

How Millennial and Generation Z consumers, employees and activists will shape the world in the years ahead







ABOUTT



The Brand & Reputation Collective (the BRC) takes an insight-driven, campaign approach to managing brand, reputation and issues - which means we focus on outcomes, linking brand and reputation to more effectively drive engagement.



Purpose Union is a specialist agency that works with clients to develop compelling narratives, identify winning arguments, build valuable coalitions and create distinctive campaigns.



Root Cause is a brand strategy and design agency that helps brands grow by discovering and delivering on their social promises.



Methodology

This report is based on an online survey of 1,919 Generation Z and Millennials in the UK (n=951) and Germany (n=968).

In total, we interviewed 507 Generation Z (those aged 16-22; born between 1998 and 2004) and 1,412 Millennials (those aged 23 to 39, born between 1981 and 1997). The interviews were conducted December 4, 2019 - January 7, 2020.

The margin of sampling error for the entire sample of 1,919 is +/- 2 percentage points and for Generation Z and Millennials it is +/-2 and 3 percentage points, respectively.



As the world enters the third decade of the 21st century, it is estimated that Generation Z - those born just before or since the turn of the millennium - will overtake Millennials as the largest demographic group in the world. Together they will make up almost two-thirds of the global population. They come of age at a pivotal moment.

The next ten years will require great changes in how we do business to tackle the economic, environmental, political and social challenges faced by people and planet. At the same time, success will increasingly be determined by understanding and responding to a new generation who will make their voices heard as activists, citizens, consumers and employees, and who expect businesses to stand on something more than the bottom line.

We call this the Purpose Decade.

That is why we are launching the Purpose Pulse, an annual publication that will track the big trends in the purpose agenda and provide evidence-based insights to help organisations navigate a rapidly changing landscape.

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INTRODUCTION THE PURPOSE PULSE 2020 #THEPURPOSEPULSE

The idea that an organisation should be driven by a sense of purpose is not new. In the past year, that view has gone mainstream, with everyone from the Business Roundtable to the Financial Times and the World Economic Forum now agreed on the need to balance profit and purpose.

The question is how?

How do companies build purposeful cultures? How do you equip senior leaders and employees with the skills to understand and engage with these issues authentically? How do you align business decisions with social and environmental impact? How can purpose add longterm value to a company's brand? And in a world deeply suspicious of corporate spin, how do you communicate all of this to multiple audiences with different expectations?

The answers to these questions are not straightforward. This is especially true as the new wave of Generation Z joins the already influential Millennial cohort. In many ways, they will bolster the impact Millennials have had. In others they will bring new traits - more politicised, and drawing their information and trust from different sources.

Our research illustrates one animating characteristic shared by both of these

generations. While they see the risks facing their generation as existential, they are not without hope. More than politicians, celebrities, governments, businesses and other more established members of civil society they feel an agency - a purpose - to leave the world in a better state than they found it.

In the following pages we analyse the critical importance that these young people will have in driving socio-economic change around the world. And we provide insights to underpin the strategies and campaigns that will be successful in a world led increasingly by Millennials and Generation Z. A world where their voices and their desire to have a seat at the table are changing policy and politics faster than anyone would have ever expected.

KEY FINDINGS

Purpose matters and will continue to matter

Millennials and Generation Z expect companies to take clear positions on social and environmental issues. Six in ten (61%) respondents told us that it was important or very important that companies take a stance on issues that matter to them. A majority (55%) of those surveyed also said that having a clear purpose beyond profit was important to them when considering which brands to buy.

The climate emergency dominates

Climate change comes top of the concerns of Millennials and Generation Z. 71% of Millennials and Generation Z saw it as the biggest challenge facing their generation. There was an 11 point gap between the climate emergency and the next prominent issues (economic inequality and political instability).





The most powerful agents of change are individuals

Millennials and Generation Z believe that, more than any other potential change agent, they have the power to have an impact on the issues facing their generation. Exactly half (50%) told the Purpose Pulse that individuals such as themselves are best placed to drive change on these issues.

Business and government trail in trust to tackle the big issues facing younger generations

In an indication of low confidence in traditional institutions, both government and business were repeatedly rated bottom when respondents were asked who could help tackle the challenges they face. Just over one-in-three thought government (35%) or business (37%) could be trusted to tackle the big issues. For Generation Z the lack of trust in politicians and government seems especially strong.

A clear social purpose attracts women and Black/Black British/Mixed talent

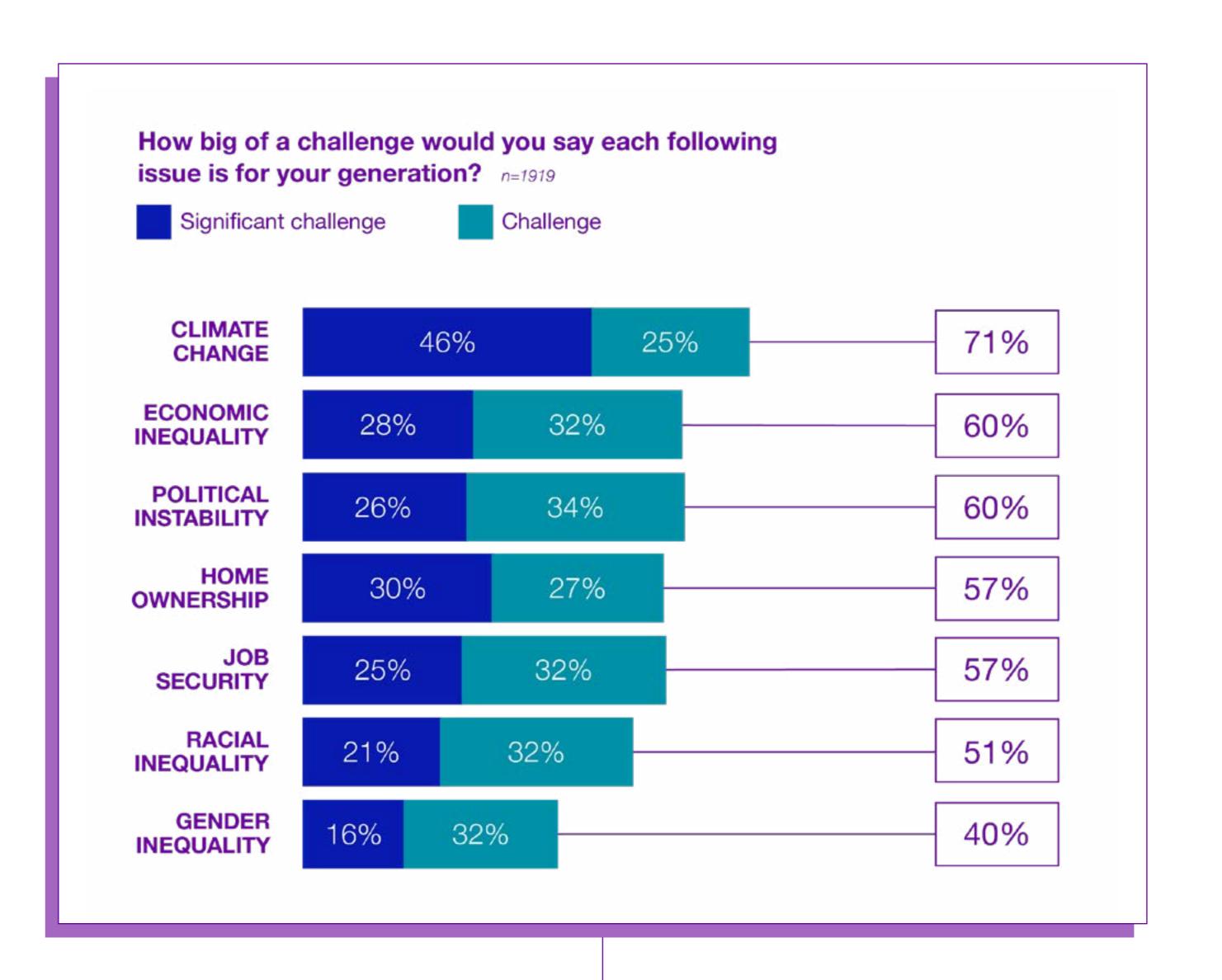
Six out of 10 Millennial and Generation Z women (59%) said that having a clear social purpose was very important when deciding to work for a company (compared to 54% of Millennial and Generation Z men). More than two thirds of Black/Black British/Mixed Millennials and Generation Z (69%) said that having a clear social purpose was very important when deciding to work for a company (compared to 58% of white Millennials and Generation Z).

