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The Change-Ready Generation

What Gen Z Can Teach Us

July 22, 2026

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NATIONAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

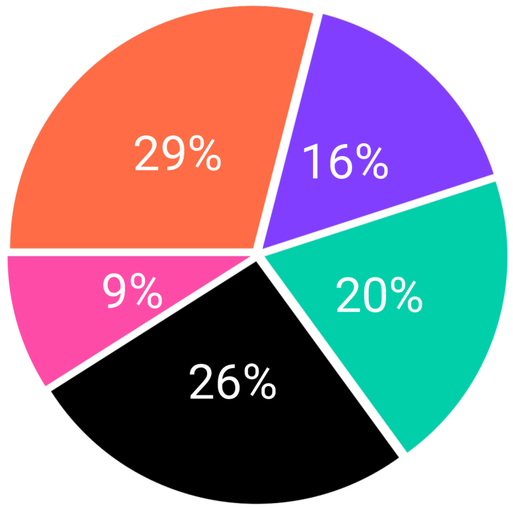
- Five questions repeated verbatim from 2022 study → 4-year benchmark.
- Figures are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
- Margin of error is +/-3.58 percentage points.

NATIONAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

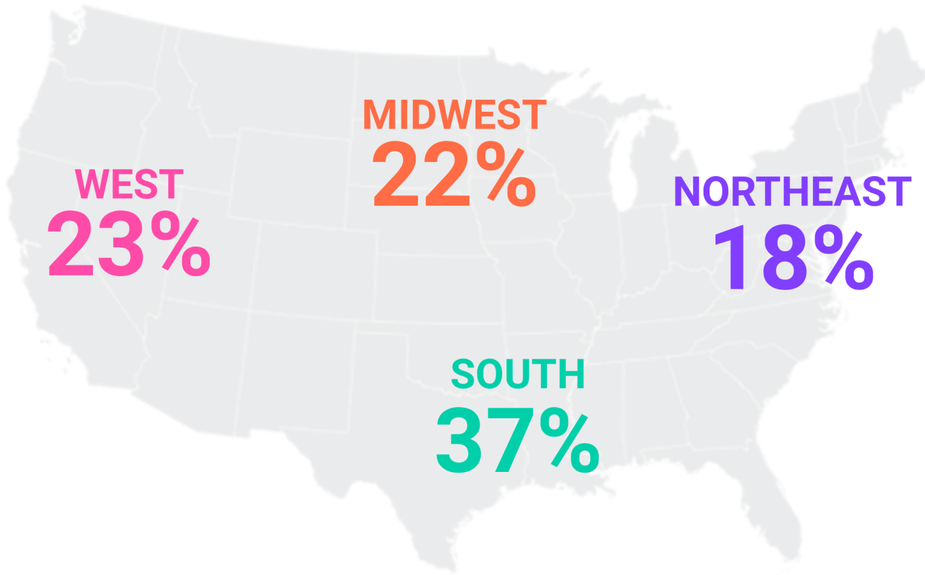
CUSTOM 12-QUESTION STUDY COMPLETED BY

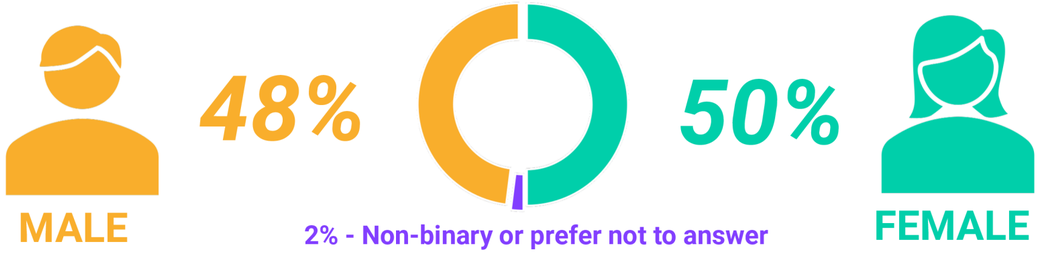
750

U.S. PARTICIPANTS (AGES 16-65)



29%	GEN Z	AGES 16-29
16%	YOUNGER MILLENIALS	AGES 30-16
20%	OLDER MILLENIALS	AGES 37-45
26%	GEN X	AGES 46-59
9%	BOOMERS	AGES 60-65

