

HubSpot +  Brandwatch

2022 State of U.S. Consumer Trends Report



From the values they expect companies to have to the channels they use to make purchases, consumers and the trends they set are changing across the board—and matching their expectations can make all the difference when trying to connect with them.

To better understand how consumers act, how they think, and what they expect in 2022, we surveyed over 1,000 individuals across the U.S. In the report, Gen Z (18-24), Millennials (25-34), Gen X (35-54), and Baby Boomers (55+) shared their thoughts and recent actions across eight categories:

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- 01 Purchasing Habits
 - 02 Social Media
 - 03 Online Communities
 - 04 Data Privacy
 - 05 Corporate Responsibility
 - 06 Workplace Trends
 - 07 Crypto and NFTs
 - 08 Metaverse

The survey revealed invaluable insights, such as that all generations prefer making purchases when needed instead of using buy now, pay later services or the increasingly popular subscription model.

Read on to learn more about consumer behaviors and their impact on businesses.

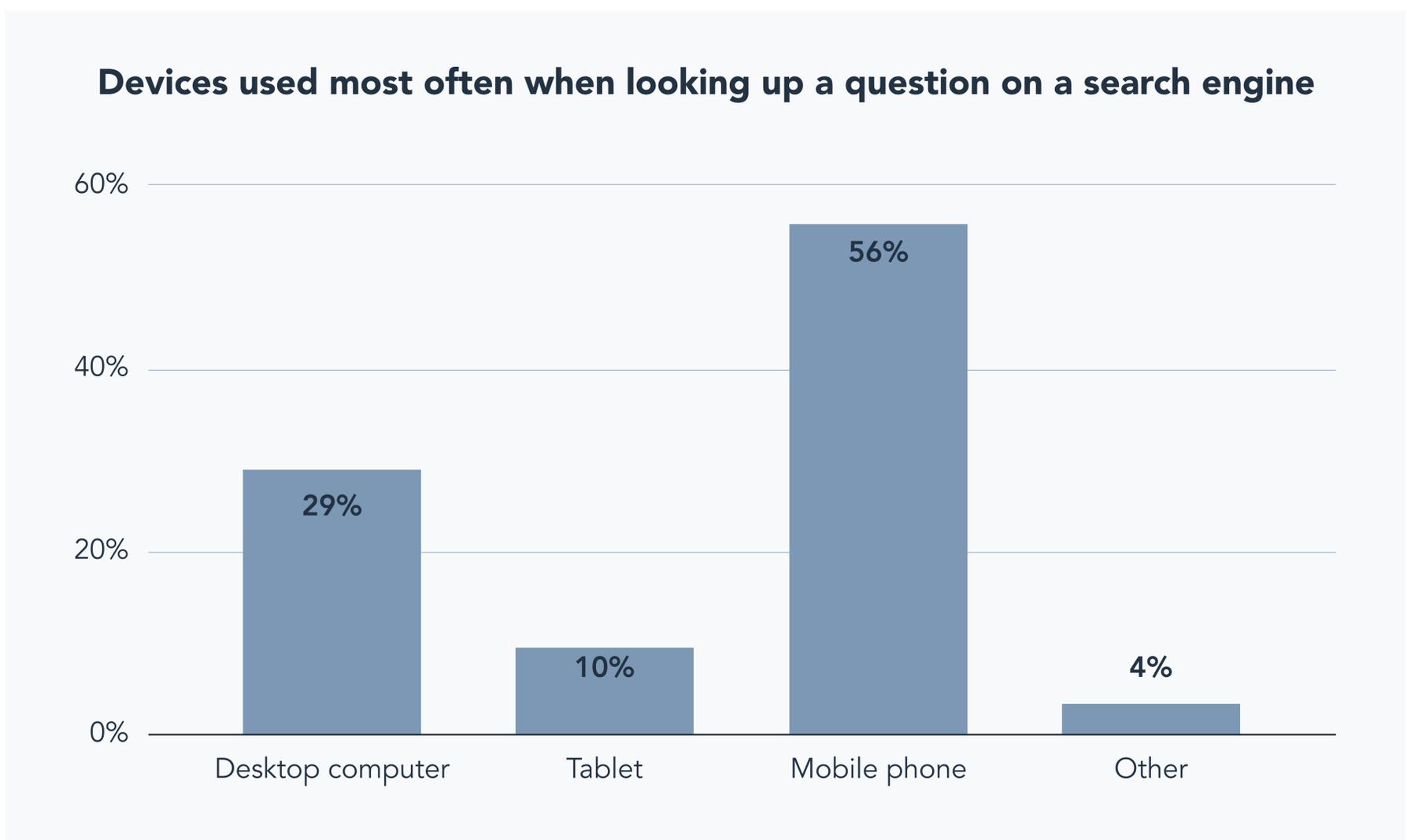
CHAPTER 1

Purchasing Habits



Reaching Consumers Where They Are

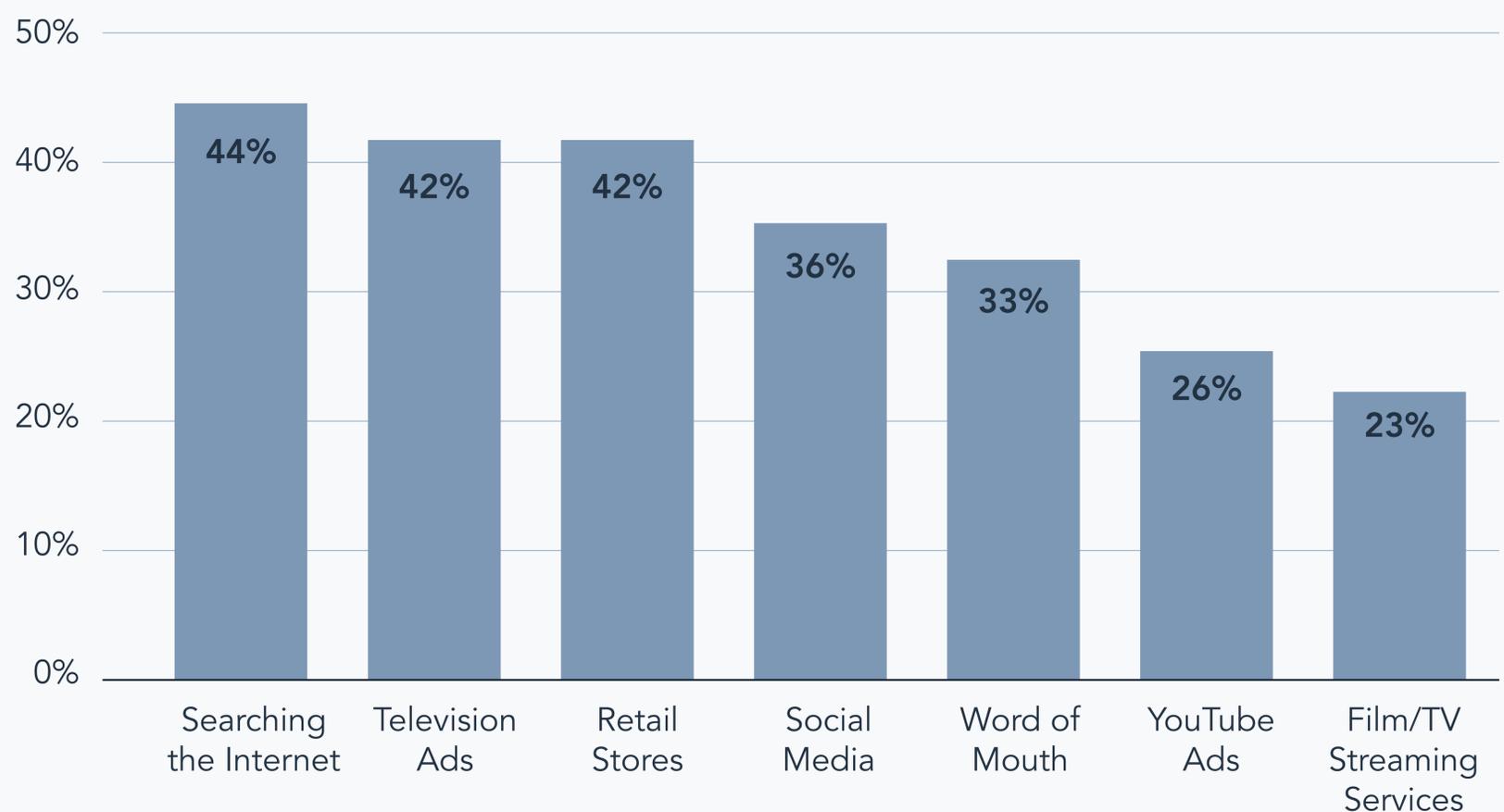
If businesses want to reach today's consumers, [mobile optimization](#) has to be a priority. From web development to digital advertising, making sure the mobile experience is top of mind and receives just as much attention as the desktop experience could mean the difference between connecting with consumers or losing potential customers to the competition.



According to our data, 56% of those surveyed use mobile phones more than any other device when looking up a question on a search engine. Millennials are the most likely generation to use their mobile device more at 74%.

Regarding the shopping experience for consumers, the data also reveals that mobile leads the way as the preferred platform. More than half of those surveyed use a mobile device more than any other device for online shopping. Gen Z is leading the trend, with 74% of those 18-24 choosing mobile first for shopping.

Top 7 channels where participants discovered new products (Past 3 months)



If businesses are looking for the best way to share the value of their products with consumers, not only is the mobile format important, but also the location of where they share their content. Thirty-six percent of respondents have [discovered a new product on social media](#) in the last three months. For Millennials, that number reaches 50%, and for Gen Z, it tops out at 57%.

