

# GENERATION Z (IGEN)

## ATTRACTION AND RETENTION GUIDELINES FOR THE FOOD & FIBRE SECTORS

*PRIMARY INDUSTRY CAPABILITY ALLIANCE REPORT*

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# Generation Z have arrived

The latest generation are transitioning into the workforce. This cohort come with their own set of **values, motivations** and **workplace expectations**.

New Zealand's food & fibre sector has a critical need for skilled and qualified people. By 2025, it is projected that an additional **50,000** people alongside the existing food & fibre workforce will be required to meet future demand<sup>1</sup>.

Attracting and retaining Generation Z in our food & fibre sectors are not only needed to meet future demand; this budding young generation are brimming with fresh, **innovative** ideas that could change, grow and add further value to our sectors.

This report provides a snapshot of Generation Z. These guidelines will inform decisions on how to effectively **attract, transition** and **retain** Gen Z's in the food & fibre sectors.

Born between  
**1995-2010**

**15%**  
Of the workforce<sup>2</sup>

Aged  
**10-25**

# Where Millennials end & Gen Z begin

For the past decade, Millennials have been studied extensively to understand their motivations, values and workplace expectations. With the focus only beginning to shift to Gen Z, there is limiting large-scale research comparing the differences between the two generations.

## Millennials (1980 – 1994)



### Digital Pioneers

Millennials witnessed the rise of technological advancement in the early 2000's, including the development of search engines, instant messaging and social media<sup>3</sup>.



### Confident & Idealistic

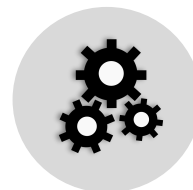
Millennials have paved the way for having high expectations in the workplace; a desire for a good work/life balance, meaningful work, recognition and a positive workplace culture are few of their expectations in the workplace<sup>5</sup>.

## Generation Z (1995 – 2010)



### Digital Natives

Gen Z are the first generation to have a technological influence from a young age. Their online world is an integral part of their identities<sup>4</sup>.



### Anxious

Excessive screen time, over-use of social media, faced with the challenges of climate change and an unpredictable future has resulted in an anxious generation, with a pragmatic outlook on life<sup>4,6,7</sup>.

# Methodology – Literature review

A literature review was conducted to explore Gen Z's values, motivations, workplace expectations, key influencers for career decision making and how to best support their transition into the workplace. Further literature was reviewed to explore retention strategies (international and domestic) and those applicable to the food & fibre sectors.

Literature was drawn from recent largescale international studies and smaller studies in New Zealand and Australia. A complete list of references included in the literature review can be viewed at the end of this report.

International studies	n*
Dream jobs? Teenagers career aspirations and the future of work (OECD, 2020)	500,000
The Deloitte global millennial survey (Deloitte, 2019)	3,009
Gen Z: The future has arrived (Dell Technologies, 2019)	12,086
Meet Gen Z (Kronos Incorporated, 2019)	3,400

Studies from Australia and New Zealand	n*
The future of work (MYOB, 2019)	503
Perceptions of careers in the tourism industry (TIA, 2018)	1,485
The Gen Z effect in Australia and New Zealand (Nintex, 2019)	450
Understanding decision making that leads to careers in the primary industries (PICA, 2016)	470
Developing student Interest in the agricultural sector (Youth Insight, 2018)	512

\*n refers to the sample of Generation Z individuals who participated in the corresponding studies.

# Methodology – Primary research

The primary research component of the report was undertaken by Isabelle Coates and Emma Subtil between 2019-2020 as part of their Master’s of Management in Agribusiness at Lincoln University. This research was sponsored by PICA as a pilot study.

## Quantitative research

**Approach:** Two separate surveys were carried out on Gen Z in Christchurch. Surveys were administered physically to [Year 12](#) students across five schools. An online survey was administered to recent Lincoln University graduates via social media platforms. Graduates had recently transitioned into the workforce.