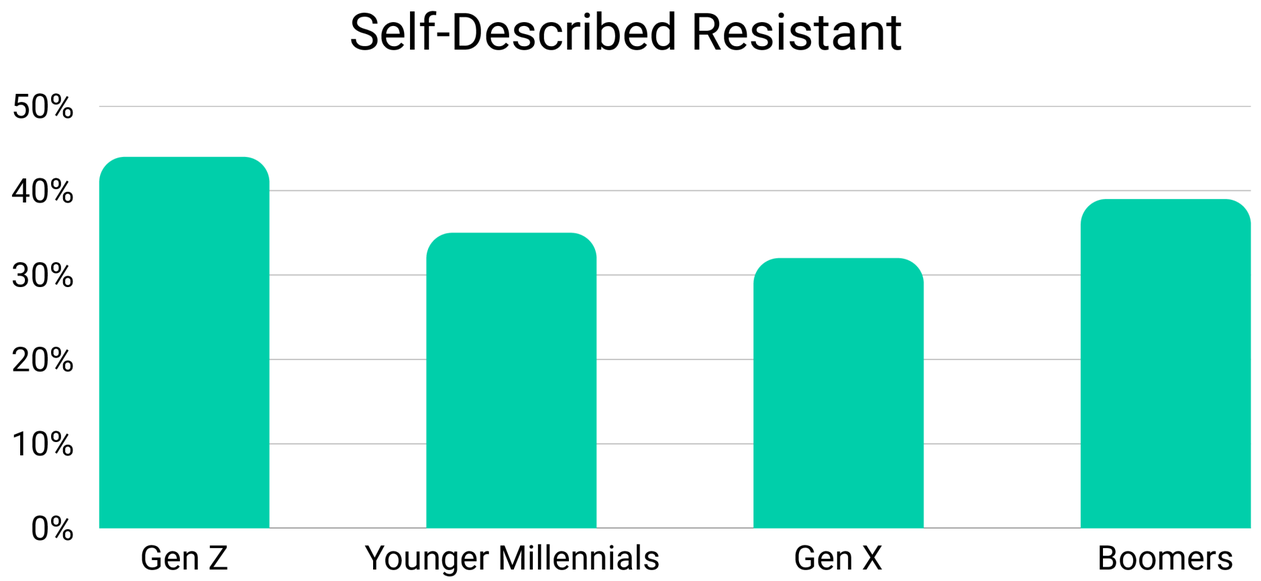




*Figures are statistically *significant* at the 95% confidence level. Margin of error is +/-3.58 percentage points.
Weighted to the 2020 U.S. Census for age, region, gender, and ethnicity.
Employment quota (employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed) set at 82% of the total sample to match the 2026 with the 2022 sample data.
In an instance that a chart total for a single select question does not add to 100%, please note that this is due to the minimal effect of rounding.
Study was conducted online from December 23, 2025, to January 12, 2026.

The Gen Z Misread

Nearly half (44%) of Gen Z respondents reported themselves resistant to change…



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The Gen Z Misread

Of all generations, Gen Z is most comfortable expressing their emotions around their coworkers (67%)

Perhaps not meaningfully more resistant…just most willing to express and discuss the resistance they feel.

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The Gen Z Misread

70% of Gen Z wish they were better or more skilled at navigating change

44% Self-Described Resistant + 70% Wish Improvement

This generation knows where its challenges lie and wish to close the gap.

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The Gen Z Misread

Gen Z is the generation most likely to be more motivated to adopt change when they feel truly heard and understood by their manager and peers (89%)

This is not a matter of Gen Z's capacity…

It's about the conditions organizations are creating for them.

