

Food and Generation Z

Area of research interest: [Behaviour and perception](#)

Study duration: 2019-09-10

Conducted by: Britain Thinks

As global connectivity soars, generational shifts could come to play a more important role in setting behaviour than socioeconomic differences do.

The research programme set out to explore:

1. Generation Z (Gen Z)'s engagement with food and the food system
2. How they make decisions about food, and how they communicate about food
3. Gen Z's attitudes toward the food system, including future aspirations
4. Generational differences between Gen Z and other generations, and between previous generations of young people
5. Sub-group differences within the 16-25-year-old age group

Methodology

The methodology of for this project included 3 stages:

1. A Rapid Evidence Assessment covering the academic literature on Generation Z and food
2. Qualitative work with 40 16-25-year-olds recruited across London, Cardiff, Belfast and Colne, including an online community, deliberative focus groups and filmed ethnographic interviews
3. A Nationally representative poll with boosted sample of 16-25-year-olds

Key findings

- Gen Z's food behaviours are strongly influenced by life stage and socio-economic background. Those who are still living at home tend to have less control over, and engage less with, food choices. Meanwhile, students and those in work are more engaged because they are budgeting and planning their own meals
- Price is a stronger driver of food behaviours for Gen Z than for older generations. As such, despite being more likely to feel strongly about environmental or animal welfare issues, Gen Z are less likely than older generations to be 'ethically-conscious' consumers
- Gen Z, alongside Millennials, are among the most likely to eat no meat or to be reducing their consumption of meat. They are also most likely to cite environmental concerns as the reason for this
- Aside from a minority of 'conscious consumers', Gen Z have low awareness and understanding of food system issues. The knowledge that does exist is often patchy – picked up from encountering viral content on social media, most frequently on the topics of plastics and animal welfare
- Thinking about the future, Gen Z care most about the environmental impact of food, and least about the global nature of the food system. Gen Z believe technology will be key to delivering the food quality, variety and value they enjoy today, with less harmful impacts. They also feel negative about the involvement of large corporations and monopolies in the food sector

Research report

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