CONTEXT

The final year of the last decade was dominated by climate activism, from children around the world protesting during school hours to Extinction Rebellion bringing cities to a standstill.

This took place against the backdrop of record storms and the Australian wildfires that grabbed global attention. It comes as no surprise therefore that climate change comes top of the concerns of Millennials and Generation Z. 71% of Millennials and Generation Z saw it as the biggest challenge facing their generation.

Maybe more surprising is the 11 point gap between the climate emergency and the next prominent issues (economic inequality & political instability).



That does not mean young people are not worried about financial security. The legacy of the 2008 great recession, a frustration with capitalism's ability to close the economic gap and a feeling that previous generations have been materially better off than Millennials and Generation Z have driven a particular set of issues up the agenda of our respondents. Economic inequality, political stability, home ownership, and job security are all seen as challenges for their generation by the majority of respondents.

Issues of identity also matter for Millennials and Generation Z. 51% of respondents told us that racial inequality was a major challenge. 40% said the same of gender inequality. It may be that with the prominence of feminist movements like the Women's March and MeToo, visibility has been interpreted as progress. However, the higher score given to racial equality as a worry may reflect an acknowledgement that progress on race issues has been slow.

How might these issues continue to play out in the next decade?

When asked their view of the future, the most common response (53%) was 'worried'. But 51% said they were hopeful. It seems that while keenly aware of the challenges in the decade ahead, young people still think these problems can be solved.

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CLIMATE

Environmental activism will probably get louder and include a much broader range of voices. Greta Thunberg has been instrumental in channelling the fears and frustrations of a generation. Our view is that others, inspired by her actions, will pick up the baton, developing new and innovative ways of bringing the urgent message to the public. We anticipate that 2020 will see the rise of more climate activists becoming household names, and perhaps some household names becoming climate activists. Expect these influencers to shape Millennial and Generation Z decision-making, political advocacy, and purchasing habits well beyond the next year and throughout the Purpose Decade.

As our data shows, the contribution to the fight against climate change will be the defining component of a company's reputation and, by extension, its licence to operate. Companies should also be prepared for careful scrutiny of their environmental credentials with respondents most likely to say they would be concerned by corporate "greenwashing".

FUTURE OF WORK

Millennial and Generation Z concerns about economic instability and job security will probably not dissipate anytime soon. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution continues to shape society with the growing rate of automation in business and the enhanced sophistication of the types of roles under risk from automation, this will be a key trend to watch.

Generation Z currently ranks concern about job insecurity lower than their older counterparts (51% vs. 60%, respectively). This may be because they feel better equipped with the skills needed for the future workplace, or have grown up with an acceptance of more transient careers and casual work. Whether this changes once they move further along in their careers remains to be seen.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As more of Generation Z enters the workforce, their purchasing power, and their desire to work for companies that reflect their values will continue to drive changes at all levels across all sectors.

We expect that gender pay gap reporting will continue to be heavily scrutinised, and that companies, even those outside of the statutory reporting requirement in the UK will begin to publish their data.

Likewise, we predict that 2020 will be the year that momentum gathers behind a requirement for ethnic pay gap reporting.

In a data-driven age, it is clear that younger people want to be certain that companies genuinely perform, rather than just proclaim their values.



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DIFFERENT PRIORITIES: GENDER AND ETHNICITY

The issues identified in the previous section are of deep concern to a large number of Millennials and Generation Z. However, it is worth noting that they are not homogenous in their views and there are considerable differences of prioritisation within both groups.

Millennial and Generation Z women were more likely to attach greater importance to social issues than their male counterparts. Three-quarters (75%) of women attached high importance to climate change as an issue compared to just two-thirds (67%) of men. Perhaps unsurprisingly, men (35%) were less likely than women (45%) to attach high importance to gender inequality.

The question of race produced important differences of opinion on key questions. 72% of Black/Black British/Mixed respondents to us that economic inequality was a significant challenge, compared to 65% of Asian/Asian British respondents and 63% of White respondents.

62% of Black/Black British/Mixed respondents told us that racial inequality was a significant challenge, compared to 57% of Asian/Asian British respondents and 46% of White respondents. Black/Black British/Mixed respondents (53%) were also more likely than White respondents (41%) to report that gender inequality was a significant challenge.

These findings serve as an important reminder to those seeking to communicate with Millennial and Generation Z audiences that although there is a desire for change to happen, different groups see those issues differently. Framing arguments in a way that will resonate with the priorities and expectations of women and people of colour matters.

