

March 2021

We, The family

How Gen Z Is Rewriting the Rules of Parenting

VIRTUE

VICE media
group

01

INTRODUCING GEN Z PARENTHOOD

Nearly 1 in 10 Gen Zers in the US are parents,¹ and nearly 1 in 5 of annual births are to Gen Z mothers.² In just a couple of years, Gen Z in the U.S. will make up the *majority* of first-time parents.³

And yet we still think of them as *kids*. Kids born after 1996 and before the early 2010's, who've lived through perspective-shaping events—ubiquitous internet, economic collapse, radicalization and terrorism, a global pandemic. Kids who have learned from previous generations' hindsight. Their generation is perhaps the most savvy, honest, industrious, inclusive, self-aware, and collective-minded generation in history. They think and behave in new ways, they champion new values, they aspire to new ideals, and they pursue them through new means. Generation Z is reimagining every part of culture they touch, and the world of parenting is next.

So say goodbye to smash cakes and gender-reveal parties

To soft pastel perfection

To sleep-training books and mommy juice

To sharenting and new-parent FOMO

To babies at concerts with little baby earmuffs

In Gen Z's world of parenting, kids are not a badge to unlock or a ball to juggle. For the new generation, parenthood is their #1 source of meaning, fulfillment, and motivation. And every aspect of lives will evolve to make room for it, whenever the time strikes. Gen Z Parenthood is here, and the world of parenting will never look the same for any of us.

Virtue is part of the VICE Media Group ecosystem, with unparalleled access to culture and people. Through our unique understanding of the now, we help others navigate and shape what's next. And so, we are proud to share this first-of-its-kind deep dive into the lives and minds of Gen Z parents from around the world. Our report will get at those fundamental questions everyone will soon be asking: Who are Gen Z parents? What experiences have shaped their approach to parenting? What moves them? What keeps them up at night? And how will their generation shape the wider world of parenting?

To answer these questions (and many more) we conducted a robust three-part research study. The research, conducted in June through December 2020, focused on Gen Z parents (20-24 years-old).

Phase 1

Mobile Ethnographies

We met Gen Z parents "face-to-face" virtually. Over the course of one week, we engaged a diverse group of Gen Z parents in the United States through a series of mobile diaries and tasks. This approach allowed us to interact with Gen Z parents in their own environment and understand who they are as parents day to day, bringing to life their attitudes, preferences, and lifestyles.

- Sample size: n=45 Gen Z parents
- Age: 20-24 years-old
- Gender: 73% Female / 27% Male
- Location: U.S. (mix of urban, suburban, and rural settings)
- Discussion Topics: Journey to Parenthood, Nursery Tour, Parenting Philosophies, Caring for Your Children, Support Systems, Work & Financial Life, Future Outlook

Phase 2

In-Depth Interviews

To dive deeper into the learnings from our initial phase, we followed up with select participants and conducted 1-hour in-depth interviews with each of them. This allowed us to probe and investigate key areas that surfaced in the previous phase, leading to a rich and detailed conversation.

- Sample size: n=20 Gen Z parents
- Age: 20-24 years-old
- Gender: 70% Female / 30% Male
- Location: U.S. (mix of urban, suburban and rural settings)
- Discussion Topics: Living Arrangements, Parenthood Beginnings, Relationships, Stigma & Assumptions, Education, Finances, Mental Health & Wellness, Work, Trust

Phase 3

Online Survey

In this final part of the research, we conducted a global online survey to validate and quantify the trends and tensions identified in Phases 1 and 2. This survey was conducted among 7,518 young parents, including Gen Z parents and a sample of Gen Y parents to identify generational shifts in attitudes and behaviors as parents.

- Sample size: n=3,759 Gen Z Parents (20-24 years-old), n=1,880 Young Gen Y parents (25-29 years-old), n=1,879 Old Gen Y parents (30-39 years-old)
- Gender: 49% Female / 49% Male / 2% Gender-fluid, Genderqueer, Non-binary, Transgender
- Location: 25% North America (U.S. & Canada), 30% Latin America (15% Brazil, 15% Mexico) 15% China, 30% EMEA (14% France, 16% UK). All geographically representative by country.
- Survey Topics: Childhood Experience, Current Family Structure, Journey to Parenthood, Parenting Values, Relationships, Communication & Resources, Education & Career

THE “WE” MINDSET

Self-perception & Identity

Who are Gen Z parents as people? Before they were parents, Gen Zers were people, of course. People about whom a lot has already been written, and people who are known for a great many inspiring traits: for seeking truth above perfection, for wanting to live and let live, and for having an unprecedented “we” point of view. That generational mindset informs how they see themselves as parents and as people.

Gen Zers are known for rejecting societal norms and constraints and for turning rigid binaries into inclusive spectrums. They don't align with binary definitions of sexuality or gender, proving their identity is anything but static.

This generation only expects their identities to become even more complex in the future as they face new experiences and express themselves through the choices they make. Demographics like age, gender, and race that describe *what* they are don't show the entire picture of their complex views of identity.

Gen Zers base their identity on *who* they are—their personality, values, hobbies, and passions. This perspective remains true when understanding how the parents in this generation define themselves. To truly understand who Gen Z parents are, we need to stop relying on demographics and start thinking in terms of their values and passions.

While Gen Z parents are by no means a monolith, certain personality traits rise to the top, blending pragmatism with spirit.

GEN Z PARENT PERSONALITY TRAITS



*I take on others' emotions, stand in their shoes and **see their perspective**. That's a gift that I have that happens naturally."*

- Female, 24, US



I don't give up easily. If something is difficult, I'll find a way or make a way. No one is going to **stop me**."

- Female, 22, US



*I love to be laid back, but I also very deeply care about constantly **learning** and the **people** around me matter the most."*

- Male, 22, US

1) SELF-AWARENESS IS EMPOWERING

Gen Z are much more honest about their mental health challenges and needs than older generations. Mental health holds the key to their overall wellness—ahead of physical and nutritional health. This is a noticeable shift from Gen Y, who focus their energy primarily on nutritional and physical health.

Gen Z parents are cognizant of their own imperfections and know that being open about them is necessary to improve their wellbeing. These are priorities for this generation as parents, not just as people.



*It was a **personal journey** for me to take time to myself and my thoughts. Sometimes you are the problem and you need to fix it. That takes self-awareness. I've had to have **uncomfortable thoughts** with myself. If you can't even be comfortable with the things you don't like about yourself, you can't have full conversations **in the world**. You don't really know who you are."*

- Female, 23, US



*I got into Headspace. [...] at 11 o'clock, I usually join a group session when a moderator talks. That calms me. I practice breathing techniques. **It actually works**. I thought that stuff was fake, but it really does."*

- Male, 23, US



*I have a book called **Burn After Writing**. I use the book to tap into different parts of my brain. Make myself think about other things. **My anxiety** is just running my life, basically. I noticed when I became a mom my anxiety levels just went up. I write in the book probably **every night**."*

- Female, 22, US

2) PARENTHOOD IS A COMPLEMENT—NOT A COMPROMISE—TO THEIR IDENTITY

Gen Zers view parenthood as a new layer of identity, one that enhances their existing personalities and makes their lives better. They try to integrate their children into everything they do.



*[My baby] is my pride and joy and everything. I feel like that's become a big part of **my identity**, being her mom. I don't feel like I lost any part of my identity, all my good traits and who I am has been **enhanced by the lessons and responsibilities** that I've had to learn by being a mom to this cute little baby."*

- Female, 21, US

73%

say that becoming a parent enhances who you already are as a person

ONLY

35%

say you lose part of your personal identity when you become a parent

Unlike Gen Yers of the so-called “Me” generation, Gen Zers from around the world have championed collective prosperity over individual success. They have a sense of shared responsibility, which informs much of their decision-making. For Gen Z parents, this “we” mindset carries over into family life and dynamics, informing their dreams, their worries, and even their hobbies. Their kids do not impede their lives. In fact, they shape their lives in order to include their children in meaningful ways.

Their favorite hobbies and activities revolve around creative and cultural activities —like cooking, DIY projects, reading, traveling, and watching movies. But these hobbies aren't just for personal fulfillment. They do them to enrich their family's and children's lives as well.



I love to sew. *I recently made a drawstring play mat for **my son**. He loves it and it makes clean up fun and easy!"*

- Female, 24, US



*During the Coronavirus, my family kept in touch by **baking the same recipe together over FaceTime**. I love to bake because it helps bring people together."*

- Male, 24, US



Music was a big inspiration and still is. I love the idea, from orchestras to three minute music videos, how it was made through someone's thoughts and emotions.

I'm a drummer myself and my little man is as well."

- Male, 24, US



*We love to have **movie night**, grab a big cover, pick one of the various **Disney movies** and sit down to watch while eating snacks and cuddling."*

- Female, 21, US

When it comes to “me-time,” Gen Z parents don’t have the energy or the resources to devote a great deal to it. They have extremely busy lives juggling work, school, and parenting, and not much energy—or desire—to enforce a parenthood/personhood balance. Instead, they have evolved a new mindset and new self-care strategies that can be done in tandem with their everyday parenting activities.



*I’m a reader, but I stopped reading for a good couple of years. I took that love again and I gave it to my son, I started reading to him. Now I’m trying to find that balance to where I’m able to **share that with my son.** We’re going to make this become our thing.”*

- Female, 24, US



[My son] loves when I use him as the “weight” for my workouts. We both get a kick out of exercising together. I will bench press him, curl him, and hold him while I do squats.”

- Male, 24, US

3) EMBRACING THE UNEXPECTED

Most Gen Z pregnancies today were unplanned. While a majority of Gen Zers (78%) planned to become parents at some point in their lives, only 40% were actively trying to get pregnant. The only outlier is China — where 73% of current Gen Z pregnancies were planned. However unplanned many of those pregnancies might be, Gen Z parents embrace this unexpected turn and choose to see its advantages rather than any disadvantages.

71%

believe it's still possible
to enjoy your youth while
being a parent

60%

believe there is no wrong
or right time in life to
become a parent

//

[When I found out I was pregnant] I was scared and happy all at once. I knew I wanted to be a parent for a very long time, I just didn't know what path I was going to be getting myself into."

- Female, 24, US



Gen Z parents see many advantages to being a younger parent—all revolving around the ability to be a better parent to *their child*. They are less concerned with how it may impact the plans they have for their *own lives*. It's not about the personal benefits for themselves.



*The way I express myself is **all centered around children**, my kids, the things I would do for them. If I didn't have my kids, I don't know who I would be in a sense anymore. I can't really see myself before I had kids."*

- Female, 23, US



BENEFITS OF BEING A YOUNG PARENT

Child First

1

More energy to engage with them

2

Better relate to children

3

Be alive to experience a greater portion of child's life

Parent First

4

Parents still around to help take care of children

5

Still in your prime when children leave home

6

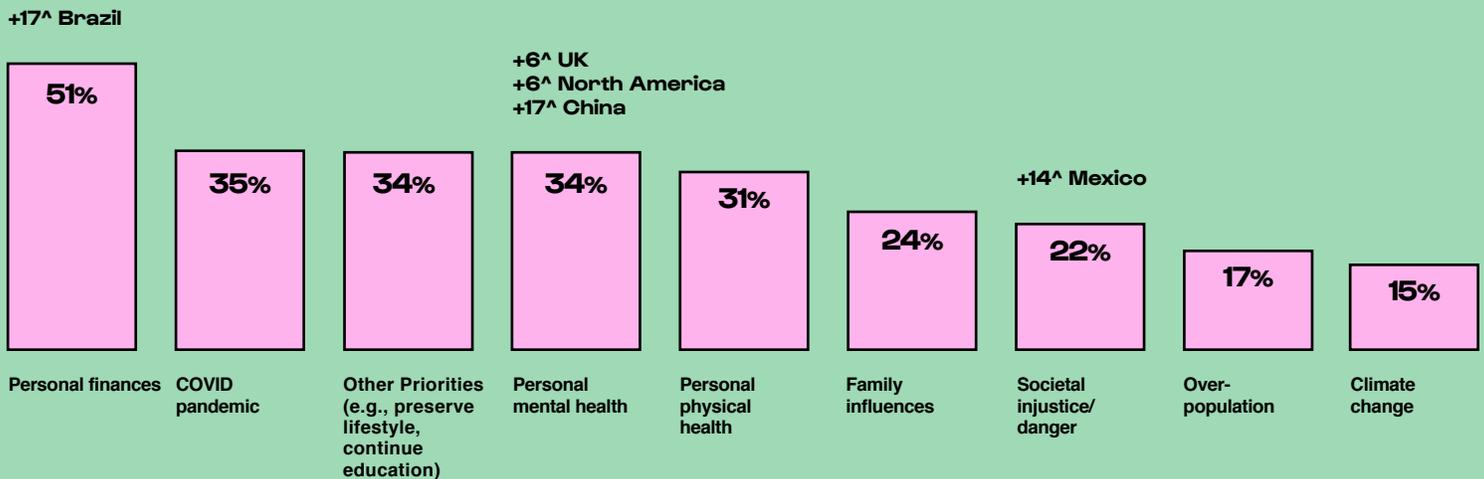
Focus on career path with pregnancy out of the way early

4) AWARENESS OF THE MACRO FORCES LIMITING THEIR FAMILIES

Parenthood itself is not a barrier to young people’s fulfillment. It’s the economic, political, and societal realities that prevent young parents from thriving. While two-thirds of Gen Z parents plan to have more kids, they are deterred by their personal finances, health, and societal injustice and danger.