**Fieldwork dates:** 21 October – 30 October 2019 (Year 12 Students)  
14 January – 19 January 2020 (Lincoln Graduates)

Sample	n
Year 12 Christchurch school students	50
Lincoln University Graduates	50
Total	100

Research on the Year 12 students was carried out by Isabelle Coates and Emma Subtil; the Lincoln University Graduate research was carried out by Isabelle.

## Qualitative research

**Approach:** Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted on 6 agribusiness employers in the Canterbury region. Employers were selected from a range of sectors and stages of the supply chain. On-farm employers were largescale (25-50 staff), limiting recommendations for small-scale farming enterprises.

**Fieldwork dates:** 16 January – 24 January 2020

On-farm employers	Supply chain employers
Lone Star Farms Limited	The New Zealand Merino Company
Rakaia Island Limited	Synlait Milk Limited
Turley Farms Limited	PGG Wrightson Limited

Qualitative research was carried out by Isabelle Coates and Emma Subtil.



# Gen Z Characteristics

# Gen Z characteristics: Digital natives

Considered digital integrators, Gen Z don't know life without access to the internet. Their strong affiliation with technology aligns closely with the 'high tech' direction of New Zealand's food and fibre sectors.

Dell Technologies 2019 global survey<sup>9</sup> of over 12,000 Gen Z's found:

**98%** have used technology as part of their formal education.

**80%** are interested in working in jobs with cutting edge technology.

**77%** are willing to be technology mentors to others on the job.

## What does this mean?

- Create more awareness and continue to position food & fibre sectors as a 'high tech' industry.
- Gen Z have an expectation to work with modern technologies in the workplace.
- Encourage reverse mentoring in the workplace to allow tech-savvy Gen Z's to transfer their knowledge and help senior employers adopt new technologies.

*"Gen Z are tech savvy"*

- Canterbury Agribusiness, 2020

*"Generation Z are more comfortable with computer systems"*

- Canterbury Agribusiness, 2020

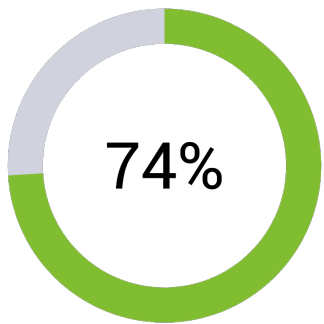
# Gen Z characteristics: Anxious

The prevalence of psychological distress in young New Zealanders aged 15-24 is significantly higher than in adults aged 25 and over<sup>19</sup>. Factors such as excessive screen time and social media use, climate change, global terrorism and uncertainties about the future are key drivers of their anxiety<sup>4,6,7</sup>.

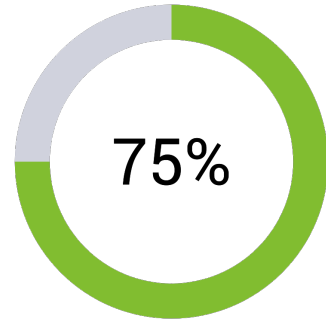
- Kronos Institute found (2019) found **75%** of Gen Z prefer feedback from their manager in person rather than online or over the phone<sup>10</sup>.
- Dell Technologies (2019) found **75%** of Gen Z expect to learn from co-workers in person, not online<sup>10</sup>.
- Nintex (2019) found **71%** of Gen Z prefer weekly check-ins<sup>13</sup>.

## Gen Z want more feedback and social/emotional support

More feedback



Social/emotional support



74% of Lincoln University graduates said opportunities for feedback would or may better help their transition into the workforce. 75% of Lincoln University graduates said social and emotional support in the workplace would or may better help their transition into the workforce (n=45).

*"I definitely **value open conversation and feedback** from my superiors to help me improve"*

- Lincoln University Graduate, 2020

## What does this mean?

- Position the food & fibre sector as a close-knit, supportive industry with opportunities to develop personally and professionally.
- Providing a mentor or 'buddy' in the workplace will ensure your Gen Z employee has sufficient emotional support, guidance.
- Regular "face-to-face" feedback is encouraged to reassure young employees.