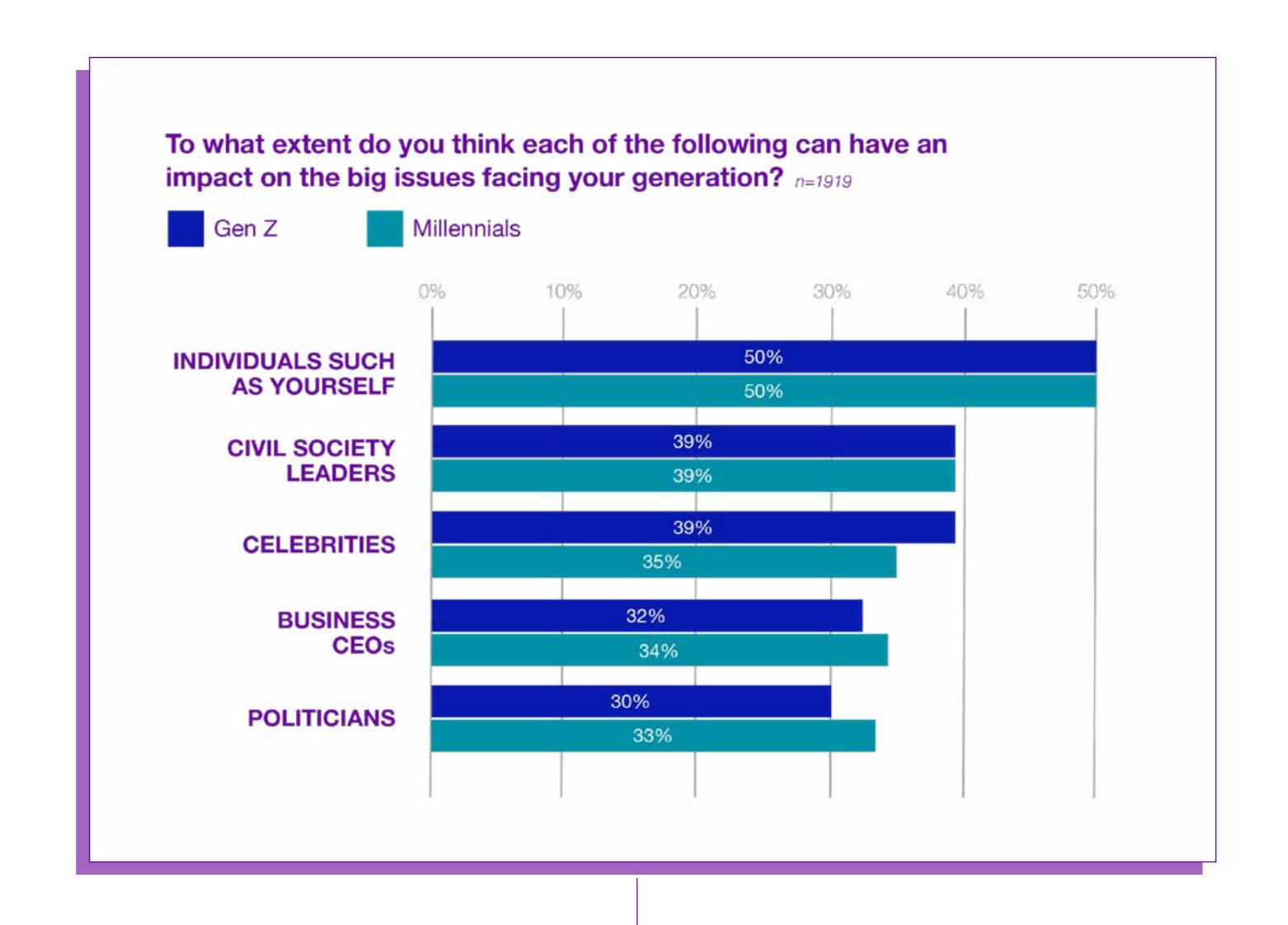


DRIVERS OF CHANGE THE PURPOSE PULSE 2020 #THEPURPOSEPULSE

MASTERS OF THEIR OWN DESTINY

Millennials and Generation Z believe that, more than any other potential change agent, they have the power to have an impact on the issues facing their generation.

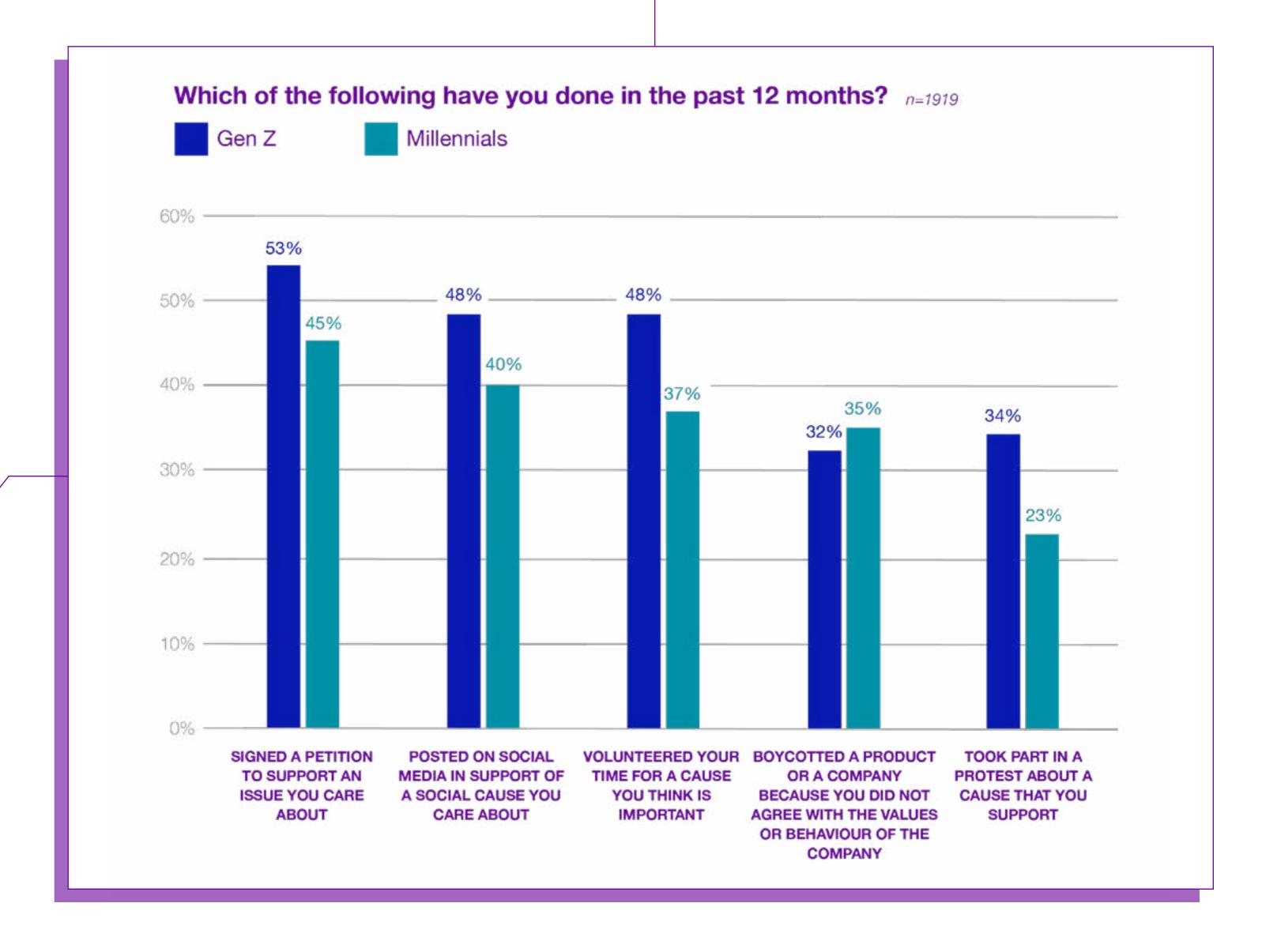
Exactly half (50%) told the Purpose Pulse that individuals such as themselves are best placed to drive change on these issues. This compares to 40% who believe that civil society leaders can have the most positive impact, 36% who thought the same for celebrities, 34% for company CEOs and only 32% for politicians. Most conventional theories-of-change suggest that the Government leads policy-making and policy-delivery, with support and lobbying from private citizens, civil society and the private sector.



DRIVERS OF CHANGE THE PURPOSE PULSE 2020 #THEPURPOSEPULSE

However, this seems inadequate to describe the certainty and self-belief of Millennials and Generation Z. They believe that their voice matters, and that their actions can shape the world around them. The generations that were once, and to some extent, still are, derided as the "me" generation believe that they should have a leading role in making positive change. Companies should take note.

And the trend appears to be intensifying in younger groups. Whilst over a third (37%) of Millennials claim to have volunteered their time to a cause that is important to them in the last year, this number rises to nearly half (48%) for Generation Z. Virtually across the board, on measures of political behaviour, Generation Z reported higher levels of activism. However, it appears Millennials are more likely to take action through purchasing power by boycotting a product where they don't agree with a company's behaviour.



LOW EXPECTATIONS OF GOVERNMENTS

Most starkly, just one in three (32%) of Millennials and Generation Z believe that politicians are able to have an impact on the most significant issues facing their generation, trailing every other group asked about.

The failure of political leadership to deliver for young people speaks to a considerable gap between the issues that several national governments have recently prioritised, and the current challenges that matter to Millennials and Generation Z audiences. Again this trend appears to be sharpening with Generation Z a full 5% less supportive of governments' ability to solve today's big challenges.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS OF BUSINESS

With expectations of politicians so low, there is an opportunity for companies to drive performance and brand engagement by stepping into this vacuum. The challenge lies in whether business can meet the growing expectations of these audiences.

Despite commentary in some quarters that companies are going too far in demonstrating how "woke" they are, the data show the opposite is true. Millennials and Generation Z are more than six times as likely to say companies are not doing enough and should do more (45%) than to say companies are doing too much and should do less (7%). And a majority (55%) said that having a clear purpose beyond profit was important to them when selecting a brand to buy. In the next section we consider how this trend might evolve.