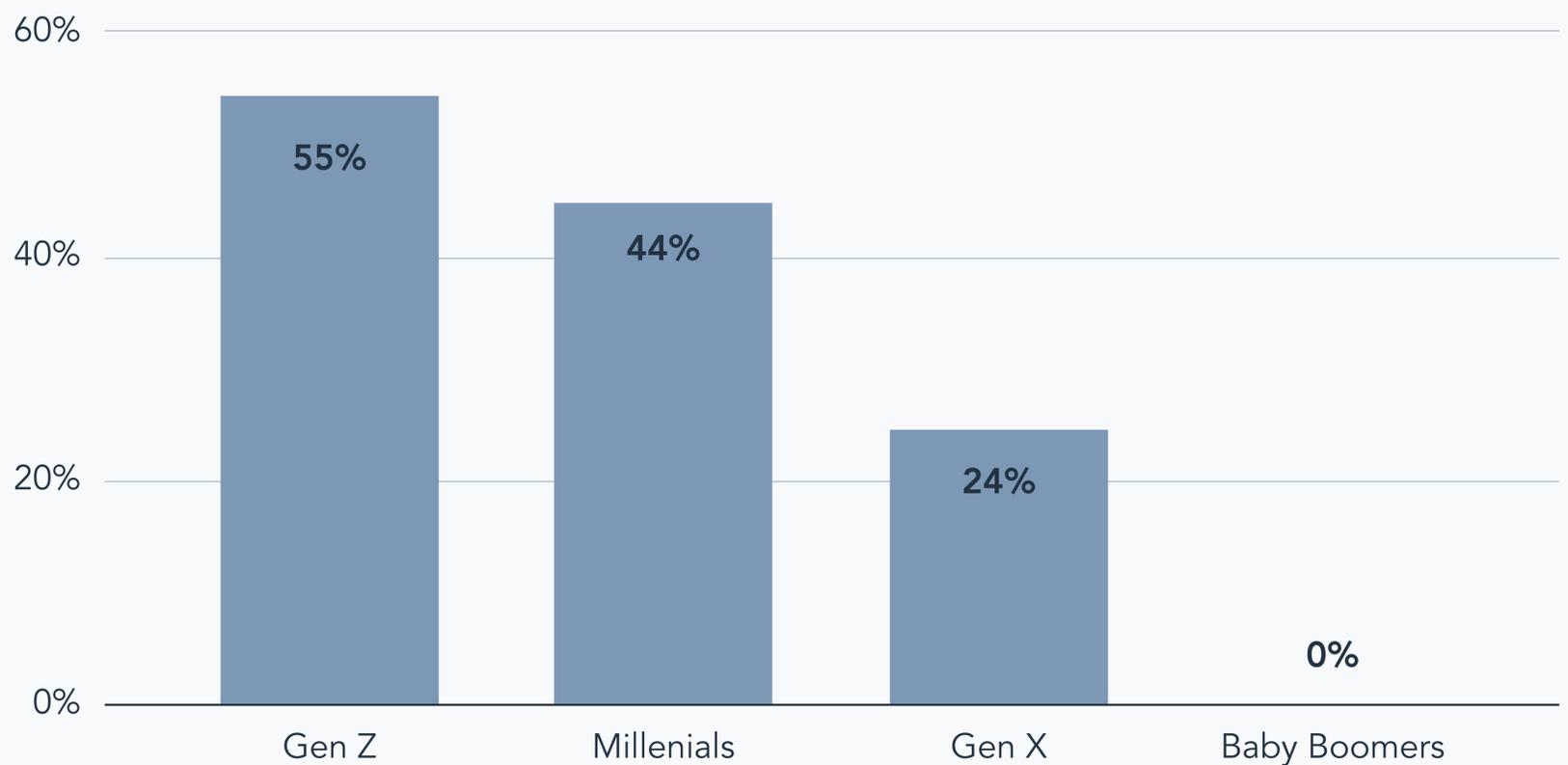
The Messenger and the Message

Word of mouth has always played a significant role in how businesses market to consumers. Add in [the rise of influencer marketing](#), and a major question arises: do today's consumers trust the word of personal referrals more, or referrals from the influencers they follow?

According to our data, influencer recommendations win out for Gen Z, with 55% of that generation surveyed saying recommendations from influencers are one of the most important factors in their purchase decision. Across generations, only 30% consider influencer recommendations as one of the most important factors in their purchase decisions.

In addition to who shares the message, how the message is delivered also plays a significant role for consumers. For instance, of the consumers we surveyed, 78% say it's more important for a marketing video to be authentic and relatable than to be polished with high-quality video and audio.

Percent who consider influencer recommendations one of the most important factors in their purchase decision



Making the Purchase

[Subscription boxes and services](#) have become a popular method for businesses to get their products into the hands of consumers regularly. Pair that with the resurgence of buy now, pay later options, and consumers have several choices for how (and how often) they want to make purchases.

As it turns out, the flexibility in purchase types might not be needed. Each generation surveyed prefers purchasing products when needed rather than financing or subscription options. Just 21 percent stated a preference for payment installments, and 11% prefer subscriptions.

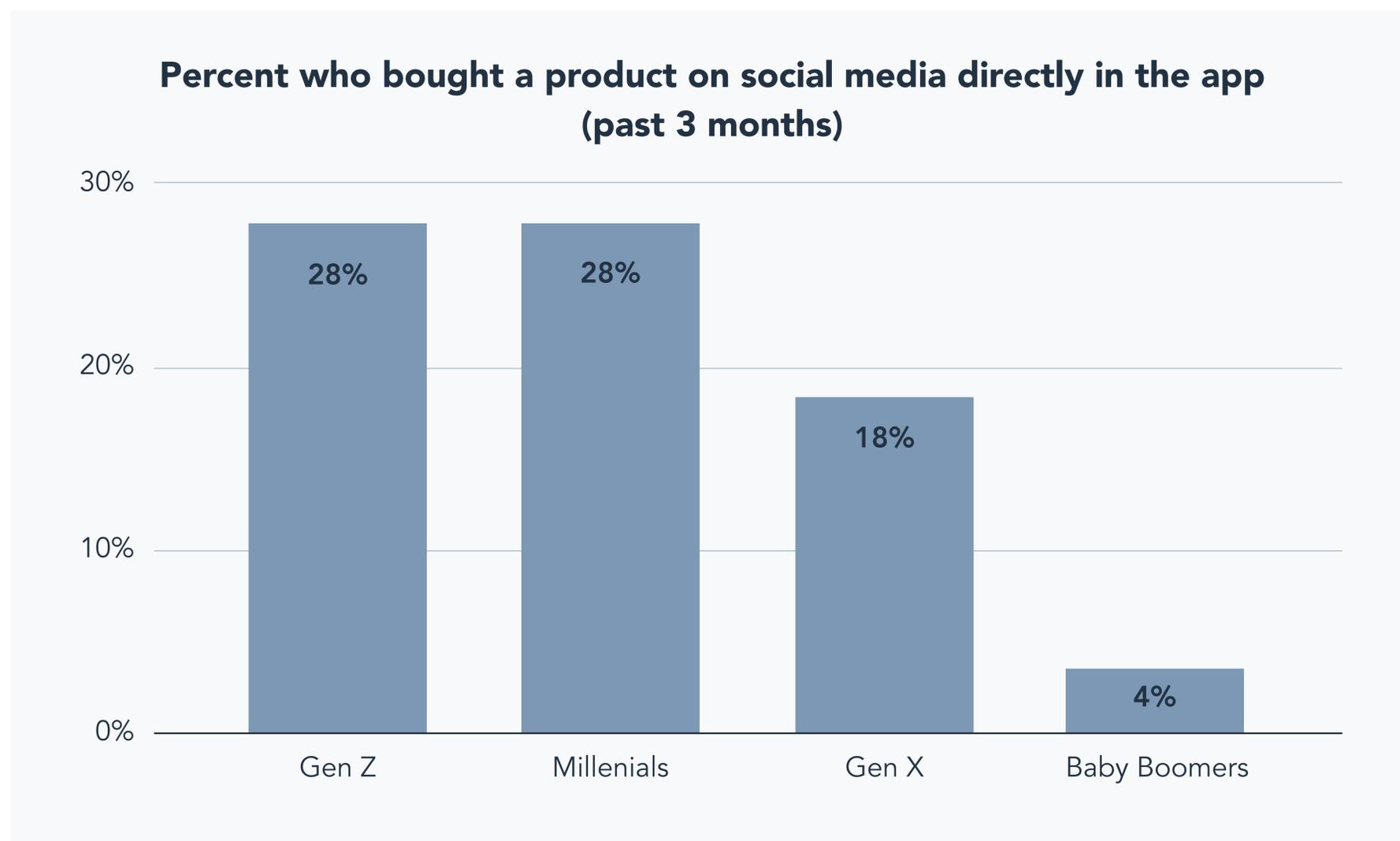
CHAPTER 2

Social Media



The Value of Social Media for Consumers

Social media has expanded from platforms to connect with family and friends to places where users can grow their networks, access customer support, make purchases, and more. Understanding just [how many users expect to use social media for these purposes](#) can help businesses to optimize their social profiles to support their customers better.

