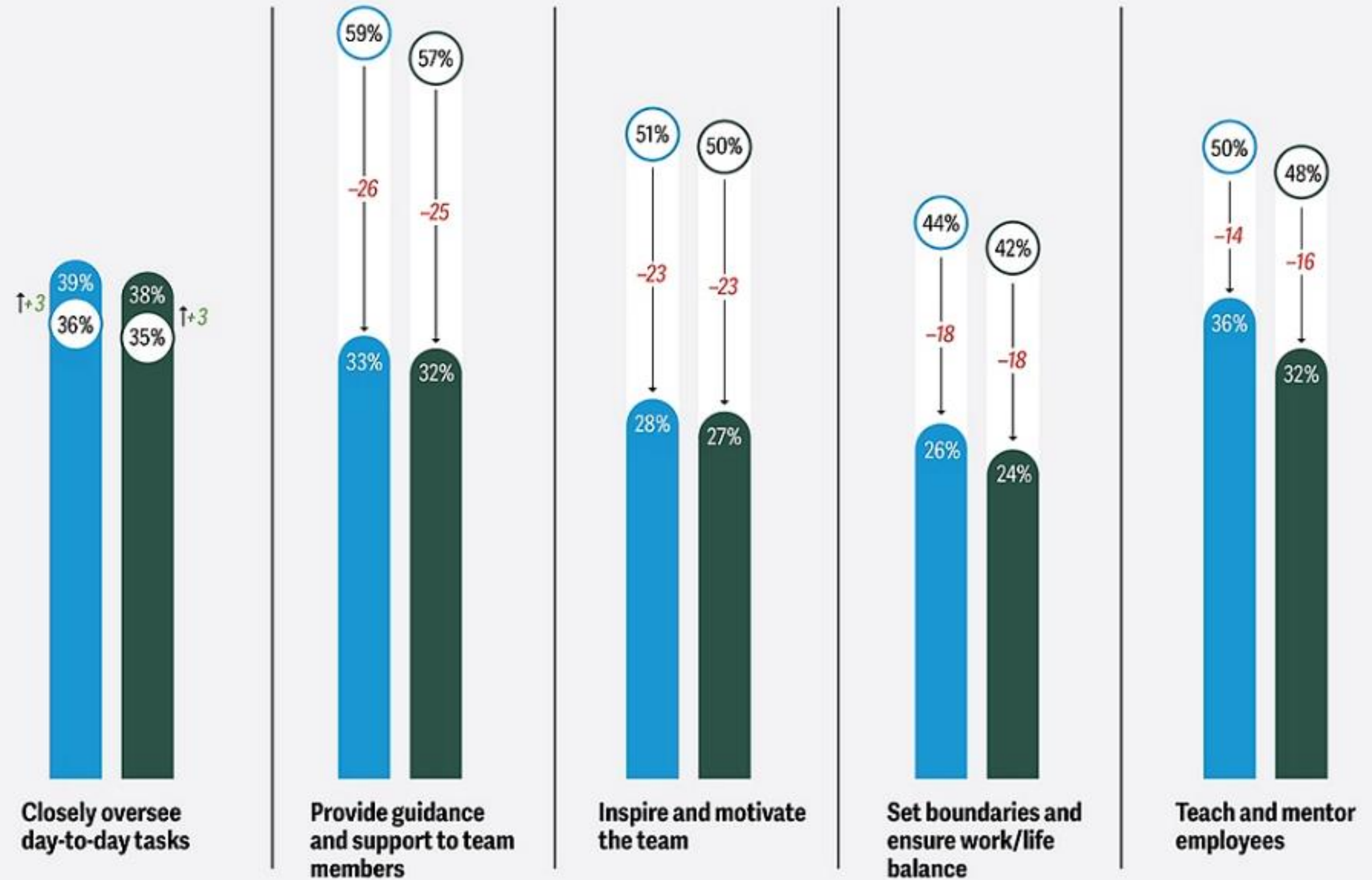
Up People Leadership at Your Organization