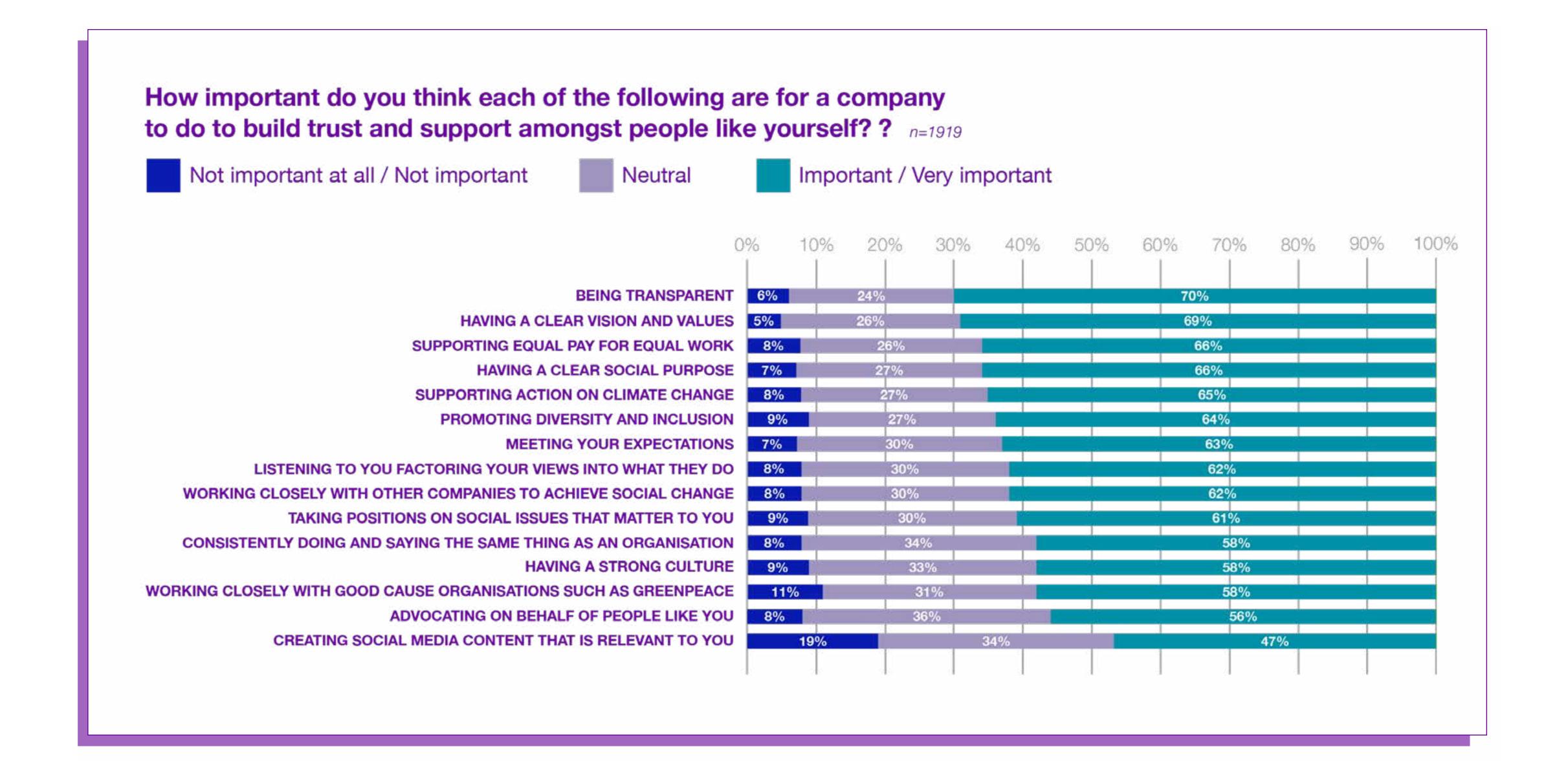


TAKING A STAND THE PURPOSE PULSE 2020 #THEPURPOSEPULSE

BUILDING TRUST AND SUPPORT

Trust has been a recurring theme over the last few years in the conversation about companies and their relationship with society.

The generations examined in this report have specific behaviours and actions that they expect from companies if they are to gain their trust and support. Alongside the articulation of a clear social purpose, respondents cited transparency, clear values and culture as critical ways of establishing trust and support between themselves and companies.



TAKING A STAND THE PURPOSE PULSE 2020 #THEPURPOSEPULSE

BRANDS TAKING STANDS

In today's world, Millennials and Generation Z expect companies to take clear positions on social and environmental issues. Six in ten (61%) of respondents told us that it was important or very important that companies take a stance on the issues that matter to them.

This usually takes the form of a company, reactively or proactively, making a bold business decision or engaging in some form of advocacy that is relevant to their audiences. An example of the former includes the supermarket chain Iceland's commitment to remove palm oil from its products.

The latter is well illustrated by Nike's high profile support for Colin Kaepernicks's activism for racial equality.

In both of these cases, the companies in question would have carefully considered each of their audiences' concerns and expectations - investors, employees, customers, suppliers, regulators and local communities. Given the growing importance of Millennials and Generation Z in each of those stakeholder groups, and a strong expectation that companies should not shy away from relevant issues, staying silent is no longer seen as being neutral for these generations.

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This is reflected in the growing focus on the power of branding. In today's markets, products and services often look very similar. What differs is the story told about them and, increasingly, their impact on the world around us. The majority of Millennials and Generation Z take a brand's purpose (55%) and social impact (54%) into account before making a purchasing decision or becoming a supporter.

Most consumers and employees in both of these generations want to feel like they are making a real difference. A brand with a purpose that overlaps with the values, concerns and priorities of their audience, and is actively pursued throughout the company, gives the individual a voice. The Purpose Decade will be defined by brands listening more intently to their stakeholders and building movements that create measurable cultural and societal changes.

Based on these findings, brands that have a purpose and produce tangible social results, can achieve long-term competitive advantages. It's notable that despite a vocal backlash against Nike's positioning, the company share price rose, and it saw a 31% boost in sales.