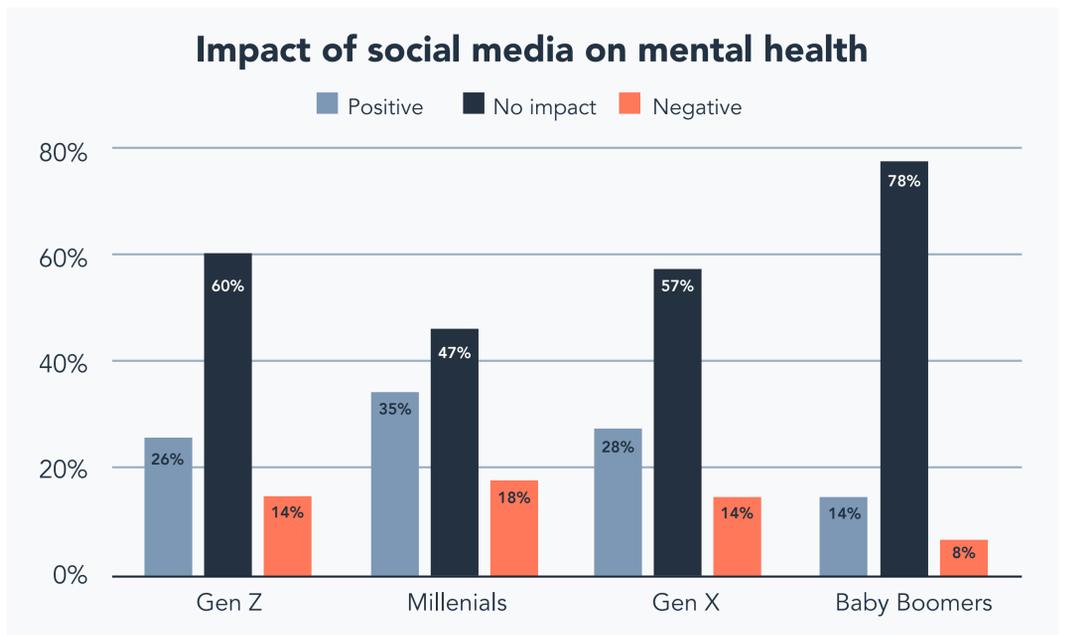


Looking at data from the past three months, 28% of Gen Z and Millennial social media users bought a product on social media. Millennials also get the most use out of social media as a customer service channel, with 24% using social media direct messaging for support over the past three months.

For Gen Z, there's significant value in social media for in-the-moment connection. In that generation, 63% have used live audio chat rooms in the past three months, with 36% specifically using Discord.

If businesses want to stand out on social media, they should also consider adding to another benefit consumers get from it: positivity.

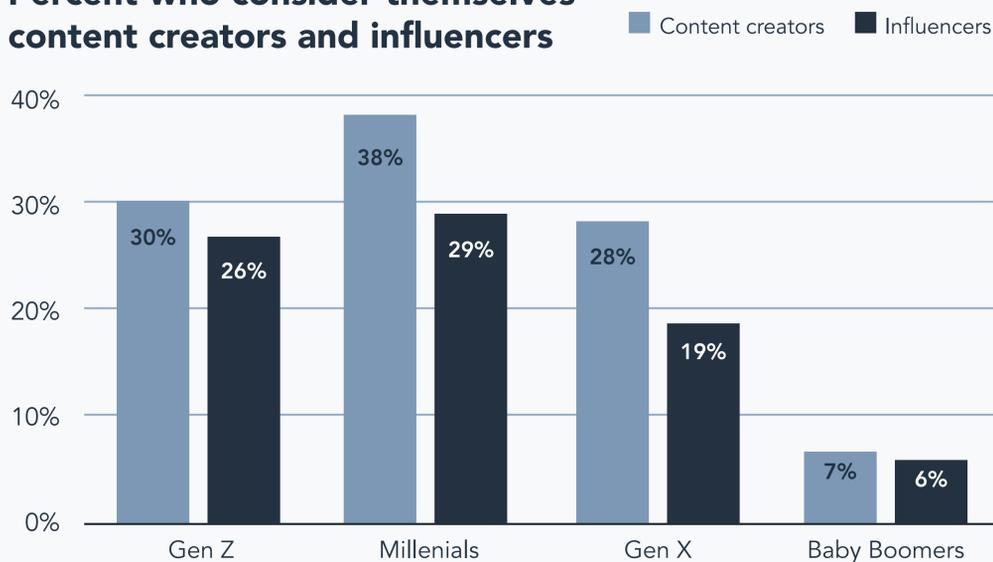
While 61% of social media users say social media has no impact on their mental health, a quarter of respondents said it has a positive impact.



The Everyday Content Creator and Influencer

The line between the average social media user and those with bigger aspirations is shrinking. Users are now taking their social media talents to new heights by using their time online to create content and grow their influence.

Percent who consider themselves content creators and influencers



Of those surveyed, 24% consider themselves content creators, with Millennials being the largest generation in the creator space. The overall percentage of influencers was a bit lower at 18%, but Millennials also lead the charge at 29%.

For those in the influencer and creator space, it's also important to consider their reach. A large percentage (84%) have 10,000 or fewer followers or subscribers, and 39% have 1,000 or fewer.

CHAPTER 3

Online Communities



Community building has become one of the most consistent ways for some businesses to delight and nurture potential and existing customers. When companies build communities, they have a direct line to their target audience. This opens up the opportunity not only to share targeted messages, but also to give those in the community a way to easily connect with the business and their peers.

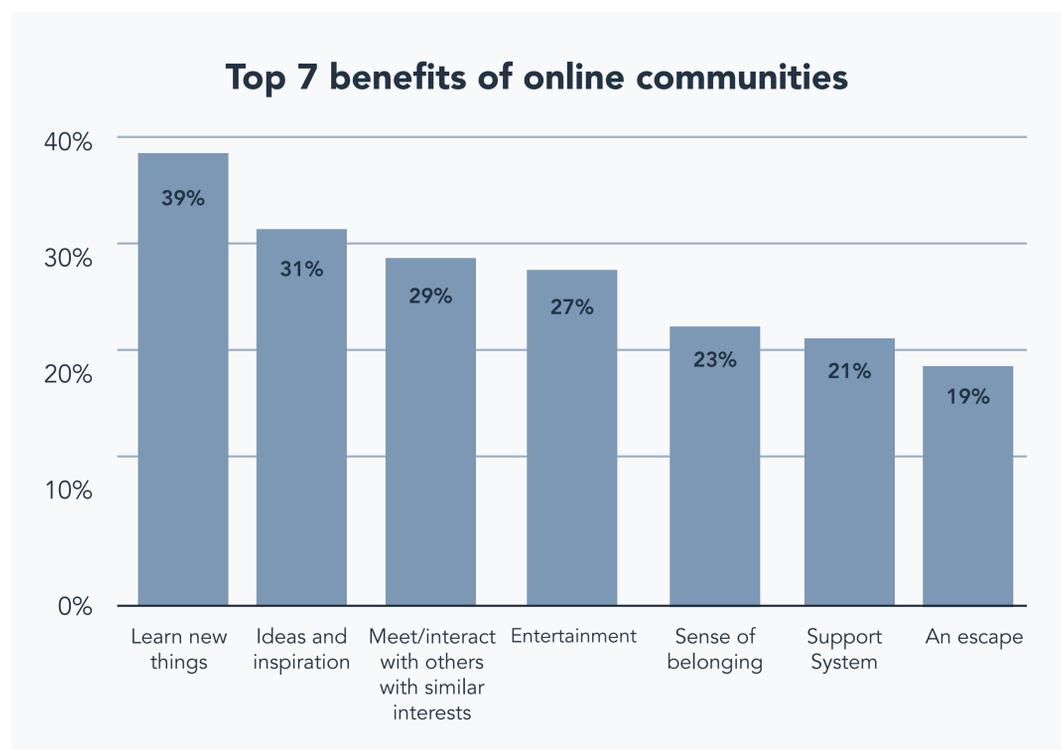
From social platforms like Facebook and Reddit to community platforms like Discord, the list of locations where companies can build communities is steadily increasing. For companies that haven't yet explored community building, the data from our participants might change their minds.

Across the last three months, 19% of social media users surveyed joined an online community, and in that same time, 24% actively participated in one. When comparing generations, those numbers are highest for millennials (33% joined an online community) and Gen Z (36% actively participated).

But what are community members expecting in these communities, and how can brands make communities worth each member's time?

According to our data, the top benefits for those in communities are learning new things, sourcing ideas and inspiration, and allowing members to meet and interact with others who have similar interests.

Adding to that, the top reasons people spend their time in communities are for fun, to share their interests with others, and to stay connected.



This data can be illuminating for companies that are looking to build or improve communities. Customers want to form genuine connections, learn, and enjoy their time in the spaces businesses create. Companies can use this data to create a litmus test for the content and activities they have planned for their community to ensure it aligns with what members expect.

CHAPTER 4

Data Privacy



Governments worldwide are setting standards and expectations for how businesses handle personal data from customers and prospects. This ranges from the multi-national level—with guidelines like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union—to much smaller scales, like the state-wide California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the U.S.