Certain external factors are more of an issue in some markets than others. Mental health is of greatest concern in North America, China, and the UK, while societal injustice is more on the minds of Gen Z parents in Mexico.

BARRIERS TO HAVING MORE CHILDREN



*My son is half black. My wife and I deal with a lot of racism, especially now. Unfortunately, a lot of people don’t want to believe that, especially a lot of white people like myself. They don’t want to believe that **racism is real**. It’s scary how real it is. I go through it with my wife every single day.”*

- Male, 22, US



*How is my child going to live in this world in 2025, 2030? A combination of competition, of the wealth gap that is currently happening... Just a combination of a bunch of different things that make it a **lot harder to live** in this world.”*

- Male, 23, US

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

HAVING CHILDREN AT A YOUNGER AGE

Gen Zers don't see their kids as a barrier to self-actualization, which means they're more likely to have children before (or in tandem with) education and career, or any other larger life goals. We expect them to have children sooner than Gen Yers.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reflection of this growing reality in entertainment and advertising media
- More child-friendly academic environments
- Empathetic workplace environments that understand and normalize the multi-faceted roles of working parents

GREATER INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN INTO OTHER FACETS OF DAILY LIFE

Gen Z parents aren't looking for help in striking the perfect balance between me-time and kid-time—they will simply demand better ways to blend the two.

- New self-care solutions that allow them to stay present and engaged with their children while tending to their mental health
- Age-agnostic recreation that is enjoyable and appropriate for parents and children

HOLDING MACRO FORCES ACCOUNTABLE FOR PARENTHOOD CHALLENGES

Gen Z parents will refuse to fault themselves for parenting "shortcomings" that lay beyond their control. We see them organizing with like-minded parents to identify and combat the root causes of those issues.

- Storytelling that grounds parenting challenges in macro conditions beyond individual control
- Contributing to grassroots initiatives that address the systemic causes of parenthood challenges

3

DETERMINED TO BE DIFFERENT

Approach to Parenting

To understand the Gen Z parent mindset, it's critical to consider how their unique family dynamics growing up, coupled with their unique experiences of the wider world, have shaped them as people and as parents. How their unparalleled access to information *and* community has made them uniquely self-aware and open about their feelings. How coming of age during a Great Recession has compelled them to take matters into their own hands and find more realistic and more meaningful goals to pursue. How their pragmatism and disregard for convention have unlocked new and alternative models of parenting.

There is also the personal sphere of influence to consider: how being raised with Gen X parenting virtues—of hard work, realism, and tough love—has shaped their childhood experiences and led them to become the parents they are today. Gen Z parents are keenly aware of the emotional and psychological toll of their childhood upbringings and have learned from those experiences. They are determined to do things differently by connecting with their children on a deeper level. They are looking to build trust with trust, honesty with honesty and, ultimately, do a better job of preparing their children for the outside world. Gen Z parents see their own parenthood as an opportunity to be the parents they wish *they'd had*.

1) GEN Z UPBRINGING: GOOD INTENTIONS, DIFFICULT OUTCOMES

Gen Z parents see their own parents in a realistic light. However imperfect their childhoods might have been, Gen Zers are grateful for their parents' efforts. They're hyper-aware of their parents' mistakes and the impact of those mistakes on their experiences growing up. This awareness may not diminish the strength of their relationship with their parents, but that relationship is often complex.



*My father was a very strict and yelling, swat you on your butt type of parent. That's one thing I'm **not going to do with my kid** — **the yelling, spanking,** I'd rather talk to him on his level and explain to him what he did wrong and why it's wrong. **What I do take from [my parents]** is how they showed us that family came first with us, me and my sisters, with **the loving and the cherishing of each other.**"*

- Male, 24, US



79%

believe their parents tried their best to be good parents

1 in 3

felt neglected or ignored by their parents growing up

3 in 5[^] Chinese Gen Z parents

Compared to 1 in 5 Gen Y parents

While most Gen Z parents felt loved growing up, many regretted the ways in which that love manifested itself as strict discipline, sheltering, pressure to conform, and distance.

The intricacy of Gen Zers' relationships with their own parents comes across most strongly in China, with Gen Z parents in that country feeling the negative impacts of their childhoods at higher rates than other parts of the world.

These feelings of fear and intimidation pushed many Gen Z parents to keep secrets from their own parents. Many felt they had no choice but to explore the realities of the world without their guidance, often learning life lessons the hard way—through trial and error.



*I'm really present and spend quality time with [my son]. My parents, I was scared of them, **I never told them anything.** I don't want him to be scared of me so he doesn't tell me anything. I'm different, I'm not as strict and I'm more loving."*

- Female, 24, US

32% 58%^ Chinese Gen Z parents

never prepared them for how to handle the real world

+4^ vs. Gen Y parents

31% 46%^ Chinese Gen Z parents

felt a lot of pressure to be someone they weren't

+3^ vs. Gen Y parents

28% 42%^ Chinese Gen Z parents

never understood why they were being punished by their parents

+4^ vs. Gen Y parents

2) THEIR PARENTS AS “REVERSE” ROLE MODELS

Gen Z parents are determined to learn from the experiences of their own childhoods in order to cultivate a different relationship with their own children.

While they have great respect and admiration for their parents’ grit and efforts, fewer than half of Gen Z parents (47%) named their own parents as the number one parenting style they emulate. Rather, their parents seem to model behaviors they now know to avoid, inadvertently guiding them on “what not to do.”

4 in 5



have a different approach to parenting than their parent(s)



*I never had anybody that I looked up to and inspired me to be a better parent. I’m impressed by what I’m capable of and I know that I will always take what I learned from my bad experiences growing up and will work on giving my daughter a **better life than I had**. I admire myself for growing up, taking responsibility and being forgiving.”*

- Female, 23, US



*I honestly had a tough upbringing as a child. Everything I do is from the heart and is based off of how people, who I considered loved ones, have treated me in the past. Some people are blessings in your life and others are lessons. **I am my only role model** when it comes to parenting because I know that my child deserves everything I never received.”*

- Male, 23, US



*If I had to pick [a role model], I guess **my mom**. She’s **made many mistakes** but she does try. She is a big reason why I’m always affectionate and show love to my daughter because she never really did that.”*

- Female, 24, US

3) WALKING IN THEIR KIDS' SHOES

For Gen Z parents, it's their children—and not their parents—who guide their parenting decisions. They are committed to listening to their children and staying attuned to their needs. Compared to their own parents, Gen Zers are taking an approach that puts themselves in their children's shoes.

72%

say their children teach them how to be a parent better than anyone else



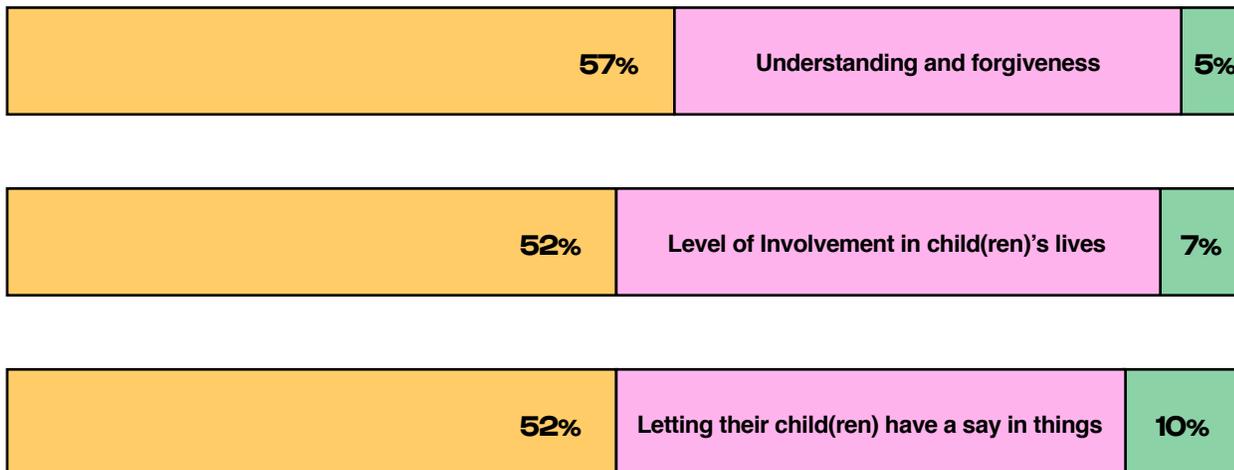
The perfect parent is the parent who is perfect for their child."

- Female, 23, US

Do this more than their own parents



Do this less than their own parents



Gen Z parents understand that their children are not just children, but people in progress. And so they extend them the same level of consideration they would other adults. They value their children's opinions and show them respect by including them in decision-making. Relating to their kids as human beings doesn't mean they lose sight of their differences, it just means finding common ground to connect on.

This sentiment is heightened even more significantly in Chinese Gen Z parents, who felt the most neglected and unheard by their own parents growing up. They are making even more of a concentrated effort to build a different relationship with their own children.

60%

say they consider themselves and their child(ren) as equals

78%^ Chinese Gen Z parents

62%

say they often ask their child(ren) for their input when making plans

77%^ Chinese Gen Z parents



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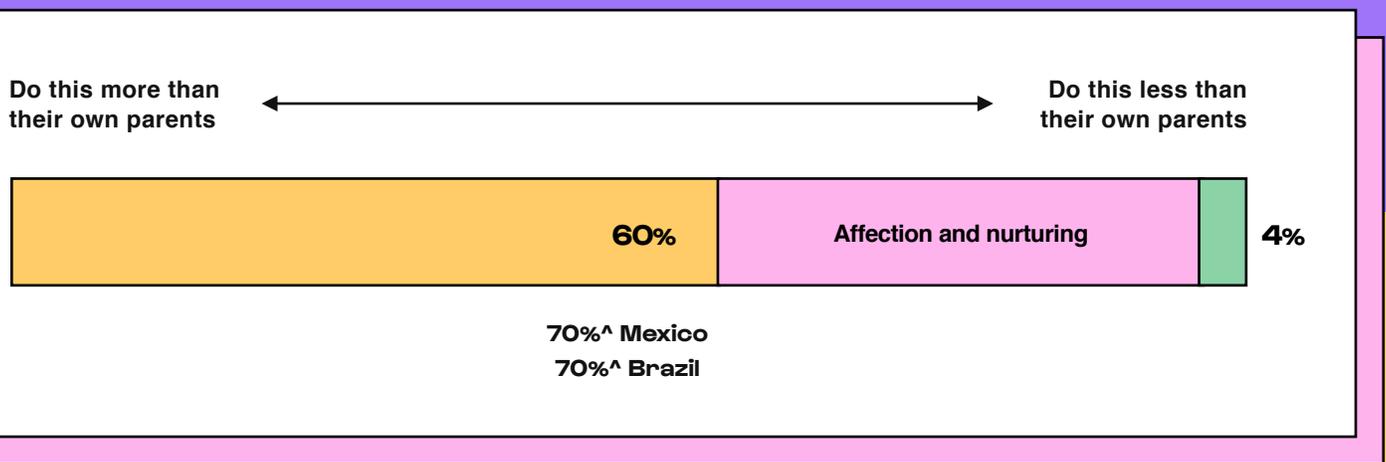
*I want to be **able to have fun with her.** I want to have a relationship where **she's my best friend.** Obviously, **parenting** comes first, but I also want that for an aspect.”*

- Female, 21, US

4) ESTABLISHING A STRONG EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

It's through this child-first lens that they approach parenting their children. They are determined to give their children the things they wished they'd had more of growing up. Being the parent they wish they'd had means developing more intimacy and a more emotional, closer bond than they were given growing up.