*"This generation requires **more feedback and positive reinforcement**"*

- Canterbury Agribusiness, 2020

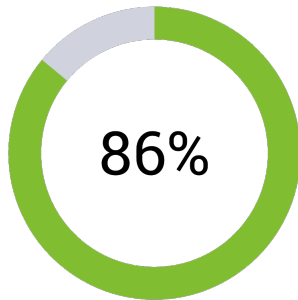
# Gen Z characteristics: Ambitious

Born into a world characterized by constant change, rapid innovation and instant gratification, Gen Z have learned to move with agility. While getting things done at pace can be a positive, it can be a challenge when it comes to career progression.

- Kronos Institute's global study of 3,400 Gen Z's found **57%** expect to be promoted once a year<sup>9</sup>.
- Deloitte's study found **33%** of Gen Z would quit their job in the next two years if there weren't enough opportunities to advance<sup>6</sup>.

## Gen Z want career progression

Lincoln University Graduates



86% of Lincoln University Graduates said a personalized career progression programme would or may have better supported their transition into the workforce (n=43).

## What does this mean?

- Position food & fibre sector as a growth industry with many opportunities to learn, progress and move into different roles within the sector.
- Communicate with young staff and ask them about their career aspirations and expectations and where they think they fit in the business.
- Clearly outline career progression opportunities within your business and what milestones they can work towards to advance in their role.
- Rapid career progression is not realistic; rotating young employees through different departments or providing ongoing learning opportunities will keep young employees engaged within the means of their role.

*"Young people **don't want to start at the bottom**, especially university qualified people who can't always see the long game".*

- Canterbury Agribusiness, 2020

*"Young people want to **fast track** their career"*

- Canterbury Agribusiness, 2020

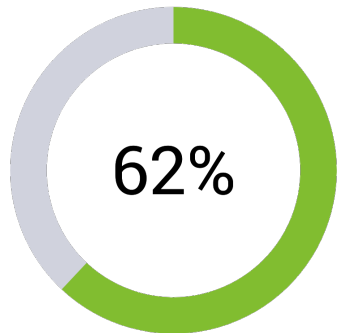
# Gen Z characteristics: Altruistic

Like Millennials, money isn't everything for Gen Z. They want a job that is going to make a difference and have a positive impact on the environment and society. Fortunately, the food & fibre sectors are well setup to cater to this desire for meaning and purpose. From feeding the world, to finding better ways to sustainably produce food, Gen Z can make a tangible difference across the food & fibre sectors.

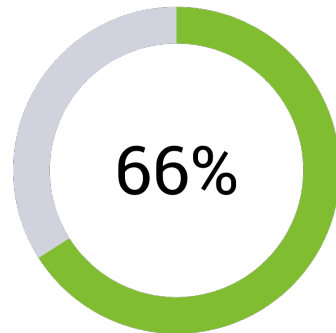
- The Deloitte (2019) survey found **47%** of Gen Z want to make positive impacts on society<sup>6</sup>.
- Dell Technologies (2019) found **45%** of Gen Z want a job that has meaning and purpose beyond getting paid<sup>9</sup>.

## Gen Z want meaningful work

Year 12 Students



Lincoln University Graduates



Work that is meaningful was ranked as the #2 and #3 most important work activity by the Year 12 students and LU graduates (n=100).

## What does this mean?

- Emphasize the altruistic attributes of working in the food & fibre sectors, such as feeding the world, producing sustainable fibre, supporting farmers and growers and improving the environment.
- When recruiting and onboarding, explain how the job makes a difference, what value it adds to the business and the bigger picture.
- Showcase what your business is doing to support local communities and improve the environment.