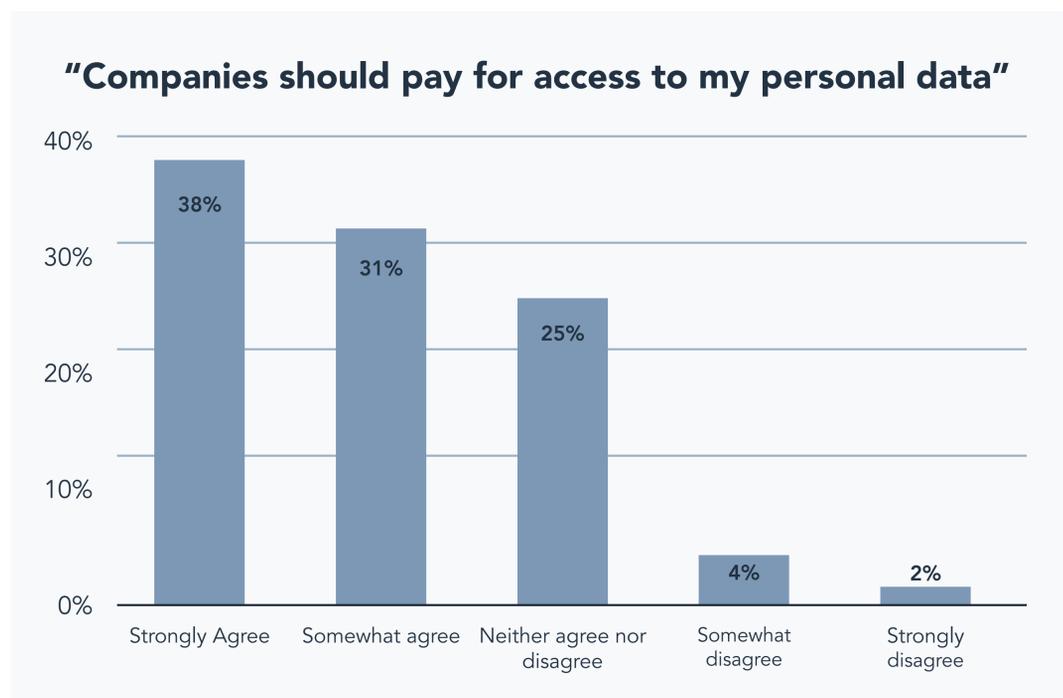
Still, not every nation and state has embraced similar protections, and among our respondents, there are serious consumer concerns about their data privacy. For instance, 70% said they are concerned with how companies use their data, and just over half of respondents distrust how companies use their data.

The Dream: More Rights for Individuals

Consumers' expectations around how companies handle their data united the generations surveyed in our report. For instance, 80% of all respondents consider data privacy a human right, and 80% also say that individuals should have complete control over how companies use this data.

This agreement across generations should signify that consumers are serious about how companies use their data; companies that come close to matching the expectations of their customer base will have an easier time differentiating themselves from competitors.

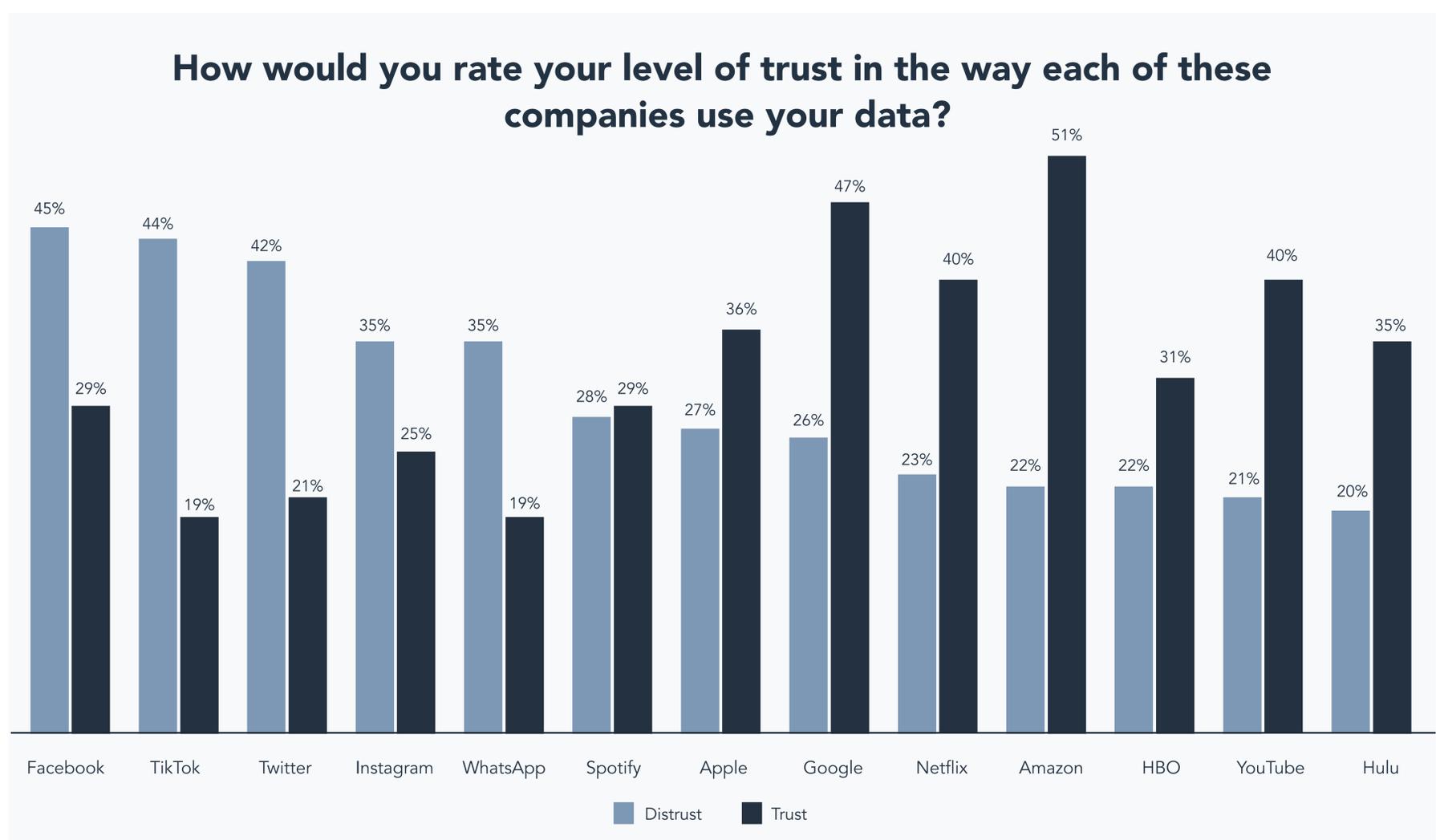
Another data privacy topic also brought together many respondents: paying for data. Overall, 69% of respondents said that companies should pay them for access to their data. Whether this becomes the norm or not, it shows that many consumers understand that their data is valuable and see that value as a possible route to monetization.



The Bottom Line: Trust

The consensus over the importance of data privacy among consumers is more than theoretical. It plays a direct role in the purchase decisions they make. Of those we surveyed, 82% said they are more likely to buy from companies they trust with their data, and this is consistent across generations.

In addition, 45% of respondents say that their trust in companies regarding their data depends partly on the company's CEO. While this is less than half of respondents, it's still a significant number and should encourage companies to consider how their overall brand and the CEOs' personal brand align.



Our survey participants were also willing to give us insight into how trustworthy they view some of the world's most well-known brands regarding their data.

Social media apps face a significant challenge, as participants trusted them the least with their data. Keeping in mind that trust affects purchase decisions, this could impact not only the platforms themselves but also companies that use social media platforms for selling and advertising.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some companies consumers deemed most trustworthy with their data are Amazon, Google, and YouTube.

