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# Research Summary on Generational Differences

Organisation: Ballyhoura Development CLG  
Country: Ireland



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

## Partners



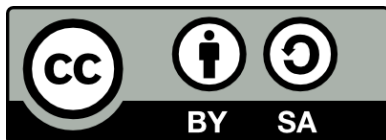
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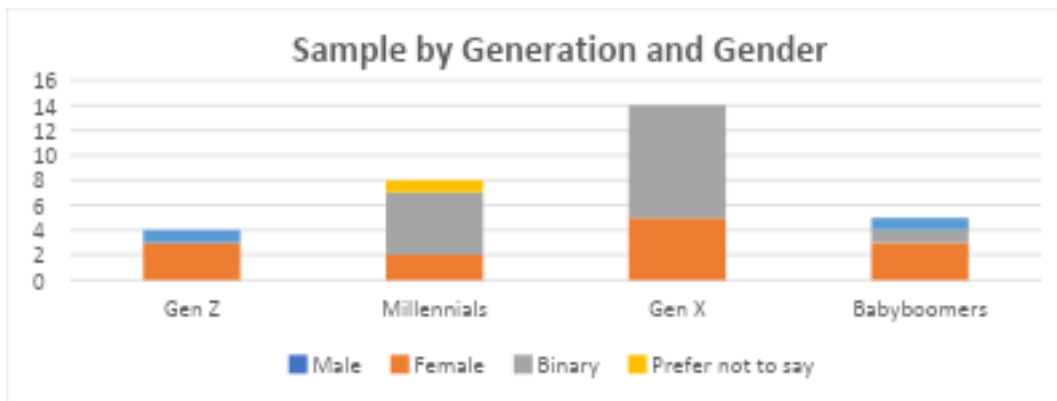
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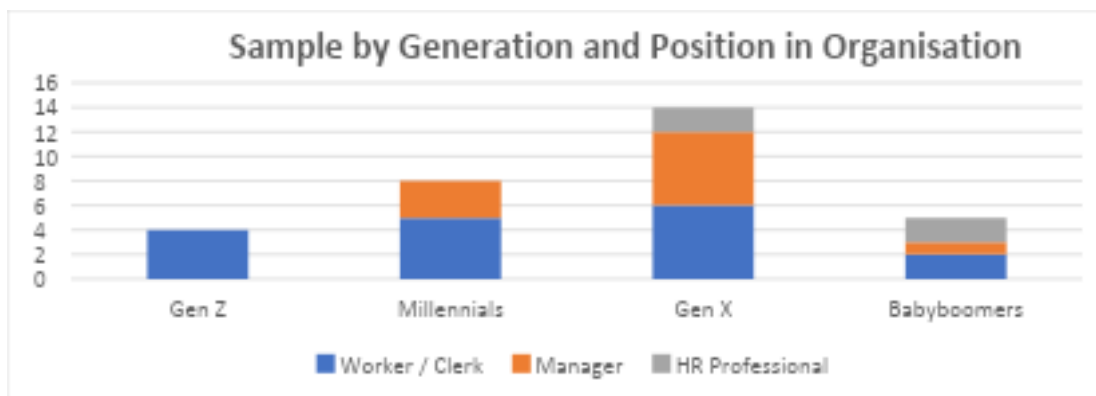
# 1. General Information

Each generation is represented in the sample of thirty-one survey respondents from Ireland. Gen X account for the largest cohort making up 45% of participants, followed by Millennials at 26%, Baby Boomers at 16% and Gen Z at 13%

48% of respondents were male, 42% female, 3% binary and 7% preferring not to say. Males accounted for the majority of Gen Z and Baby Boomer respondents reflecting the higher participation rates of males of these generation in the Irish labour force. Millennial and Gen X respondents were predominantly female.



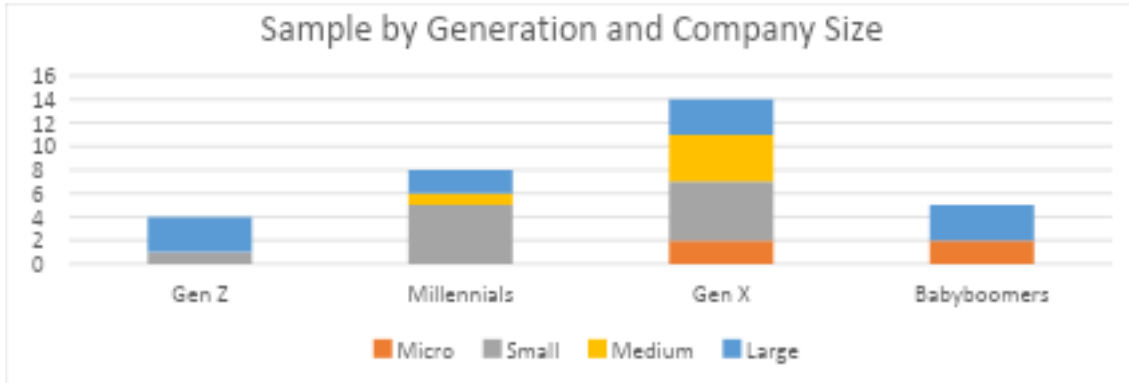
55% of respondents were workers or clerks, 32% managers and 13% HR professionals. Neither Trade Union representatives or employers feature in the survey. The fact that all Gen Z respondents were workers or clerks is indicative of their relative youth and the importance of experience and seniority in accessing management roles in Ireland. Managers were represented in all other generations while HR professional were represented in the Gen X and Baby Boomer cohort.



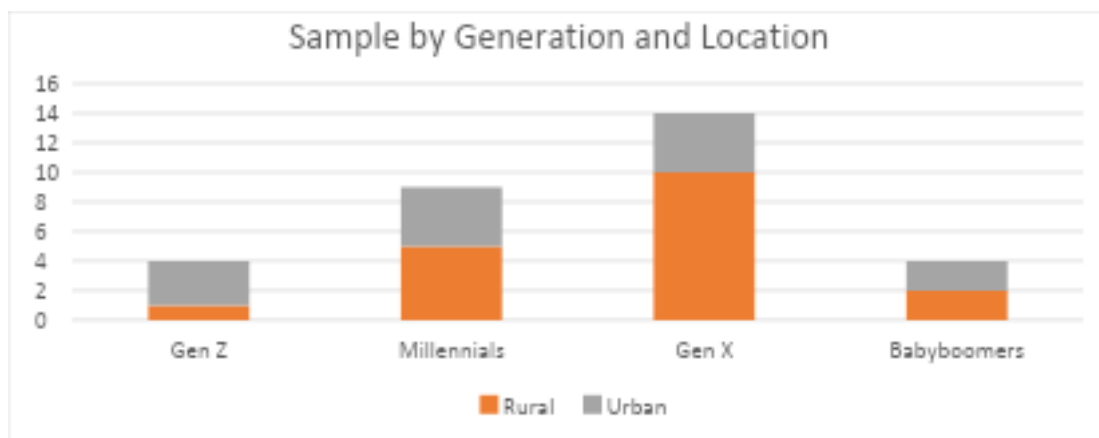
The majority of respondents worked in either small or large companies (36% each) while 15% worked in medium enterprises and 13% in micro enterprises. The majority of Millennial respondents worked in small enterprises while both Gen Z and Baby Boomers were more likely to work in large companies. Although



Gen X has the most diversity in company size with the majority of this generation employed in small businesses.



58% of respondents worked in rural areas and 42% worked in urban areas. Millennials and Gen X were more likely to work in rural areas. Gen Z were more likely to work in urban areas reflecting the propensity of this generation to move to urban areas on leaving school or further education. Baby Boomers were equally split between urban and rural locations

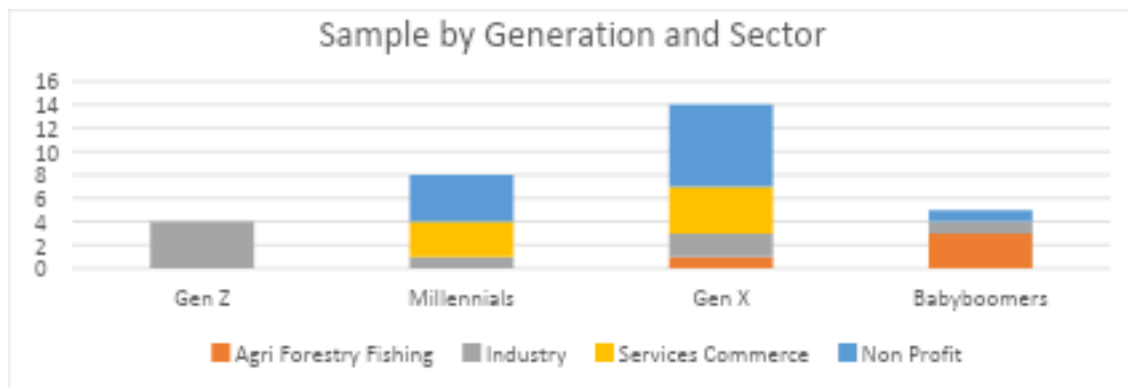


A large cohort of respondents worked in the Charity / Non-Profit sector, followed by industry, services and commerce and lastly Agriculture, Fishing & Forestry.



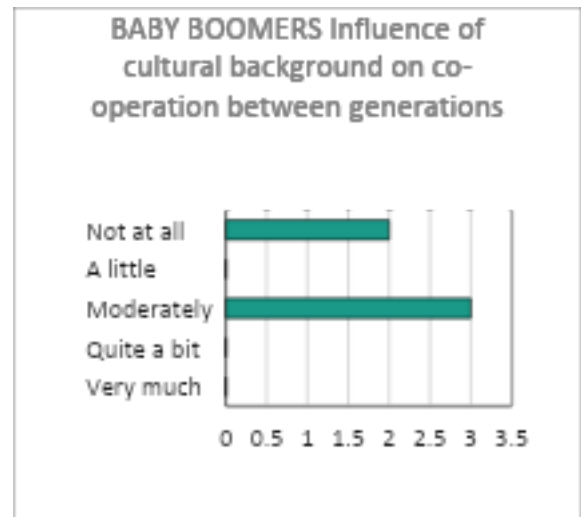
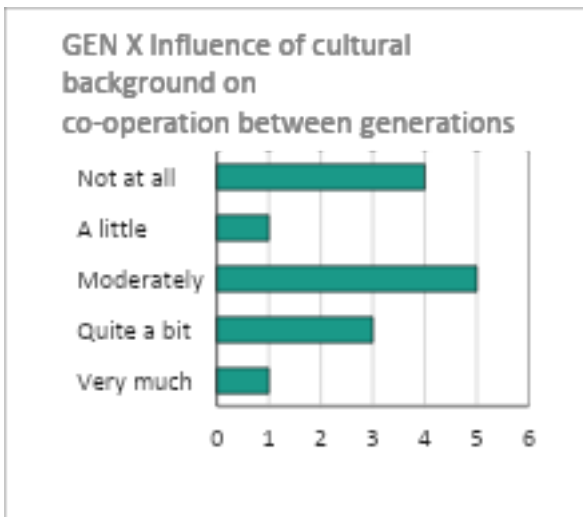
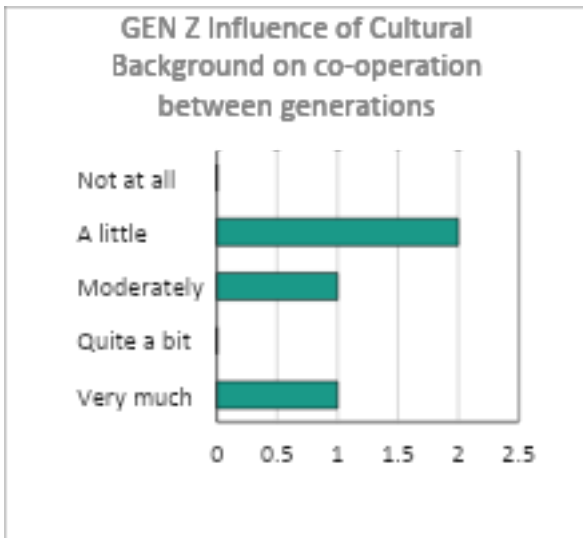
This sample does not reflect the overall sectoral employment in Ireland where just 7% of the workforce are employed in the Charity / Non-Profit Sector.

The majority of Baby Boomers worked in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. However, a declining percentage of Gen X and Millennials work in this area with zero representation of Gen Z in this sector. This result reflects the reliance of the older generation in rural parts of Ireland on traditional employment and the movement of younger workers away from this sector.



## 2. Culture and Generations

The survey results show significant difference in beliefs around the influence of cultural background in co-operation between generations. Baby Boomers believed that cultural background was either moderately important or not important at all, Gen X views were mixed, the majority of Millennials believed that the influence of cultural background is “quite a bit” important. Interestingly Gen Z was the only generation where no respondent believed that cultural background was irrelevant.



In relation to experience in the workplace, 75% of Gen Z, 50% of Millennials, 57% of Gen X and 40% of Baby Boomers did not report any instances of witnessing intercultural differences causing issues across

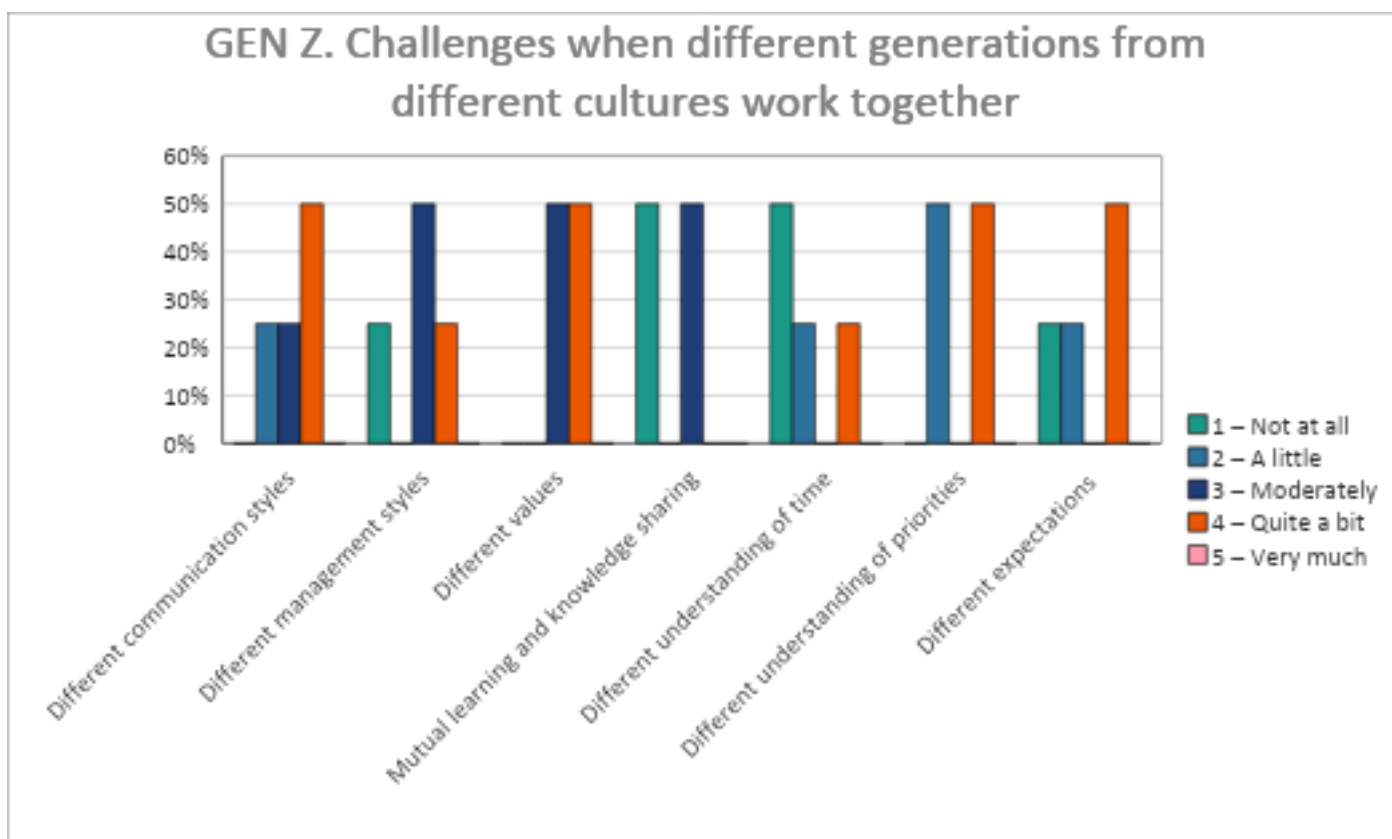
generations. Of note is the fact that 20% of Gen X commented on the positive aspects of intercultural exchange across generations.

The areas where issues related to cultural background arose included

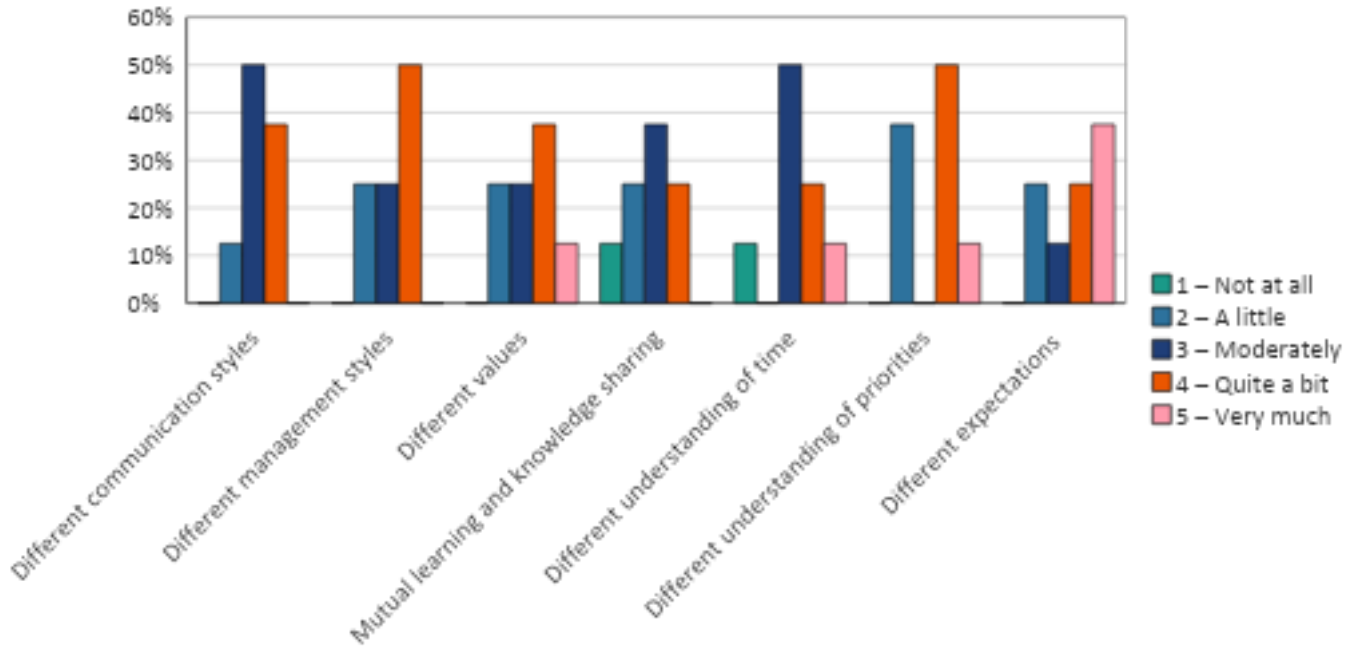
- dress code,
- values
- skills
- communication
- religion

There was broad agreement across generations on what types of challenges are present in the workplace when different generations work together. All generations were of the opinion that different management styles and different communication styles can be moderately challenging. All generations agreed that differing expectations and differing priorities posed a significant challenge. Mutual learning and understanding were not considered a challenge by any generation. Interestingly both Millennials and Gen Z believed that different understanding of time across generations can pose a challenge in the workplace.