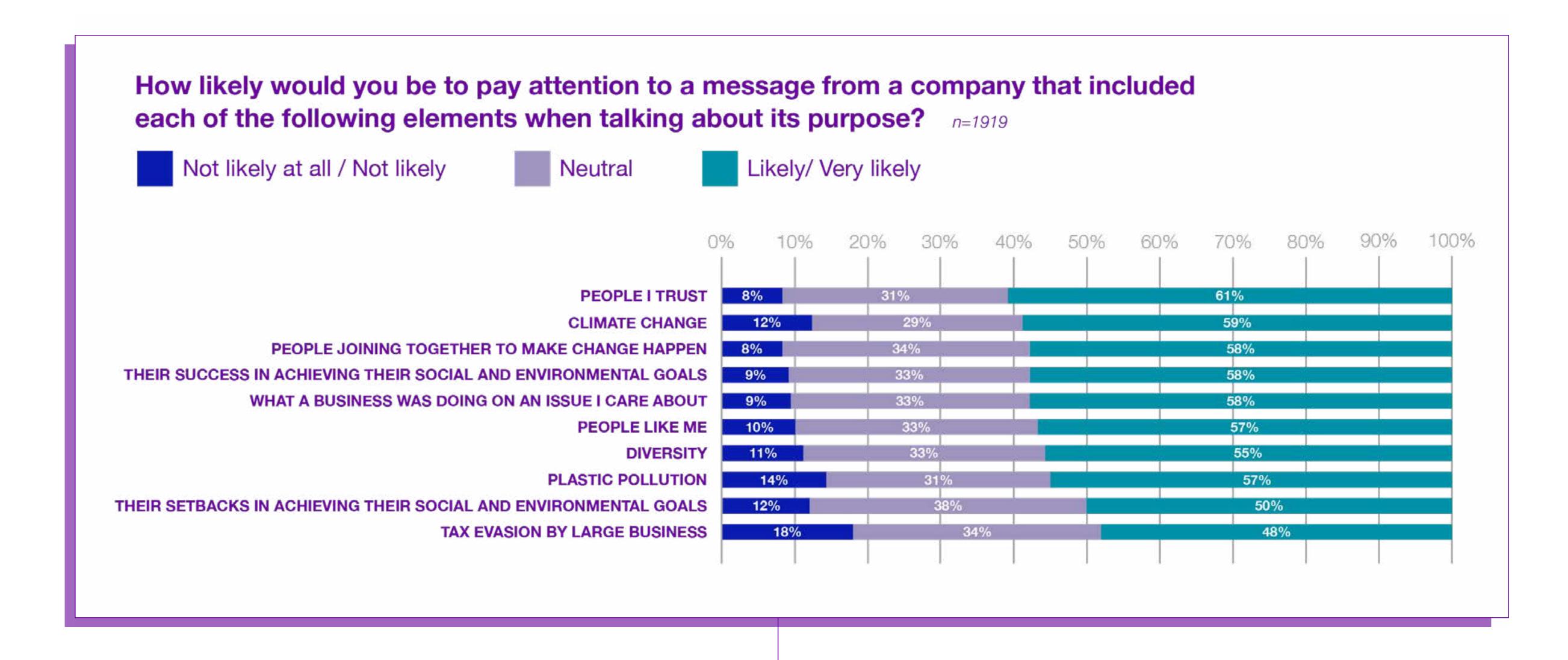
"The majority of Millennials and Generation Z take a brand's purpose (55%) and social impact (54%) into account before making a purchasing decision or becoming a supporter."



HOW TO CUT THROUGH THE NOISE

Companies aiming to build their reputations as purpose-driven must typically deal with what we call the three **As: Articulation (what do we say); Attention (will we be heard); Authenticity (will we be believed).** As more companies adopt a more purposeful approach, navigating these hurdles will determine how successful business will be at standing out by standing up.

What messages are likely to resonate?



A majority (58%) told us that they are more likely to take notice of a company that communicates their successes in achieving social and environmental goals. Interestingly, 50% said that there is a high likelihood that they would pay attention to a company's messaging on these issues if they refer to setbacks in achieving their goals. This finding may be of interest to companies who fear that setting ambitious and inspirational goals could set them up for failure. For generations that place significant importance on transparency, being open about missed goals or the struggle to reach certain targets could be a powerful way of standing out from the crowd.

Regarding specific issues, 58% of Millennials and 62% of Generation Z said that a company talking about climate change in relation to its purpose would make them

highly likely to pay attention.
Furthermore, Millennials are
more likely than Generation
Z to take notice of purposedriven messaging if it references
diversity (58% and 54%,
respectively).

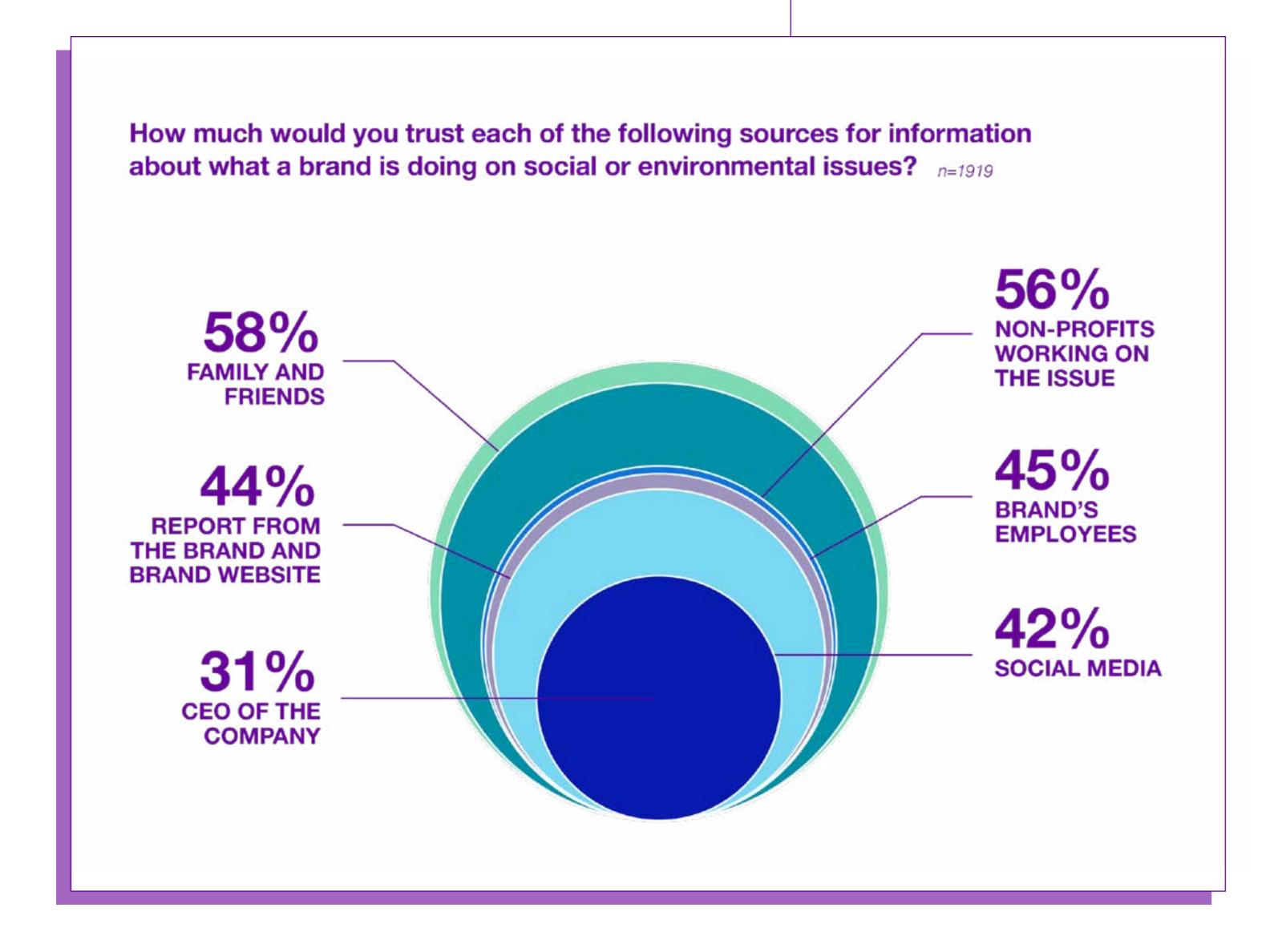
Companies will have radically different social purposes. However, these findings suggest that companies who can create a red thread that ties their activity on diversity and inclusion or the climate emergency back to their own social purpose will be more likely to land their messages successfully.





A LITTLE MORE CONVERSATION CAN LEAD TO MORE ACTION

When communicating their social purpose or taking a stance on a prominent social issue, who should companies use to deliver the message? Conversations between friends and family about a company and a particular campaign or initiative driven by that company can be a powerful way of building trust and support.



A majority (58%) of our respondents place considerable trust in communications received by friends and family about a company's actions on social and environmental issues. This compares to 56% of respondents who place strong levels of trust in endorsements from relevant non-profits, and 44% who place strong levels of trust in corporate responsibility reports.