CHAPTER 5

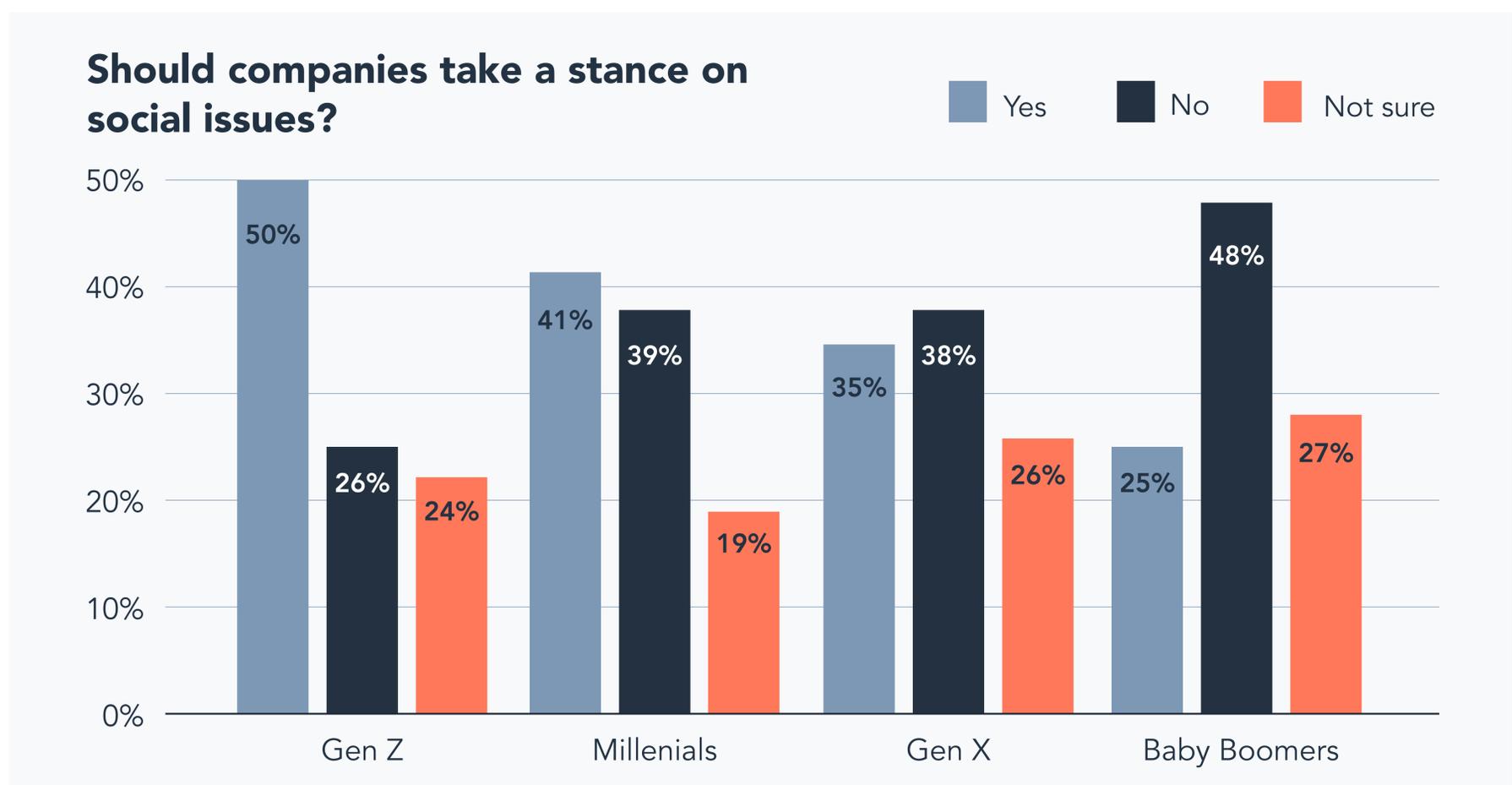
Corporate Responsibility



Clear Expectations

If employee retention is an issue—[which has been the case](#) for many businesses since 2021—another area that companies can consider prioritizing is corporate responsibility. Ensuring their efforts and their employees’ expectations line up is one way to create a work environment that employees are satisfied with.

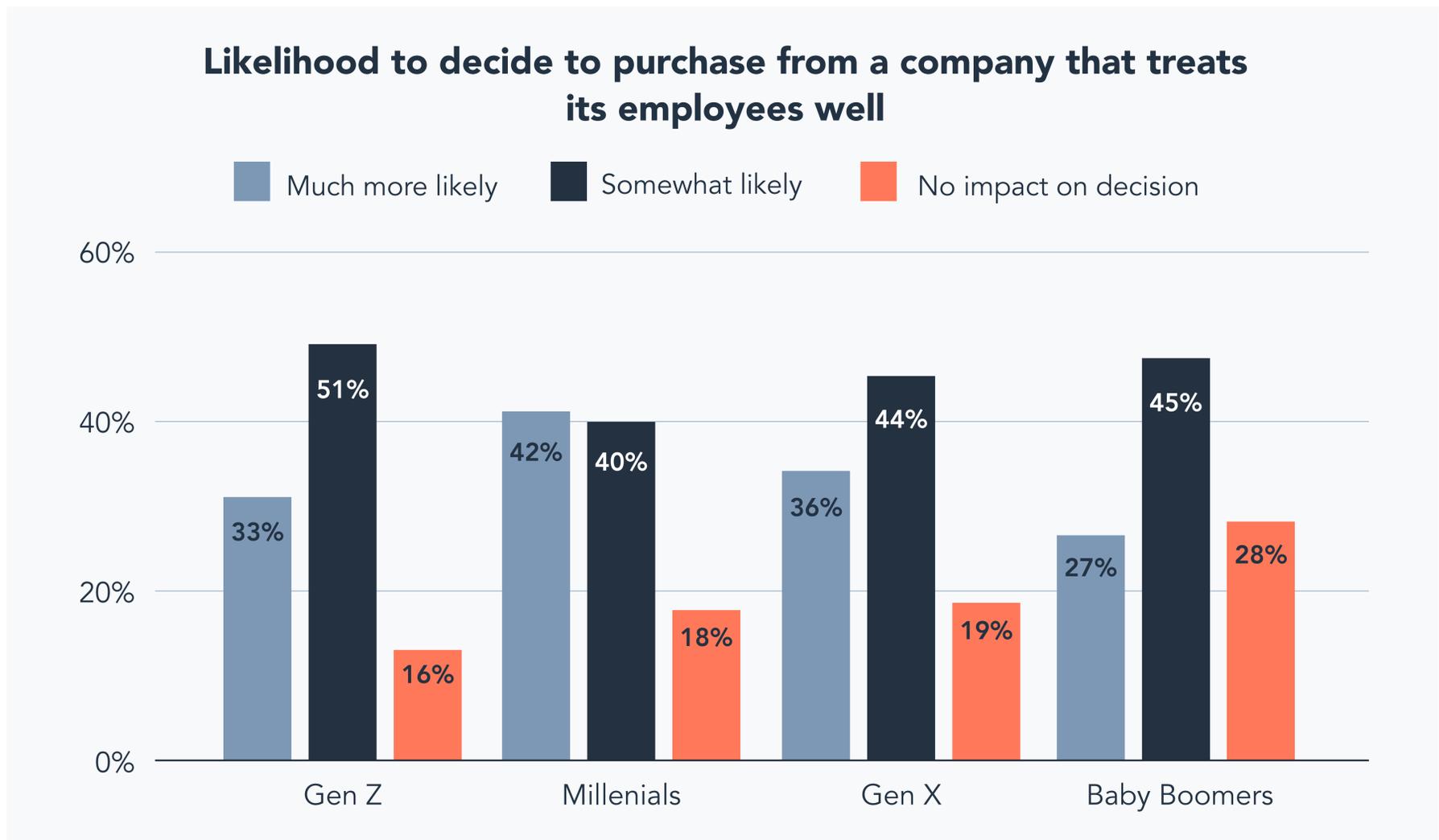
From our survey, we know that 34% of respondents say companies should take a stance on social issues (e.g., climate change, racial justice, and LGBTQ+ rights). Compare that to 41% who say they shouldn’t. However, it’s important to note that 25% said they’re unsure, so the answer isn’t so definitive.



Also, companies should consider the data shared by each generation, especially if their workforce falls heavily into certain generations. For instance, Gen Z has the most affirmative opinion on the matter: 51% agree with companies taking a stance. Millennials are a bit less decided, with 41% agreeing.

Consumer Thoughts on the Workplace

Where companies stand on specific social issues also impacts consumers’ purchase decisions. Regarding diversity and inclusion, 36% said they’re more likely to buy a product based on a brand’s commitment to this focus. This also aligns with their purchase history, as 30% chose a product based on a brand’s commitment to diversity and inclusion in the past three months.



The survey data also shows that consumers are paying attention to how companies treat their employees, and it plays a significant role in their buying decision. Seventy-two percent of those surveyed said that companies should actively try to improve the well-being of their employees, and 78% said that they're more likely to buy from companies that treat employees well. So not only will focusing on a positive work experience benefit employees and retention, but it also makes a huge difference for customers.

Corporate Impact

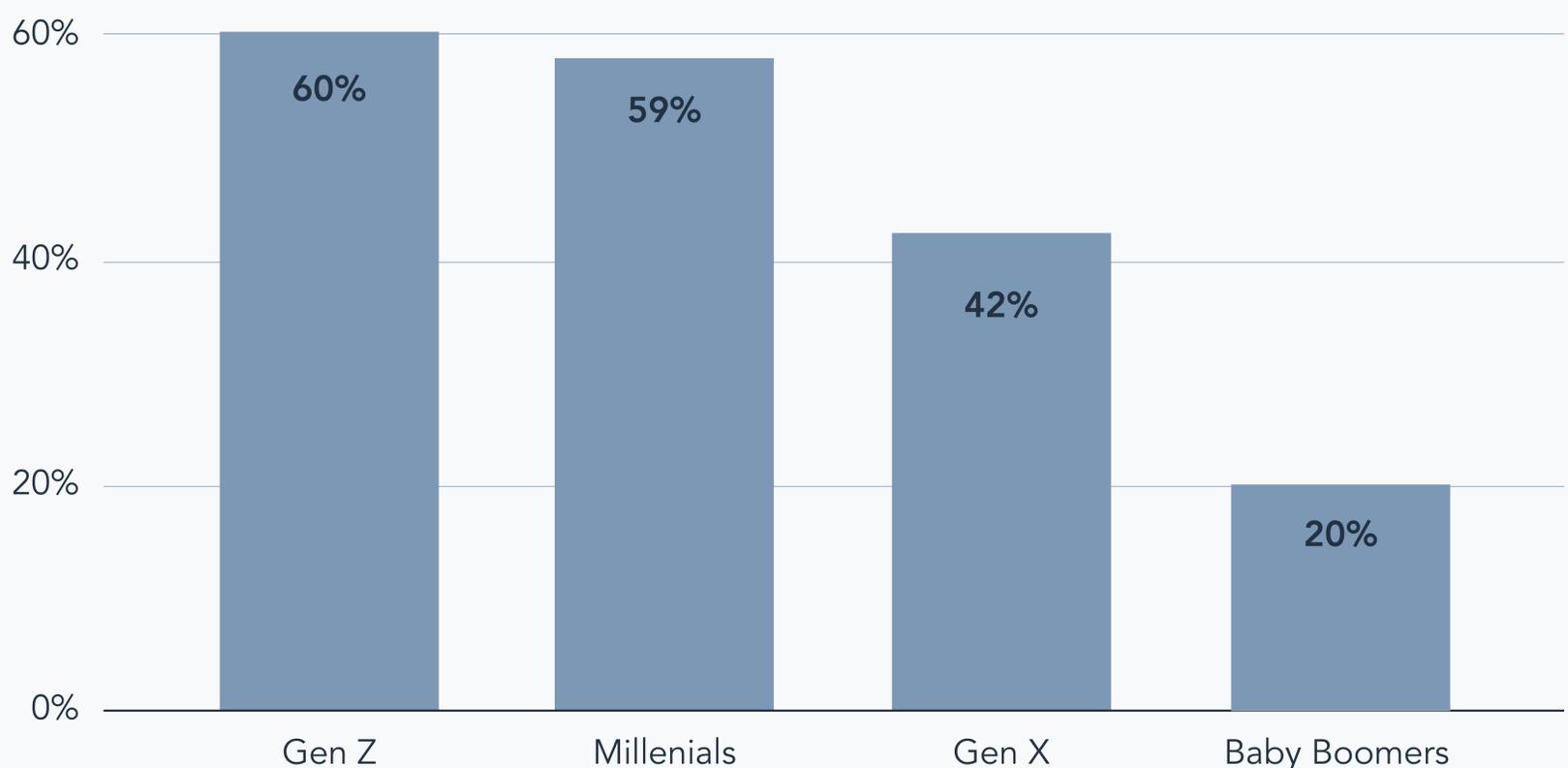
What companies do for communities and causes is also hitting consumers' radars. While 56% said companies should donate a portion of their profits to charity, 66% say they are more likely to purchase from a company that makes donations.