Displaying more affection is expressed even more fiercely in LATAM countries, with Gen Z parents in Mexico and Brazil showing a desire to do this to an even greater extent. This is on par with how their Gen Y parent counterparts feel as well, indicating a real cultural shift in fostering a more open relationship between parent and child compared to older generations.



The parenting [style] of my own parents, I tend to not try to follow in that direction...I want different things. I have a lot more patience, I'm going to be right by my son's side, I feel like I didn't have that emotional connect to my mother and that's going to be different."

- Female, 24, US

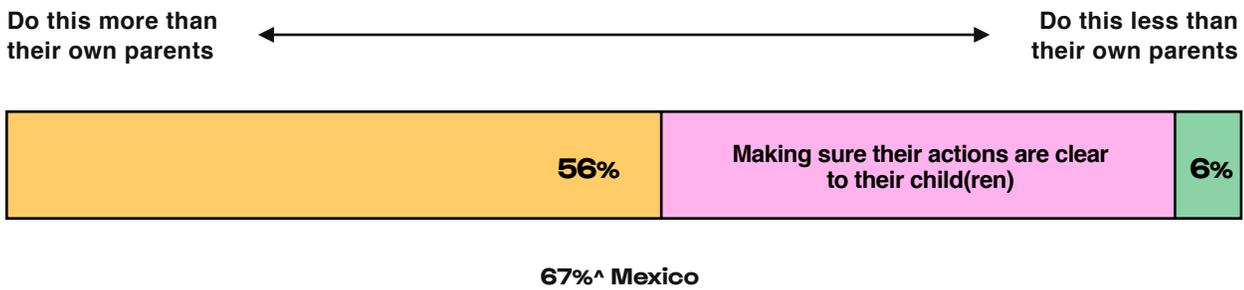


We're definitely finding new ways to parent. **There is a gentler way.** So many people are living life not even being self-aware of why they feel the way they feel. So many things were swept under the rug. Just a general level of self-awareness and **the ability to point out your emotions.**"

- Female, 21, US

5) CULTIVATING, NOT TRAINING

Gen Z parents are not interested in molding their children to become something they're not. Watching their kids learn, grow, and become their own unique individuals is one of their greatest joys and rewards as parents, so they're focused on ensuring that their children have the tools they need to live the lives of their choice and to take on whatever they may face in the world. Their approach to getting their kids to do what is good for them is gentle, working with their kids, not against them.



When their child doesn't want to do something they feel is important for them to do:

59% explain why it's important

54% do the activity with their child

52% find a way to make it enjoyable



"I want to guide him. I want to show him. I want to help him navigate. I don't want him to come to conclusions that I've already made for myself. If my son has different ideas than me, I would rather him to come to those ideas himself."

- Male, 22, US

Their desire to let their kids grow doesn't stop them from being firm when called for. In fact, consistent rules and routines are very important to this generation, who see them as necessary for creating a safe and child-appropriate space for their kids to flourish. For Gen Z parents, having that reliable structure in place is a way to reassure their children, not intimidate them. And they are as firm with themselves as they are with their own children.



[My schedule] is definitely around my son's routine, because having this transition, it's a lot for a newborn. Moving from one house to another, seeing a whole different type of environment, I have to find a way for him to be comfortable. I don't want him to worry when he's a little alone or playing with his toys."

- Female, 24, US

ONLY

31%

let their kids use screen devices regularly

-10 vs. Gen Y parents

FEWER THAN

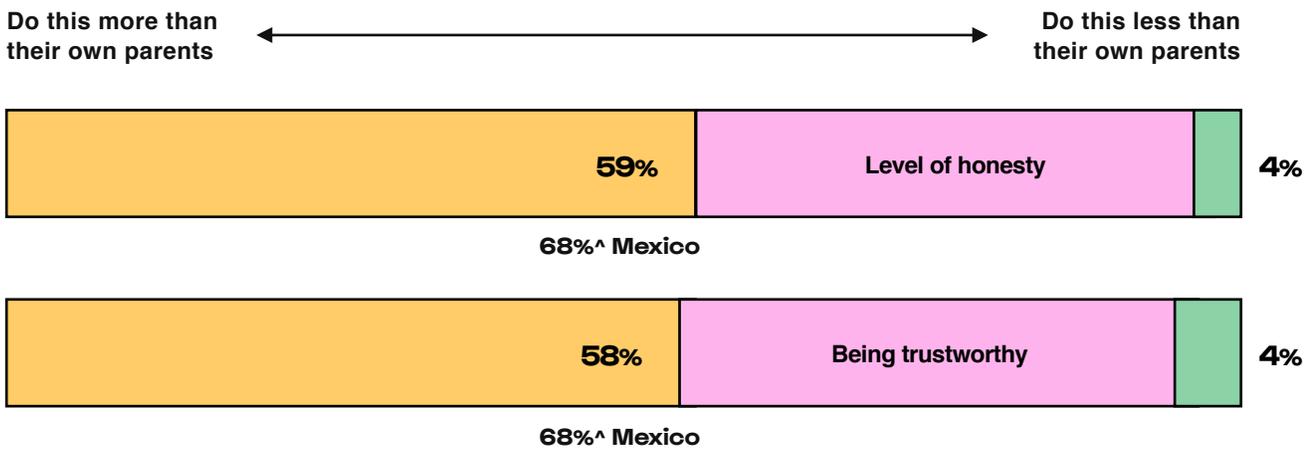
1 in 6

consume alcohol or cannabis products while on parental duty



6) PREPARING, NOT PAMPERING

Like every parent, Gen Z parents worry about the best way to equip their kids for an uncertain future. They don't want to coddle their kids or shelter them from the tough realities of the world; they want to help them be ready for it. And that means tailoring and carefully planning out how they deliver these messages based on what they know their child is able to handle.



You're not going to get a perfect world, utopia. It's not happening. I also believe that things are going to come in another form. An example, racism, it might be in another form that you don't know about. That's just how the world is. I don't like it and I don't stand for it, but I also want to teach my child what it is and what you can do."

- Male, 23, US



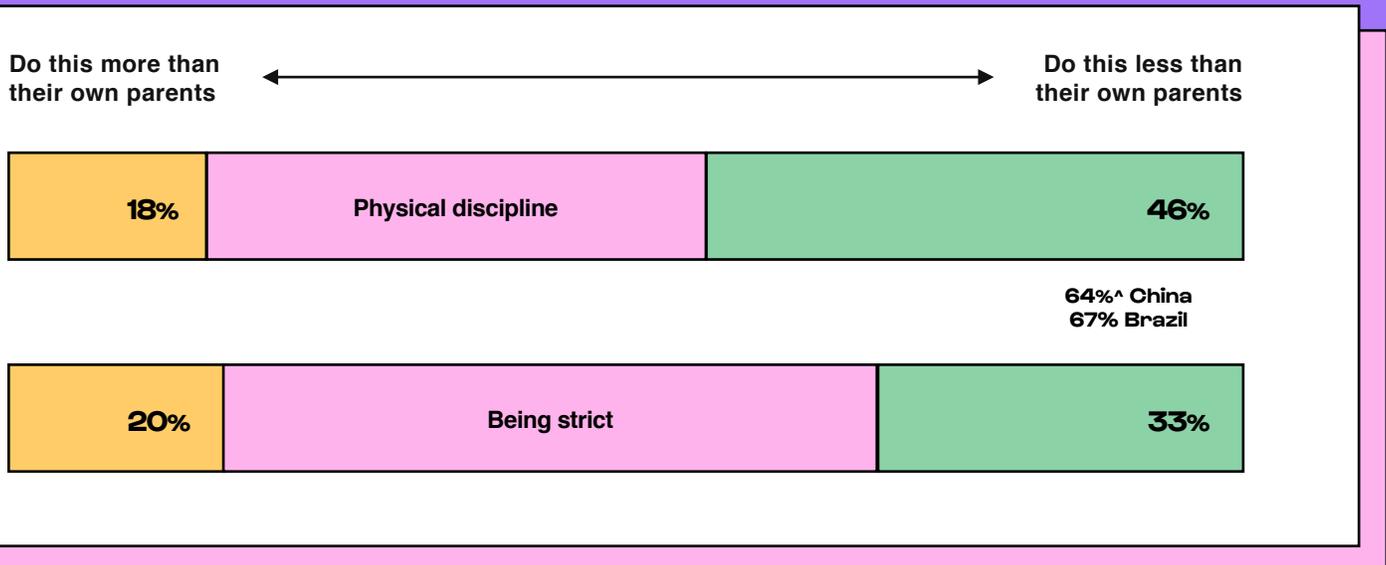
I talk to him like a little adult. My parents made me feel like I had no control in my life. They never asked me or talked to me about anything, and so I talk to him all the time about everything. Telling him why we can't do stuff. I want him to **feel secure in any decision** he makes and be able to think about things."

- Female, 24, US

7) TRUST, NOT DISCIPLINE

Gen Z parents are also looking to move beyond intimidation as a parenting strategy. Throughout the world, parents want to use less physical discipline and be less strict than their parents were with them. This is especially apparent in China and Brazil, where Gen Z parents are even more adamantly moving away from the disciplinarian styles of their parents.

Mexico offers an interesting exception to this pattern, where more parents report emulating or surpassing (67%) their own parents' use of physical discipline. These numbers are more pronounced with men than women, indicating that physical discipline is a manifestation of wider gender norms, a demonstration of masculinity (“machismo”).



In every country, Gen Z overwhelmingly agrees that trust—not discipline—is the strategy they feel is most effective in protecting their kids from the perils of the outside world. Chinese Gen Z parents especially stand out in this approach, once again signaling that they are particularly sensitive to how they come across to their children.

63% 75%^ Chinese Gen Z parents

Say it's more important for their children to trust them than to follow their rules

76% 98%^ Chinese Gen Z parents

Say trust (vs. discipline) is the most effective parenting strategy to protect their children from the perils of the outside world

Gen Zers build trust with their children by keeping the doors of communication open. They want to instill a trusting relationship with their children so their children will feel comfortable coming to them in the future when facing unforeseen dangers. This is the most protective thing they can do—always being there to help their kids.