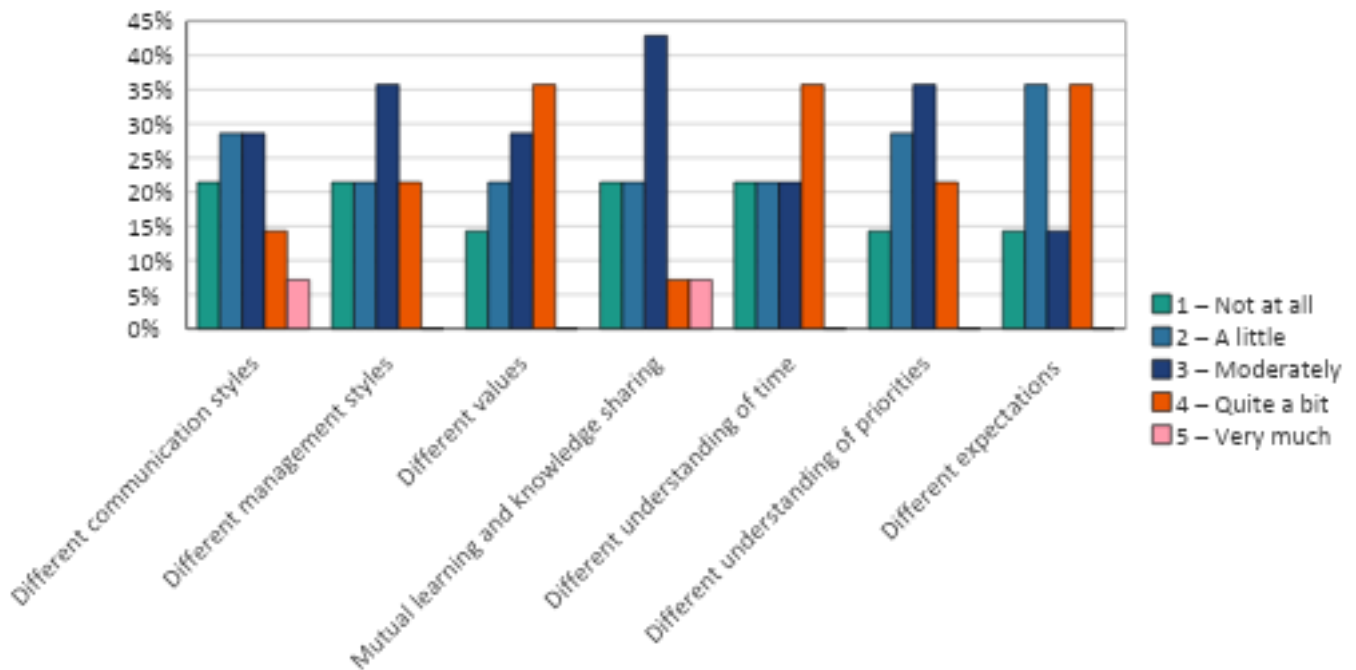
A full analysis of results on this section can be seen in the tables below.



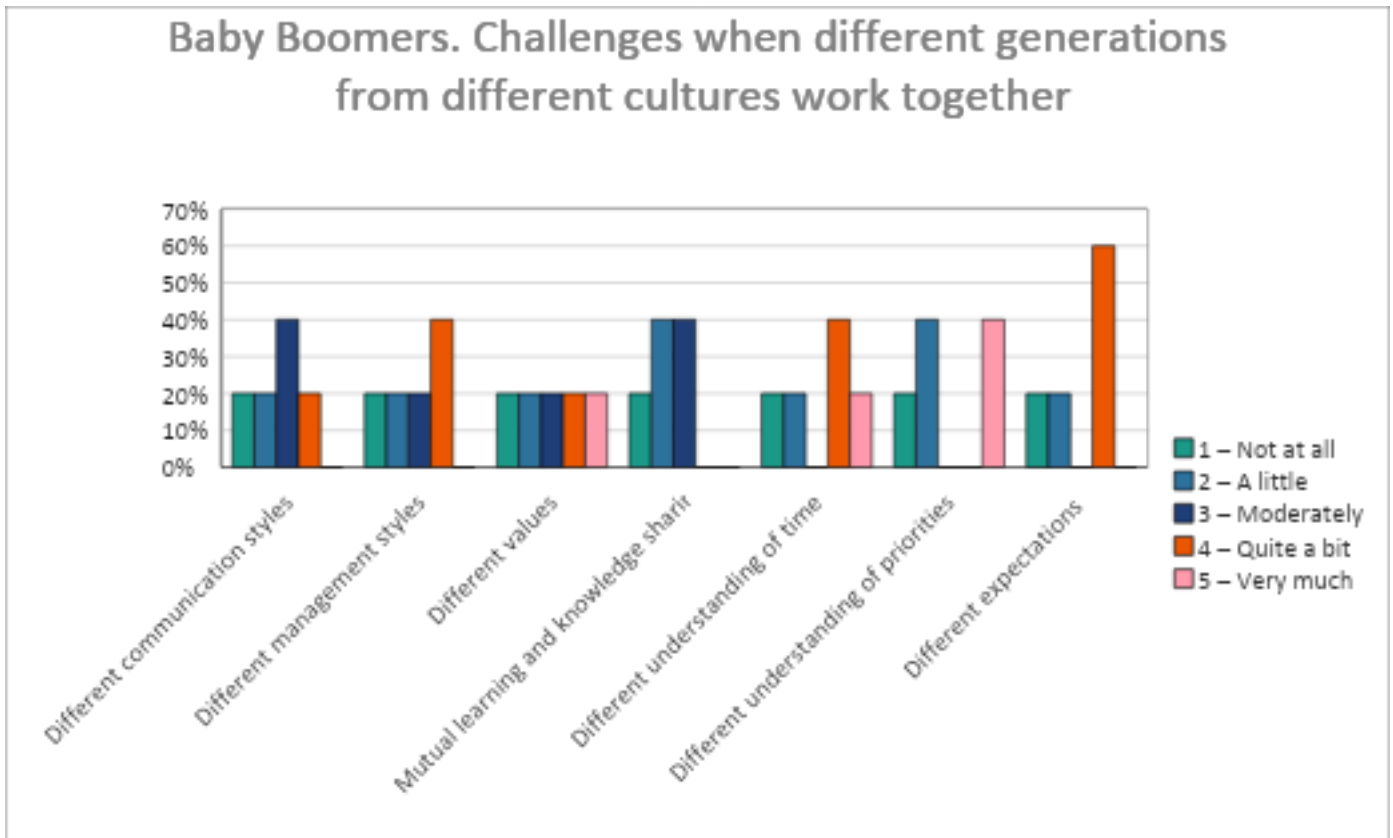
### Millennials . Challenges when different generations from different cultures work together



### GEN X.Challenges when different generations from different cultures work together







When asked how their own generation perceived cultural differences in the workplace on a scale of 1 -5 the following results were of interest.

50% of Gen X strongly believed (rating 5) that cultural differences presented an opportunity for co-operation while 30% believed that cultural differences present a challenge and that cultural differences strongly effect ways of working and communicating (rating 4)

25% of Gen Z believed there are no cultural differences but 50% believed that cultural differences, where they do exist, present an opportunity for co-operation.

This indicates that cultural differences are acknowledged and that cultural challenges can be converted into opportunities in the workplace

In relation to which generation has best approach to cultural differences the overwhelming response was Gen Z which featured in 55% of replies. This was followed by Millennials at 23% and Gen X at 10%. Baby Boomers were absent as they did not feature in any response.

All other responses mentioned that personal values rather than age determine a person’s attitude to different cultures.

Respondents mentioned changes in Irish society resulting in Gen Z growing up in a multi-cultural society with awareness of diversity from a young age.

### 3. Communication between generations – Conflict Prevention and Management

#### Modes of Communication

74% of total respondents believe that face to face meetings are the least important mode of communication for Gen Z while the same percentage believed that Instant Messaging is the preferred mode of communication for this generation. 71% believe that face to face meetings are the most important mode of communication for Baby Boomers. Phone, email and video call were perceived as “a little” or “moderately” important across all generations while collaborative tools were not seen as the most important mode of communication for any generation.

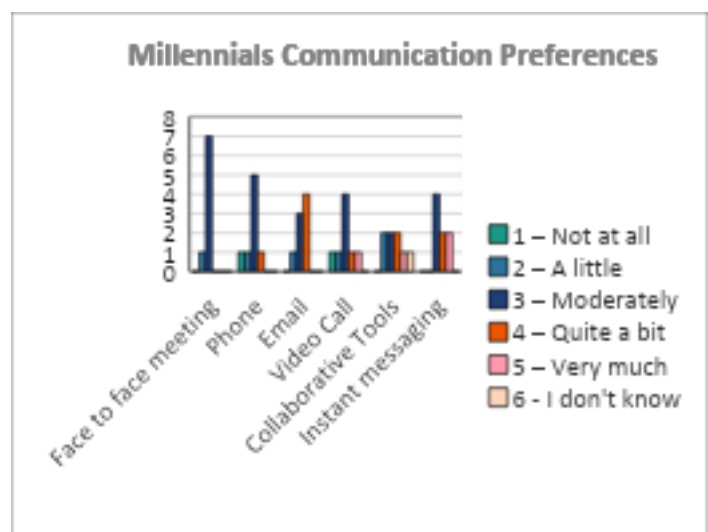
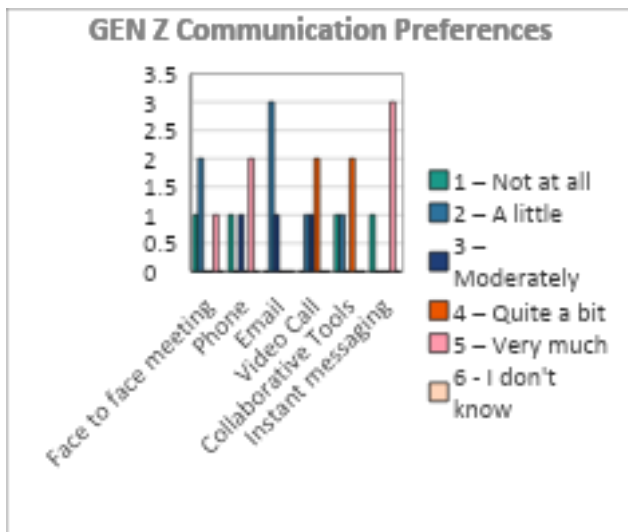
When the results were analysed across generations the stereotypes were generally confirmed with:

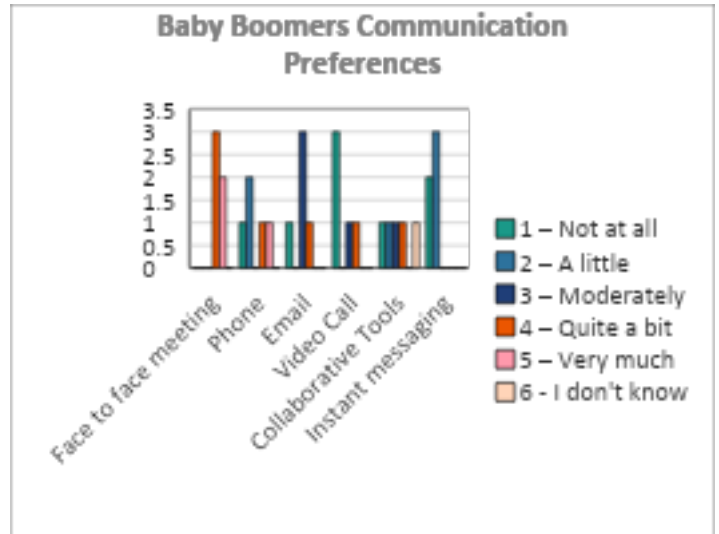
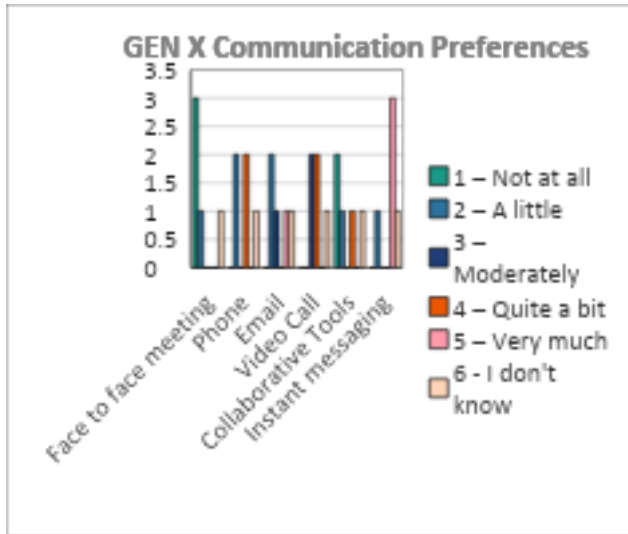
**Gen Z** respondents rating Instant Messaging as their preferred mode of communication and rating face-to-face meetings as unimportant.

**Baby Boomers** expressed a preference for face-to -face and phone communication and rated Instant Messaging and Video Call as unimportant.

**Millennial** responses were varied with all modes of communication ranking as moderately important.

**Gen X** ranked face to face meetings, phone and email highly but also rated video call, collaborative tools and instant messaging as moderately important. This may reflect the fact that our Gen X respondents were the most diverse generation in terms of business sector and position in the company, possibly working with a diverse range of co-workers across all generations.





### Communication Preferences as a source of Misunderstanding & Conflict

**Gen Z** 50% have experienced communication preferences leading to misunderstanding. In each case the misunderstanding arose from use of instant messaging by the younger party where the older party believed that a phone call was needed.

**Millennials** 75% reported incidences where communication preferences led to misunderstanding. One third of instances mentioned tone and language used in email being misconstrued as aggression by a younger colleague. Concern was also expressed that a phone discussion with a Baby Boomer colleague will not result in action and that email or written communication is also required. Other instances related to difficulty contacting older workers when they do not use messaging apps.

**Gen X** 57% reported communication preferences leading to misunderstanding mainly in the use of instant messaging by younger co-workers. Issues were also raised in relation to etiquette in online meetings and younger workers refusing to attend in person meetings.

**Baby Boomers** 25% (1 person) reported miscommunication leading to misunderstanding and conflict around the use of email. This misunderstanding was also related to a new employee adjusting to the organisations culture.

### Sources of Conflict in the Workplace

When asked to rate potential sources of conflict in the workplace 29% of total respondents rated behaviour as “very likely” to cause conflict. A similar number rated identity-based conflict as the least likely. When analysed across generations the following results emerged with behaviour-based conflict ranking highly across all generations.

Value based conflict was mentioned as “Very likely” to cause conflict by all but Gen Z, while Identity based conflict was considered very likely to cause conflict only by the two younger generations.

When asked to describe situations where conflict arose from one of the issues above (identity, values, behaviour and organisational culture)