A focus on the environment is also a game-changer for some consumers. Sixty-six percent say companies should try to reduce their environmental impact, while 46% say they are more likely to purchase from a company that actively tries to do so.

Support for Small Businesses

As some consumer brands grow to achieve billions in yearly revenue and become household names, support for small businesses is also steadily growing. Just look at the growth of [Small Business Saturday](#) as an example. What started as a small initiative by American Express has grown into a nationwide observance, taking place the day after Black Friday and bringing in billions of dollars for small businesses around the country.

Chose a product based on it being made by a small business (past 3 months)



Consumer preferences support small businesses, which can offer them a leg-up against larger competition. Of those surveyed, 39% said they had chosen a product in the last three months [based on it being made by a small business](#).

The support doesn't stop there. Forty-five percent of respondents say they are more likely to buy a product that was made by a small business.

CHAPTER 6

Workplace Trends



For many companies and individuals, the global shift to remote work that began in 2020 is still in full swing. A quick search on LinkedIn or Indeed will show that remote and hybrid roles are being promoted just as often—if not more—than in-office positions.

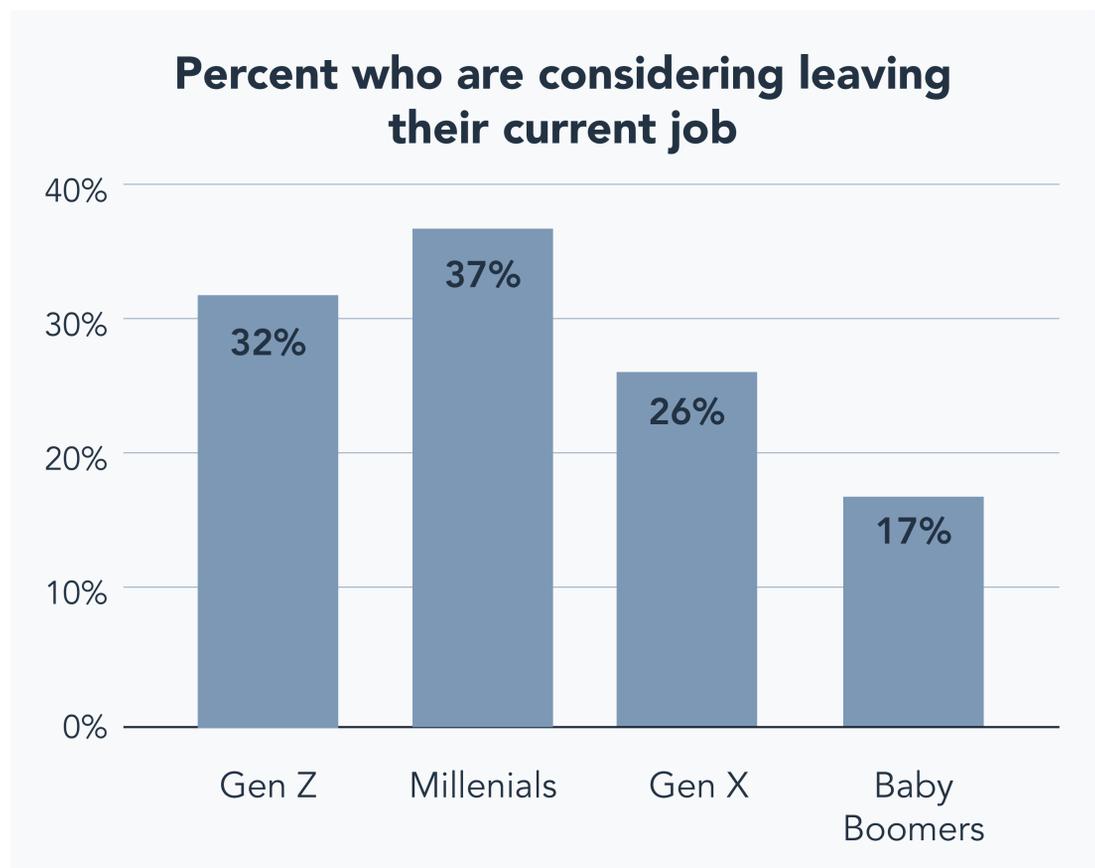
Our data shows that while 40% of respondents are in the office full time or nearly full time, 32% are in remote roles, and 28% are in hybrid roles.

For many of our respondents, remote and hybrid work has not only become the norm, but it's now a requirement. Of those surveyed, 54% of remote or hybrid workers would consider leaving their role if their company made them return to the office five days a week.

Like the remote work shift, the labor shortage that began in 2021 is also ongoing. According to our respondents, what some call "The Great Resignation" is still a reality that employers should prepare themselves for.

While only 15% of respondents changed jobs in the last three months, 29% said they are considering leaving their current position. So what can employers do to impact this labor trend positively?

They can start by paying attention to what employees say they value most, especially regarding what makes their work impactful. Luckily, our respondents shed some light on this for employers.



Sixty-five percent of those we surveyed said it's important to them to feel like they are making a positive impact on the world through their work. Adding to that, 56% said it's important that the company they work for has a diverse and inclusive culture.

Creating an environment that addresses what employees value most can give businesses a leg-up as they work to adapt to the changing work landscape.

CHAPTER 7

Crypto and NFTs



Current and Future Outlook

From the [creation of Bitcoin](#)—the world’s first cryptocurrency—in 2008 to the more than 12,000 cryptocurrencies today, digital currencies are growing rapidly. In fact, the number of cryptocurrencies in 2022 is [double what existed last year](#).

However, the industry hasn’t solely experienced growth. Recent [market volatility](#) has kept crypto in an even bigger spotlight and caused uncertainty about [the future of digital currencies](#).

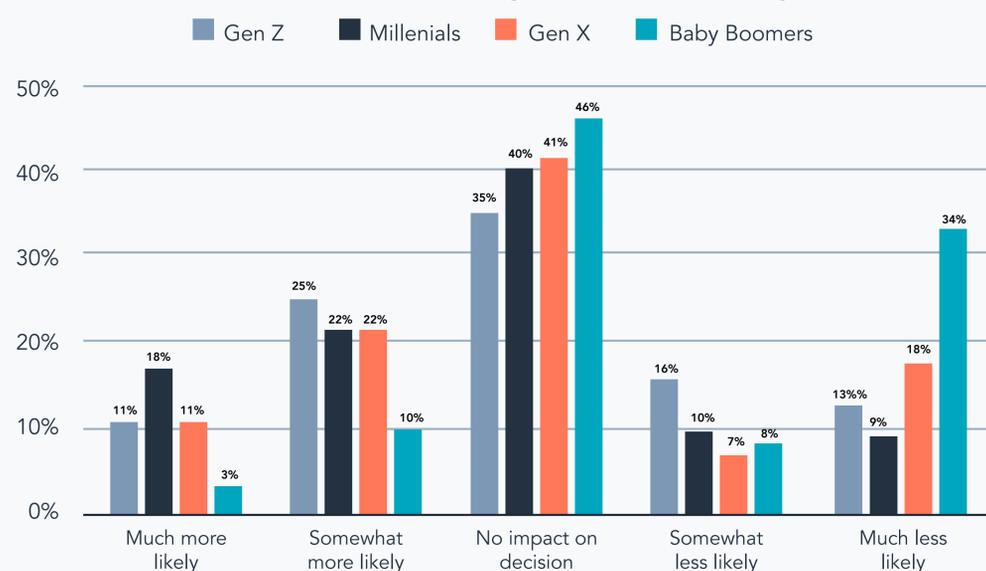
Still, the consumers we surveyed are showing an interest in crypto. Over 1 in 5 Gen Z, Millennial, or Gen X respondents are invested in crypto. Additionally, 34% of crypto owners have used it to make a purchase (other than using it to buy more crypto).

For companies wondering whether it’s worth integrating crypto into any part of their business (e.g., accepting payments in crypto), one aspect that could be holding them back is whether there’s a solid enough understanding of crypto among consumers. Luckily, consumers have shown that lack of knowledge isn’t widespread.

Forty-three percent of respondents said they understand the concept of cryptocurrency, and 35% said they view it as a legitimate form of currency. In addition, 28% even said it is the future of currency.

Although accepting crypto is one consideration that companies can make from this data, another is providing it—particularly for companies that offer platforms.