Some useful insights can be gained from these findings. First, employees can be an incredibly effective advocacy group for a company. Investing in energising employees to have conversations with those closest to them about initiatives can be a more effective way of telling a company's story than through

traditional collateral such as sustainability and corporate responsibility reports. Second, a digital-first approach to communicating social purpose can help employee advocates reach a wider audience.

Generation Z use different sources than Millennials to get their information about a company's impact on society. Only a third of Generation Z read news websites to find out such information (compared to 39% of Millennials). 31% of Generation Z use their peers to find out about a company's positive social impact (23% for Millennials), whilst influencers are a more important source for GenZers than Millennials (23% and 15% respectively).

COALITIONS AND MOVEMENTS

"The formation of coalitions to address specific social challenges should play a more prominent part in any approach that seeks to rebuild trust between companies and wider society."

Different groups of organisations and individuals formally working together to drive an agenda carries significant appeal for Millennial and Generation Z audiences.

Just over half of respondents (51%) said that they place a high amount of trust in coalitions of non-profits, business and governments to solve today's big challenges. Coalitions can vary in approach and structure but usually have common elements such as shared goals, a backbone organisation, joint content creation and a way of holding the coalition accountable.

There are clear advantages to such an approach - the ability to address change at a system-wide level, using a collective voice to cut through the noise and the pooling of expertise and resources. The formation of coalitions to address specific social challenges should play a more prominent part in any approach that seeks to rebuild trust between companies and wider society.





DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Companies who are serious about engaging Millennials and Generation Z on the issues that matter to them should embrace being part of the debate online.

These audiences are very likely to use digital channels to participate in advocacy. 55% of Millennials and 47% of Generation Z told us that they had signed a petition to support a cause that they cared about in the last 12 months. 60% of Millennials and 52% of Generation Z had posted about a social cause they cared about in the same timeframe.

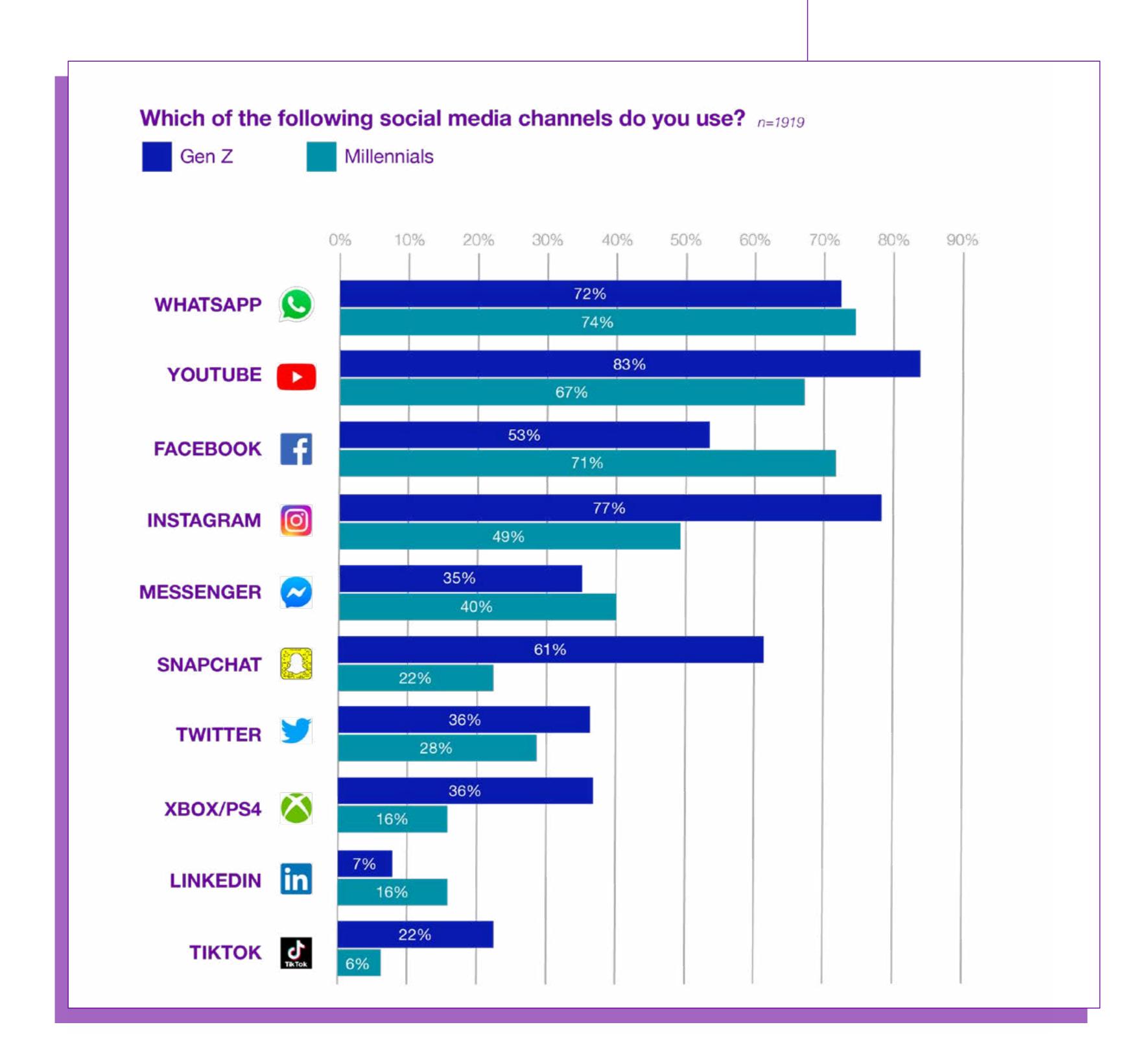
We know that these audiences want to hear the views and perspectives of companies; online

is one of the critical ways of meeting those expectations.

Where should this digital engagement take place?

Given how quickly various digital platforms evolve, it is perhaps unsurprising that the two generations that are the focus of this report engage on these issues online via different platforms.

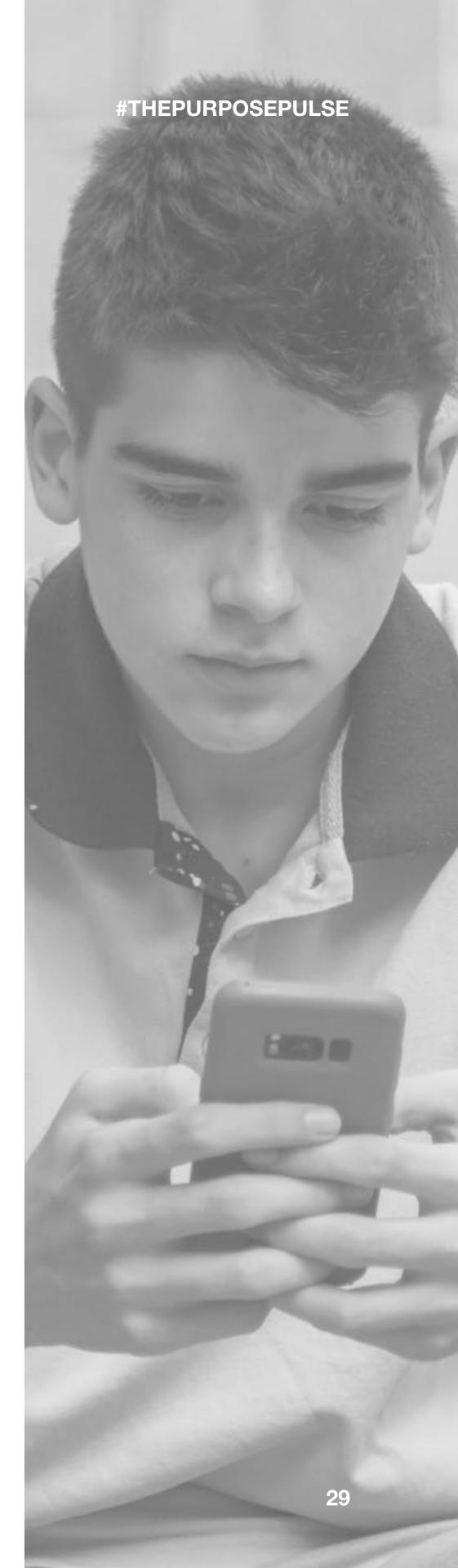
Whilst some platforms are ubiquitous, mostly because they lack a clear competitor, there is a significant amount of differentiation between Millennials and Generation Z. Whatsapp is used by 74% of Millennials and 72% of Generation Z for example.