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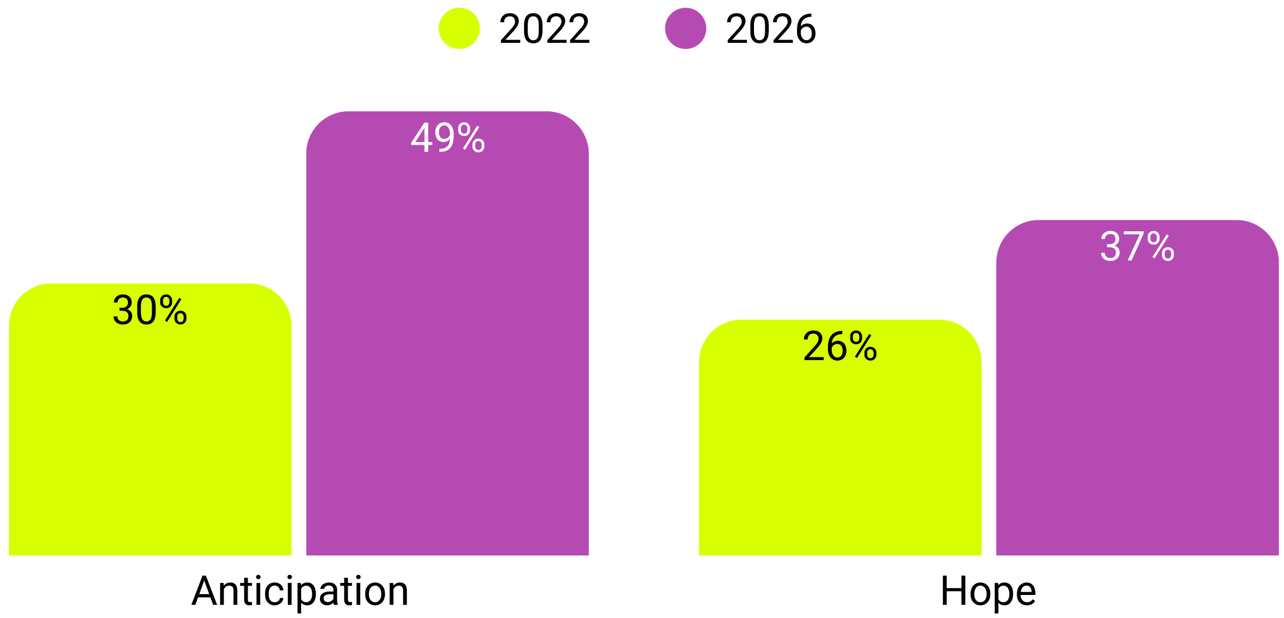
The Positive Shift: What Gen Z is Already Doing



Gen Z's Positive Emotional Shift, 2022 to 2026 | Source: CGK National Research Studies, 2022 & 2026

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Gen Z Leads the Way In Reporting Emotion

Q1: Which of the following emotions do you feel when experiencing change at work?					
	Generation				

		Younger	Older		
	Gen Z	Millennial	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer
	16-29 ----------	30-36 ----------	37-45 ----------	46-59 ----------	60-65 ----------
Fear	29%	17%	20%	19%	17%
Anxiety	62%	58%	59%	60%	50%
Frustration	31%	28%	22%	30%	32%
Anger	12%	4%	7%	7%	8%
Grief	7%	7%	2%	6%	3%
Anticipation	49%	50%	48%	49%	48%
Excitement	41%	38%	37%	35%	30%
Gratitude	21%	15%	18%	13%	5%
Hope	37%	28%	33%	31%	29%
Joy	21%	14%	10%	11%	6%

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Why Does Emotion Matter In Change?

- Assumption - emotion clouds our thinking
- Reality - emotion supports our decision-making process

Without the guidance emotion offers, we can't make decisions.

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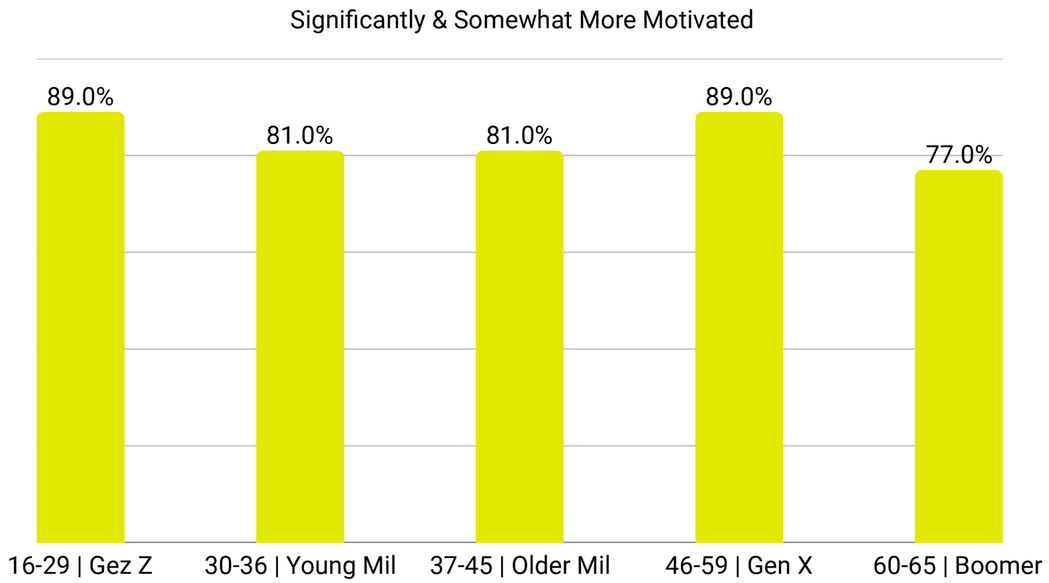
Can We Talk About It?