Likelihood to use a platform in exchange for virtual currency as in incentive

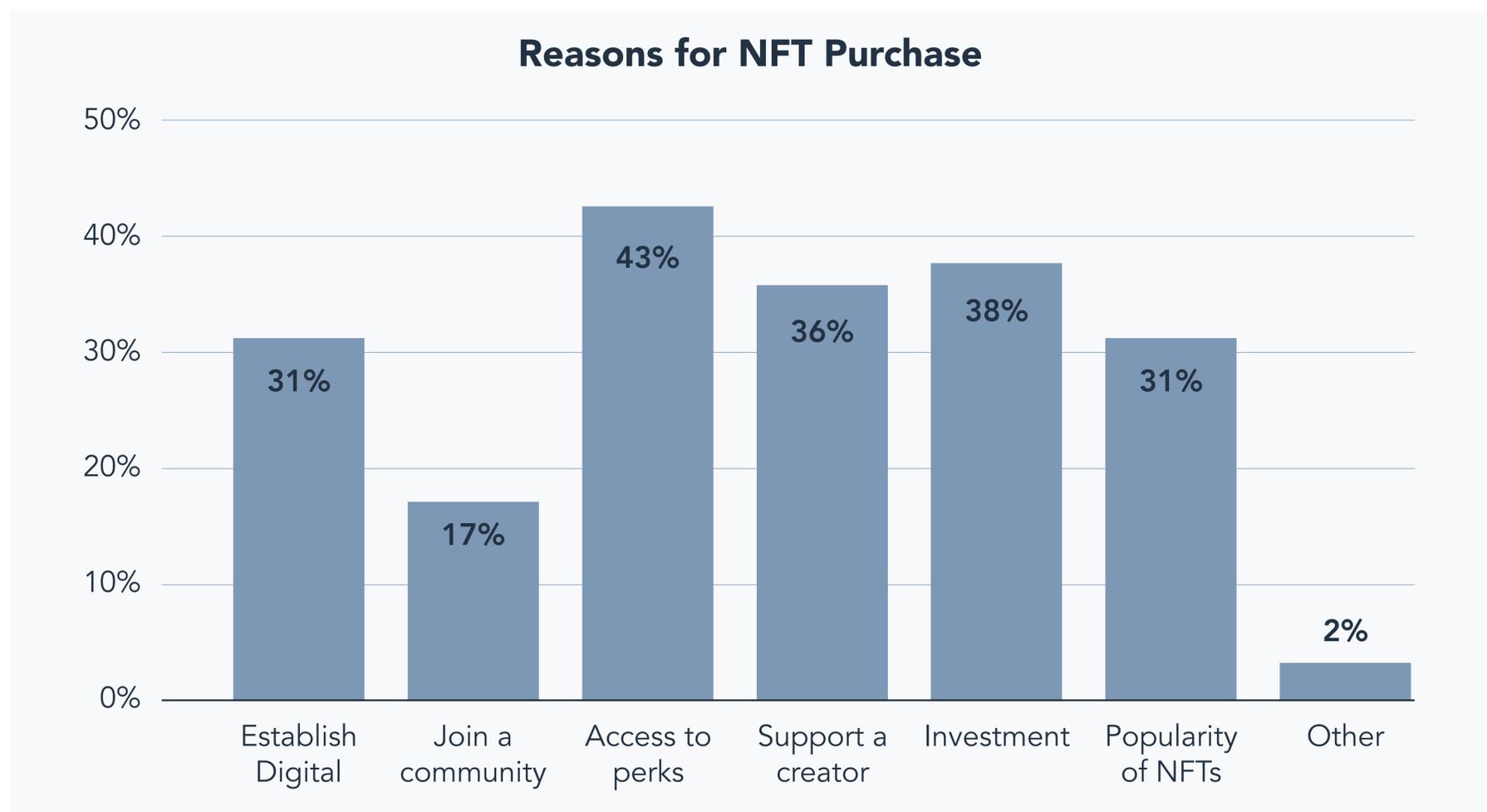


Of the respondents, 27% said they would be more likely to use a platform if they received virtual currency for using it. That number was highest among millennials (40%).

NFT and Crypto Investments

Shifting the focus to [non-fungible tokens, or NFTs](#)—unique digital assets bought and sold similarly to crypto—these assets have a bit longer to go until they’re as widely understood or accepted as crypto. Only 29% of those surveyed said they understand the concept of NFTs, and 26% see them as a legitimate form of digital ownership.

So, why are people buying NFTs at all?



The most common reasons people buy NFTs are to get access to exclusive perks (e.g., pre-sale concert tickets or an exclusive skin in a video game), investment opportunities, and to support creators. Specifically looking at the Gen Z generation, 50% have bought an NFT as a requirement to join a community.

Whether we’re talking about NFTs or crypto, there’s an evident shift in the willingness of consumers to take risks for the sake of investment. For instance, 19% of all respondents would accept a percentage of their salary in crypto, assuming that they get to choose the percentage and cryptocurrency. These numbers are highest for Gen Z (38%), followed by Millennials (30%) and Gen X (21%).

As some consumers are looking to get involved with both forms of digital ownership, they’re also looking to hold onto what they already have. Of all crypto owner respondents, 19% have no plans to sell their crypto, and 34% plan to keep it for the next 1-3 years.