Yet, while Millennials (71%) are more likely than Generation Z (53%) to use Facebook, Generation Z are more likely to use YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Xbox/PS4, and TikTok.

Indeed, TikTok, a platform less than three years old, is nearly four times more likely to be used by Generation Z (22%) than Millennials (6%), suggesting that the younger generation is quickly developing their own, selfcontained digital ecosystem.

Changemakers will have to be aware of this dynamic, as appealing to a broad-base of young people will increasingly involve coordinating messaging segmented across multiple platforms.





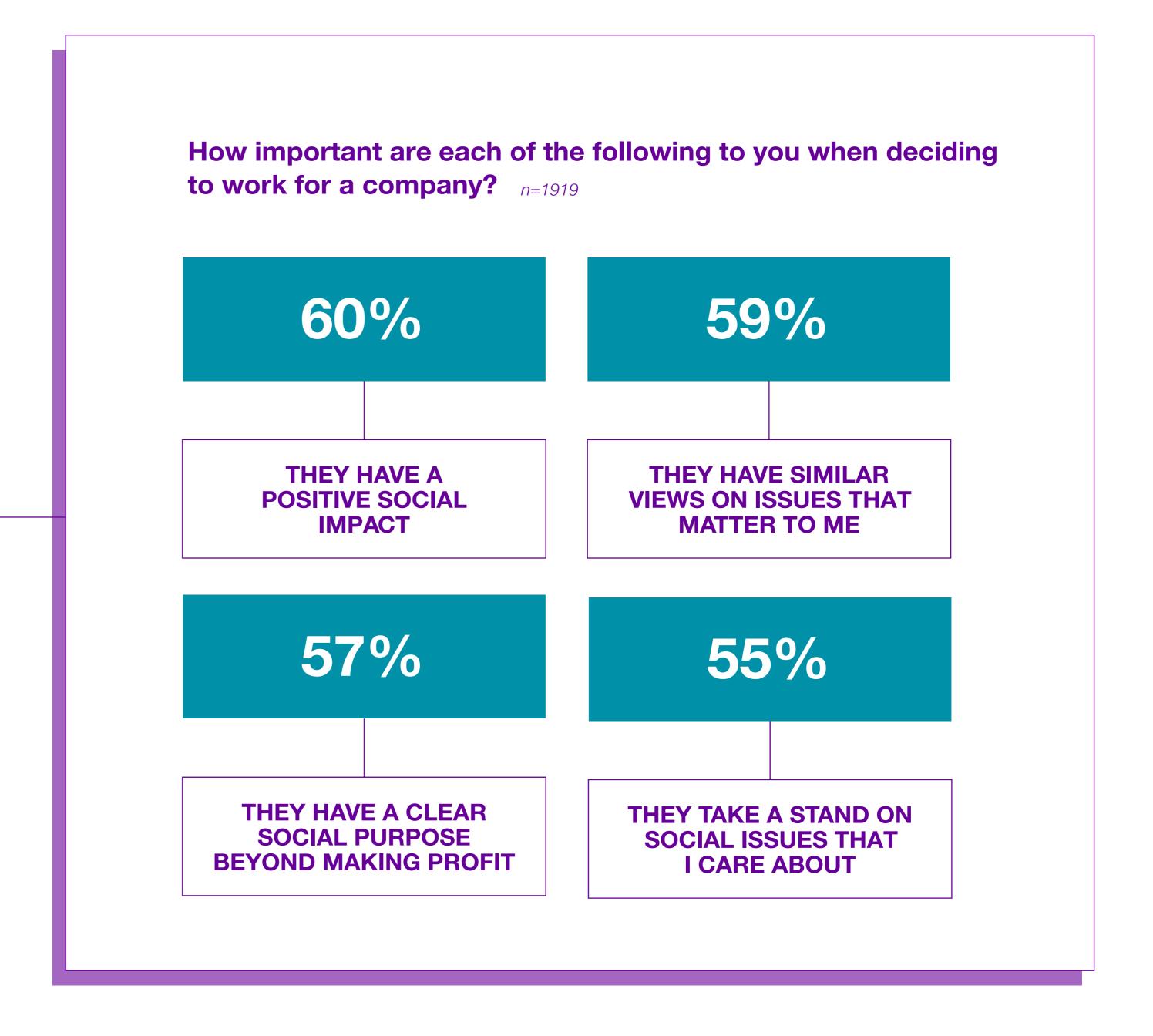
TALENT AND DIVERSITY THE PURPOSE PULSE 2020 #THEPURPOSEPULSE

A CAREER AS AN EXTENSION OF WHAT I CARE ABOUT

The majority (57%) of Millennials and Generation Z told us that, when making decisions about who to work for, they attach high importance to a company having a social purpose that is not defined solely by making a profit.

Similarly, these generations reported that how a company positions itself on big social and environmental issues plays an important role in their decision to work for that company. Furthermore, when the companies they work for take concrete actions to support big issues, their employees are twice as likely to recommend them as a place to work.

Millennials and Generation Z believe that they have the ability to drive change as individuals. Naturally, this activist mindset extends to the type of organisations that they want to be a part of.





DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Companies are coming round to the importance of building strategies to make their workforces more diverse and inclusive. This is, in part, a reaction to emerging data that shows that diverse businesses perform better financially. The prioritisation of the diversity and inclusion agenda within companies has also been driven by pressure from employees, consumers, investors and suppliers.

However, despite the best of intentions, many companies have struggled to create workplaces where everyone can thrive, irrespective of their background.

Some industries in particular face the challenge of not only attracting diverse talent, but also retaining them.

The Purpose Pulse indicates that women and particular minority groups respondents are more likely to be drawn to companies that demonstrate a clear social purpose.

Six out of 10 Millennial and Generation Z women (59%) said that having a clear social purpose was very important when deciding to work for a company (compared to 54% of Millennial and Generation Z men).