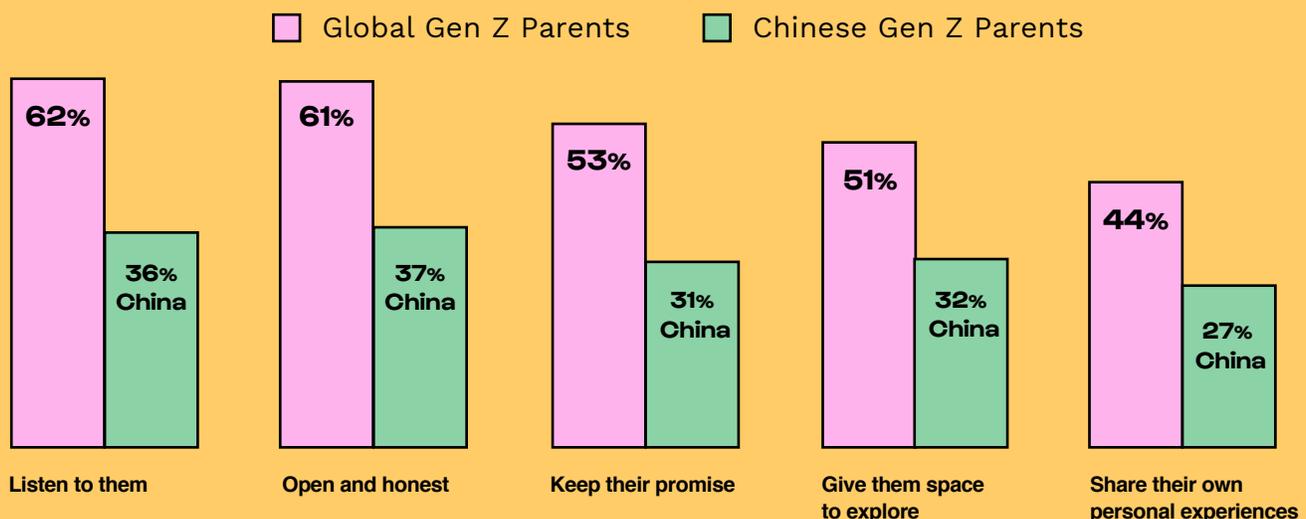
*I would love for them to say **my mom is so understanding**. I trust my mom. That **I'm always there and I'm not going to judge them**. Just so that they can be open with their feelings or thoughts. There are other parents that you're scared to go to, and I don't want to be that parent. I want to be completely different."*

- Female, 22, US

Despite their overwhelming intent to build trust with their children, not all parents have the tools to do so. This comes across most evidently among Chinese Gen Z parents. They feel the most passionately about building trust with their kids but do not appear to know how to best move forward in implementing that strategy.

Previous studies² found that growing up as a single child during China's one-child policy — as most of these Gen Z parents did — impacts their ability to trust. Without siblings, researchers found that parents of only children were less likely to teach their kids to be trusting of others. Since these parents did not experience the tools needed to build trust growing up, they are not equipped to do so confidently with their own children.

GEN Z TACTICS TO BUILD TRUST



IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

GREATER RESPECT & TRANSPARENCY FOR CHILDREN

Gen Z parents are uniquely inclined to view their kids as equals and will push for greater respect and transparency for their children across many areas of life.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Child-appropriate and honest educational media for children on real world topics like sexual health or racial justice
- Children as authorities (e.g., parenting guides written by children)
- More dignifying and intelligent representation of children in advertising media and entertainment
- Support children's rights in areas they lag behind adults' (e.g., protection from discrimination or harassment in school)

SEEKING PROGRAMS THAT CULTIVATE CHILDREN'S INDIVIDUALITY

We expect to see growing demand for child-development solutions that create space for children to explore themselves and find their own path, rather than those that look to shape or dictate a given skillset.

- More dedicated play spaces, in private and public areas
- Gender-agnostic products and (marketing) ranging far beyond clothing alone
- Non-visual forms of storytelling media that leave more to the imagination

NORMALIZING FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES & EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Gen Z parents understand the life-long impact they can have on their children's mental and emotional health, for better or for worse. They will be proactive about maintaining healthy practices, for themselves and the family.

- Innovation to make therapy more accessible and feasible for low-income families (e.g., teletherapy, gamified therapy apps for kids)
- Anti-anxiety solutions for babies and kids
- Messaging across advertising media and entertainment that openly displays vulnerability and expressing emotions in a healthy way

4

COOPARENTING

Connection & Community

Gen Z parents are deliberate about how and with whom they form their families, with their children's best interest top of mind. Having grown up in non-traditional households, they are normalizing a wider range of family configurations, from non-traditional partnerships to multi-generational households. Their family units provide them with much of the support they need, and there's less impetus for them to seek connection or validation outside of their immediate circles. They are content with how their relationships have evolved and comfortable with how they balance those relationships—with their partners, with their friends or even just with themselves.

1) BORN INTO NEW FAMILY FORMATIONS

Gen Zers grew up with a different model of parenting and definition of family than generations that came before them. Marriage rates have steadily declined over the past few decades in almost all countries tracked by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In 1970, most OECD countries had an average marriage rate of 7 marriages per 1,000 people. By 1995 (the year right before the beginning of Gen Z births), this had fallen to around 6 marriages per 1,000 people.³

Additionally, the proportion of children born outside of marriage has increased even more drastically in almost all OECD countries. In 1970, an average of just 7% of children were born outside of marriage, but by 1995, this average had grown to 24%.⁴ As a result of consistent declines in marriage rates and increases in births outside of marriage, Gen Zers are much more likely to have been raised in a single-parent household or in a family where their parents were not married.

Single-parent households are almost unheard of among Gen Z parents in China, where only 3% grew up this way. This family structure is much more common across the rest of the world, especially in countries with higher divorce rates, like France.

GLOBAL

1 in 3[^]



Gen Z Parents grew up in a single parent household⁺

Compared to 1 in 5 Gen Y parents⁺

FRANCE

2 in 5

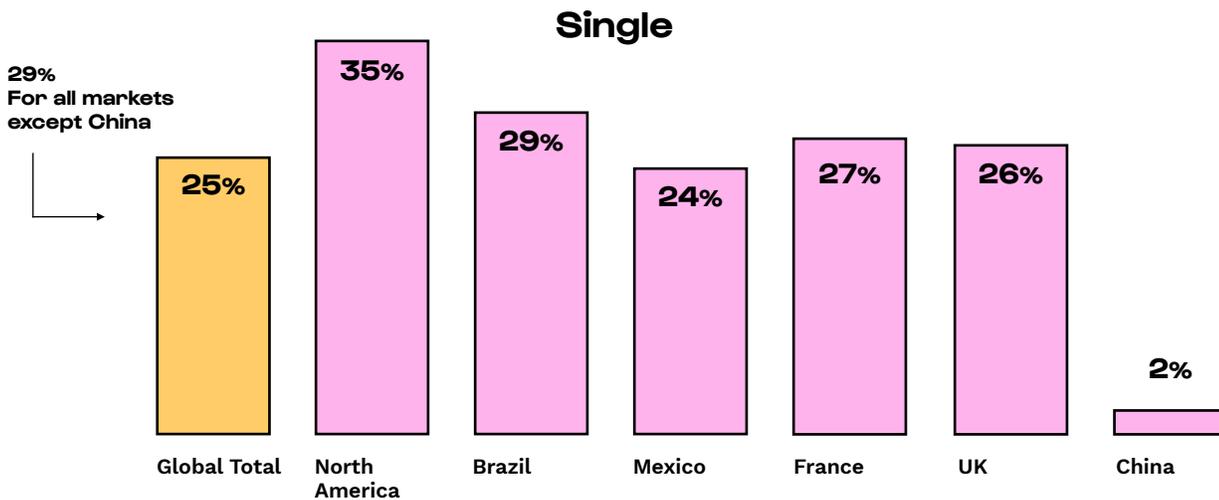


³ OECD Family Database, Marriage and divorce rate, 2021
⁴ OECD Family Database, Share of births outside of marriage, 2021

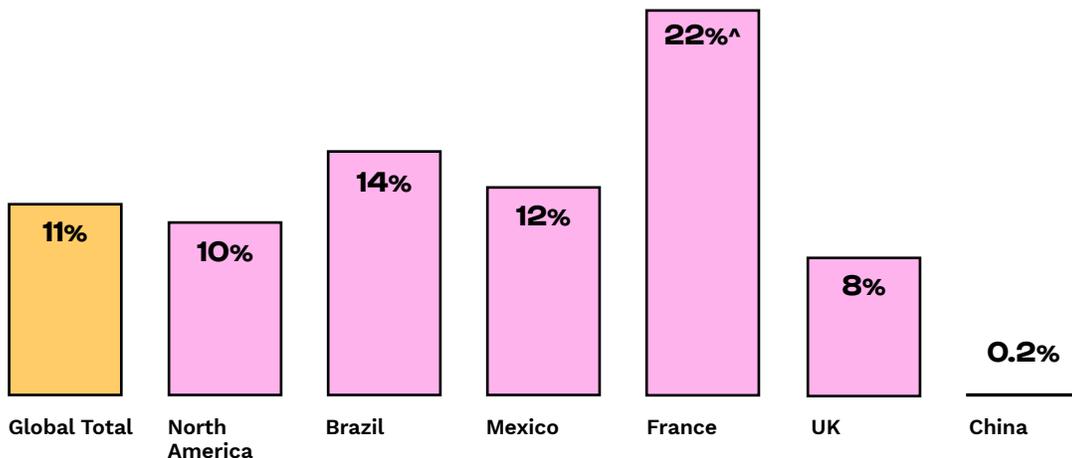
Globally, over a third (36%) of Gen Z parents grew up with parents who were not married, a significant increase from Gen Y parents at 24%. When not including China, the total for Gen Z parents in all other regions jumps to 42%.

Chinese Gen Z parents continue to indicate that they grew up in a much more traditional family structure when looking into the relationship status of their parents. Only 2% of Chinese Gen Z parents grew up with parents who were not married. Conversely, in countries like France where marriage is far less of a cultural imperative, Gen Z parents are more likely to have grown up with coupled—albeit unmarried—parents.

PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP GROWING UP (IF NOT MARRIED)



In a Relationship, Not Married



Growing up in multigenerational households is not too common globally. However, there is a notable increase in the UK among Gen Z parents who grew up in this type of household. UK Gen Y parents report a similar frequency as well, indicating it might be connected to prevalence of South and East Asian families in the UK, for whom multigenerational living is more common.

In addition to experiencing different models of parenting growing up, Gen Z parents were more commonly raised as single children. While this number is largely driven by Chinese Gen Z parents, born in the era of China's One-Child Policy, the rate of growing up as single children is still higher overall (+6[^]) when compared to Gen Y.

26% 75%[^] China

of Gen Z parents globally grew up as single children

ONLY

6%

of Gen Z parents globally grew up in a multi-generational household

16%[^]

of UK Gen Z parents grew up in a multi-generational household



2) EMBRACING NON-TRADITIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

While they're actively trying to switch up their style of parenting to be different from how they were raised, Gen Z parents are integrating the models they grew up with in terms of family structure. Since they grew up this way, they view single-parent and unmarried parental figures as normal family structures. As a result, Gen Z parents who are single aren't forcing themselves into relationships if it doesn't work for them or their kids.

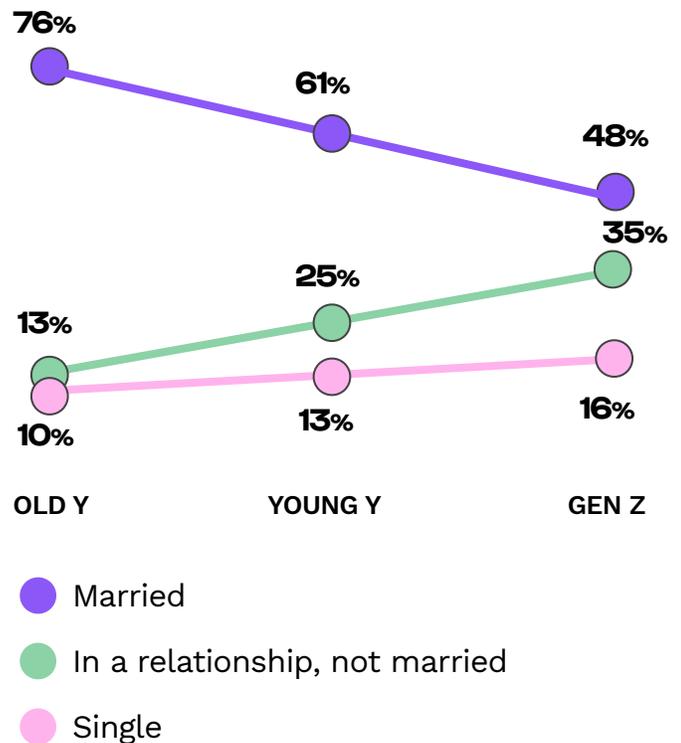
Less than half of Gen Z parents today are married. Lower incidences of marriage for Gen Z could be attributed to their young age, but marriage rates are at an all-time low globally, at just 5 marriages per 1,000 people in 2017, according to the OECD.⁵ This is especially true in France, where nearly 60% of Gen Z parents are in relationships but not married to their partner. The opposite is true in China, where almost all Gen Z parents are married (99%), a rate consistent with their Gen Y counterparts.