CHAPTER 8

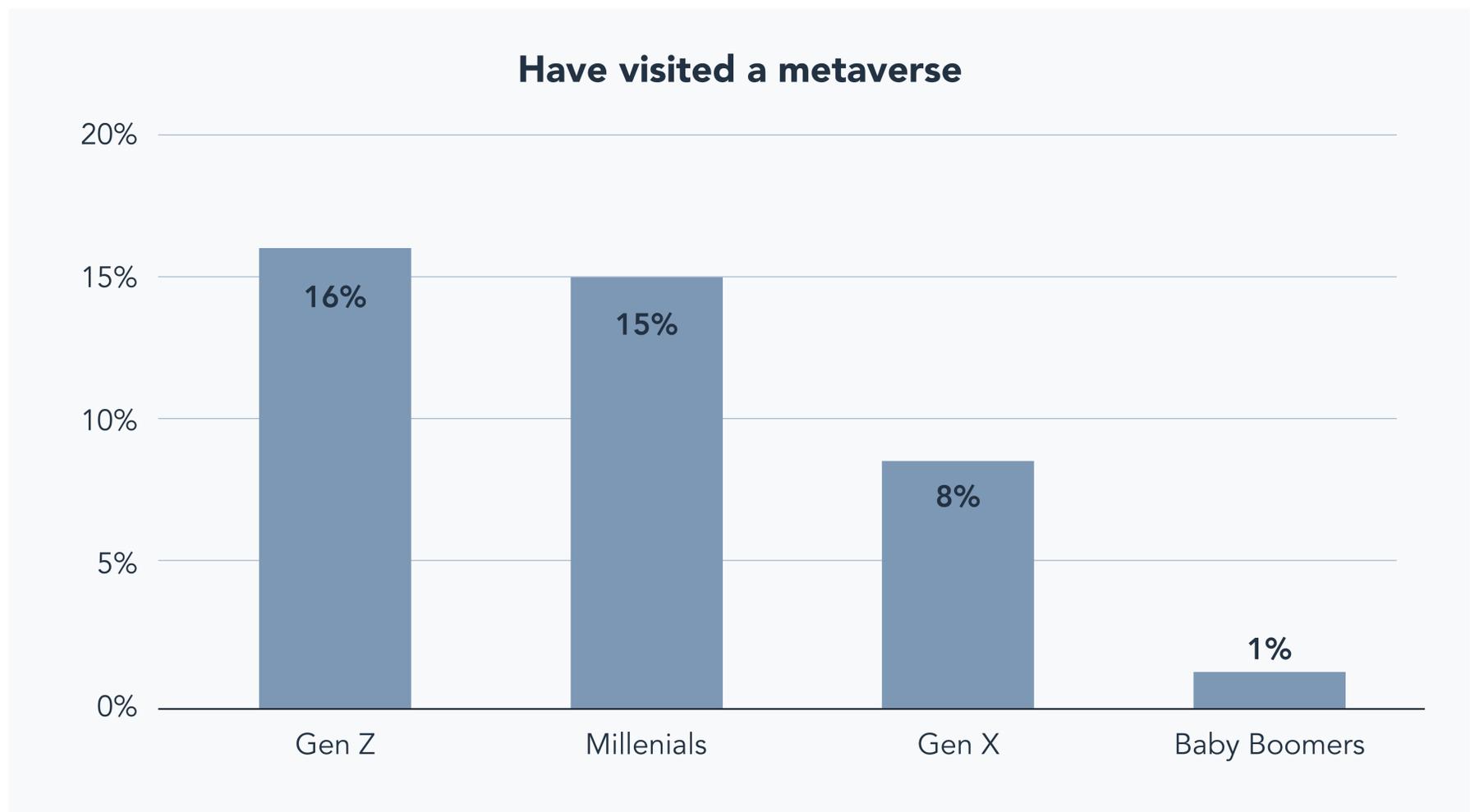
Metaverse



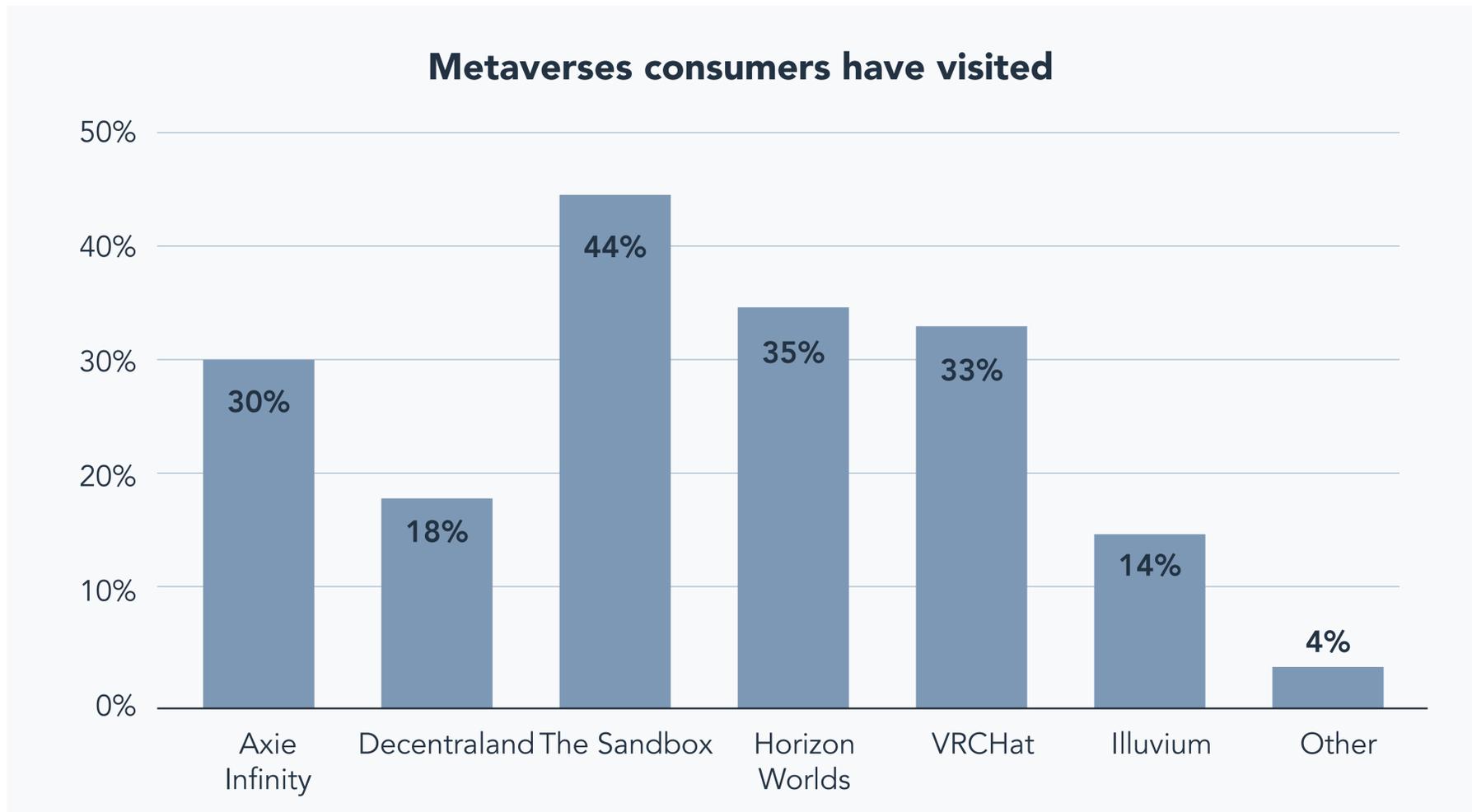
Adopting the Metaverse

When Facebook changed its name to Meta, large-scale conversation around the metaverse soared. [As we've mentioned](#), there can be a misconception that Meta owns “the Metaverse,” when in reality, Meta owns a metaverse that they launched called Horizon Worlds. There are several metaverses—or virtual reality worlds—some of which came years earlier than Horizon Worlds.

To better understand how our survey participants view the metaverse, we started by asking questions about their understanding of it. We found that 40% said they understood the concept of the metaverse. Compare that with 51% of all respondents who said they do not understand the idea of [Web3](#)—or the third generation of the internet, which is a vision of a more decentralized web that places the power in the hands of users instead of large tech companies.



To add additional context, consider how many of those surveyed who have visited a metaverse, which is 8% on average. Gen Z has visited the most at 16%, and Baby Boomers have visited the least at just 1%.



Which metaverses are consumers spending time in? The most popular is The Sandbox, which refers to itself as “a community-driven platform where creators can monetize voxel assets and gaming experiences on the blockchain.” Voxel assets are 3D models constructed out of 3D cubes.

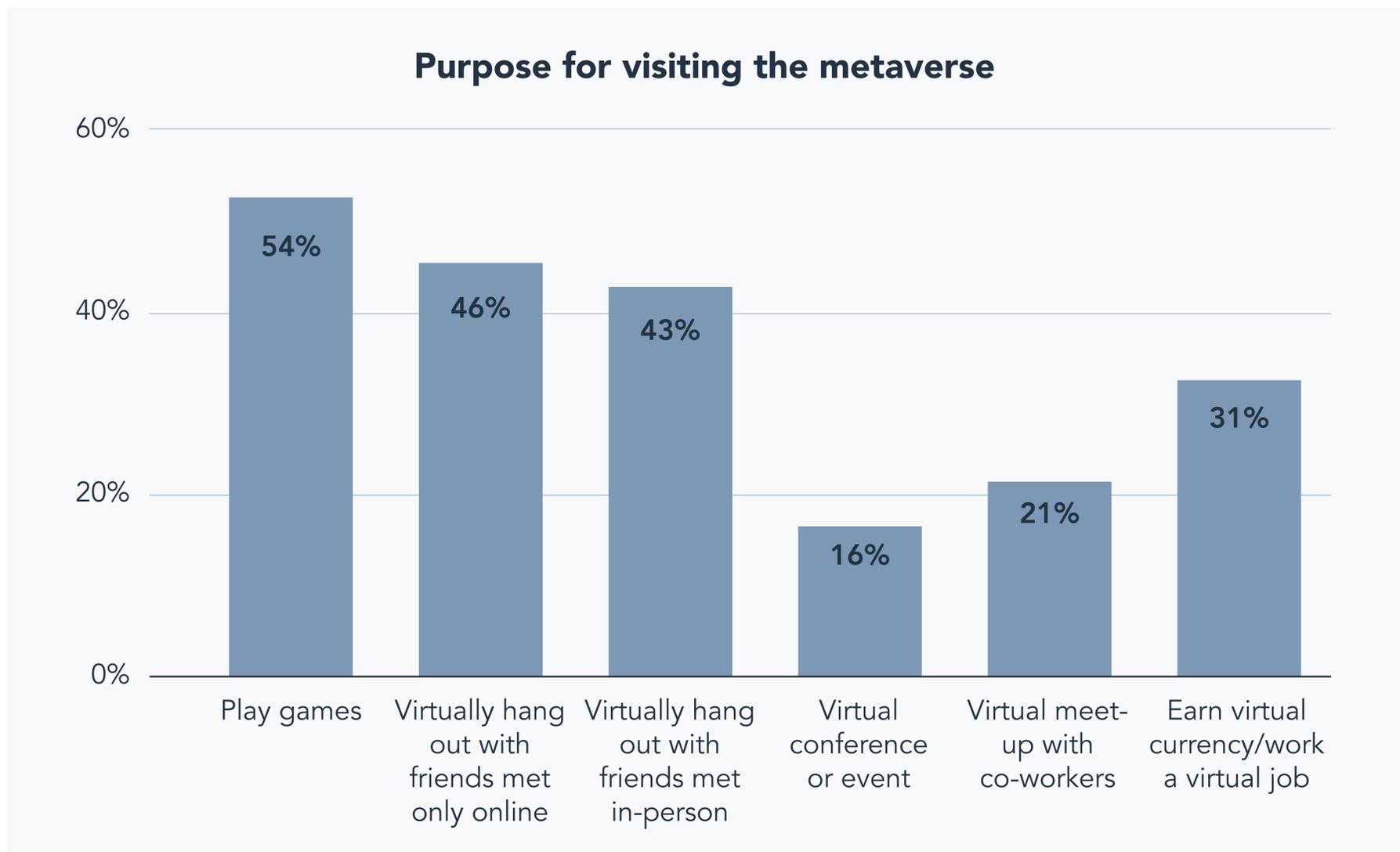
When digging deeper into how all respondents view the metaverse, we discovered that 34% say it’s the future of technology. Thirty percent also agree that brands should have virtual stores in the metaverse.

Ultimately, when it comes to how consumers view the metaverse, perhaps one of the most insightful data points is that 28% say the metaverse is an extension of reality.

What’s In It for Consumers

One of the most significant insights we learned from survey respondents regarding the metaverse is that it’s likely not a fad. When we asked participants about their activities related to the metaverse, many of them had recent experiences from the last three months.

For instance, of the respondents who have played an online multiplayer game, 81% did so in the last three months. The same is true for those who have visited a metaverse (56%), used a virtual reality (VR) headset (56%), or attended a VR event (47%).



The reasons that people step into the metaverse vary, but the most common reasons all relate to having fun off the clock. The top reason is to play games (54%), hang out with online friends (46%), or hang out with friends that they've met in person (43%).

Consumers are seeing other benefits to spending time in the metaverse. One of the biggest is that 51% of those who have visited a metaverse say they can more easily be their authentic selves in virtual worlds than in person.

Another is data security. Fifty-three percent said they trust how data on their activities in the metaverse will be stored and used—which is more trust than what they place in many social media platforms.

Additional Resources

Consumer trends vary across generations, categories, and time periods. Staying on top of those changes can be a competitive advantage for companies that create consumer products and platforms. It's also essential for attracting and retaining top talent that sticks around even when trends favor job switching.

For a deeper dive into some of the latest consumer trends, take a look at these content resources:

[HubSpot's State of Consumer Trends Information Page](#)

[The Top Channels Consumers Use to Learn About Products](#)

[How Different Generations Shop in 2022](#)

[The Top Shopping Trends of 2022 & Beyond \[New Data\]](#)

[Cost of Living and Changing Consumer Behavior](#)

[Brand Visibility Report: Why Your Brand Needs a Strong Visual Identity](#)

[Buying Habits and Trends for the Consumer Packaged Goods Industry](#)



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Brandwatch

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