**Gen Z** reported no incidences.

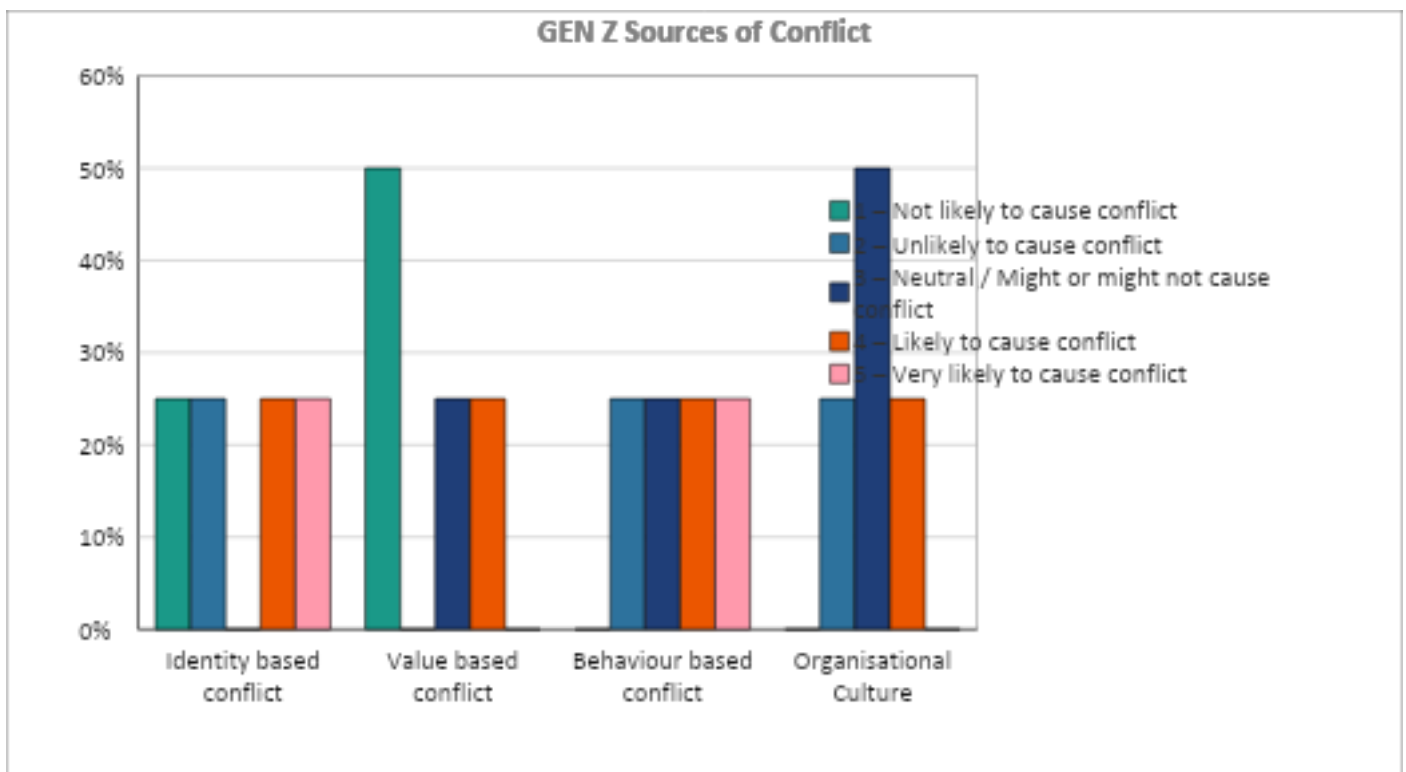


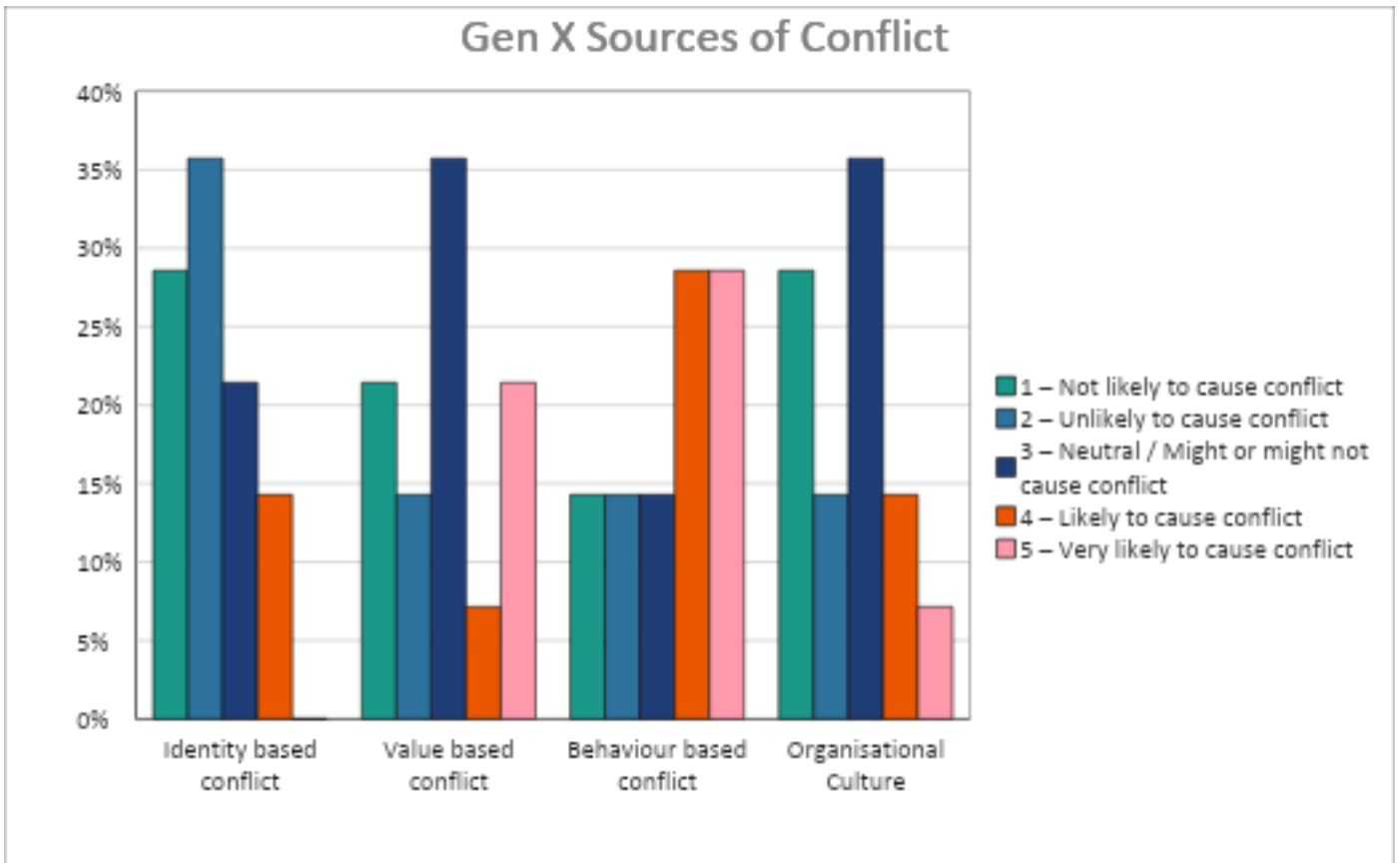
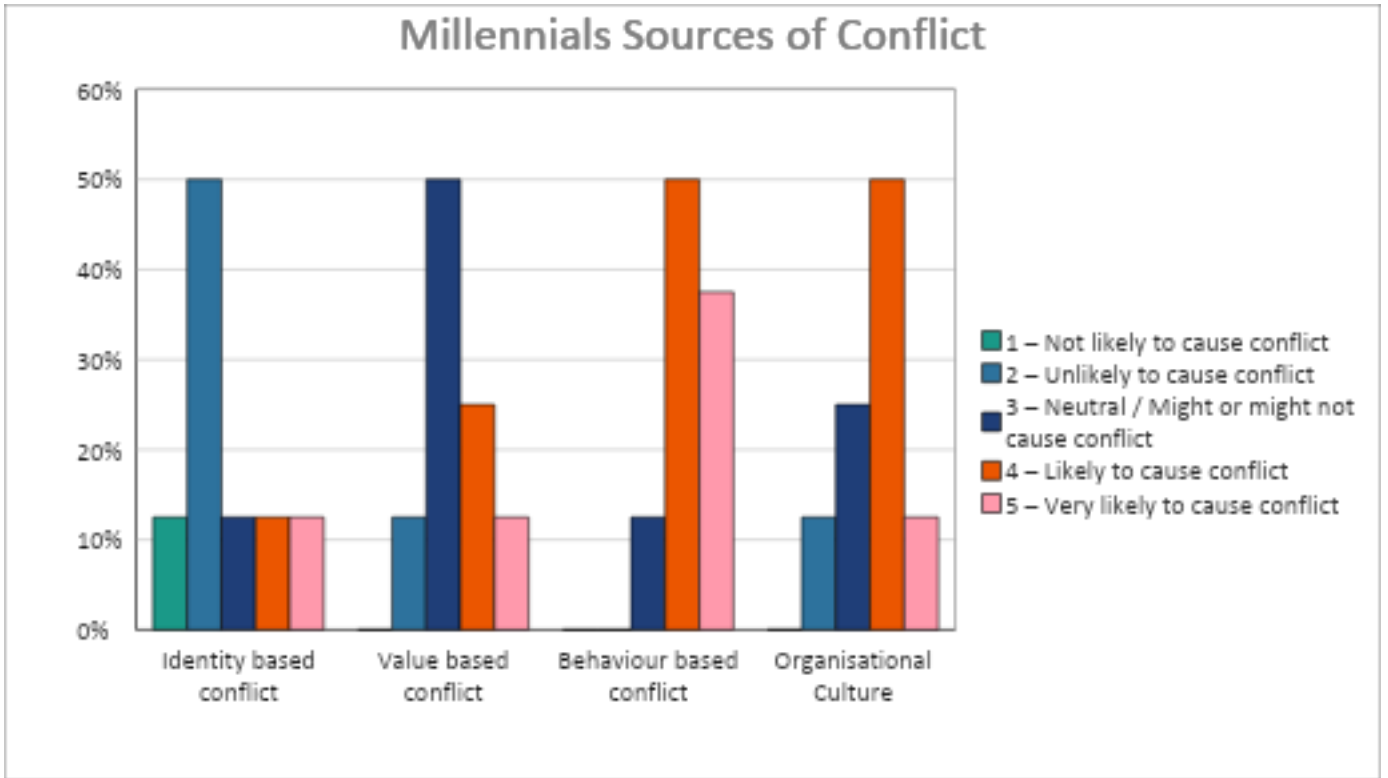
**Millennials** Conflicts were reported by 50% of Millennials in the following areas with only one instance having a clear generational divide.

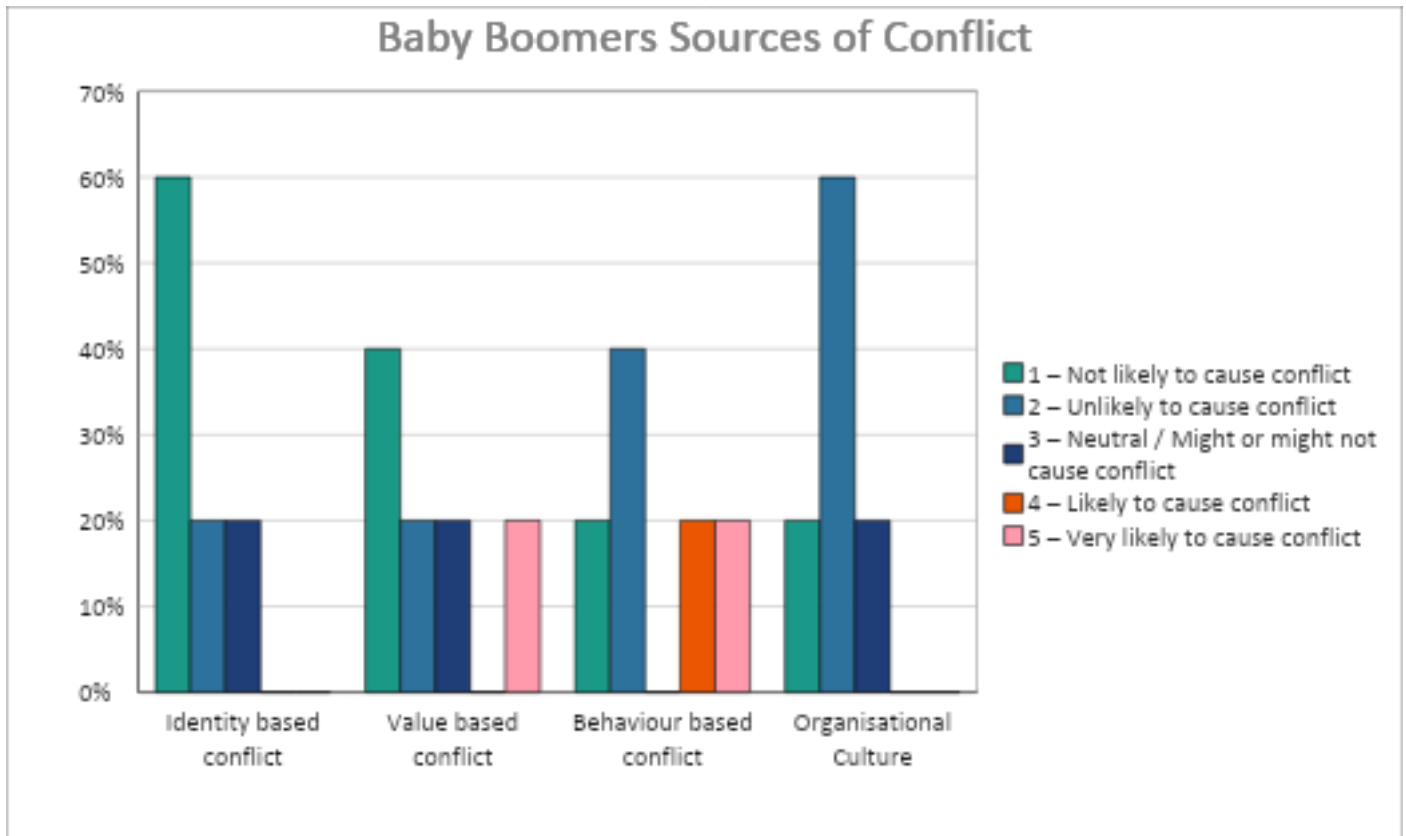
- Values – Discussions around abortion referendum in the workplace although not work related led to conflict among co-workers
- Organisational Culture – Company policy in relation to Working from Home can cause conflict with a clear generational divide with younger people preferring to work from home
- Communication Style - direct versus indirect communication with regard to interpersonal problem solving

**Gen Z** 50% of Gen Z also reported experience of conflict in the workplace in the areas of behaviour and values. This generation also experienced conflict where an older worker expressed views about a minority ethnic group. Interestingly when conflict escalated there was no clear generational divide noted by this cohort.

**Baby Boomers** 40% of Baby Boomers reported conflict between generations, most notably in relation to willingness to work overtime and weekends.