*I'm currently not pursuing anyone or dating because **it doesn't interest me.** I got out of a two year relationship a couple months ago and I found that I excel in life when I don't have romantic distractions."*

- Female, 20, US

RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD'S OTHER PARENT



3) EVOLVING GENDER DYNAMICS AND ROLES

Those with partners in their lives buck traditional gender roles in their family dynamics. Overall, Gen Z parents reject the idea of it being primarily a mother's responsibility to take care of domestic duties. However, Gen Z parents in China are still holding onto this traditional view, more than in other parts of the world.



I'd like to see a more open-minded father. I'm a more vulnerable dad [...] I can talk like this with anybody. I don't mind being vulnerable. I don't mind telling people what I really think and how I feel. I don't think it's wrong."

- Male, 23, US

ONLY

1 in 3 ^{2 in 3[^]}
China

believe it's a mother's responsibility to handle most household and parenting duties



Gen Zers approach household responsibilities in a deliberately equitable way, based on what makes the most sense for them and blurring the gender lines of traditional roles. Even though Chinese Gen Z parents believe mothers should handle the bulk of the responsibilities in the home, when put into practice, they are actually handled by both parents at higher rates than any other country. North American Gen Z parents have more rigid divisions of labor, with one parent acting as the main source of income and the other taking on the duties at home.

HOUSEHOLD DIVISION OF LABOR



We split everything down the middle. She's my better half, so she's right on the side of me, so everything that we do, we do together, every decision we make, we make together as a team."

- Male, 23, US



I actually made my husband and I a **chore chart**, because I do work. It's a little chart that I laminated just on a wall next to light switch. Any chores for the day I try to get done first and then if anything is left over, my husband helps out. That's been really helpful to deal with everything pretty evenly and we **both are on the same page** of what needs to get done."

- Female, 23, US

Counter to the popular conception of children as a relationship killer, Gen Z parents feel their relationships are strengthened and enhanced by the presence of their children. The advent of parenthood is not a source of romantic estrangement for Gen Z parents, and they don't feel like having a child around takes away from the time they spend together as a couple.

62%

say quality time with their partner also includes their children



[My partner] always spoils us with spontaneous weekend trips to the beach. He knows my safe haven is the beach and any chance he gets he tries to get us out of the house and to the beach. He knows how much private time with our family means to me, so it's strictly the three of us. I think it's romantic because he sees that I've been home all day and he knows how important it is for me to have a relaxing trip."

- Female, 23, US



4) RELYING ON THE FAMILY COOPERATIVE

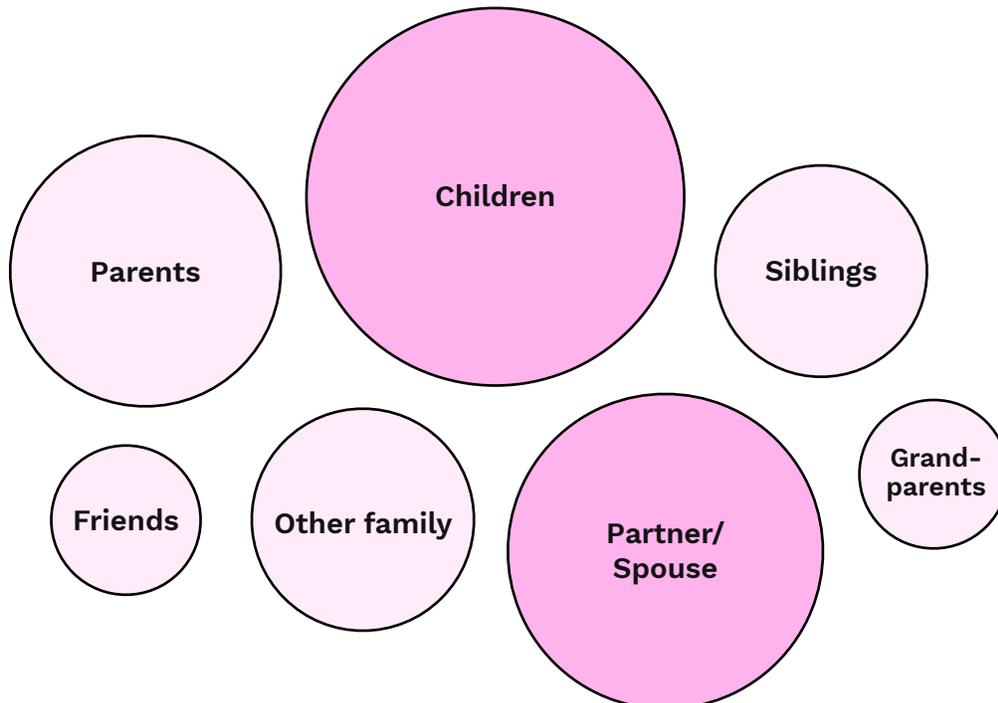
Overall, Gen Z is more likely to live with other family members than Gen Y. This is likely attributed to their lifestage and the need for extra support in being parents at a younger age. But it also ties back to their own childhood, where being raised by single parents or other family members may have carved the path to forming less “cookie-cutter” family configurations as adults.

Household makeup does differ across markets. In China, Gen Z parents have the most traditional setup. A vast majority (85%) live with their partners and children only, having no other housemates. This is on par with Chinese Gen Y parents.

Multigenerational households are more common among Latin American Gen Z parents, with 1 in 4 parents in both Brazil and Mexico living with their parents. This is a significant increase from Gen Y parents in both markets.

GEN Z HOUSEHOLD MAKEUP

Light pink denotes significant increase from Gen Y households



They are choosing to move in order to be closer to their family for that support. Their location is determined by ties to family that can help them take care of their kids, rather than by jobs or opportunities for themselves.



*We recently moved up a little closer to my family, so sometimes when my husband's at work and I'm feeling overwhelmed and not feeling super great as a parent, I load Ruby up and head on **over to my parents' house** and watch my mom and my dad and my siblings fawn over her. It makes me feel better for a little while because **I don't have any responsibility** while I'm there."*

- Female, 21, US



*We ended up **struggling** for a little bit in the first few months. Having to ask everybody around us for **more help than** I was comfortable asking for. Which is why I ended up moving from the city of Chicago to Charleston with my sister. They've been helping me set up a foundation for myself."*

- Male, 22, US



5) FRIENDSHIP WITHOUT FOMO

Gen Z parents have close, tight-knit friendships with those who've kept their trust and stuck by their side as they transitioned into parenthood. Due to their age, many of their friends aren't currently parents themselves, but these parents still find fulfillment and satisfaction from these relationships, as their friends understand that their lives are different now and want to help support them. They still feel like they can relate to their friends even if their lifestyles differ, with 65% of Gen Z parents saying they feel close to their friends.



[My best friend] supported me more mentally and she would help me out with anything that she could. Her and her mother will try and offer to watch the kids for me if I ever need to get anything done. She would always try and keep me positive. She would always be there if I needed to talk or go on a rant or needed advice. She's always really been there."

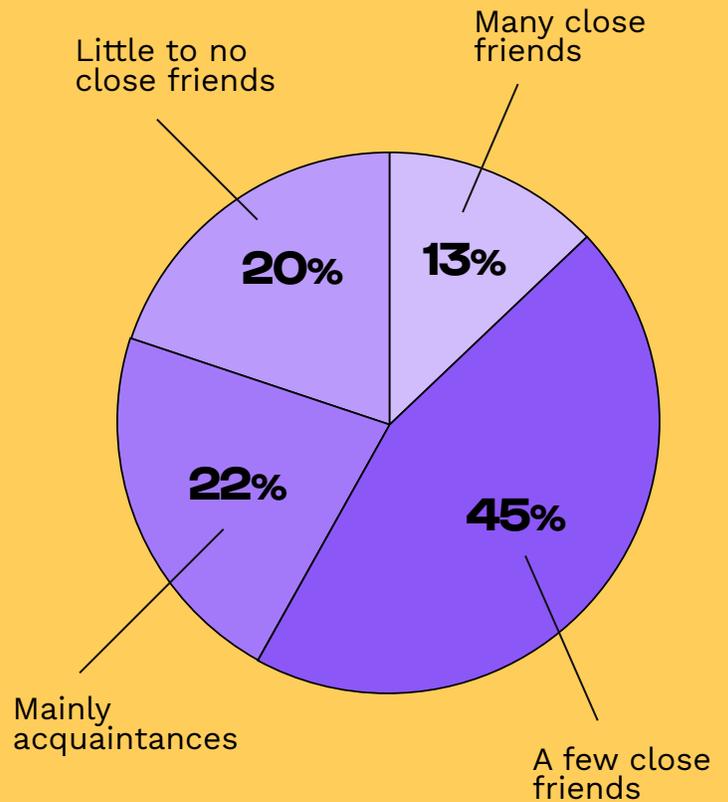
- Female, 22, US



The people that I have as friends now that I've filtered out through the years from adult life are people who are loyal, and I have a high level of respect for. It's mutual. These are people that if I need to **call for advice** or even if I need someone to come over and watch my kid or something, these are people I can call on for help. Regardless of the fact that they don't have a child, or they don't have a wife."

- Male, 22, US

TYPES OF FRIENDSHIPS



Gen Z parents don't just grin and bear it when they see their friends out and about having fun. Overall, they don't regret missing out on things they'd be doing with their friends if they didn't have kids. Instead, they've evolved their idea of fun to include their kids and family. Now, when they want to personally have fun or spend quality time with their partner, it's a true family activity.

55%

define fun as activities the whole family can enjoy



Everyone wants to have a big party when they turn 21. I don't know if I felt left out because I couldn't celebrate my 21st because **I had a baby**. Seeing them on social media going out and going to parties. I felt a **little left out**. Now I don't feel that as much. I've accepted it more. There is nothing I can do about it. I can find my own type of fun."

- Female, 24, US

5) FEWER, MORE RELEVANT COMMUNITIES

Gen Z parents build their parenting community intentionally, based on shared values and experiences with other parents, rather than proximity or what stage their child is in. As a result, many of their parent communities are forged online. However, one-third of Gen Z parents aren't part of any type of parenting group, and the participation rates are quite low across the board. This indicates that Gen Z parents struggle to find the right community for themselves.

However, in China, joining some sort of community is almost universal, with 97% participating in some version online or in person. Latin America has among the lowest participation rates.