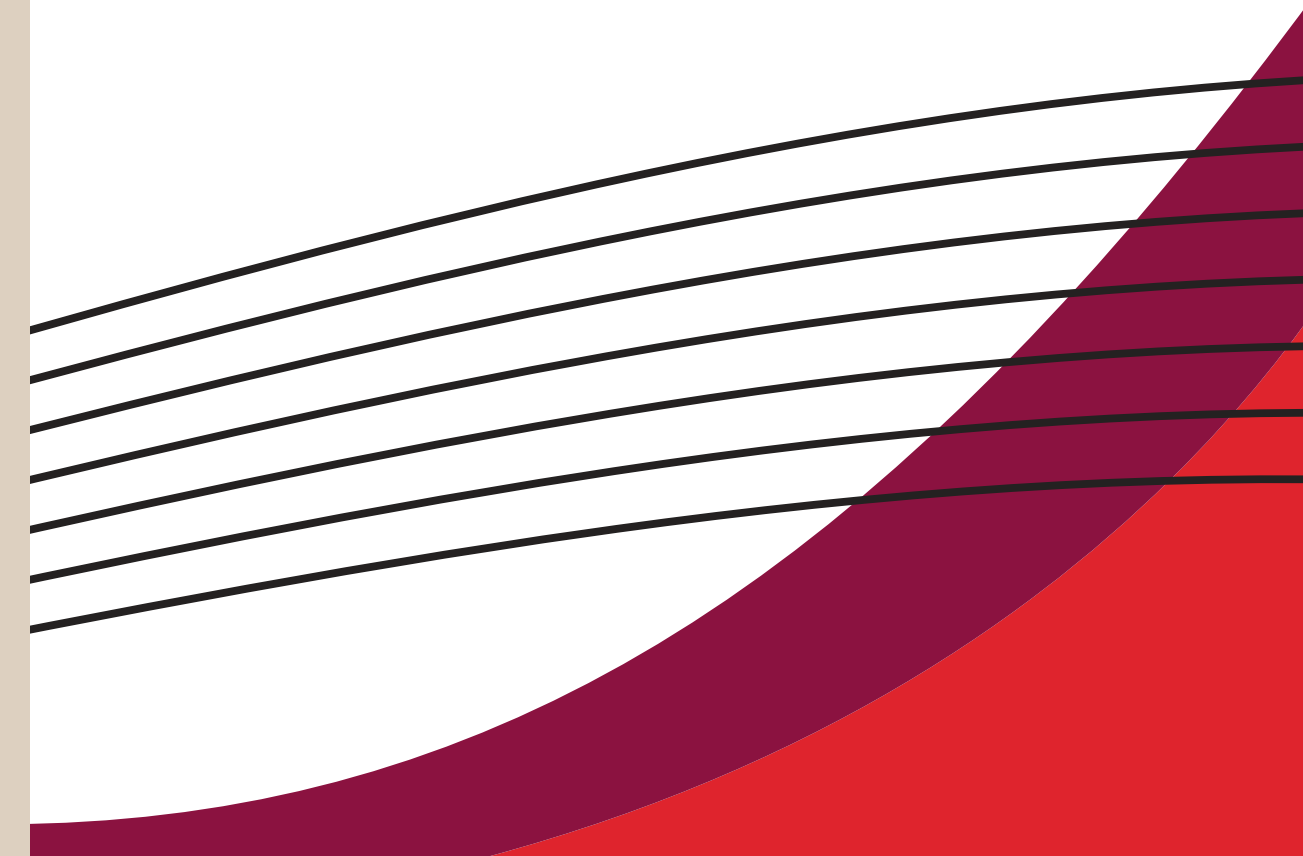| Micromanaging		Empowering	Accountability levers
Controlling		Autonomy	Set goals/gets out of the way
Monitoring		Encouraging	Listen regularly/give feedback
Authoritarian		Leading	Teach forward thinking
Telling		Developing	Ask questions vs. telling
Status Quo		Risk Taking	Seek input/try new things
Solves Problems		Coaches	Push beyond routines
Task Master		Visionary	Unleash innovation
Being Right		What is Right	Develop strategic chops