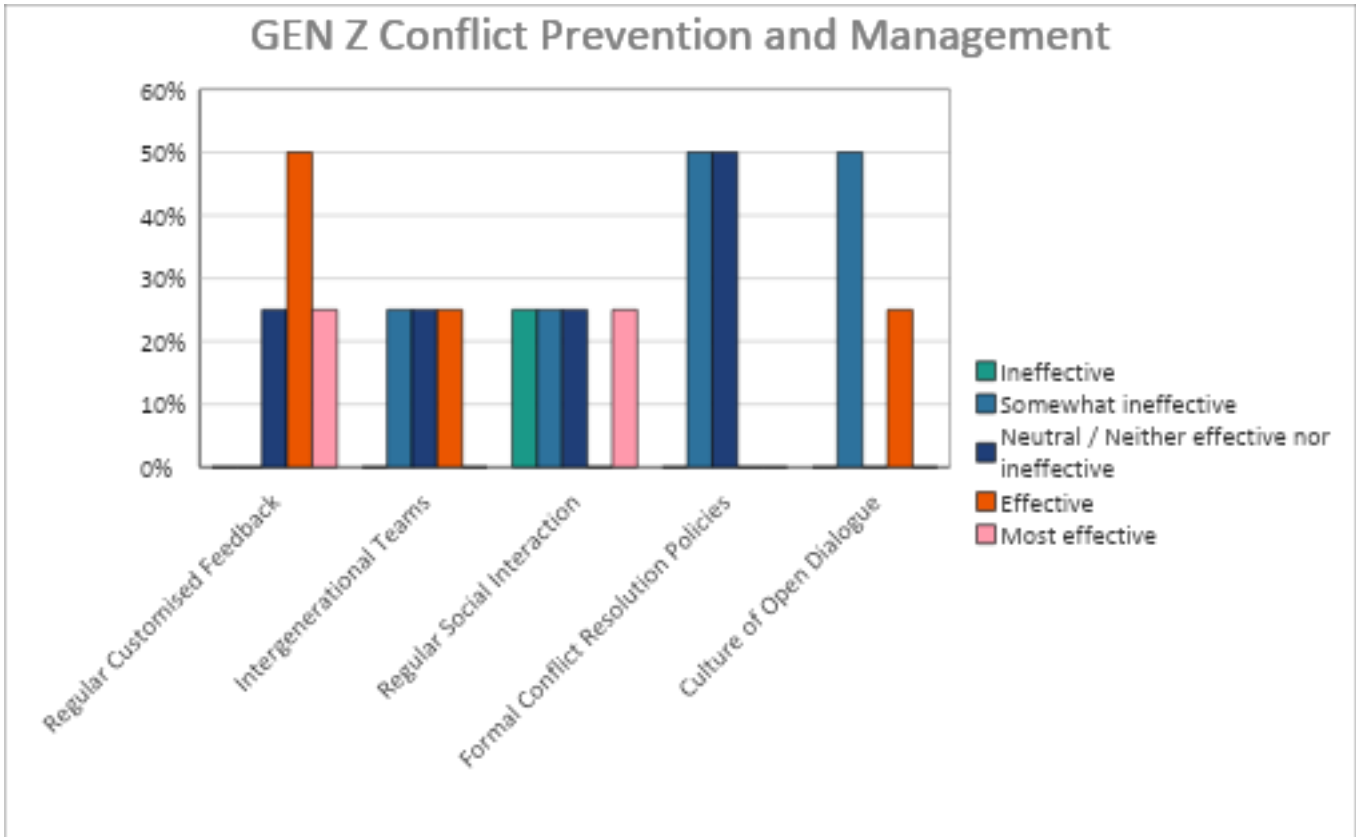




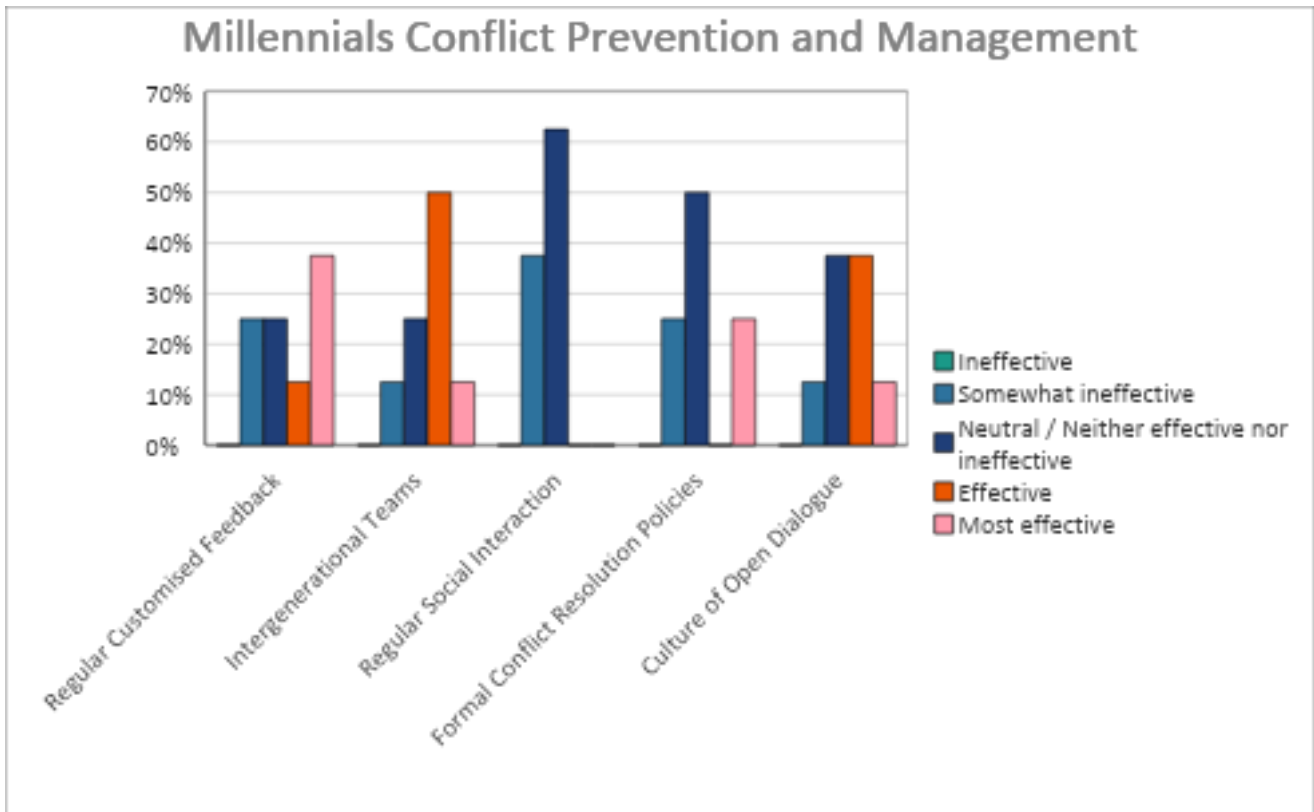


### Conflict Prevention and Management

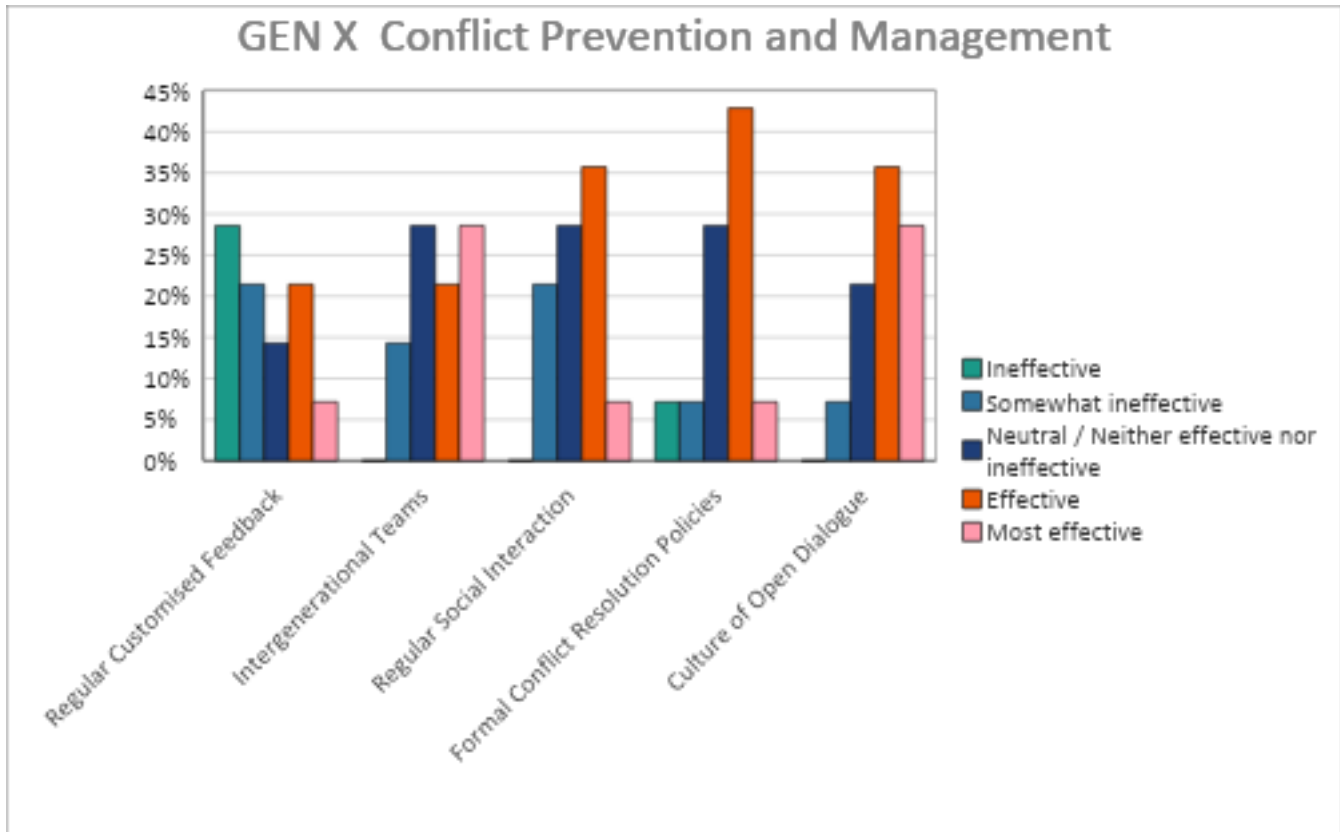
**Gen Z** results were inconclusive with an equal number rating regular social interaction as both the most and least effective method of conflict prevention. However regular customised feedback and culture of open dialogue were both rated highly by this generation.



**Millennials** results were also mixed with regular social interaction seen as neutral or somewhat ineffective by the majority of respondents.



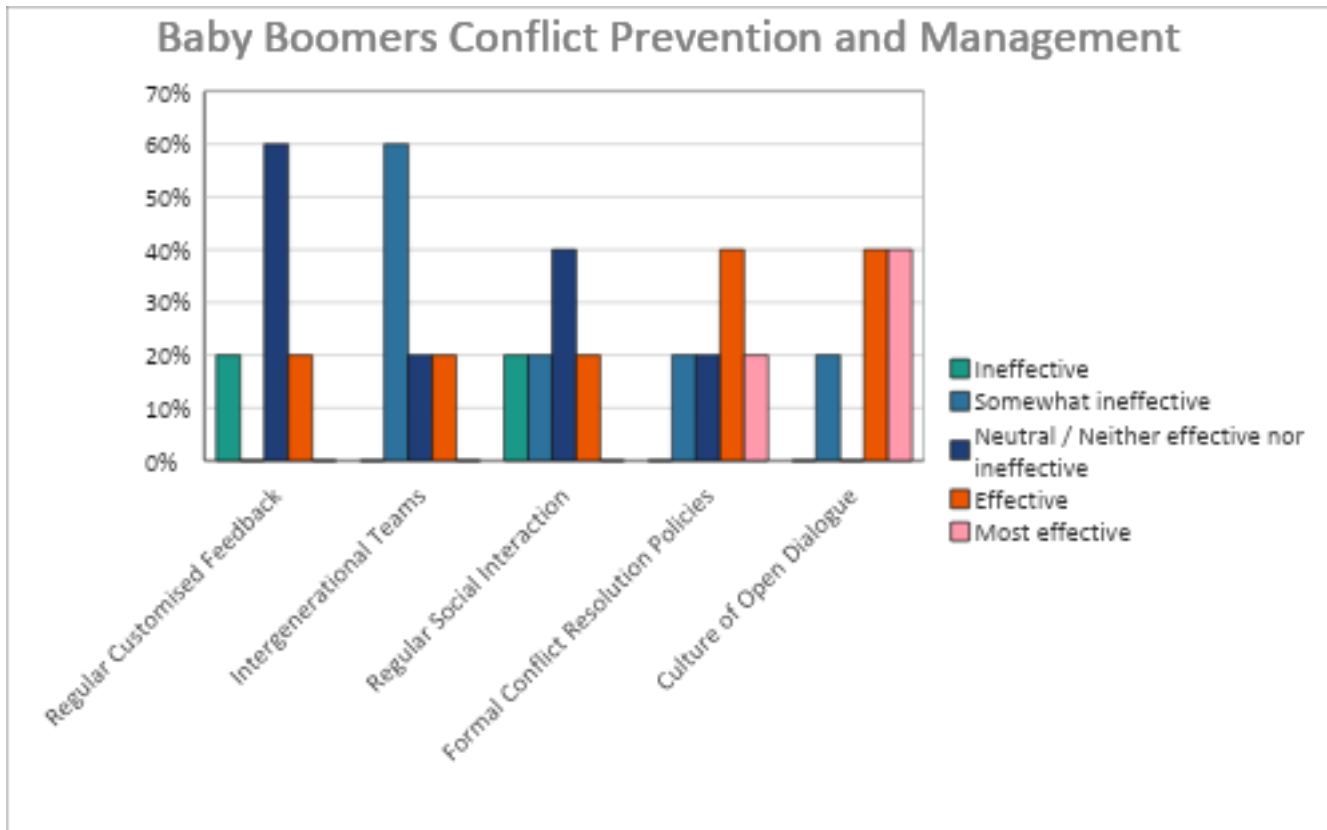
**Gen X** Intergenerational Teams and a culture of open dialogue scored highly for this generation while all other tools also featured as most effective or effective. Regular customised feedback received the most “ineffective” votes



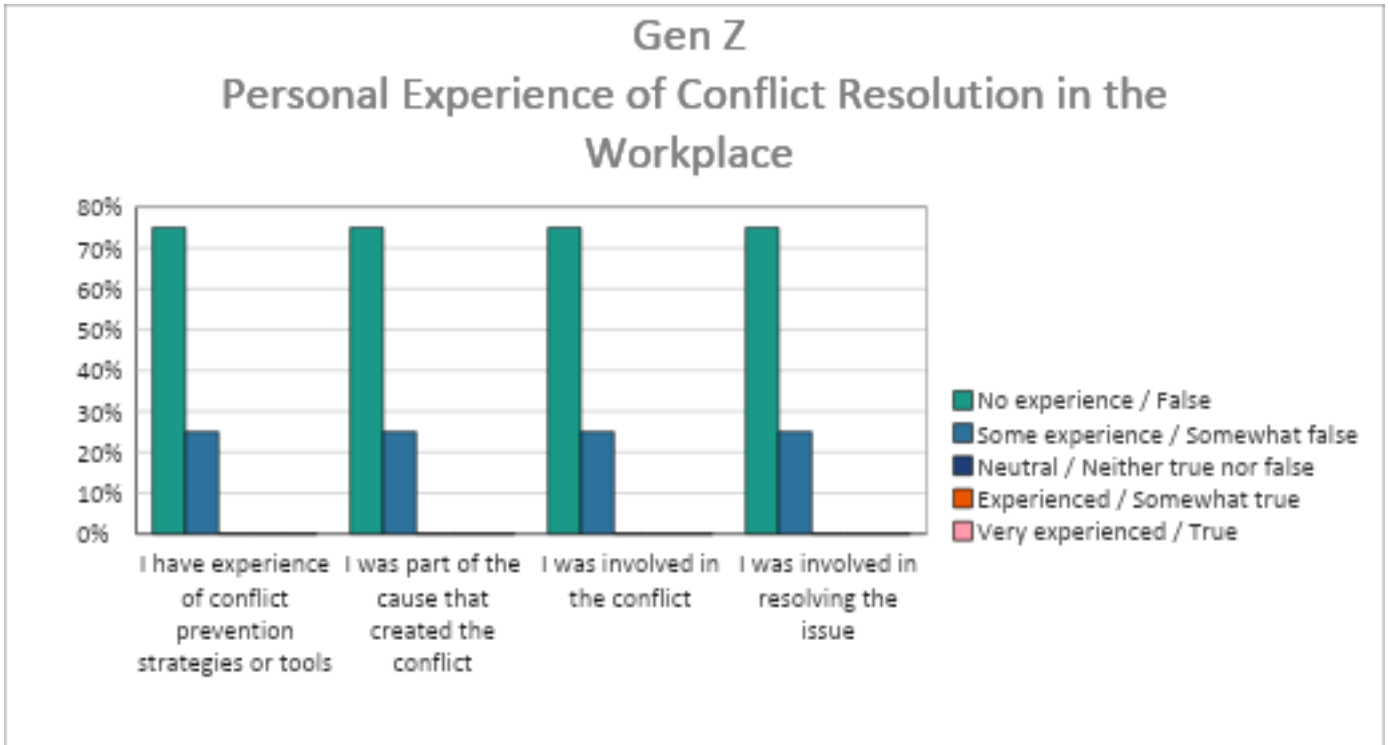
### Baby Boomers

A culture of open dialogue and formal conflict resolution polices were rated as the most effective tools for this generation, possibly reflecting the importance of dialogue and face to face meetings among this generation. This generation also considered regular customised feedback as less important than any other generation, particularly Gen Z and Millennials.



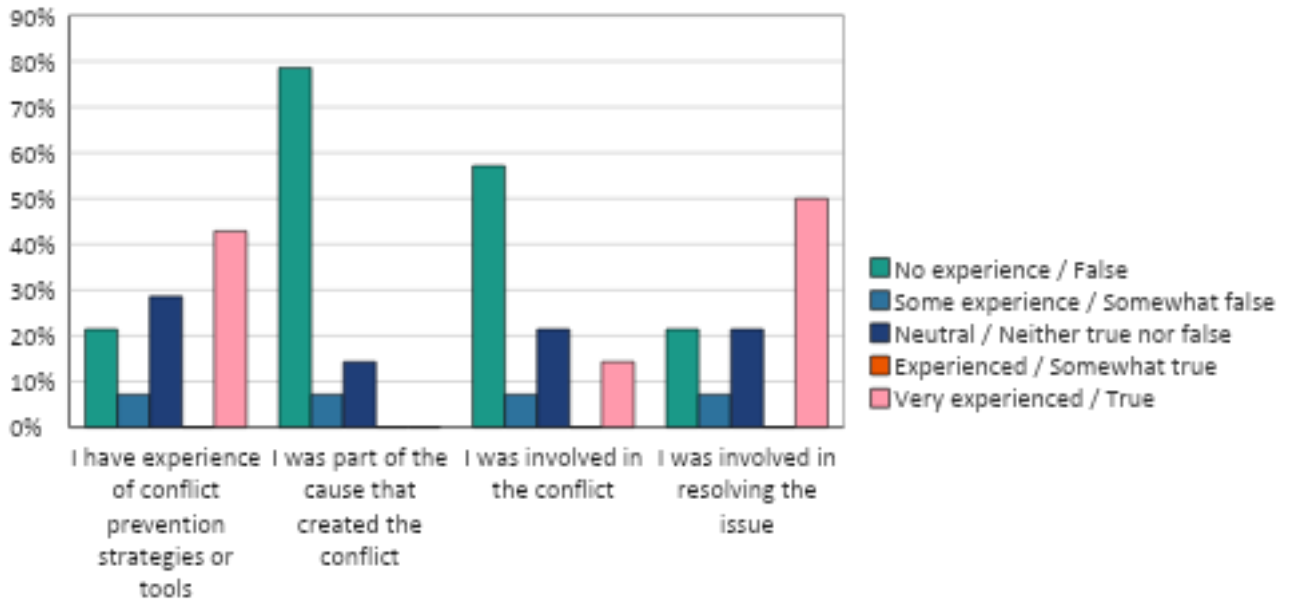


The survey results above are based on opinions and experience. It must be noted that not all respondents had experienced of conflict in the workplace This is particularly true of Gen Z and Millennials. None of the survey respondents saw themselves as being part of the cause of the conflict. In instances where conflict arose in the workplace respondents felt slightly more supported by colleagues of a different generation (87%) than colleagues of the same generation (84%)

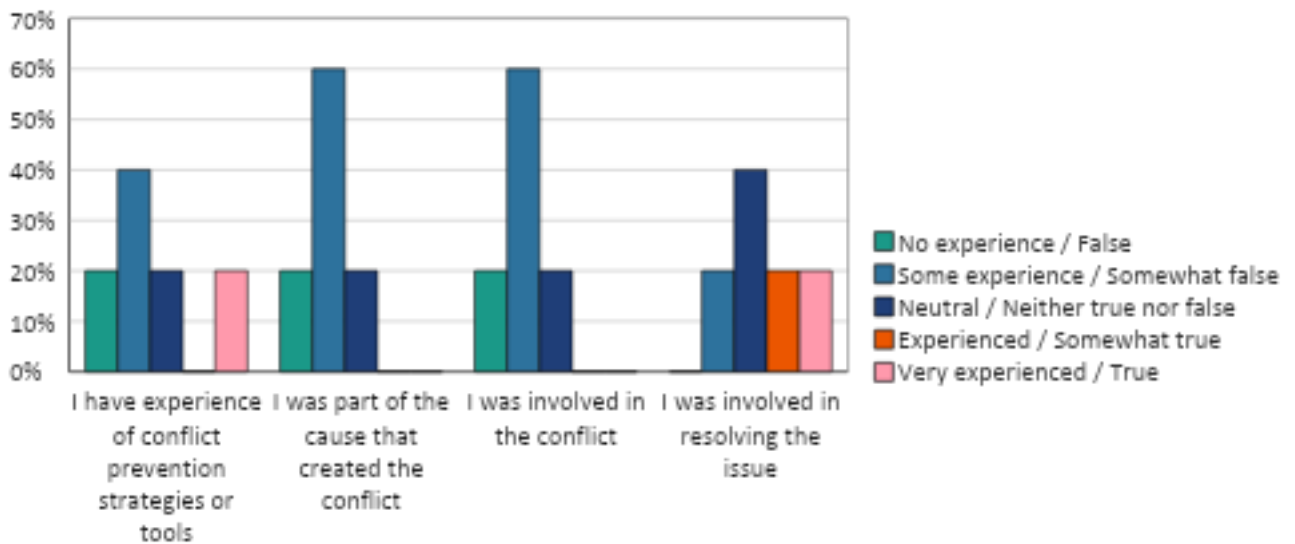




### GEN X Personal Experience of Conflict in the Workplace



### Baby Boomers Personal Experience of Conflict in the Workplace





The research confirmed that in broad terms older generations prefer face to face meetings, telephone and email communication while younger workers prefer instant messaging. Fifty percent or more of Gen Z, Millennials and Gen x have experienced situations where communication preferences led to misunderstanding.

All generations agreed that behaviour in the workplace was most likely to cause conflict while identity-based conflict was rated least likely to cause conflict.

The only area where conflict showed a clear generational divide was where younger generations wishing to work from home clashed with older colleagues and managers who prefer co-workers on site.

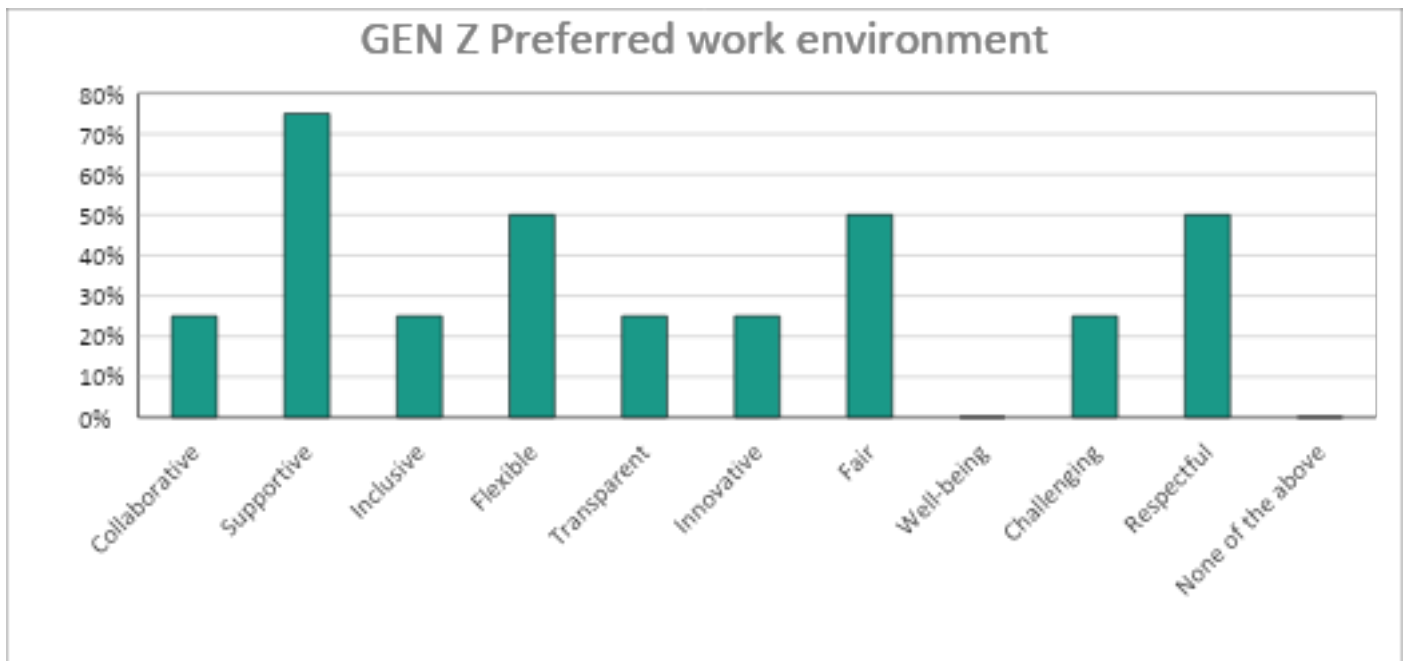
There was little consensus across generations with regard to the best conflict prevention and management tools. This result is not surprising given that the majority of the Gen Z and Millennial respondents did not report any personal experience of conflict. There was one area where the youngest and oldest cohort agreed – regular customised feedback was rated low by both Gen Z and Baby Boomers.