1 in 3

aren't part of any parenting groups or communities



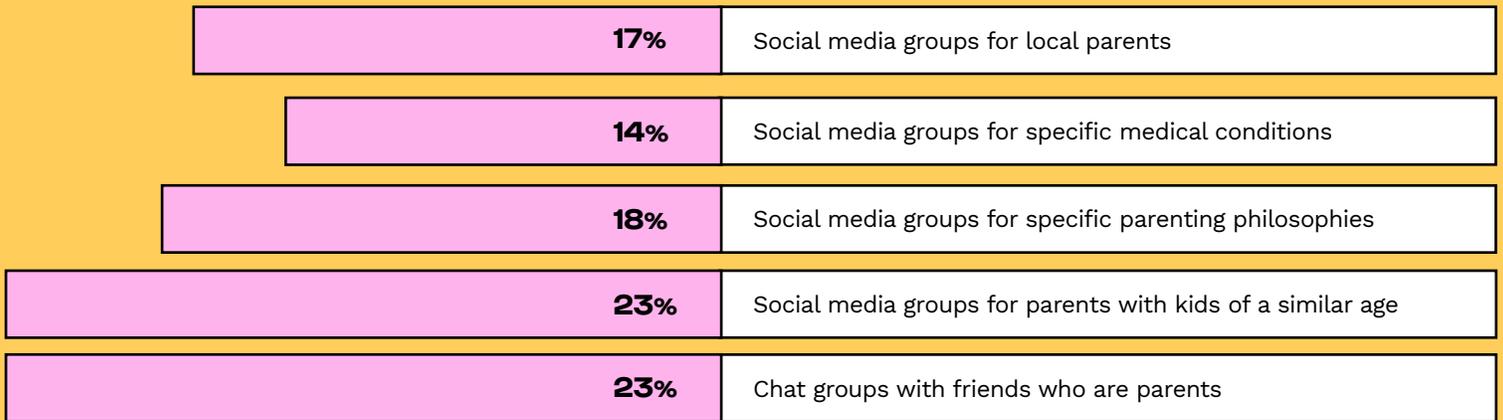
“

*I tried to look into joining a mom Facebook group, but the ones I kept finding, the women in it had their individual parenting styles and I had mine, and I **wasn't really getting the advice** I wanted that suited my parenting style.”*

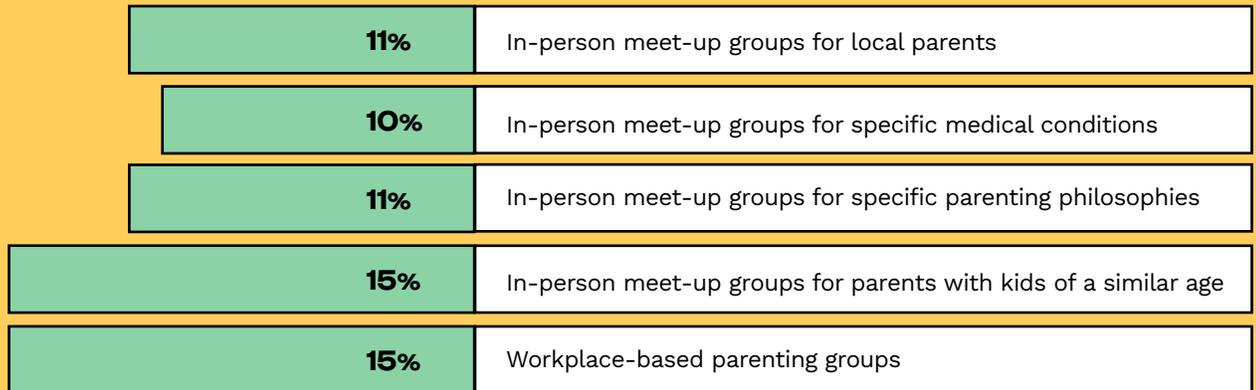
- Female, 21, US

PARENTING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

ONLINE (56% NET)



IN PERSON (41% NET)



Usually when I look for information for him or his condition [cleft palate], I just go to Facebook groups. **Google is not a good friend.** I usually ask them about their experiences. I read through them. They are talking about their own experience. That's how I usually trust them."

- Female, 23, US

For Gen Z parents to feel that they truly trust a parenting community, it must feel authentic. They actively seek out other people's experiences and approaches to make them feel confident in their own decisions. This may fill a void as they are trying to deviate so much from their own childhood and how they were raised.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

EXODUS TO NON-URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Gen Z parents are moving to be with their families more than to pursue their careers. As such, we anticipate an expansion to more suburban and rural areas and away from urban hubs.

OPPORTUNITIES

- New HQs for big companies
- More accessible transportation options outside of urban centers

NORMALIZING NON-TRADITIONAL HOUSEHOLD CONFIGURATIONS & GENDER ROLES

Many Gen Z parents are opting out of more traditional family shapes and dynamics and choosing configurations that will best benefit their kids. They're also bucking gender norms when it comes to tackling household tasks. We expect to see these shifts acknowledged and catered to by mainstream media and industries.

- Non-marriage partnership celebrations
- Representation in entertainment and advertising media of more diverse household configurations and roles
- Interest in multi-family communal living
- Multigenerational travel and activities
- Evolving dating sites to account for those seeking a wider range of partnerships
- New financial products for the multigenerational family (for spending, saving, and budgeting)

GROWTH OF NICHE COMMUNITIES

Gen Z parents are generally less connected to broad parenting communities, but they are interested in connecting with other parents who have specific life experiences in common with them. We expect to see niche parenting communities multiply.

- New social platforms built around medical conditions (perhaps launched by hospital networks)
- More experience-based IRL meetup communities
- Support for mutual aid organizations

05

INTUITION-APPROVED

Trust and Decision-Making

Gen Z parents are intent on making hyper-informed decisions. They're confident in their ability to hunt for necessary information and identify valuable resources. While they are open to advice from a range of sources, that advice is never taken as gospel. After all, they believe no two children are alike, so advice cannot be one-size-fits-all. They use their common sense and instincts to filter and vet what's right for *their* family.

1) GUIDED BY THEIR INTERNAL COMPASS

Gen Z parents are more attuned to trusting their own instincts when it comes to the actions they take that influence their children's growth and development. Ultimately, they do what they think is best based on what feels right for their own children's individual circumstances, even if that conflicts with advice from their family or doctor. However, Chinese Gen Z parents differ in this belief and prefer to seek guidance from experts, such as their pediatrician, instead of following their own instincts.

#1 influence over parenting decisions is “whatever feels right for my children”



“

As a **special needs parent**, you usually always go with your gut because you go through more things than [parents of] normal kids do. You just go with whatever the parent thinks is best.”

- Female, 23, US

“

You just **stand your ground** and stick to your gut. I understand everyone's got different parenting styles but the way some people try to implement their styles on how we raise our kids, it's just not compatible. We really just stick **to what we know** and what we're confident with.”

- Male, 22, US

Gen Zers have long been trained to look critically across all different types of sources when it comes to filtering through news and media content, and they're bringing this same approach to parenting resources they trust. Even though their internal compass is strong, they don't rely on a singular source of information when it comes to advice on raising their kids. They take it all in, mixing more traditional sources of knowledge with newer ones.

Unlike Gen Y, whose purchases are most influenced by recommendations made by other parents outside the family, Gen Z parents trust external sources with established track records: professionals like doctors and experts, or close family members like their own parents. For this reason, they are less likely to let online reviews inform their purchase decisions.



*I don't own a product that doesn't help me [as a parent], **before I buy anything I always do research and look at reviews.***

- Female, 23, US

SOURCE OF PURCHASE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Professional +3 vs Gen Y
2. Parent and family +2 vs Gen Y
3. Other parents -3 vs Gen Y
4. Online reviews -7[^] vs Gen Y
5. Parenting websites
6. Ads on social media
7. Gift they kept buying -2 vs Gen Y
8. TV commercials -4 vs Gen Y
9. Social posts from close ones
10. Social posts from followed brands

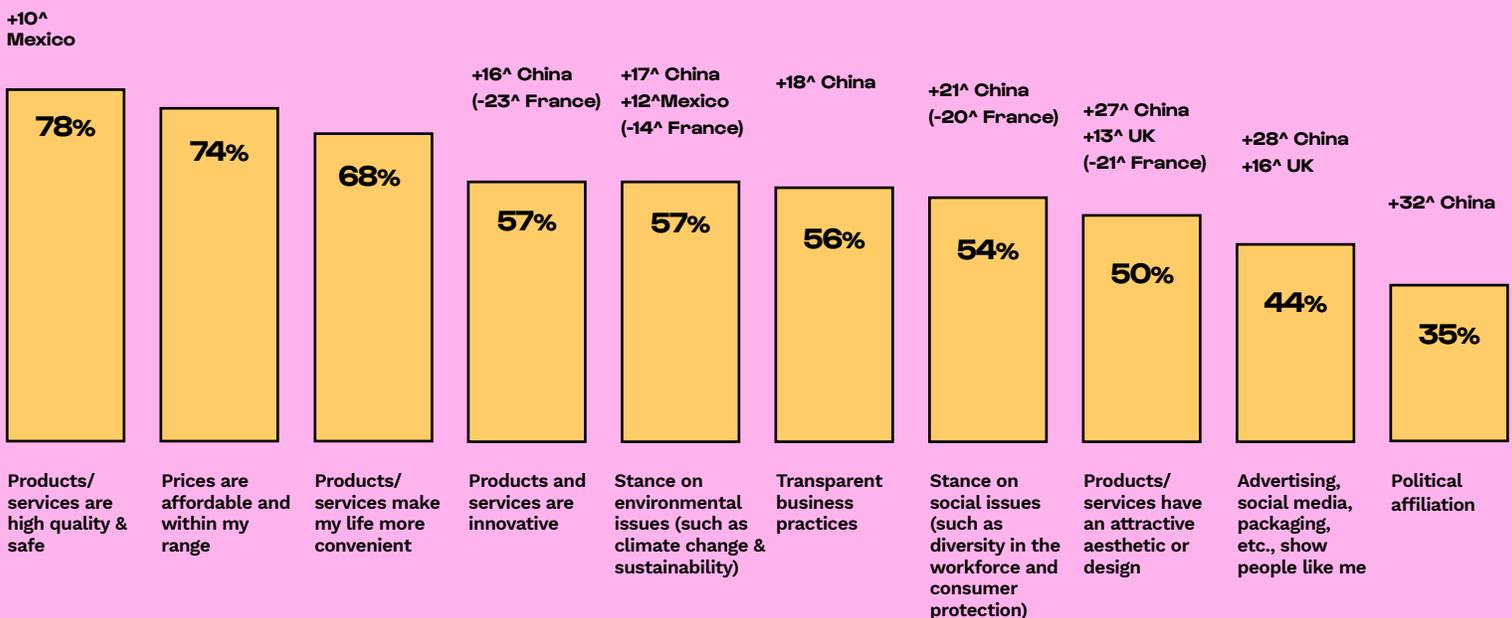
2) DISCERNING SHOPPERS WHO SEEK VALUE AND VALUES

For Gen Z parents, quality, safety, affordability, and convenience are non-negotiable factors when purchasing a brand for their kids. They also align themselves with brands that prioritize innovation and the social values they believe in, such as sustainability and transparency.

Chinese Gen Z parents highly emphasize transparency and progressive stances on environmental and social issues. Since their government is only one party, political affiliation is less polarizing and carries more weight. Young parents in both China and the UK seek out a kinship with brands they buy and see themselves reflected in them. French Gen Z parents focus on practical and traditional qualities and are less concerned with innovation, social/environmental stances, and aesthetics.



PURCHASE QUALITIES



IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

RISE OF THE UNLIKELY INFLUENCER

For Gen Z parents, knowledge is a form of cultural currency. They will listen to those whose recommendations are grounded in real expertise or experience.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Experts as influencers (e.g., scientists)
- Child-led reviews of products and services

DEMAND FOR MORE ACCESSIBLE FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE

Demand for transparency and systems of accountability will continue to be top of mind for Gen Z parents. In the future, they will demand that claims made by institutions and corporations be verifiable by everyday people.

- More accessible “receipts” (e.g., pay equity progress listed on company websites)
- New social platforms based on information sharing / crowd-sourcing
- Third-party solutions for accountability (e.g., Google doc activism)

MARKETING BY PERSUASION, NOT SEDUCTION

Gen Z parents are uniquely pragmatic and skeptical of emotional advertising. They scrutinize anything that too deliberately tugs at their heart strings. They will be moved by appeals to their intelligence over esthetic sensibilities.