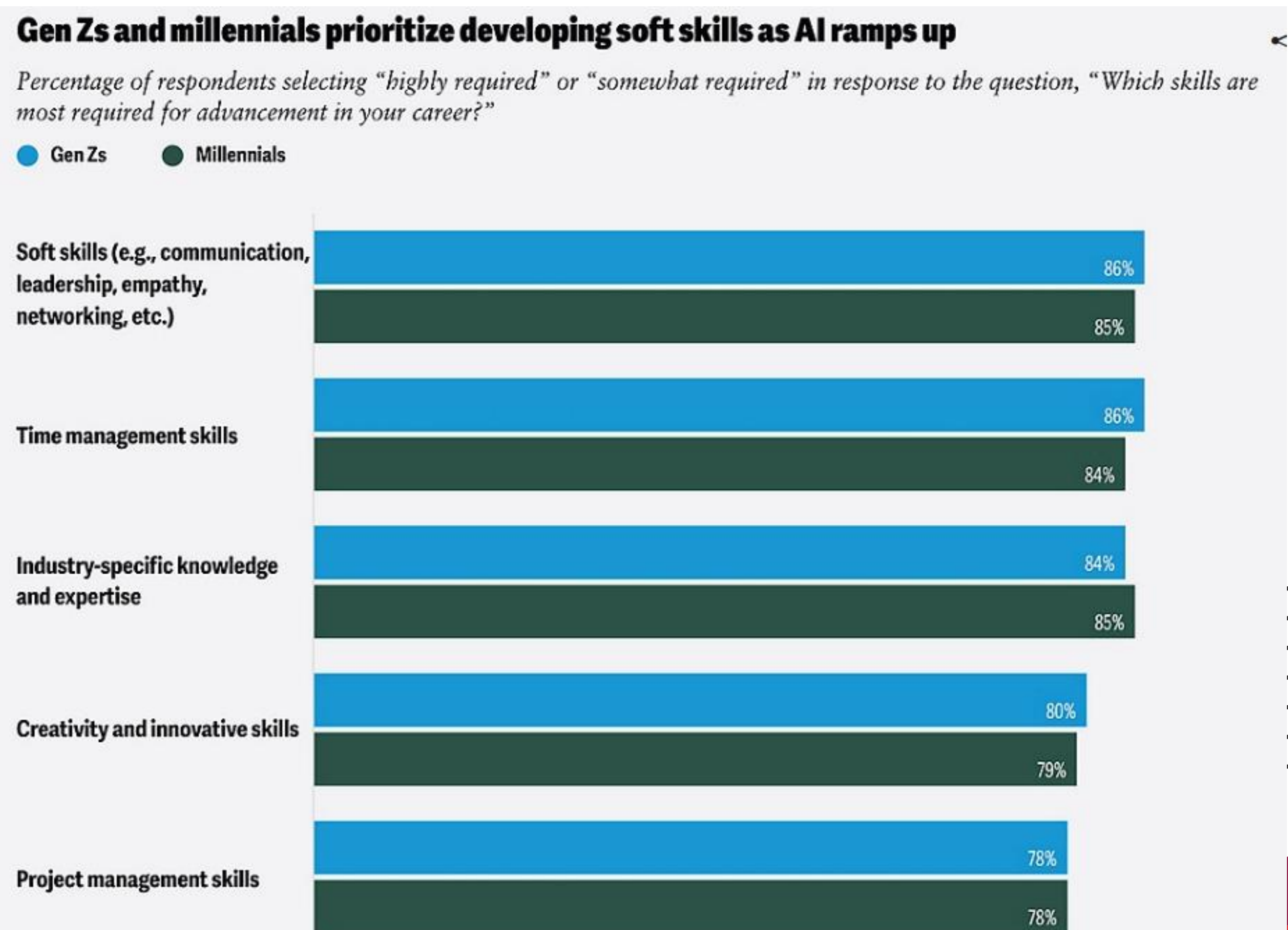STABILITY

CHANGE

Give Employees a "Seat at the Table"

Create a Pathway for Your Employees

However, "conscious unbossing" is a trend to watch.

Focus on L&D *in addition to* Traditional Promotions

Gen Zs and millennials prioritize developing soft skills as AI ramps up

Percentage of respondents selecting "highly required" or "somewhat required" in response to the question, "Which skills are most required for advancement in your career?"

● Gen Zs   ● Millennials

Skill	Gen Zs	Millennials
Soft skills (e.g., communication, leadership, empathy, networking, etc.)	86%	85%
Time management skills	86%	84%
Industry-specific knowledge and expertise	84%	85%
Creativity and innovative skills	80%	79%
Project management skills	78%	78%

Nipping Inter-Generational Issues in the Bud

- Lead discussion/training on communication norms/preferences
- Discuss how to engage in verbal dialogue to work through conflict
- Discuss how to show respect to each generation
- Teach everyone how to mentor effectively
- Ensure promotional requirements/opportunities are clearly defined
- Do not allow generalities like "never" or "always" and define "they"
- Share everyone's goals
- Remember: no "kids" or "parents" present
- Get agreement: assume positive intent
- Create a TEAM!

For HR Attendees:
Strengthen Leadership Beyond HR

HR's Strategic Partnership Role

Lead Innovation Efforts

Facilitate organizational change

Execute key *organizational* initiatives

- Understand how your company makes and loses money and how your people fit in.
- **Embed yourself in areas tied to the bottom line.**

- **70% of transformation fails due to the people side of things.**
- No one understands the people side of the business better than YOU.

Where to Start?

What's *one* leadership shift you will commit to making in the next 10 days to better lead across generations?

YOU!

Thank You!!!

For copies of these slides, email me at
vgrubb@valgrubb.com or scan the QR code:

For more ideas on solving generational issues?

Pick up my book on Amazon!