## 4. Differences in Approach to Work

### Workplace Structure and Work Environment

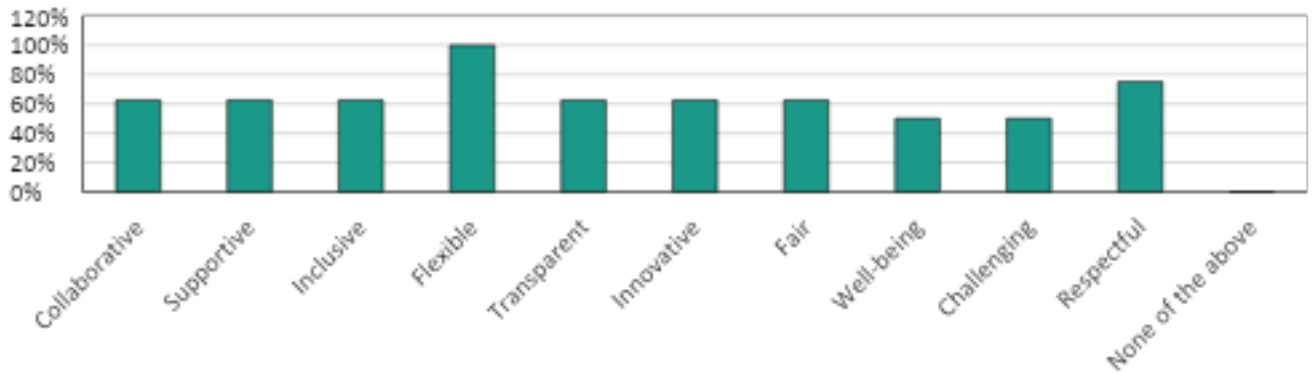
When asked to rank their preference for workplace structure 62% of total respondents favoured a casual workplace in terms of dress code and communication style. Collaborative / Teamwork structure was voted best by 58% of respondents while 54% preferred a cooperative structure. However, when analysed across generations the results showed a clear generational divide with Gen Z and Millennials expressing a clear preference for a casual work environment, Baby Boomers preferred a hierarchical workplace structure while Millennials ranked collaborative team working environments and co-operative workplaces highly.

In terms of ideal work environment, a respectful workplace was considered important by over 50% of all respondents, regardless of generation. Flexibility was considered important by all generations, although Baby Boomers valued this less than other generations. This correlates with the attitude to flexibility regarding hybrid and remote working where younger workers sometimes clashed with older colleagues or managers.

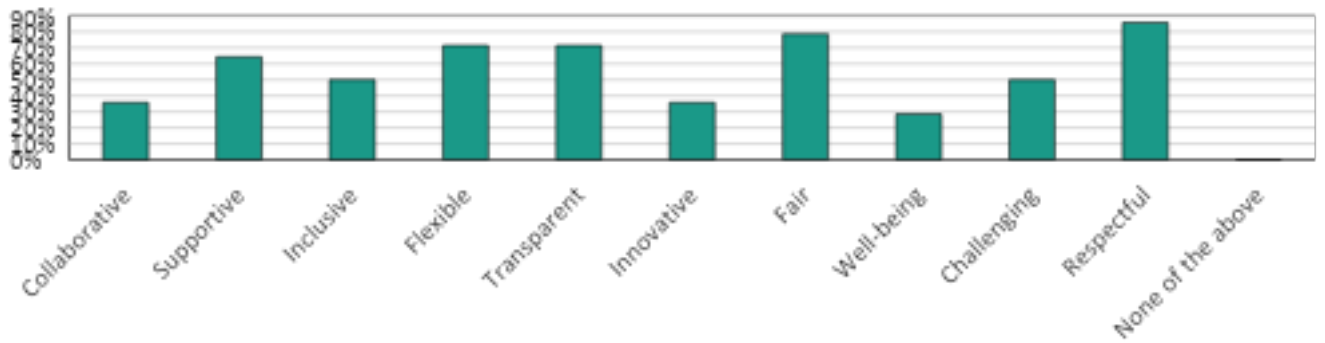




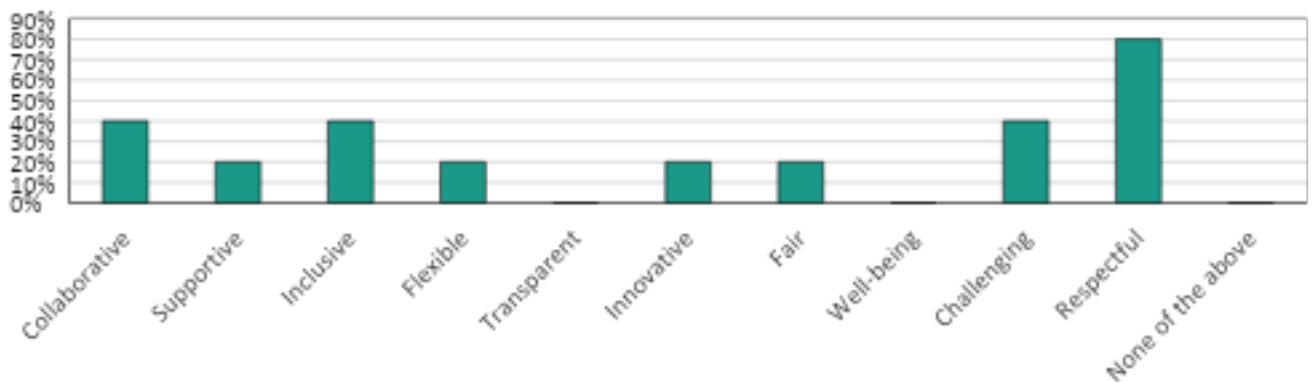
### Millennials Preferred Work Environment



### GEN X Preferred Work Environment

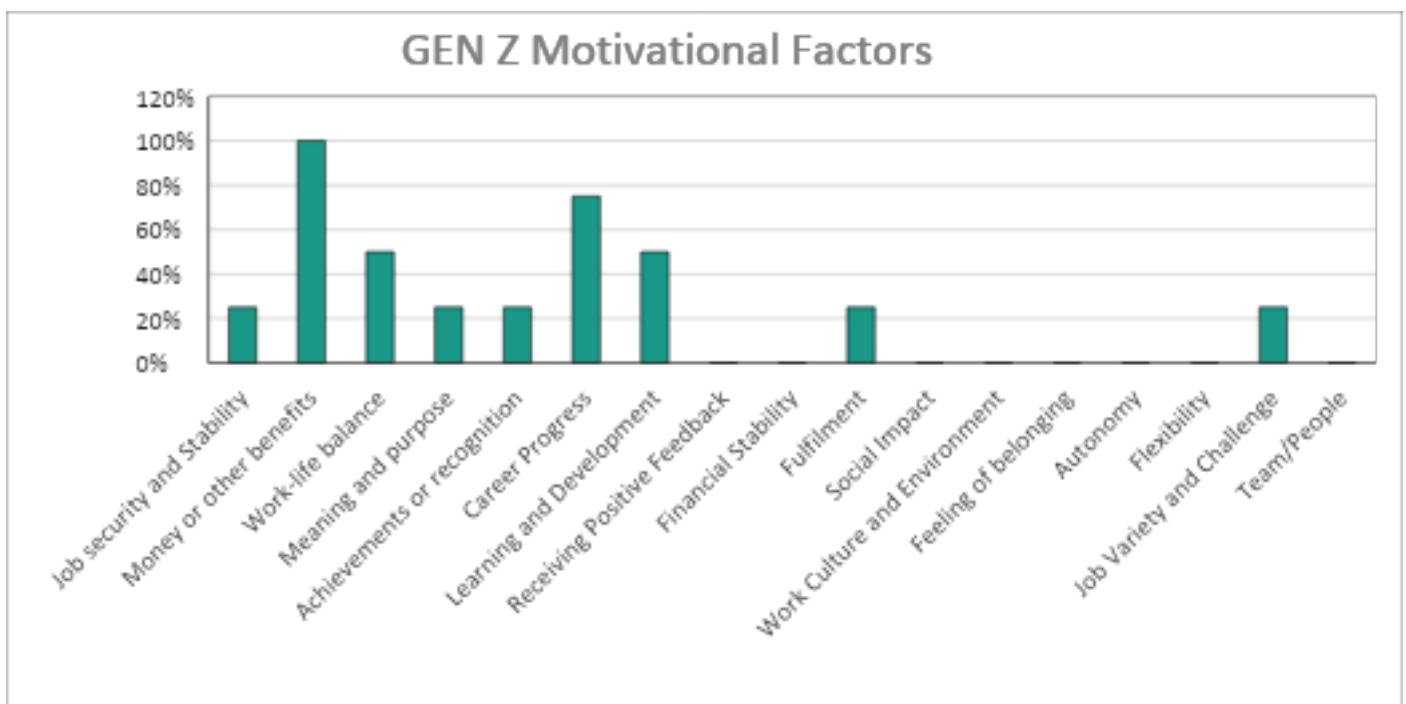


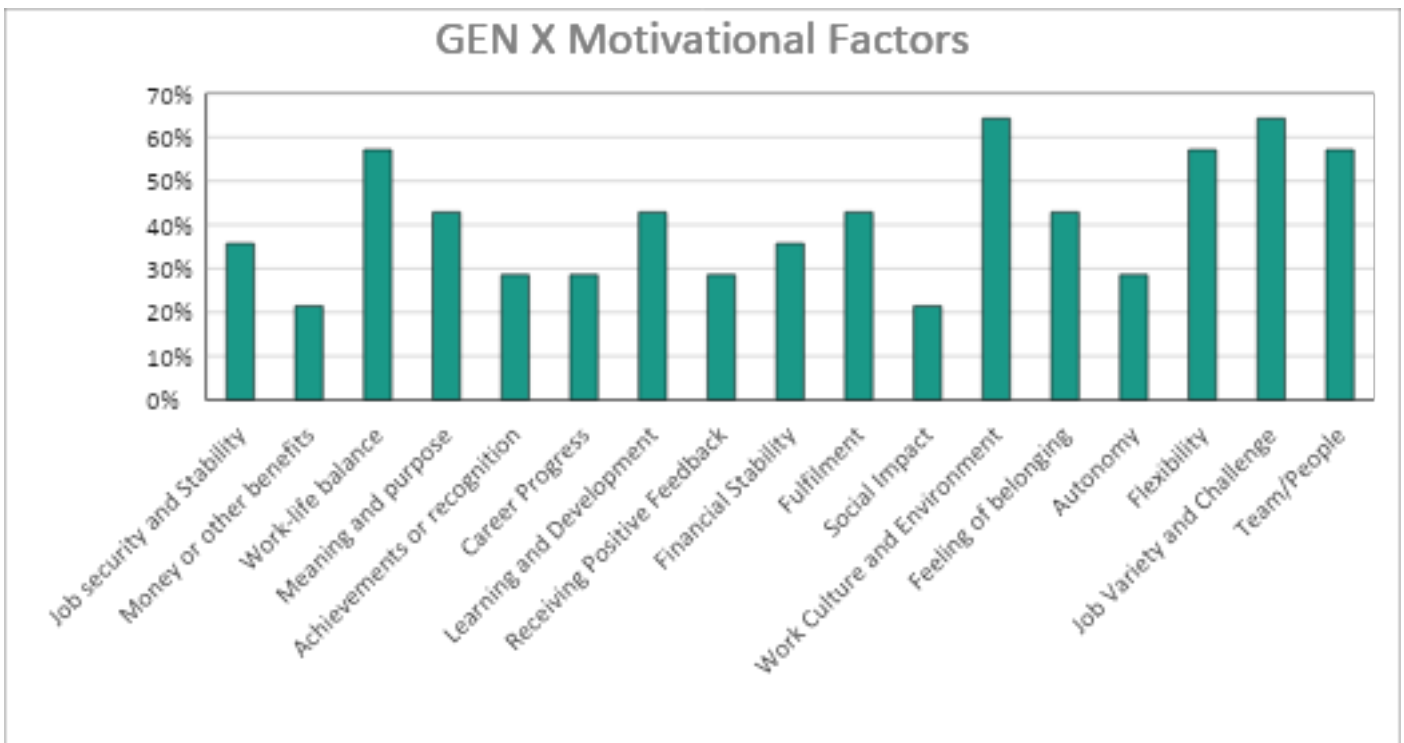
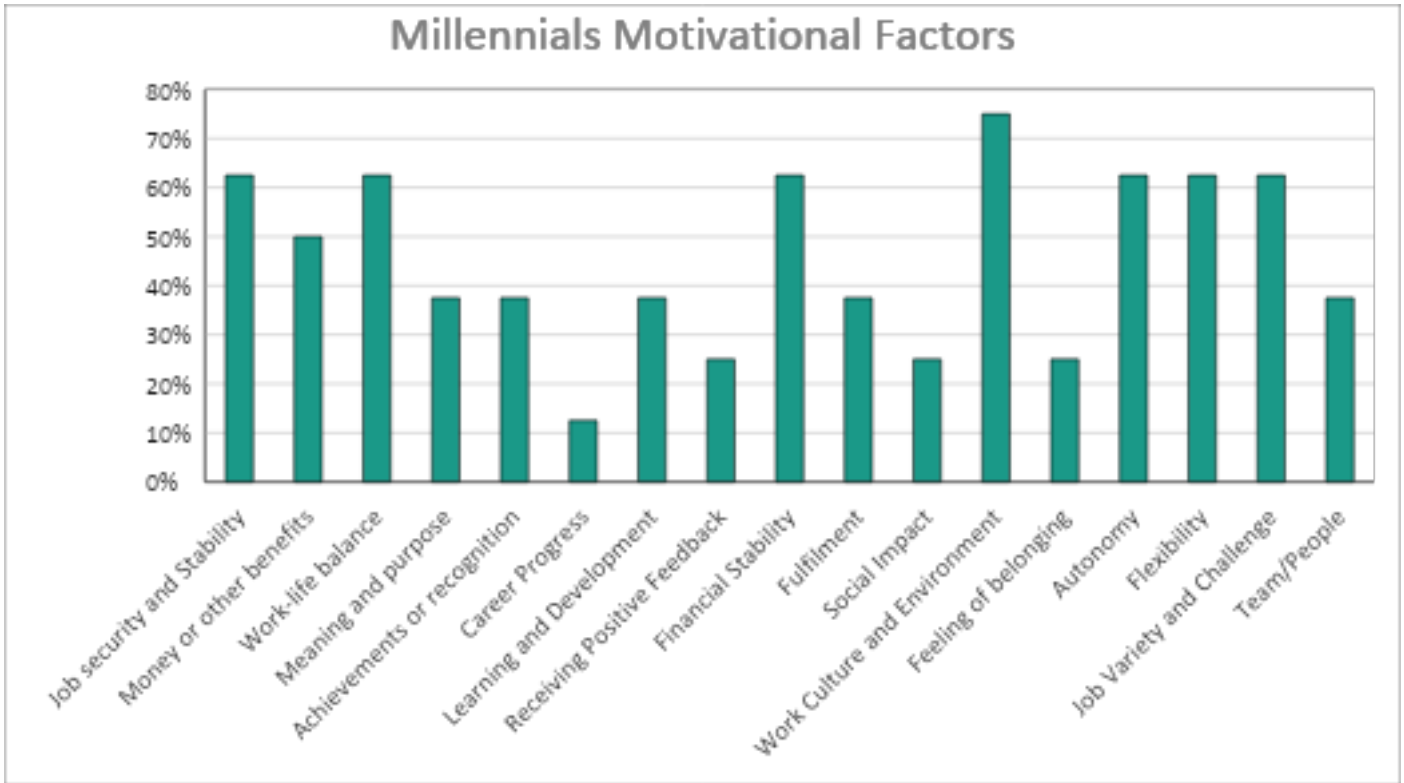
### Baby Boomers Preferred Work Environment



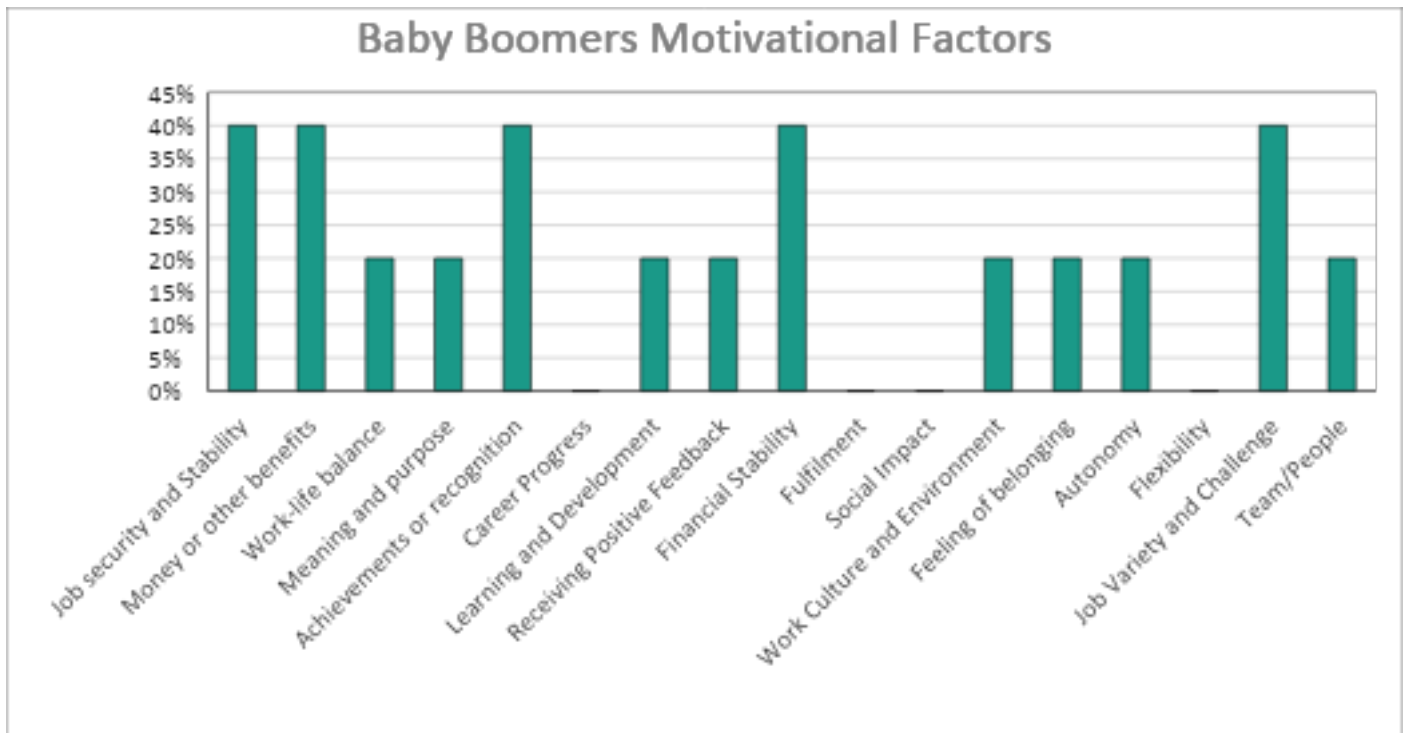
### Motivation

In terms of motivation the overall survey results masked significant variations across generations. Overall 55% of respondents valued job variety and challenge and 51% valued work life balance and work culture and environment. When analysed across generations the results showed that Gen Z were mostly motivated by financial reward and career progression. Millennials and Gen X were both motivated by work culture and environment with many other factors given equal weighting. Baby Boomers were the only generation to prioritise financial stability, money and other benefits and job security. This may be reflective of traditional work environments and the difficulty of older generations in securing new positions in an ageist job market.