- Industry disruptors that differentiate themselves via better products or CX (vs. a more relevant brand ethos alone)
- Advertising media that educates while selling
- Better assurances of the quality of new products or services (e.g., free trials or money-back guarantees)



MANY PATHS TO FREEDOM

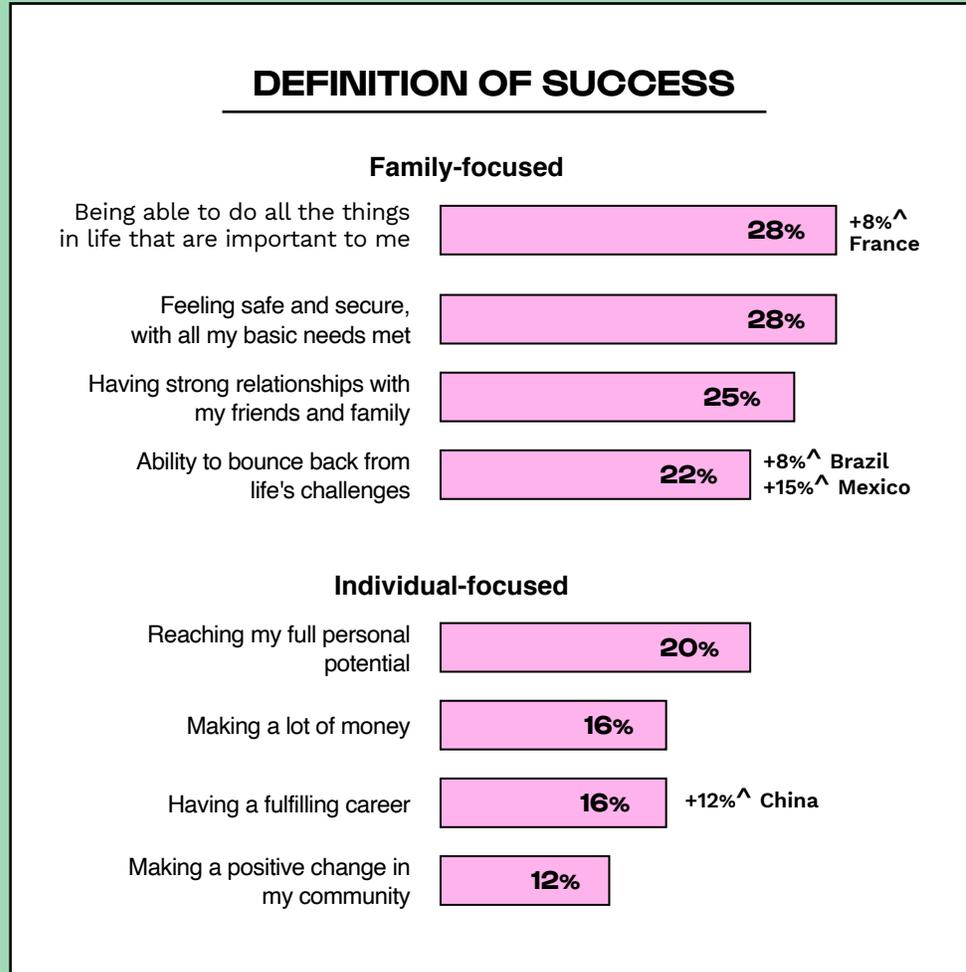
Education and Career

For Gen Z parents, success is not about achievement. It's about freedom—freedom from worry and freedom to thrive, together with their families. The paths to freedom can be as non-linear as they are novel, and there are many, many ways to get there.

1) SUCCESS IS FREEDOM, FOR THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES

For Gen Z parents, life’s biggest goalpost isn’t personal accomplishment; it’s freedom—freedom to do all the things they want to do, freedom from worry and uncertainty, freedom to be happy and thrive together through life’s ups and downs. Their conception of success blurs the line between individual and family goals.

There are some country-specific variations in defining personal success for Gen Z parents. The ability to follow all of their passions is especially important for French Gen Z parents, while Chinese Gen Z parents also seek out fulfilling careers to feel successful. In LATAM, resiliency is the true marker of success.



I still have fun every day. I really enjoy my life. That’s only because I’m happy with who I’m with.”

- Male, 22, US



*My goals are to gain lucrative employment where I can provide our needs, have fun and have good experiences with my child. I want my **child to feel safe and grow** to be whoever he wants and have a happy life and love himself.”*

- Female, 24, US

2) CHILDREN ARE THE TAILWIND OF SUCCESS

Counter to the prevailing Gen Y mindset, Gen Z parents do not see parenthood as a badge that can only be unlocked after other big life events. Having kids may delay some of their former goals and plans when it comes to their education and careers, but since their greatest ambition is family freedom, parenthood is a necessary condition for that goal rather than a hindrance to it.

Gen Z parents are more likely to have had their education interrupted by parenthood than their Gen Y counterparts but are also more likely to return to school at some point.

67%

say that being a parent won't stop them from doing all the things they want in life

2 in 5 had to put their education on hold when they became a parent

2 in 3 of those parents plan to go back and finish their degree



In fact, Gen Zers often view parenthood as a tailwind of success, because succeeding for their families is an even greater motivator than succeeding for themselves. Since they do not see parenthood as an obstacle to their life pursuits, they are more flexible with their timelines and less linear about their trajectories.



*[My education] has definitely been put on hold for now, just because my husband's so close to finishing. But once I go back – and **I do plan on going back**—I feel like I have more of a drive to get it done and get it done fast and do my very best.”*

– Female, 21, US



*I have a wife and a kid. I have people who are counting on me. People who I'm [going to college] for. I have a real ambition and a drive. I'm going to get the maximum amount of **potential out of college**. You don't realize that when you're 18.”*

– Male, 22, US

3) EDUCATION IS A MEANS TO MORE OPTIONS, NOT CREDENTIALS

Gen Z parents place great value on education, seeing it as an in-road to more career opportunities available to them and the ability to provide their families with more stability. They shape their education and career paths to support their families, not to fulfill dreams they have for themselves. Education as a stepping stone to a better life is especially highlighted in LATAM countries and China.

#1 purpose of higher education for Gen Z is more career opportunities

75% 81%^ Brazil
87%^ Mexico
88%^ China

say education gives them the opportunity to provide a stable and secure life for their family

Education doesn't need to come in the form of a college degree. Gen Z parents believe they can be successful without a traditional college education. A good education is all about getting the knowledge and qualifications necessary to accomplish their goals, whatever that takes. Gen Z parents don't need the badges or external recognition that come with a diploma or degree level. With access to so much information available at their fingertips, Gen Z parents are taking advantage of their digital savvy and using it to build their knowledge and pave the road to where they want to be.

74%

say a good education can come from places besides college (vocational school, apprenticeships, online videos, etc.)



*I still feel like [college] is really somewhat of a money trap. I know people who went to college and they spent close to \$100,000 on getting a degree and the only thing they are getting is maybe a job. A lot of them are going to have **student debt for many years** to come after this. To me, it just didn't seem like something I wanted."*

- Male, 22, US



Learning is also lifelong and you learn every single day and every instant even if it's not in a classroom. I thought a good education was obtaining a bachelor's degree from UCLA or whatever. But now I'm like however you get it, you're going to get it."

- Female, 24, US



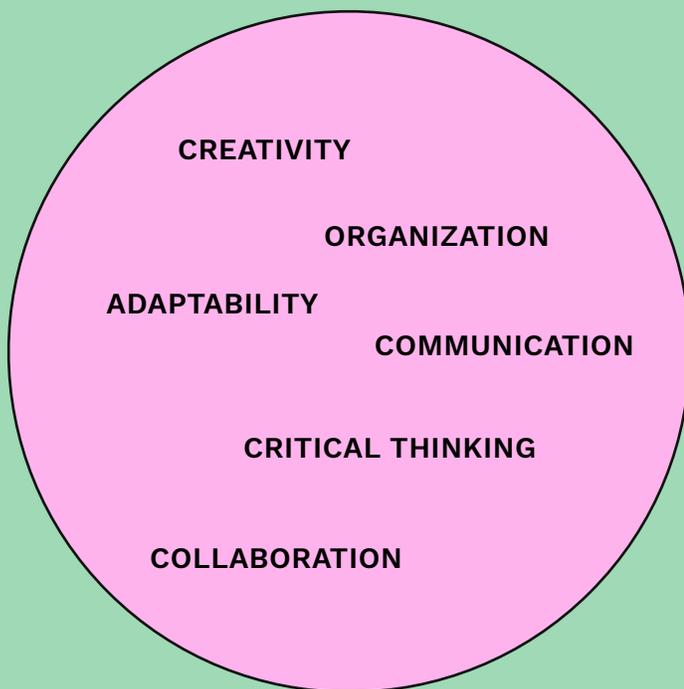
Knowledge is everywhere. *I watch documentaries, I go to free media websites. I try to be out in the world without being just into media. Most of the things I watch are documentaries or non-fictional pieces that I read. I keep up with the news. I try to be*
aware of everything *that is going on around me.”*

- Male, 22, US

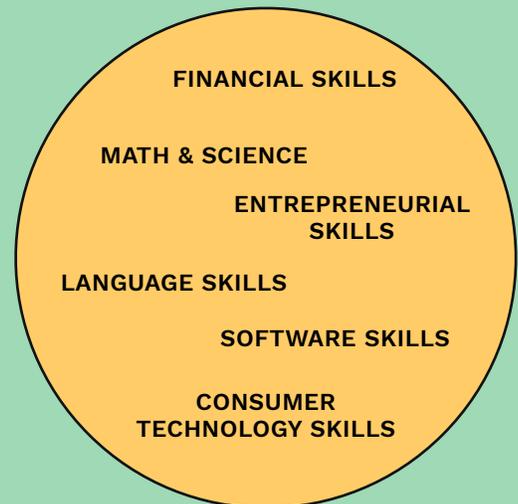
They see how quickly the work landscape is changing to become more flexible and fluid, and they’re looking to develop the kinds of skills that will be useful across a wider range of professions and that will enhance their interactions with the world around them.

These “soft skills”—like creativity, communication, and adaptability—can be learned through life experiences and are more important to success than “hard skills” traditionally taught in schools like math, science, technology, and finance.

SKILLS MOST IMPORTANT FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE



Soft Skills



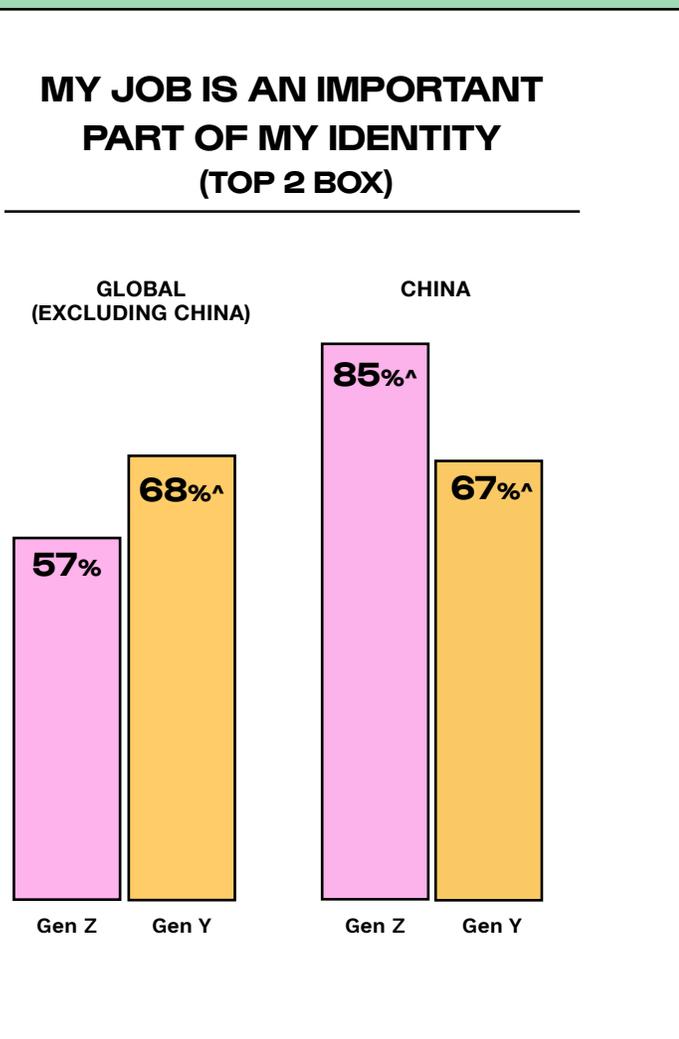
Hard Skills

4) WORK CREATES MEANING, NOT PASSION

Gen Z parents are planning their careers around their families rather than their personal aspirations. Their career is important, but more of a means to family-oriented goals than a personal measure of success or fulfillment.

As family circumstances change, they are willing to adapt and pivot their careers accordingly, evaluating their options through the lens of pragmatism rather than passion. Their job is only as important as it is *valuable* to their families, and it’s in that value that they find fulfillment and meaning.