Gen Z makes the invisible… visible.

Comfort sharing emotions with Colleagues	
Gen Z	67
Young Mil	64
Older Mil	62
Gen X	59
Boomer	56



And could use a little more comfort with supervisors…

Comfort sharing emotions with supervisors	
Gen Z	48
Young Mil	47
Older Mil	52
Gen X	49
Boomer	36

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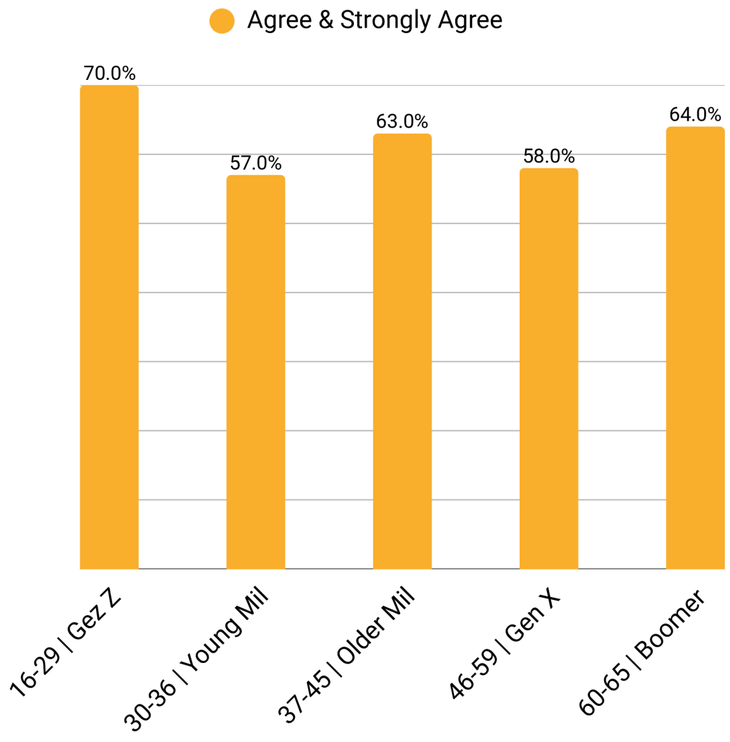
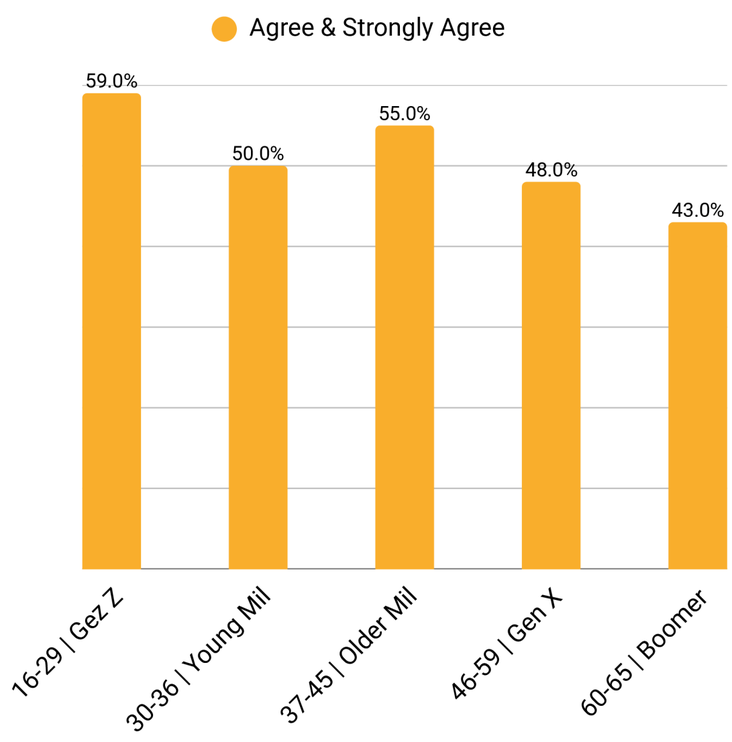
Growth Orientation