### Demotivation

**Gen Z** 50 % reported instances of demotivation at work where

- Effort is not linked to reward

**Millennials** 37% reported demotivational circumstances including

- “box ticking” exercises
- focus on achievements rather than the process

**Gen Z** 28% mentioned demotivational factors including

- interpersonal issues
- colleagues undermining each other

**Baby Boomers** did not record any instances where they felt demotivated.

### Work styles and cross generational collaboration

Hierarchical work styles were voted the least effective for collaboration across generations while collaborative, team work and co-operative styles were viewed as the most effective. One third of Millennials believed that hybrid work was most effective for collaboration. It was also notable that complete remote work was mentioned as being difficult for all generations.

## 5. Digital Inequality

74% of respondents did not have instances where limited access to or familiarity with digital tools impacted their work. Of the 26% who reported difficulties, most problems reported were related to

- remote work – various issues including
  - lack of access to high speed broadband
  - working on financial data during video calls
  - reading chat bars while listening to the speaker.

Possible solutions suggested

- Digital assistants
- equipment such as dual screens
- training

It is not surprising that access to broadband infrastructure is mentioned as many areas of rural Ireland do not have high speed broadband.

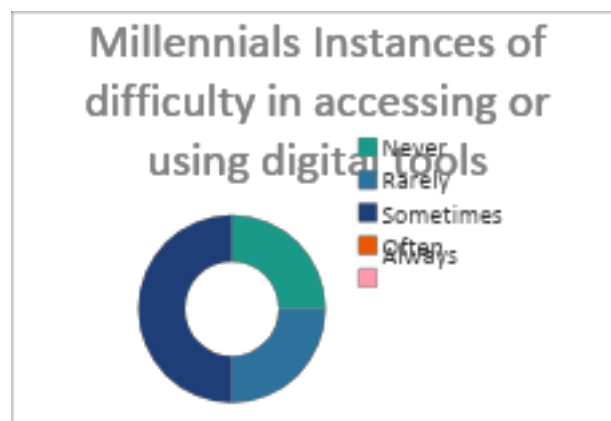
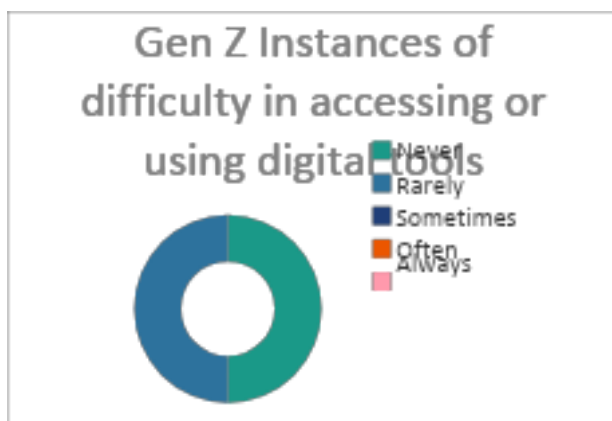
The level of difficulty in accessing and using digital tools varies across generations and feeds into the stereotypes of younger people being more adept in this area.

**Gen Z** 50% reported never having difficulty in this area

**Millennials** 25% never have difficulty in accessing and using digital tools while another 25% rarely have difficulty in this area

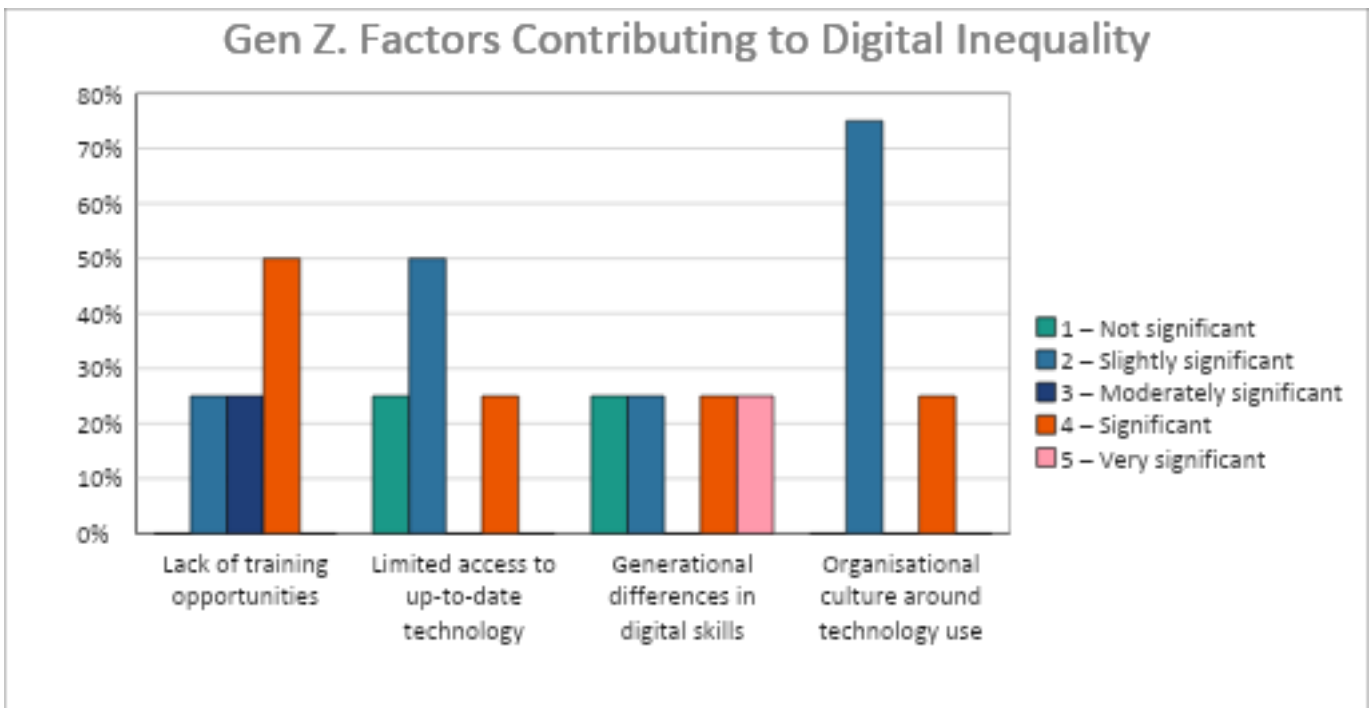
**Gen X** 21% never have difficulty and 36% rarely have difficulty in accessing and using digital tools, were the only generation to “often” have difficulty in accessing or using digital tools, albeit a small percentage (7%) of this group

**Baby Boomers** only 20 % reported never having difficulty in this area and 60% reported difficulties in this area “sometimes”.



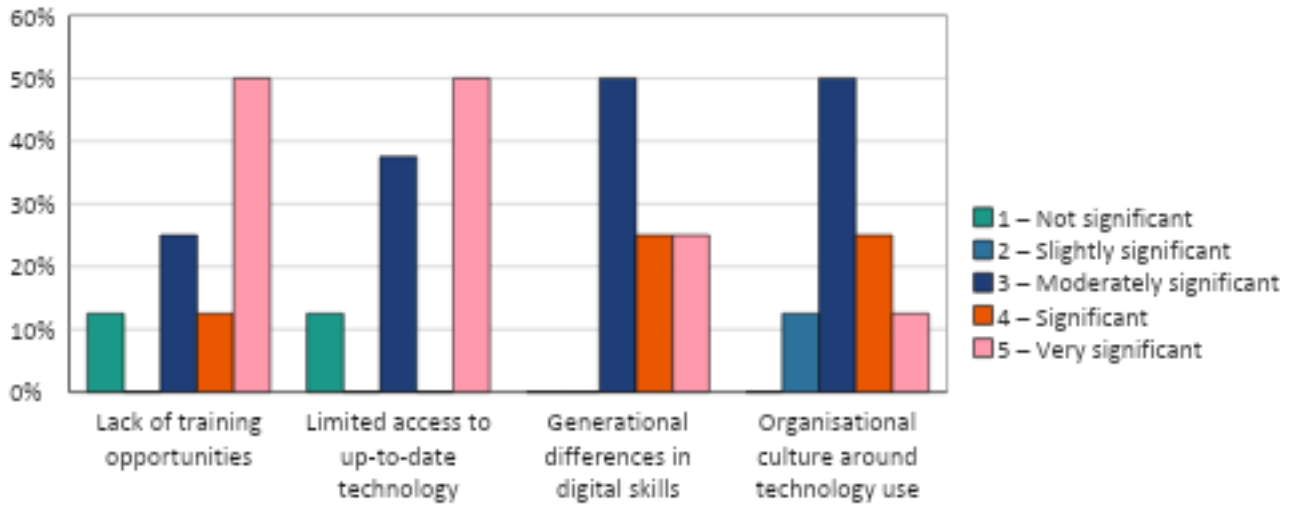


58% of respondents did not experience challenges due to digital inequality. Of the 42% who reported challenges, most were in respect of inadequate training and older generations not being as digitally competent as younger co-workers. Challenge for management in restructuring tasks to ensure inclusivity across digital competencies were also reported. This indicates that there is a willingness to promote digital inclusion in the workplace but challenges in actioning this. While not the primary concern of all generations the results below show that all generations mention lack of training as a significant or very significant factor contributing to digital inequality.

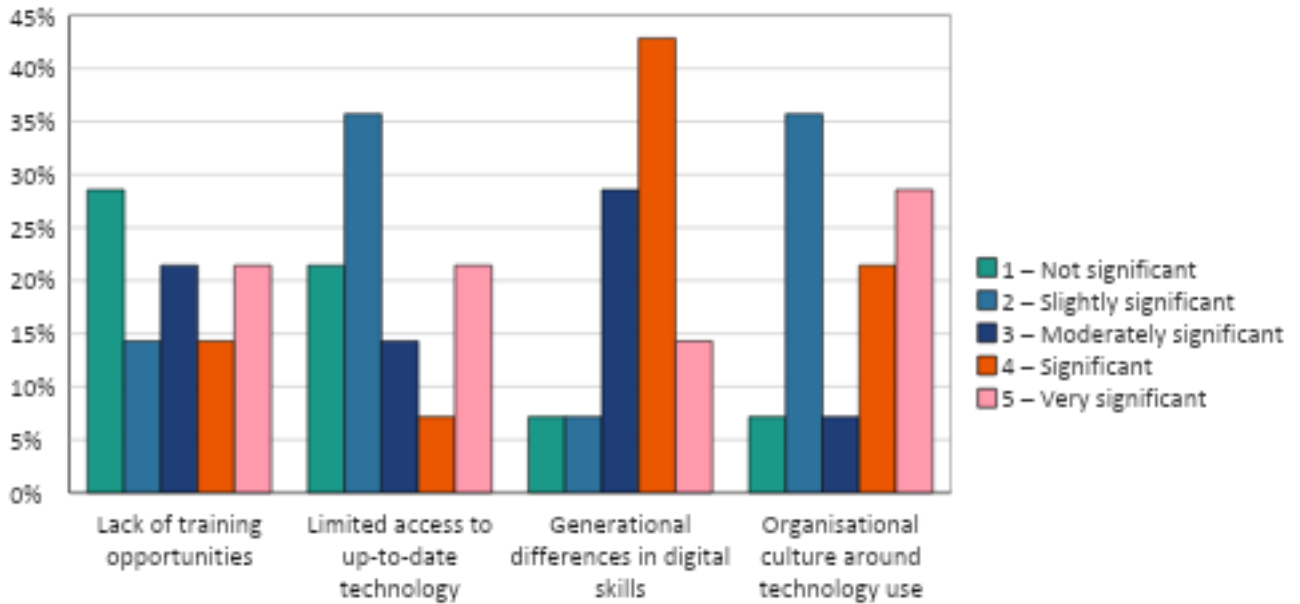


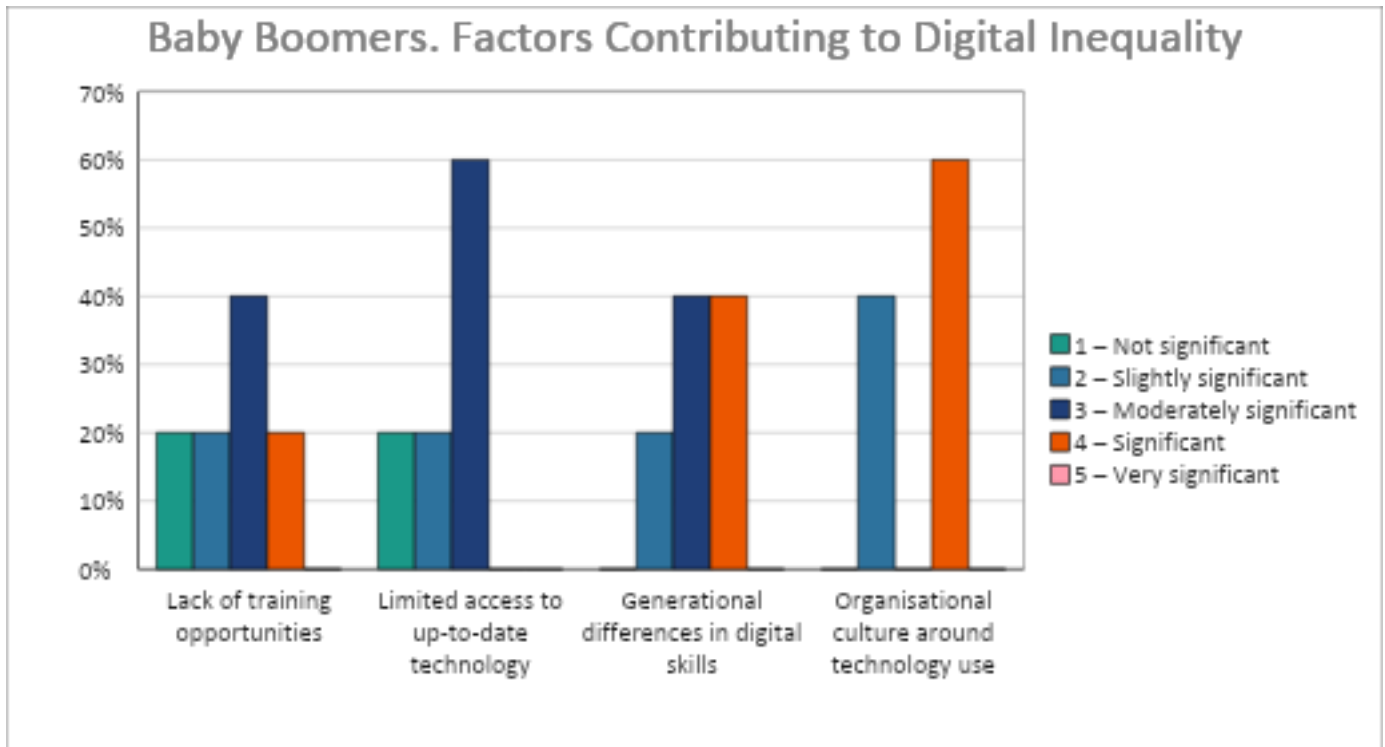


### Millennials. Factors Contributing to Digital Inequality



### Gen X. Factors Contributing to Digital Inequality





The three younger generations all mentioned “generational differences in digital skills” as a “very significant” factor in contributing to digital inequality. 25% of Gen Z, 20% of Millennials and 14% of Gen z held this view and for Gen Z they felt this was the only “very significant” factor. Interestingly Baby Boomers did not consider this a very significant matter. Organisational culture around technology use was a significant factor for Baby Boomers, followed by generational differences and lack of training opportunities (20%). Interestingly 50% of Millennials saw lack of training opportunities and limited access to up to sate technologies as very significant factor.