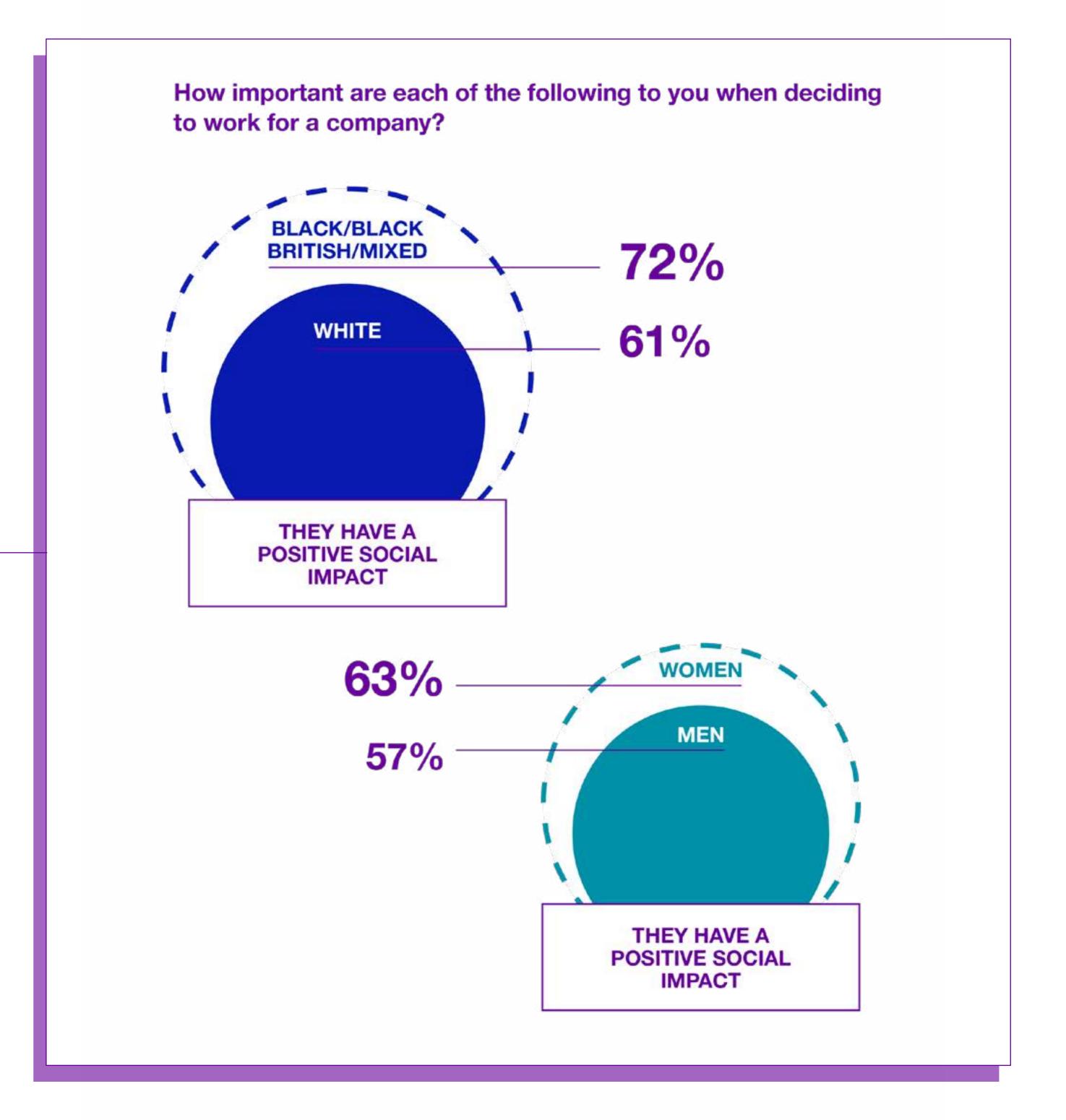
Over six in 10 of women (63%) said that a company's positive social impact played a very important role in their decision to work for them (the figure was 57% for men).

More than two thirds of Black/Black British/Mixed Millennials and Generation Z (69%) said that having a clear social purpose was very important when deciding to work for a company (compared to 58% of white Millennials and Generation Z).

Almost three quarters of Black/Black British/Mixed respondents (72%) said that a company's positive social impact played a very important role in their decision to work for them (the figure was 61% for white respondents).

This is an important finding.

For companies, demonstrating a clear social purpose can not only help a company drive its commercial and communications objectives, but can also help to attract and retain diverse talent; a finding that should be of interest to companies and industries that struggle with this issue.





The findings of the Purpose Pulse 2020 present an opportunity for companies to drive social and environmental change as well as business performance, simultaneously. These findings should also challenge current approaches to demonstrate social purpose in a world that is being shaped by Millennials and Generation Z. There are significant implications for how companies engage with this agenda and younger generations.

Define what you stand for.

The articulation of clear social purpose now forms a major part of a company's reputation with Millennial and Generation Z audiences. It influences consumer choice, choice of employment and willingness to trust and support a company more broadly. Rather than being siloed, that messaging should be integrated across a company's channels and consistently reference their purpose as the reason for their decisions.

Be prepared to take a stance.

Given the importance attached to transparency, Millennial and Generation Z are likely to penalise companies where there's a discrepancy between words and actions. Rather than platitudes, companies need a point of view and a willingness to engage in debate, even when that engagement creates detractors. Younger audiences expect companies to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with social movements – not just for the photo opportunities during the good times but also during times of challenge. Companies will have to embrace the idea that sometimes staying silent on an issue may have a negative impact on their reputation with external and, increasingly, internal audiences.

Have a clear climate strategy.

It would be difficult for company to build a reputation as a purpose-driven organisation if it fails to reduce it's own environmental impact. Society expects businesses to not only support the climate movement but to have systems in place to cut down on carbon emissions and waste. Companies must have a clear, realistic plan to reach net-zero on a trajectory based on scientific evidence. And they must be prepared for close scrutiny of these commitments and implementation.

Help your employees build a movement.

Millennial and Generation Z employees want to play a part in helping their employers to make a positive impact. That energy should be harnessed and channelled in a way that encourages innovation and empowers those employees to become advocates for the company externally. More companies are now supporting formal or informal internal groups of Millennial and Generation Z employees from across the company to develop fresh ways of making a positive impact while at the same time helping to make the business more financially successful.

Make this generation the hero.

The approach outlined for employees also applies to external audiences. A company considering launching an initiative or campaign aimed at demonstrating their social purpose should try to build in calls to action to enable wider audiences, especially Generation Z, to play a meaningful and active role rather than passively receive information from the company.

Use diversity to drive purpose and vice versa.

The Purpose Pulse found that Millennials and Generation Z care about how companies position themselves on the major issues of the day, though women and particular minority groups individuals within these groups have different views on the relative importance of those issues. This speaks to the importance of companies who intend to launch purpose-driven initiatives or campaigns assembling diverse teams who are able to offer different perspectives on how those efforts would be received. Our survey also found that women and particular minority groups Millennials and Generation Z attach greater importance to a clear social purpose and

positive social impact than men and White respondents. This means purpose can also help attract diverse talent into a business.

Integrate purpose across functions.

Those tasked with driving social purpose across a business should ideally connect to functions related to strategy, operations, sustainability, public affairs, communications, marketing and talent. Not doing so risks a loss of opportunity to take advantage of the benefit that being a purpose-driven business brings. Worse still, it can lead to gaps between what a company says and what a company does.

Build stronger coalitions.

Coalitions of organisations that work towards a collective goal matter to younger audiences. Millennials and Generation Z expect more from companies than they do from governments on these issues. To meet those expectations, companies will have to form alliances, sometimes unusual ones, to amplify messages, shift behaviour and develop system-wide solutions to problems.

DEFINITIONS THE PURPOSE PULSE 2020 #THEPURPOSEPULSE

DEFINITIONS

Fourth Industrial Revolution

The combination of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, natural language coding, robotics, sensors, cloud computing, nanotechnology, 3D printing and the internet of things.

Social Purpose

A company's purpose describes why it exists. It usually articulates how the core of the business makes a positive contribution to society (hence the use of the phrase social purpose). This should also be compatible with being financially successful. This is distinct from a sustainability plan which helps a company to fulfil its purpose without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Millennials

Commonly understood as the generation of people born in the 1980s or 1990s; for methodological reasons here defined as those aged 23 to 39, born between 1981 and 1997.

Generation Z

Commonly understood as the generation of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s; for methodological reasons here defined as those aged 16-22, born between 1998 and 2004.