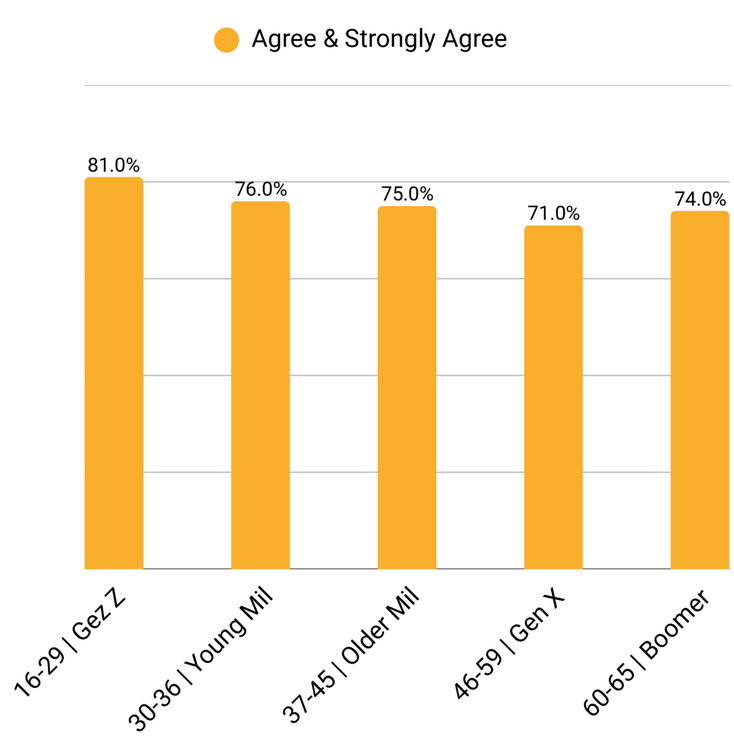
I wish I were better or more skilled at navigating change at work.



I stretch myself outside my comfort zone.



I find that more often than not, after experiencing change at work, I learn at least one thing that helps me grow.



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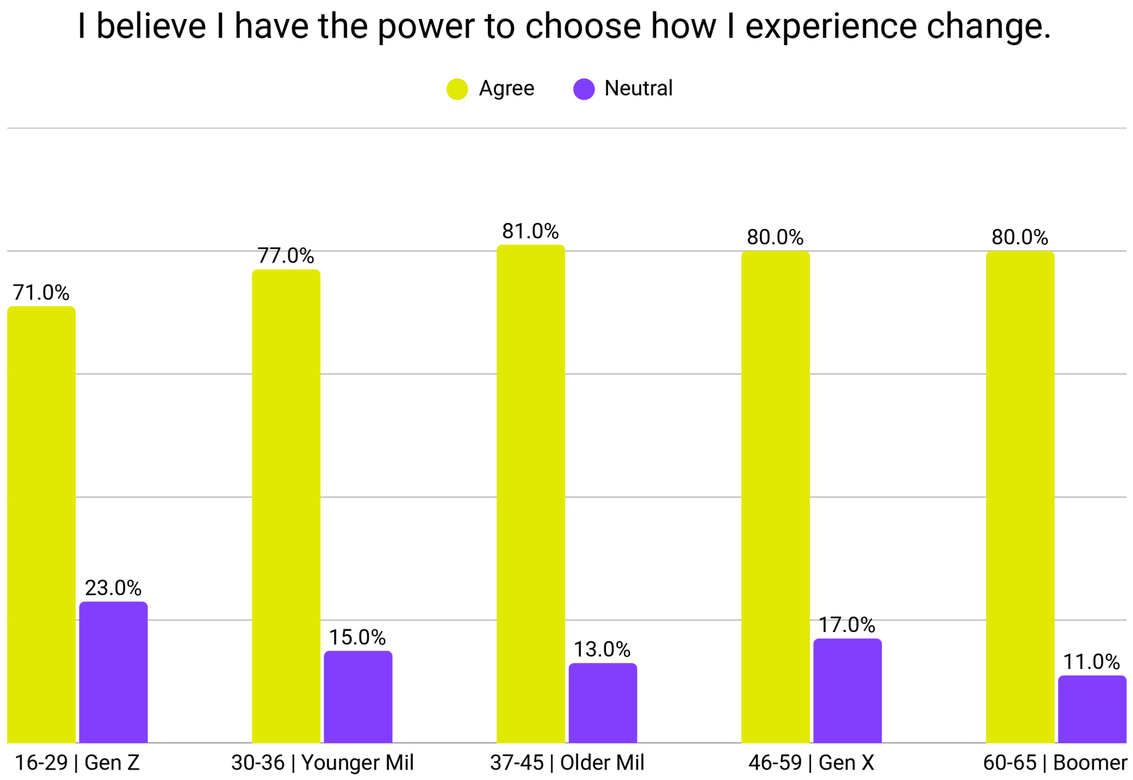
Power To Choose My Experience