### Effective Strategies for Reducing Digital Inequality in the Workplace

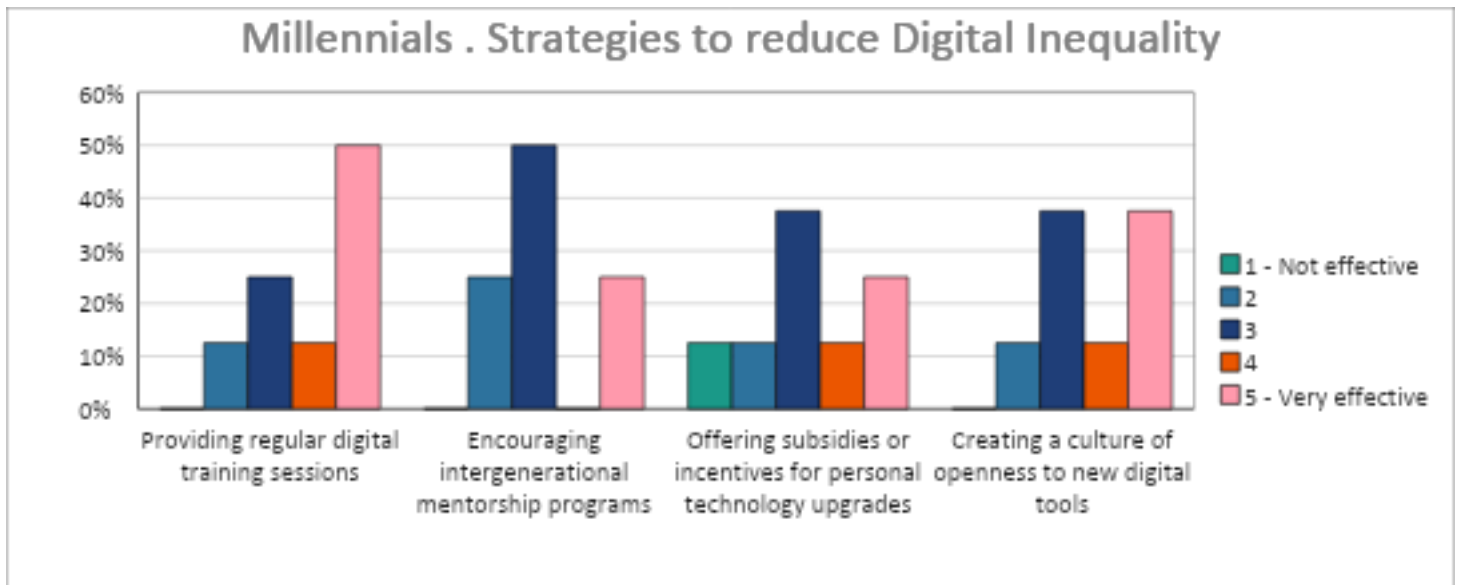
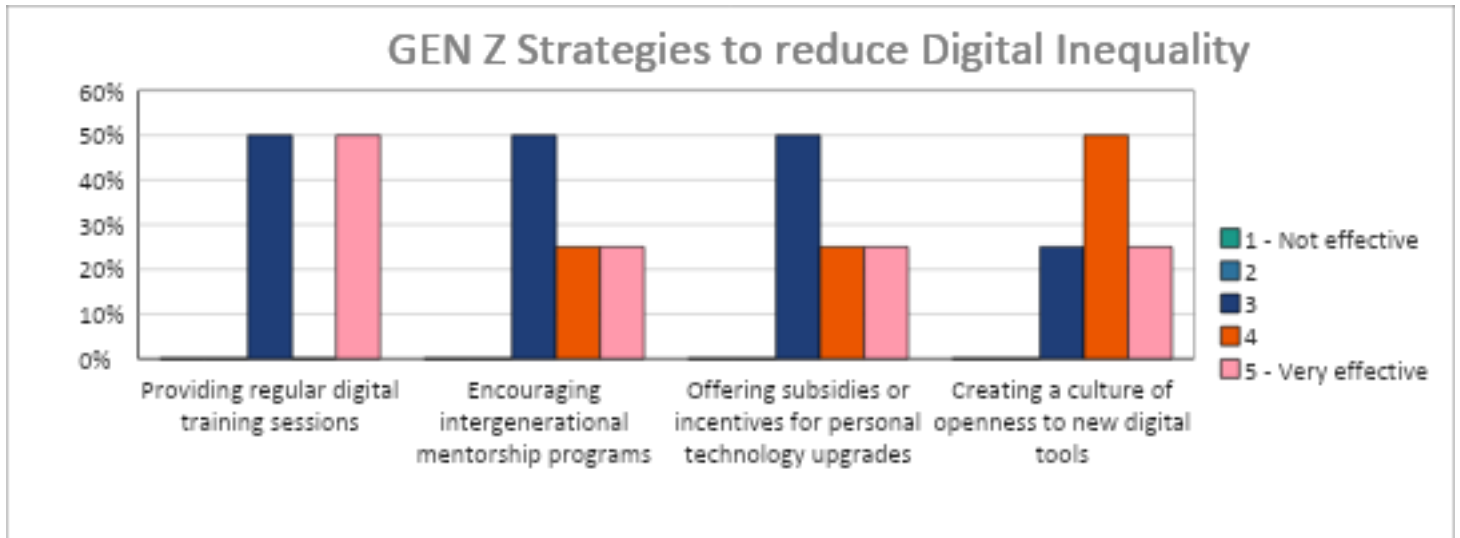
Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z felt that all four strategies for reducing digital inequality were “very effective” with regular digital training the most popular for the two younger generations and creating a culture of openness to new digital tools rated highly by Gen Z.

Millennials and Gen Z agreed that offering subsidies for personal technology upgrades was least effective. There was moderate support for encouraging intergenerational mentorship programs from all generations.

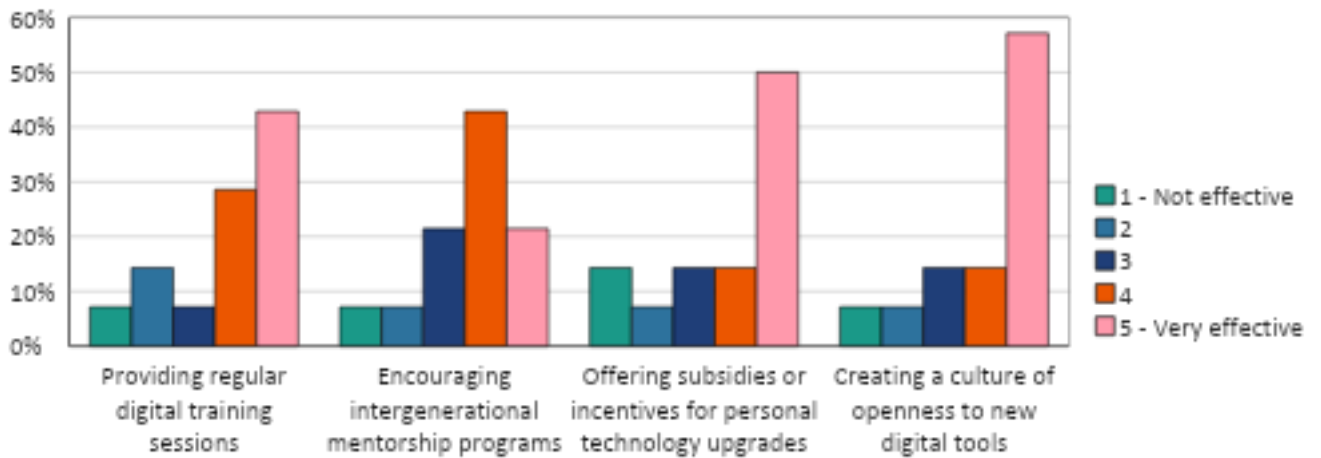
Intergenerational mentorship	Very Effective	Effective
Gen Z	25%	25%
Millennials	25%	-
Gen X	43%	21%
Baby boomers	-	60%



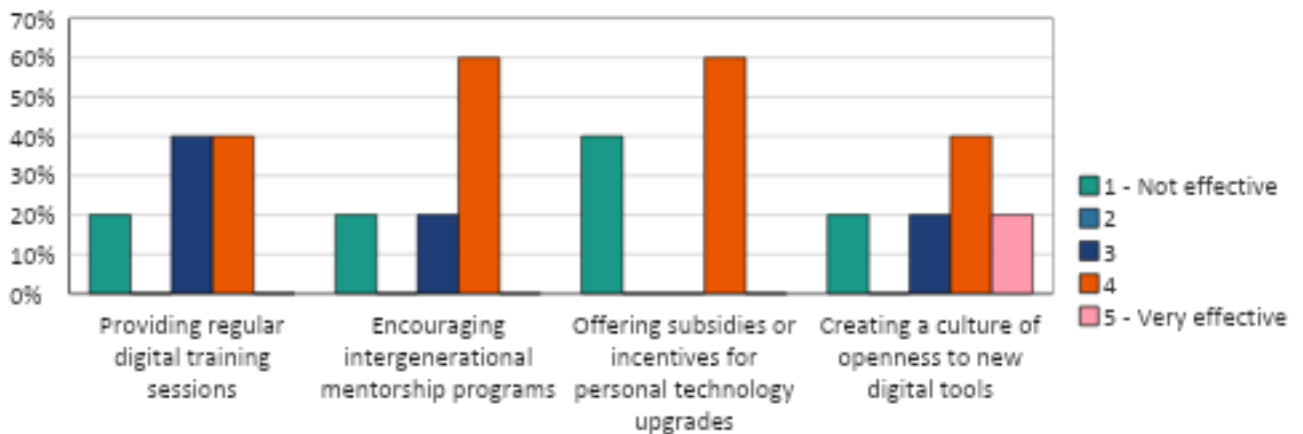
Only 16% of respondents had experience of initiatives to reduce the generational digital divide. Those who responded felt that there is no “one size fits all” solution and that group training with individual on-demand follow up was the most successful tool in tackling digital inequality.



### GEN X. Strategies to reduce Digital Inequality



### Baby Boomers. Strategies to reduce Digital Inequality





## 6. Generational Diversity from Intersectional Point of View

There was significant variation in views across the generations on factors amplifying generational discrimination and relational asymmetries in the workplace.

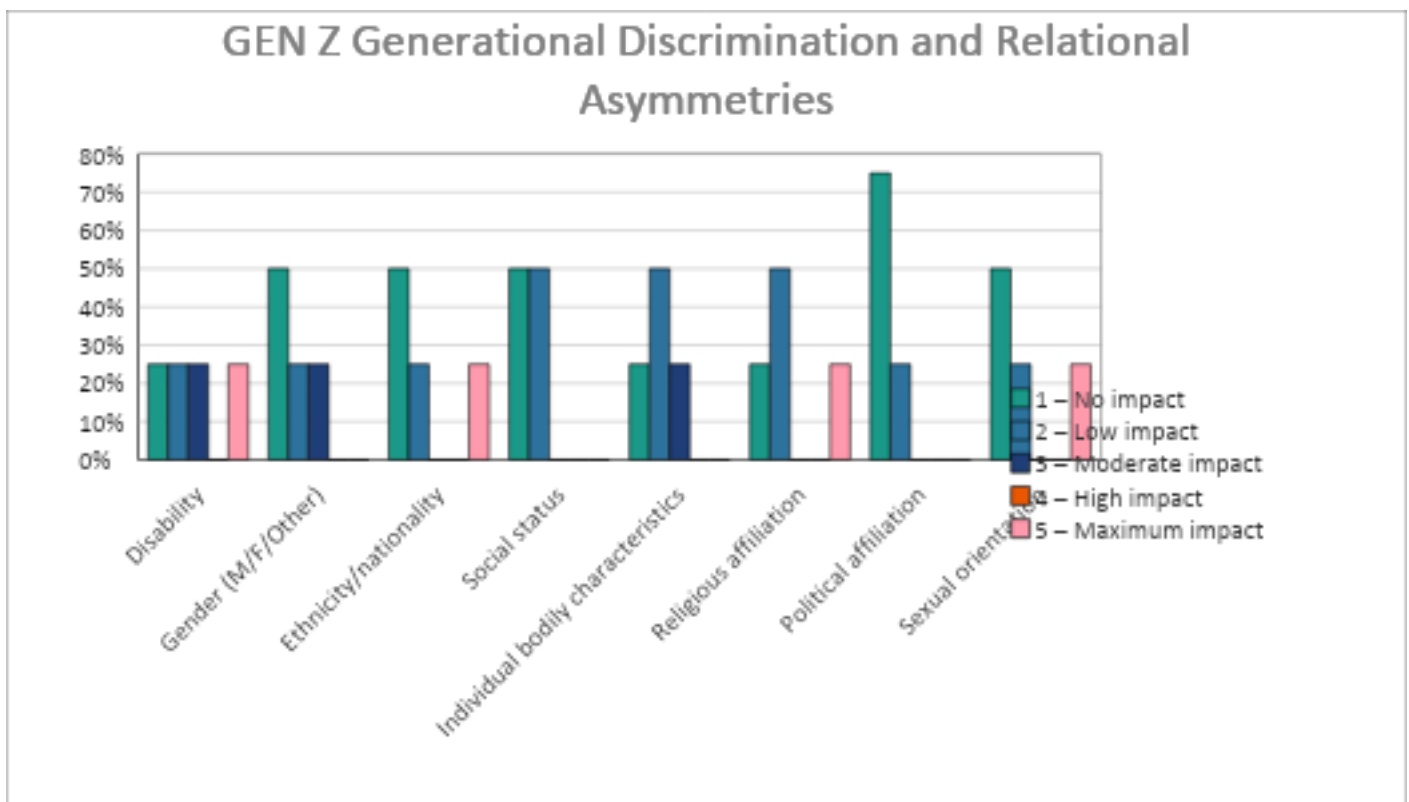
**Gen Z** 25% considered 4 factors as maximum impact. Disability was referenced in one quarter of their experiences in the workplace along with discrimination in the area of age and ethnicity

**Millennials** had the most diverse opinions as between 13 % and 25% of this generation rated 7 factors as maximum impact and 3 factors as high impact. However only 12% had seen intersectional discrimination in the workplace, solely with regard to disability and mental illness.

**Gen X** A small percentage considered 5 factors as having maximum impact and one additional factor as a high impact factor. 43% of Gen X respondents has evidenced intersectional discrimination in the area of religion and disability.

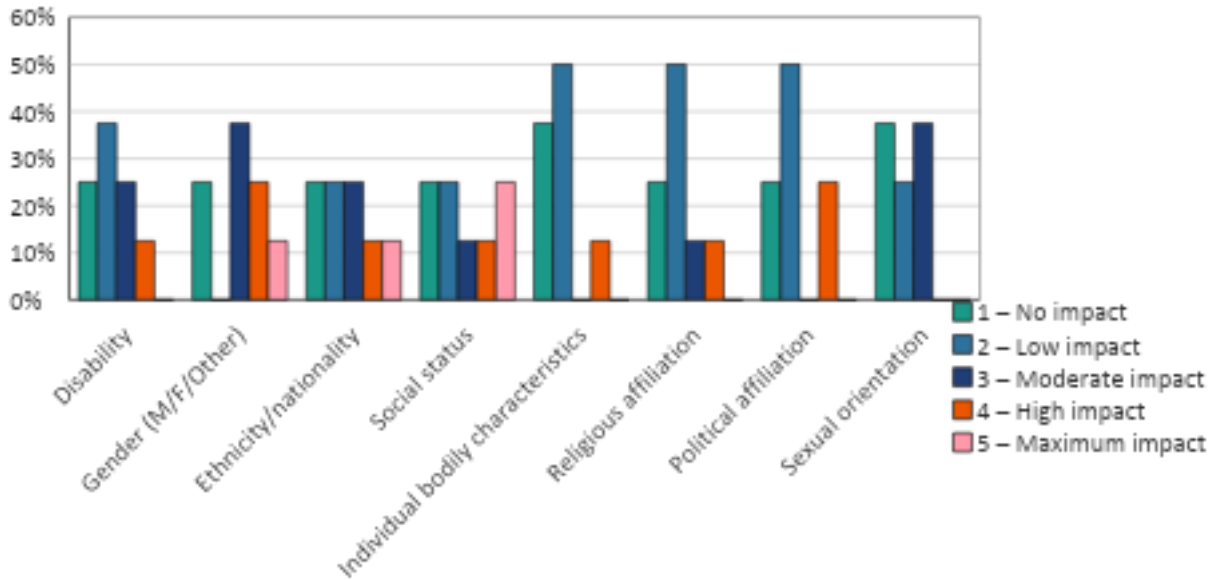
**Baby Boomers** did not rate any factor as maximum impact and 20 % rated disability as a highly impactful factor. This was reflected in the narrative answers supplied where no boomers had experience of intersectional discrimination in the workplace.

The tables below show how each generation ranks eight different factors as contributing to intersectional discrimination.