As a result, Gen Zers are less likely than Gen Yers to let their careers shape their identities. This attitude is consistent across all markets with the exception of China. Chinese Gen Zers are *more* likely than Gen Yers to view their career as a major part of their identity, which aligns with their more traditional views of success.



*I was looking forward to being able to **provide more**. It’s this feeling of gratification when you finish a long paper, or you do a hard job. You pat yourself on the back. It was that feeling of providing as a father. **I’m a working dad now**. I have a job, I come home, I see my family. I was excited to get into that motion.”*

- Male, 22, US

Many Gen Z parents wonder if the living they earn outweighs the benefits of being with their kids at home. For those parents, work can be a source of guilt as well as a source of meaning.

1 in 2

Feel guilty leaving their child(ren) to go to work

7 in 10[^] China

Though they may not always realize it in the moment, work can offer parents an unanticipated benefit, a moment of respite from the day-to-day responsibilities of parenthood. This is something they tend to realize only when their ability to work is interrupted, after layoffs or during parental leave.

2 in 5

Say work is a form of 'me time' away from their children

7 in 10[^] China

//

*I love my kid, but now I get to be away from him for a couple hours and just do my job and talk to other people and help customers. It's not a break where I just chill, but **it's me time. It's really helpful** because I get to distract myself and do something new."*

- Female, 23, US

//

*I work an hour away from my house. I have an hour drive that I can cool down or yell in my car. You have that **cool down before you get home.** As soon as I clock out, I'm going for a drive. Don't talk to me. I just need some peace."*

- Female, 22, US

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

EMERGENCE OF A DIFFERENT PARADIGM OF SUCCESS

Gen Z parents are driven by success for their entire family, not individual goals. Milestones and achievements aren't boxes to be checked off neatly in order. The world around them will evolve to reflect that shift.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Broader media depictions of what success can look like (e.g., unexpected children framed as new chapters vs. “mishaps”)
- Security as alternative forms of work compensation (e.g., equity, free childcare, free housing, free education)
- Advocating for policies that help parents juggle parenting, education, career without compromise

EDUCATION WILL STRAY FROM THE TRADITIONAL

Education is still critical to career opportunities, but no longer needs to come in the form of a college degree. Gen Z parents seek to build a diverse skill set that will enable them to succeed in life and career.

- More flexible educational opportunities that are feasible for their lifestyles (e.g., remote coursework)
- New forms and providers of alternative education (e.g., courses offered by employers)
- Opportunity for education providers to highlight the soft skills to be gained through their programs, showing a wider range of professional applications

DRAWN TO MORE FLUID CAREER PATHS

For Gen Z parents, their specific career paths aren't tethered to their identities, but open to any kind of work that advances their family-centric goals. Their professional trajectories will be less linear and more fluid than generations past.

- Introduce parents to more practical industries that offer autonomy and flexibility for their families
- Advocate for family-friendly work environments, including better paid parental, sick leave, childcare

7 THE JUDGEMENT -FREE ZONE

Bias and Assumptions

Today we are seeing the first wave of Gen Zers enter parenthood. These parents are *young*. And as young parents living in today's challenging times, the deck is often stacked against them. Their earning potential is lower, they're the first to be laid off, and as the most diverse generation in history they're more vulnerable to discrimination. Many Gen Z parents feel judged by other generations, pitied for their struggles, or condemned for behaviors deemed juvenile or irresponsible.

But they won't let it get to them. They are determined to tune out the noise and focus their attention on their families and children. They are proud of themselves as parents and want their determination and resourcefulness to be acknowledged.

1) FEELING JUDGED AT FACE VALUE

Gen Z parents today are secure in the knowledge they're doing their best, but that doesn't mean they're blind to the assumptions others make about them: that they're immature, irresponsible, clueless, incompetent. From a stranger's side-eye to an in-law's unsolicited comments, it's difficult for them to ignore the scrutiny their youthful appearances attract.

Gen Z parents feel their patient and nurturing style is too often misconstrued as complacency. The number one area they feel judged on are the methods they use to teach their children. They are also more likely to feel judged for their lifestyle choices than Gen Y parents. These different moments of judgement crop up in all areas of parenthood depending on where they live.

86% Have felt judged as a parent

Gen Z parents in the UK are feeling this sentiment at higher rates than the rest of the world. They are twice as likely to feel that they're judged *all the time*.

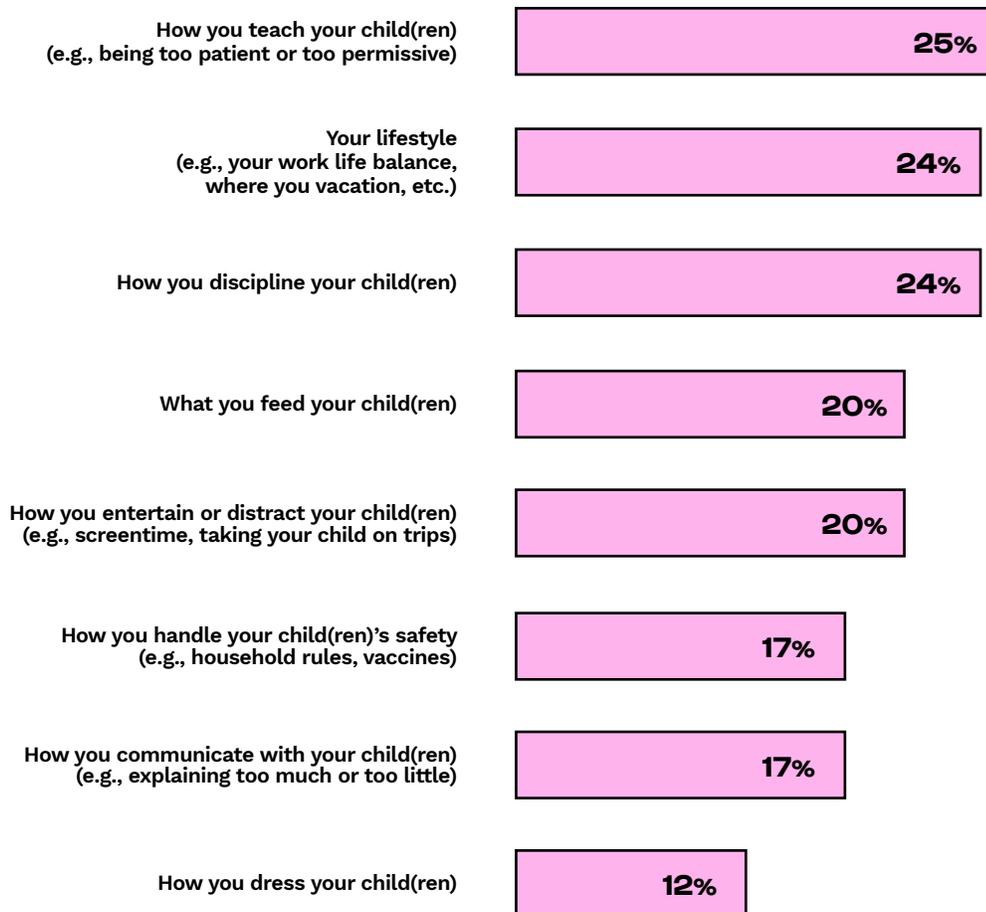


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*I was getting a lot of feedback on how **I baby him** a lot. That's a tough thing for a new parent to deal with considering that is your child. That's your baby. That's your life. That's been a big thing that **I've been judged on, criticized about.***

- Female, 24, US

AREAS OF JUDGEMENT



They see this judgment as a symptom of generational friction:



I work with people in their 60's. A lot of the people in that age group, when they look at you, they think 'her kids are going to turn out horrible, her kids are really bad.' I've gotten some dirty looks when I go out. I've even been asked, 'do you know who your kid's father is?' Yeah, I do. Thank you."

- Female, 22, US

2) TUNING OUT THE NOISE

No matter how much flak they catch from older generations, most Gen Z parents believe their parenting styles to be modern and widespread, so they try not to take any judgement personally. At the end of the day, they'd rather focus their energies on their kids than worry about what other people think.

No matter what anyone says, they know how much thought and consideration they've put into their day-to-day parenting, and they trust their instincts to make the best choices for their families. They're proud of their efforts, even when their intentions are misunderstood.

Gen Z Parents in Mexico do see their parenting style as a departure from the norm, with only 4 in 10 describing their approach as common. They're also successful at tuning out the noise and following their gut, as 65% don't let outside judgement affect them.

3 in 5



view their parenting behaviors as common

55%

say it doesn't affect them when other people judge their parenting style



*Something people assume about me is that I give up too easily on anything I try to take on. **I wish they knew how hard I try** to become a better person. I spend countless hours reading websites in order to **inform myself** about all kinds of things that are going on in life, whether it is parenthood or just being a successful adult."*

- Male, 24, US



*Something people assume about me is that I'm a lazy person in parenthood. I wish they knew **giving birth to my child motivated me** to step up to adulthood and take responsibility for both myself and my child. **I will do whatever it takes** to do my job as a parent right."*

- Female, 24, US

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

DEMANDING TO HAVE THEIR REALITY REFLECTED

They are the future of parenting and they know it. They're aware of the criticisms of the outside world, but they don't internalize them. Through their actions, they will make the world see them as they see themselves, rather than as stereotypes.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Media depictions of younger parents as highly motivated, resourceful, and open-minded (rather than helpless, self-involved, or reckless)
- Platforms for young parents to speak up and be able to be heard by their communities

CHANGING THE PARENTHOOD CONVERSATION FOR EVERYONE

They believe the wider parenthood conversation needs to move beyond the limitations—and pressures—of Gen Y perfection. They aren't just rewriting the rules of parenting for themselves; they're making it better for everyone.

- Media depictions of *real* parenthood, in all its complexity and fluidity, including lowlights as well as highlights
- Media depictions of a more inclusive and broader spectrum of parenting identities, backgrounds, beliefs, family configurations, and strategies
- Advocacy for more marginalized voices to normalize all types of parenting experiences and approaches
- Filling innovation gaps left by societal taboos and stigmas (e.g., co-sleeping and co-bathing products, better breast pumping tech, skincare for C-section scars, etc.)

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RECAP

INSIGHTS & IMPLICATIONS ROUNDUP

THE “WE” MINDSET: SELF-PERCEPTION & IDENTITY

- Self-awareness is empowering
- Parenthood is a complement—not a compromise—to their identity
- Embracing the unexpected
- Awareness of the macro forces limiting their families

- Having children at a younger age
- Greater integration of children into other facets of daily life
- Holding macro forces accountable for parenthood challenges

DETERMINED TO BE DIFFERENT: APPROACH TO PARENTING

- Gen Z upbringing: Good intentions, difficult outcomes
- Their parents as “reverse” role models
- Walking in their kids’ shoes
- Establishing a strong emotional connection
- Cultivating, not training
- Preparing, not pampering
- Trust, not discipline

- Greater respect & transparency for children
- Seeking programs that cultivate children’s individuality
- Normalizing family mental health practices & expressing emotions

COOPARENTING: CONNECTION & COMMUNITY

- Born into new family formations
- Embracing non-traditional partnerships
- Evolving gender dynamics and roles
- Relying on the family cooperative
- Friendship without FOMO
- Fewer, more relevant communities

- Exodus to non-urban environments
- Normalizing non-traditional household configurations & gender roles
- Growth of niche communities

INSIGHTS & IMPLICATIONS ROUNDUP

INTUITION-APPROVED:

TRUST & DECISION-MAKING

- Guided by their internal compass
- Discerning shoppers who seek value and values

- Rise of the unlikely influencer
- Demand for more accessible first-hand knowledge
- Marketing by persuasion, not seduction

MANY PATHS TO FREEDOM:

EDUCATION & CAREER

- Success is freedom, for them and their families
- Children are the tailwind of success
- Education is a means to more options, not credentials
- Work creates meaning, not passion

- Emergence of a different paradigm of success
- Education will stray from the traditional
- Drawn to more fluid career paths

THE JUDGEMENT-FREE ZONE: BIAS & ASSUMPTIONS

- Feeling judged at face value
- Tuning out the noise

- Demanding to have their reality reflected
- Changing the parenthood conversation for everyone