- Lowest sense of agency
- Most malleable

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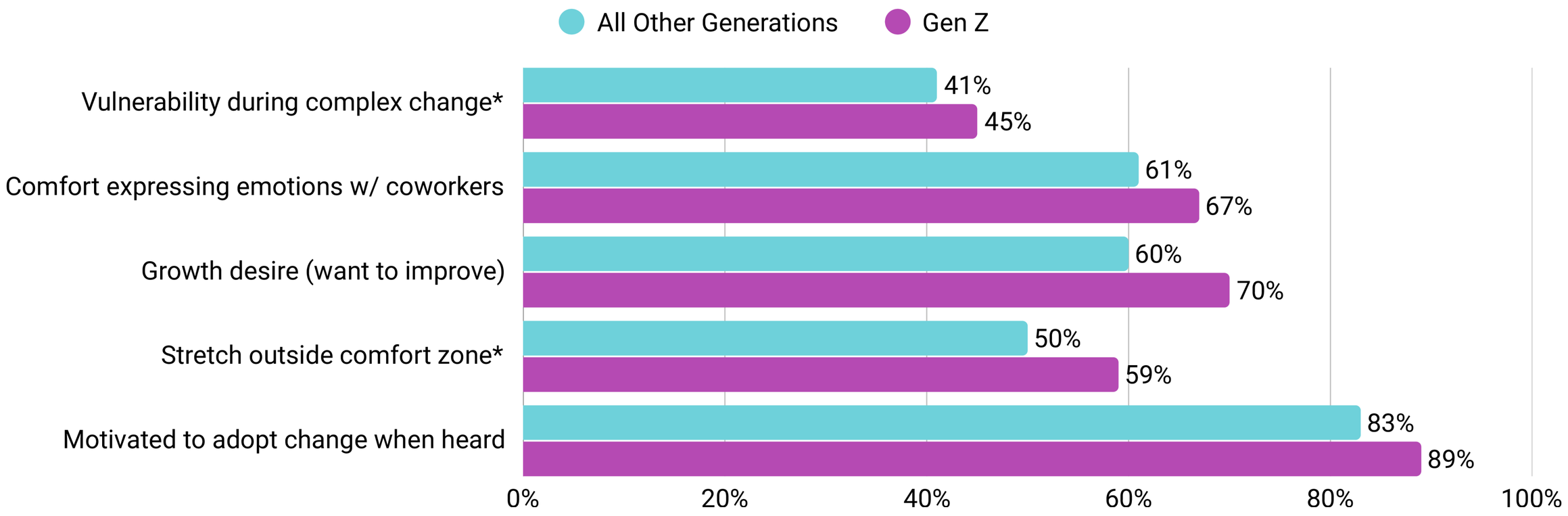
Change Ready



*Gen Z vs. All Other Generations on Key Change-Readiness Indicators, 2026 | *Among employed respondents | Source: CGK 2026 National Research Study*

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The Organizational Opportunity

Leaders have been asking: How do we manage Gen Z through change?

They should be asking...

What would our change-readiness look like if we stopped managing Gen Z and *started learning from them*?

"HONESTLY, PEOPLE JUST NEED TO REMEMBER THAT CHANGE IS GOOD. IT MEANS YOU'RE GROWING AND LEARNING. YOU'RE GETTING OUT OF THAT SAME CAVE YOU'VE BEEN IN. SO WHEN CHANGE HAPPENS AND IT STARTS TO GET HARD, REMEMBER THAT FEELING IS GOOD."

Gen Z research respondent | CGK 2026 National Study

What Organizations Can Do

- Make the commitment from the top, publicly
- Create listening sessions where Gen Z voices lead
- Distribute agency *during* change, not after it
- Reward the reach not just the result
- Let Gen Z’s questions be your signal