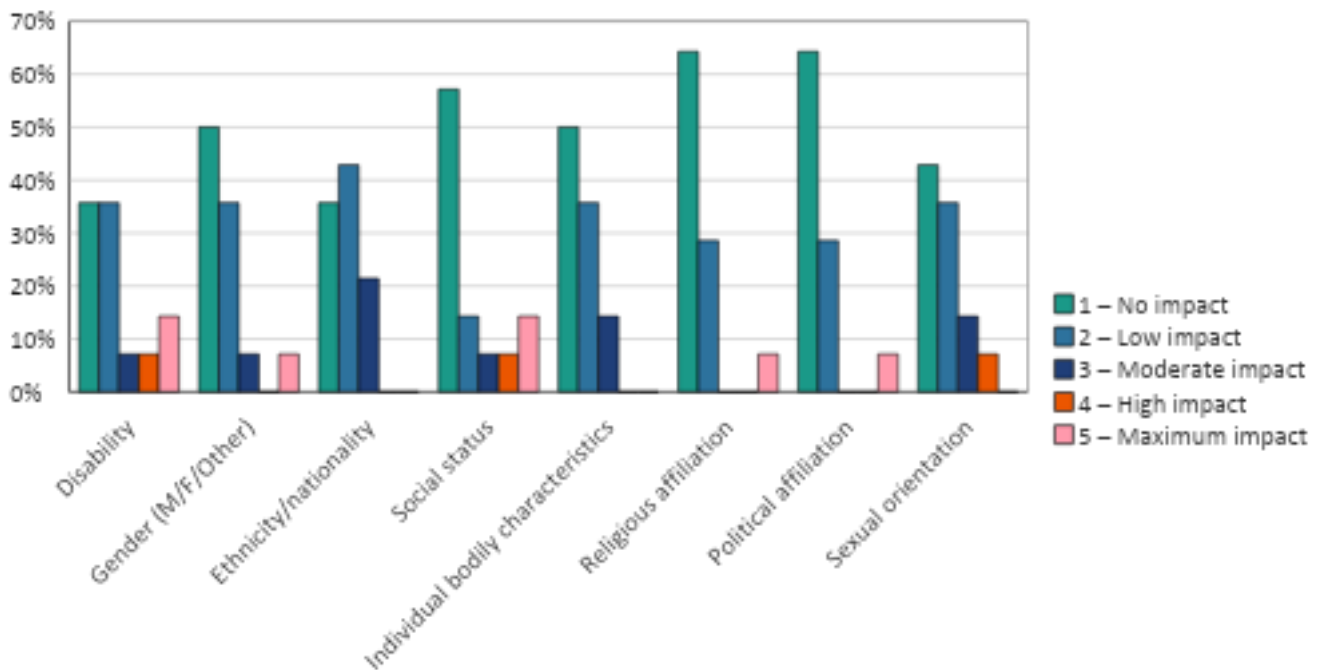


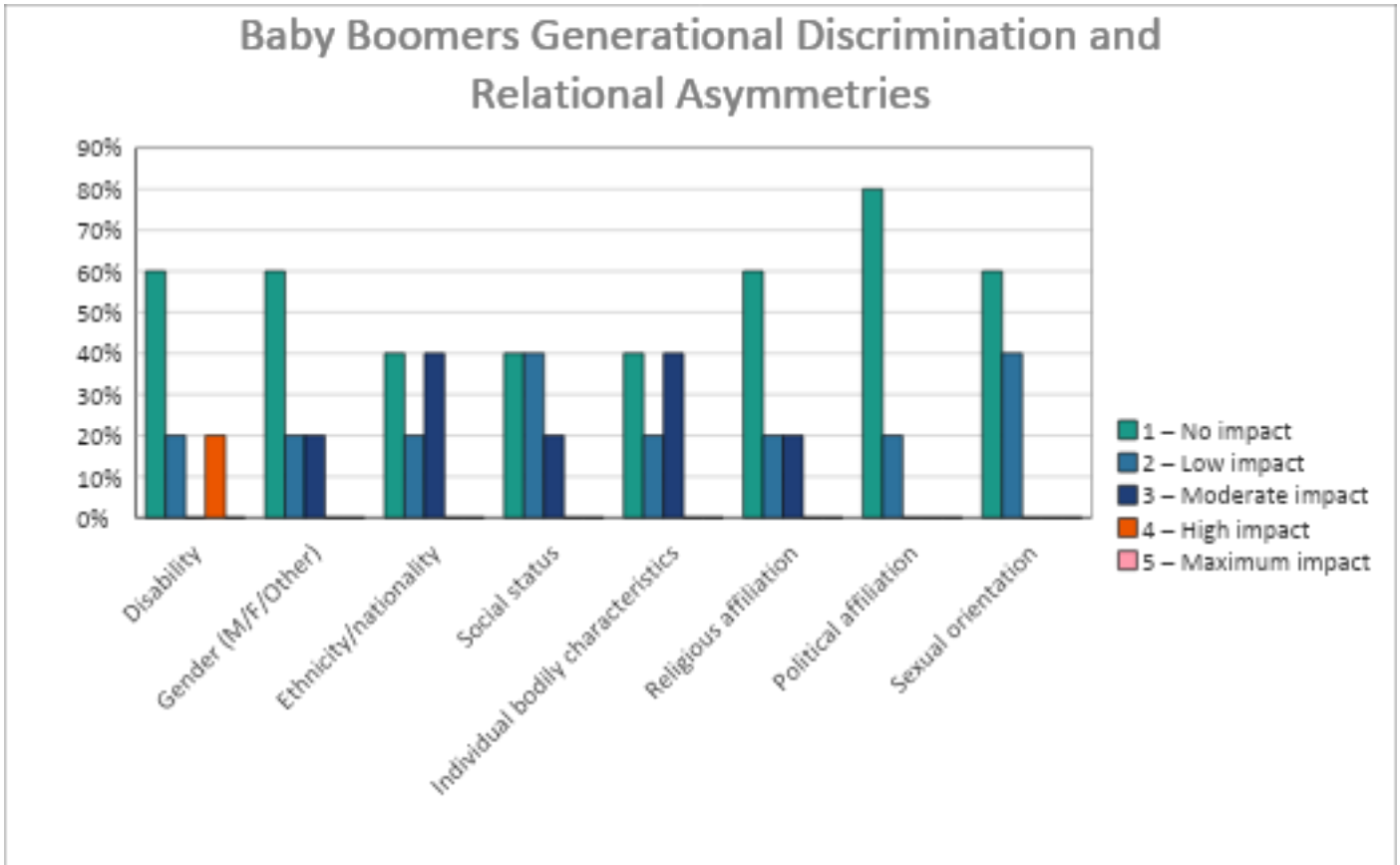


### Millennials Generational Discrimination and Relational Asymmetries



### GEN X Generational Discrimination and Relational Asymmetries

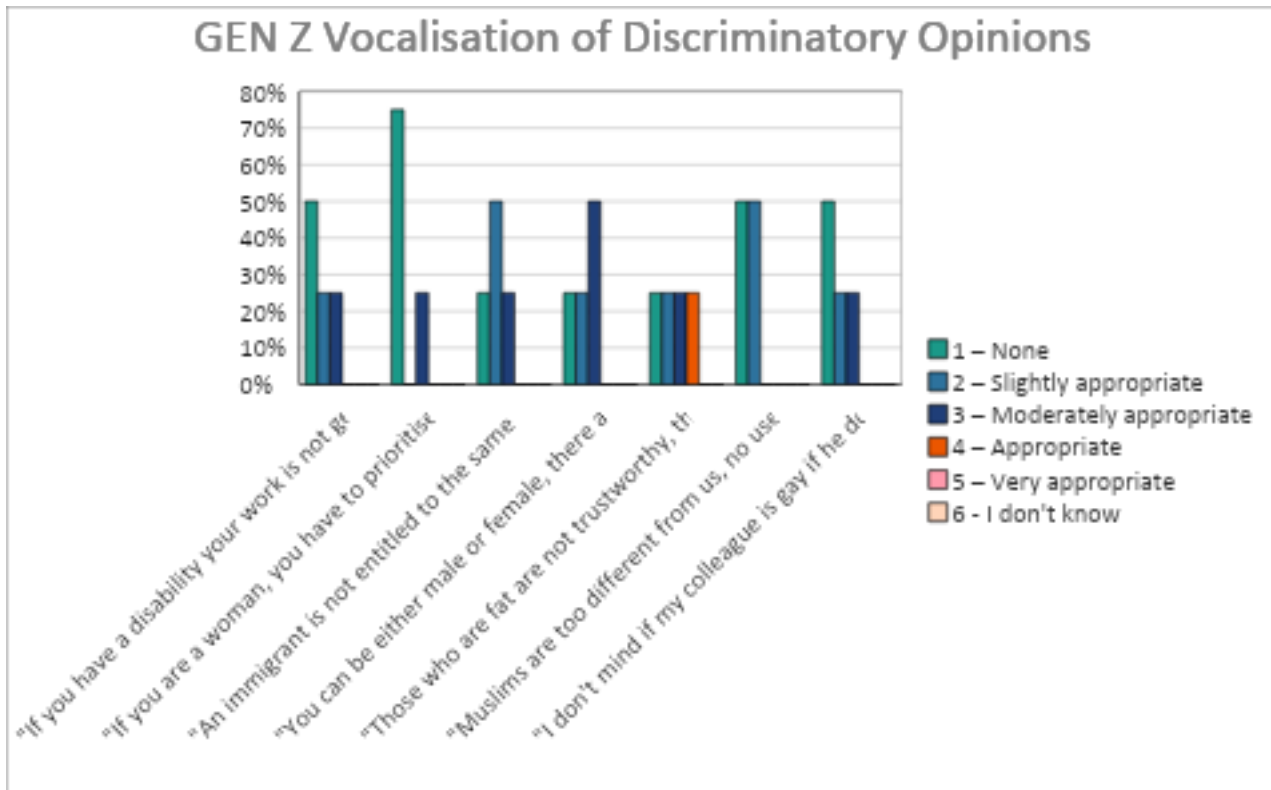




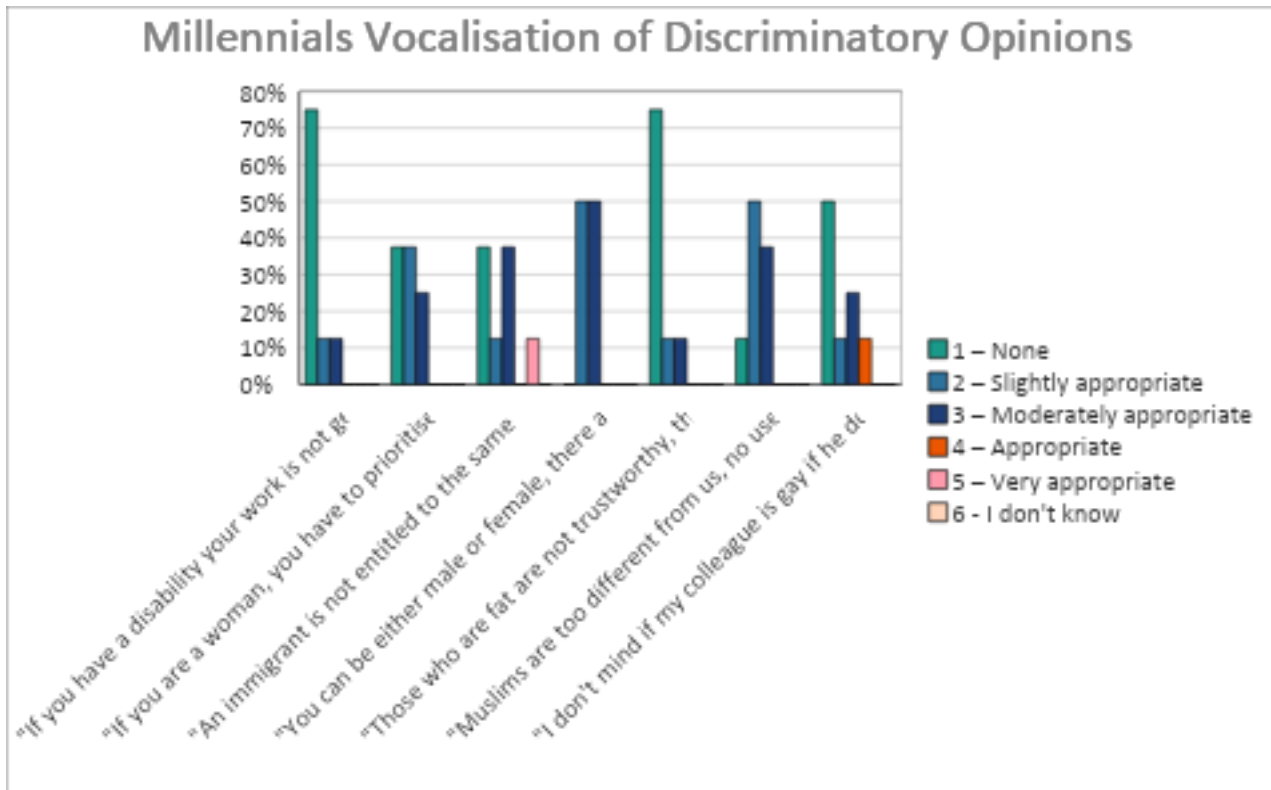
When asked to rate which generation was most likely to vocalise discriminatory opinions the following results emerged for each generation. 40% or more of all generations believed that discriminatory opinions in relation to disability would not be vocalised. Gender bias in regard to women is least likely to be vocalised in the younger cohort and most likely in the older generations (Gen Z 75%, millennials 38%, Gen X36% and Boomers 20%)



Gen Z 25 % believed that people of their generation would express discriminatory opinions in the area of bodily characteristics. They also believed that 75% of their generation would not express sexist views towards women and that 50% would not express disability bias.



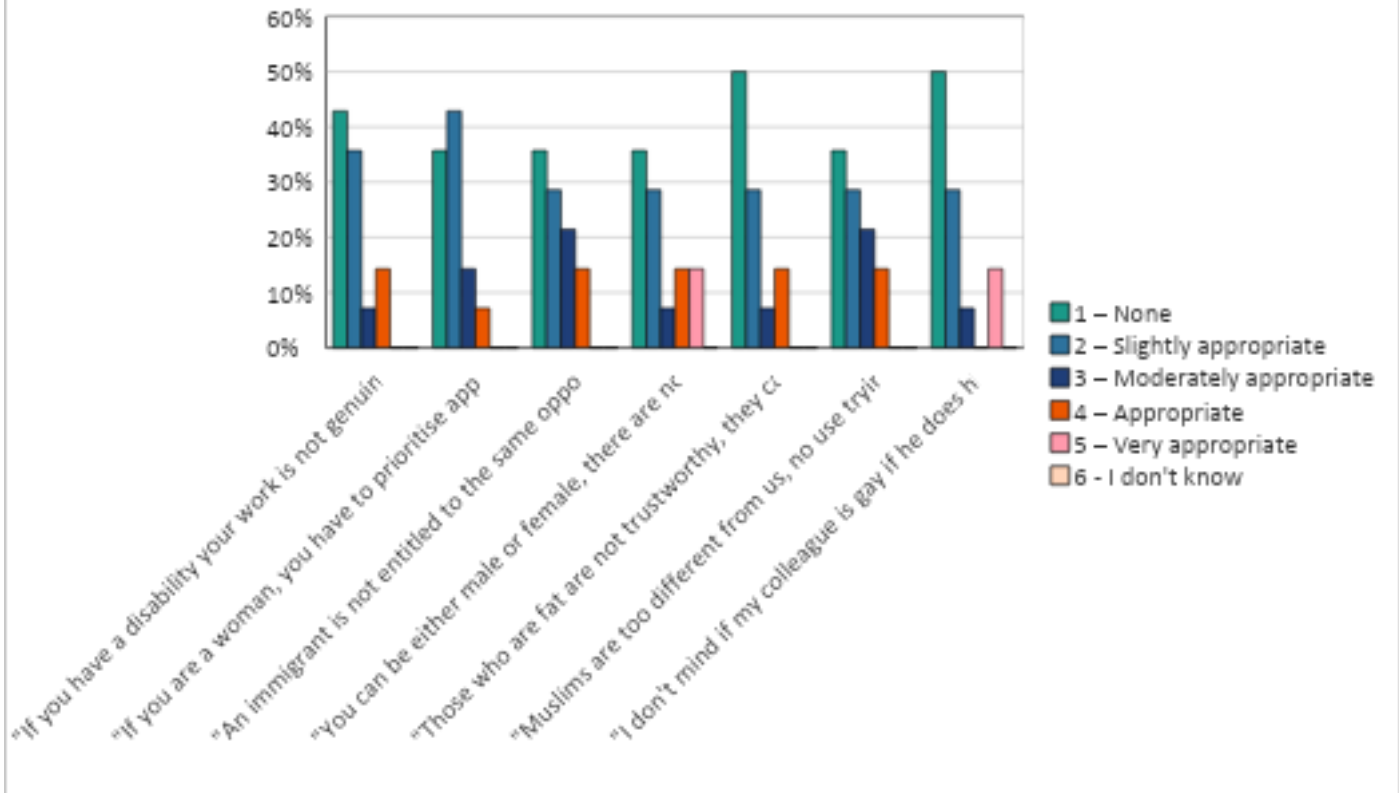
**Millennials** 13% believed that anti-immigrant bias would be vocalised by their generation and that a similar percentage would comment on a colleague’s sexual orientation. Disability and fattist biases were considered least likely to be vocalised.



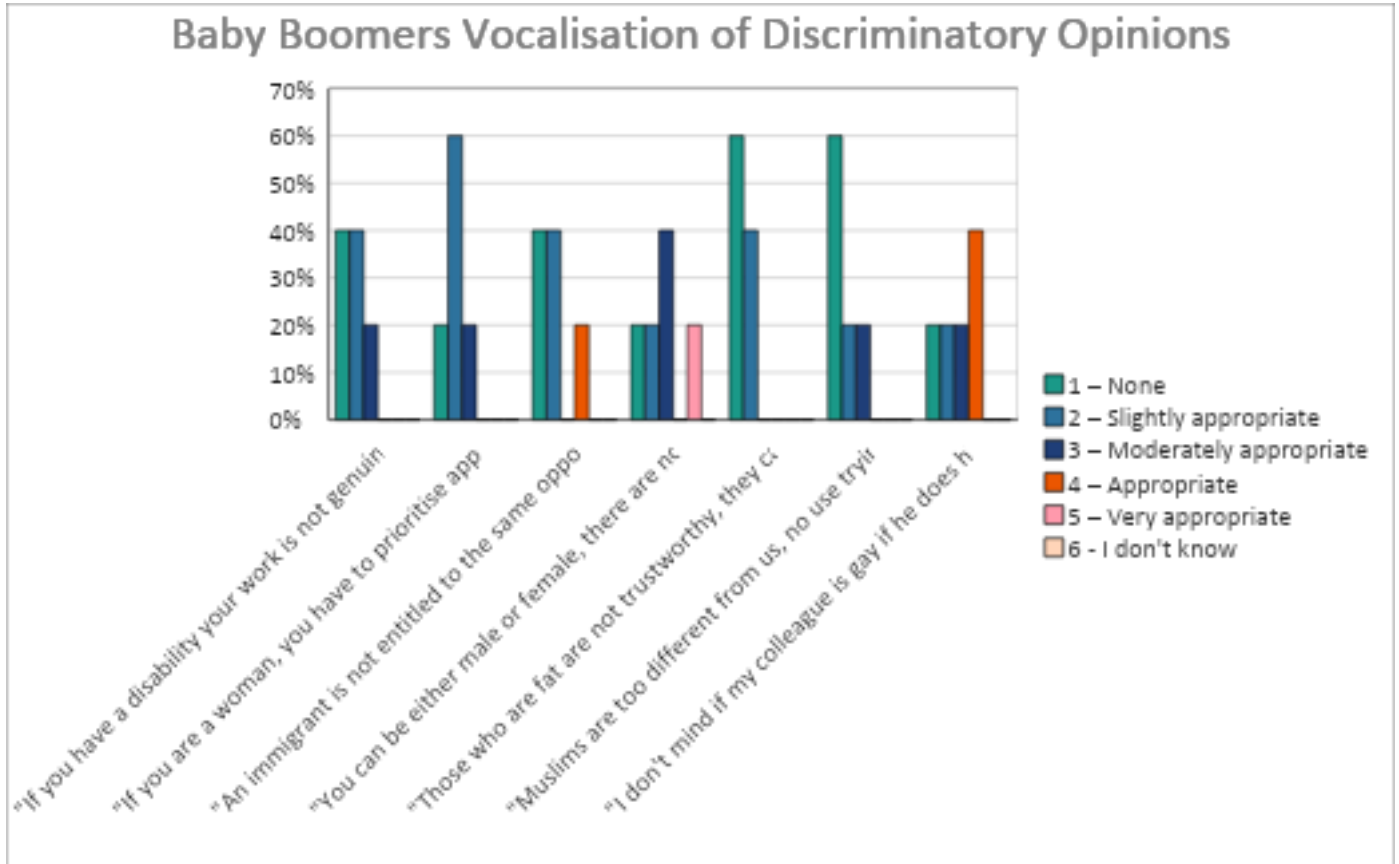


Gen X opinion was divided with each of the listed biases featuring as least likely to be vocalised by upwards of 35% of this group. However, each of the biases were also consider likely to be vocalised by between 7 and 14% of this group. Gender identity and sexual orientation were considered most likely to be vocalised by 14% of this age group but most unlikely by 35% and 50% respectively.

### GEN X Vocalisation of Discriminatory Opinions



**Baby Boomers** Gender identity, sexual orientation and ethnic background were all very likely or likely to areas where discriminatory opinions were voiced, while discriminatory statements about appearance and religion were considered as not likely or very unlikely to be spoken of by this generation.



### Instances of experiencing or witnessing discrimination in the workplace

39% of respondents experienced or witnessed discrimination on the grounds listed below. The following table gives details of who spoke in a biased way, who the target was and who helped to solve the issue

#### Gen Z

- Religious discrimination

#### Millennials

- Appearance
- Nationality
- Ethnicity
- Sexual Orientation
- Class/Social Status

#### Gen X

- Three instances of sexual discrimination against women related to
  - attitudes to single parenthood,



- attitude of co-workers to parental leave
- attitude to maternity leave
- Age Discrimination

**Baby Boomers**

- Two instances of age-related discrimination

A number of respondents mentioned additional discriminatory factors including

- Nationality
- Citizenship
- Religion
- Culture
- Gender
- Political,
- Socio economic class

Generation	Who spoke in a discriminatory way?	Who was the target of the discriminatory comment?	Who intervened to solve the issue?
Gen Z	29%	42%	23%
Millennial	19%	23%	26%
Gen X	36%	16%	35%
Baby Boomer	16%	19%	16%

**Summary**

Research was conducted on thirty- one members of the workforce in Ireland to ascertain the generational differences in the workplace across five areas; Culture, Communication and Conflict, Approach to Work, Digital Inequality and Intersectional aspects of Generational Inclusion.

Many of our findings are in line with desk research undertaken in 2025 and some of our results aligned with commonly held generational stereotypes. However, in certain areas there were surprising results where commonly held perceptions were not true of the sample surveyed. The survey results show that there are opportunities to build intergenerational understanding and create opportunities where challenges have been uncovered.