A glimpse into the minds of the youngest generation
Gen Z, people born roughly between the mid-1990s and early 2000s, are capturing the attention of marketers — and for good reason. Soon, they will be (or in some cases already are) the new people in the office, earning their first salaries and deciding how to spend and invest their earnings. Even now, research shows this generation has a loud and respective voice when it comes to household purchase decisions.

While articles and research abound, the FleishmanHillard team knows some insights are best gleaned straight from the source. So, we asked members of Gen Z to tell us what they think — about devices, what they buy, what they watch, what they talk about, and even what they eat. Once we convinced them to disconnect from their devices, they were eager to share their thoughts, dreams, and passions. And now we’re excited to share these insights with you.

In the following pages, we’ve packaged up the best nuggets from our time spent with Gen Z and paired those with insights from premier secondary research. We want this to be an inspiration and guide as you and your team tackle the challenge of connecting with the super-connected generation. We anticipate you’ve been introduced; but let’s consider this a second date, where we dive just a bit deeper into the views and ideas of your up-and-coming consumers.

Turn the page, and learn more about Gen Z.
Percentage of all teens 13 to 17 who use...

- Facebook: 71%
- Instagram: 52%
- Snapchat: 41%
- Twitter: 33%
- Google+: 33%
- Vine: 24%
- Tumblr: 14%
- Other: 11%

Gen Z has an attention span of just eight seconds. That’s four seconds fewer than Millennials. To grab their attention, we must act fast.

Source: Forbes

Data source: Iconoculture
Gen Z influences 93% of household purchases.

With $200 billion of direct buying power and $1 trillion of indirect buying power, to be exact.

Gen Z’s opinions and tastes carry heavy weight at home. Even if they don’t have a direct say in a purchase, their parents keep them top-of-mind when choosing what to buy.

67% of parents agree that their kids are more involved in family decisions than they, as parents, were as kids.

Data source: IBM, Iconoculture
In the age of Amazon and eCommerce, it's easy to assume that the youth only shop online, but nearly all of Gen Z shop in physical stores. The brick-and-mortar isn't dead just yet.

Data source: IBM
Gen Z would rather invest in "share-worthy" experiences, like dining out, than spend money on "stuff." When their funds run low, they’re quick to give up purchases like clothes or décor, but have a hard time passing up on experiences like dining out or concerts.

Top Restaurants for Gen Z:

Changes in Gen Z’s food habits and preferences are also tied to the growing young foodie culture, which is influenced by parental and social exposure to more sophisticated foods.

Data source: Piper Jaffray Companies/FH

Data source: Iconoculture
While Millennials had a passive and basic understanding of why they should eat well, Gen Z is putting their nutrition lessons into practice. Today’s kids know that unprocessed, fresh food is healthier and tastier than the fake stuff.

With a change-maker mindset and social media savviness, Gen Z feels empowered to shed light on their lunches and champion for change.

The Smart Snacks in School Act holds school treats to higher standards that promote better health.

With this change has come an increased volume of “food-shaming,” or criticism based on food choices, leading kids and parents to feel self-conscious at times about the food choices they make.

Data source: Iconoculture
Despite stricter-than-ever food guidelines in schools, the busy, on-the-go Gen Z lifestyle demands caffeine boosts.

Part of this increase in caffeine consumption at a younger age is the result of Gen Z growing up within the “busy culture” generations before them have created.

Guys are always drinking Red Bulls at school and girls are always drinking espresso.

Molly, age 16

on teenagers and caffeine

Source: FH proprietary research
In previous generations, kids might have talked about history and politics in class, but not during free time. Gen Z feels empowered to have a voice – and hanging out with their friends feels like a safe enough environment to discuss their views and opinions openly.

Amara, age 7 on staying informed

In my school, we talk about politics during lunch.

Source: FH proprietary research
Gen Z is more diverse and multicultural than any other generation in U.S. history. And they actively seek out people with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds for the welcomed perspective they bring to the group.

Data source: IBM, Iconoculture
Teens’ values shift from 2010 to 2015

+16 Diversity
I am always open to ideas, people, and cultures that are different from my own.

+10 Individuality
I enjoy and emphasize the qualities that make me unique.

+6 Equality
I strongly believe that all people should have equal opportunity and equal access in all areas.

When it comes to race, it’s been said that Millennials are color-blind, but Gen Z’s approach to race and inclusion is best described as color-aware. They seek out and embrace commonalities while celebrating differences among their peers.
While distractions might come with multitasking, Gen Z is capable of **juggling multiple things at once**. From platforms and devices to fictional storylines and IRL relationships, they’ve got it covered. (…Or at least they think they do.)

Data source: IBM
Gen Z craves connection and fears being unreachable. As their battery life decreases, their anxiety increases. In fact, they need devices powered to 100% just to feel comfortable.

Annalisa, age 10
on battery life

Source: FH proprietary research

Data source: IBM
For Gen Z, devices are no longer a virtual extension of who they are, but a physical attachment. Their phones and tablets are never more than an arm’s reach away.

Sometimes my sister acts like she’s asleep, and she has her iPad under her pillow.

Tarak, age 9
on always being connected

Source: FH proprietary research
Gen Z understands that their dreams and ideas don’t have to live solely in their minds. If something fascinates them or captures their imagination, they know they can turn to the internet for more.

Chloe, age 9
on using the internet for all of the things

If you want to watch A DANCING POTATO, you can search for DANCING POTATOES!

Source: FH proprietary research
**Gen Z as 100 People**

**Ages 20 & below**

**Relationship Status**
While the overwhelming majority of Gen Z are not married, 11% of them are married.

**Parental Status**
Only a handful of Gen Z are parents. 96% are not.

**Household Income**
More than one-third of Gen Z households earn between $20K and $59K.

**Education Level**
The majority of Gen Z are in high school or are entering college.

**Ethnicity**
More than a quarter of Gen Z are Latino.

**Employment Status**
The majority of Gen Z are full-time students, though 15% work part-time.

**Type of Home**
More than two-thirds of Gen Z live in single-family homes.

**Home Ownership**
43% of Gen Z live in homes likely owned by their parents while almost a quarter rent or lease.

**Parental Status**
Only a handful of Gen Z are parents. 96% are not.

**Ethnicity**
More than a quarter of Gen Z are Latino.

**Employment Status**
The majority of Gen Z are full-time students, though 15% work part-time.

**Type of Home**
More than two-thirds of Gen Z live in single-family homes.

**Home Ownership**
43% of Gen Z live in homes likely owned by their parents while almost a quarter rent or lease.

**Data source: Iconoculture**
Blending Insights with Action

Gen Z is still young, but they’re confident in who they are and what they want — at least for now. Better understanding their motivations, values, and choices helps marketers and communicators connect on an emotional — not just digital — level with this up-and-coming consumer audience and will be key as they grow. How will their values and goals change as they experience big changes in life — graduation, moving away from home, starting jobs and families?

At the same time, broadly looking at this generation’s personalities and differences is only scratching the surface. At FleishmanHillard, we believe in the power of aligning specific audience insights with a brand’s unique personality and goals to help brands and causes connect to audiences’ values on an emotional level.

Blending on-point research and insights with deep knowledge across many different industries enables a fresh approach to consumer marketing. We’d love the opportunity to share more about our expertise and how we can add value to your communications efforts.