*"If the job doesn't **enhance livelihoods**, then it's **hard to give 100% at what you're doing to benefit the business.**"*

- Lincoln University Graduate, 2020



# Workplace Expectations

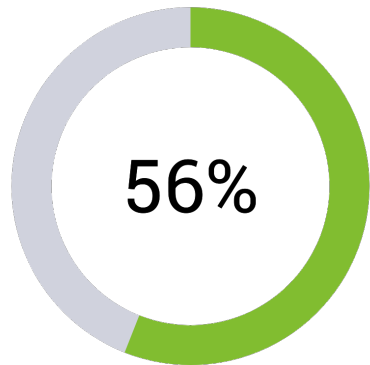
# Workplace expectations: Challenging work activities

Gen Z are entrepreneurial, driven and motivated. They aren't afraid of a challenge and want work that is relevant, challenging and helpful. With a desire to grow and make progress, these innovative thinkers need to be kept on their toes.

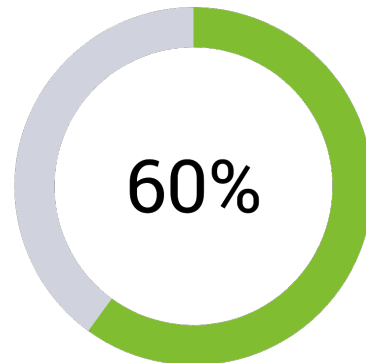
- PICA (2016) found **52%** of Gen Z would choose a career that is intellectually stimulating and challenging<sup>12</sup>.
- Deloitte (2019) found **21%** of Gen Z would leave their job because their work is not challenging<sup>6</sup>.

## Gen Z want challenging work activities

Year 12 Students



Lincoln University Graduates



Challenging work activities were ranked as the #2 and #4 most important work activity by Lincoln University graduates and Year 12 students (n=100).

## What does this mean?

- Position food & fibre sector as an exciting industry with many opportunities for problem solving and challenging work.
- Challenge their ambition – assign them tasks or independent projects that they can take responsibility and ownership for.
- Acknowledge their ideas and include them in decision making.

*“Wanting to consistently **challenge practices** and improve them”*

- Lincoln University Graduate, 2020

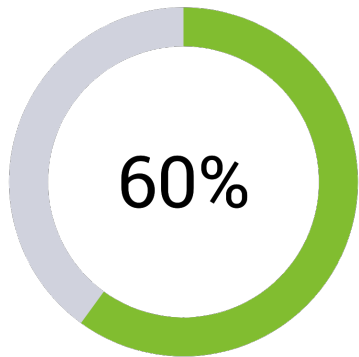
# Workplace expectations: Variety

Gen Z desire roles that offer variety in the workplace. Food & fibre sectors offer variety; from working with people, animals, plants or technology, working inside, outdoors or travelling. Offering variety in seasonal roles can be challenging and will prove to be a barrier for attracting young people into the industry.

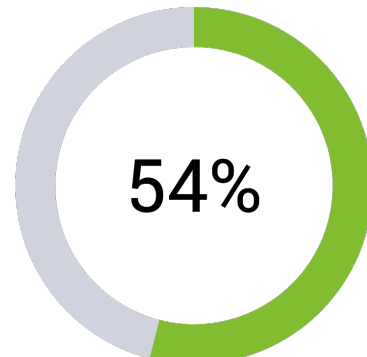
- PICA's survey found work that offers variety was a key motivating factor for young people looking for a career<sup>12</sup>.

## Gen Z want variety

Year 12 Students



Lincoln University Graduates



Both the Lincoln University graduates, and the Year 12 students ranked variety as #3 most important workplace activity (n=100).

## What does this mean?

- Showcase the variety of roles the food & fibre sector has to offer, and variety in specific roles.
- Rotating young employees through different departments.
- Provide ongoing learning opportunities to keep young employees engaged within the means of their role.
- Repetition of specific work activities are inevitable in many jobs - assign tasks that Gen Z enjoy, alongside mundane activities to improve variety in their work activities.

*"I definitely prefer having a lot of **variety** in things I'm doing at work"*

- Lincoln University Graduate

*"A range of different tasks/**non-predictability** keeps the days interesting"*

- Lincoln University Graduate

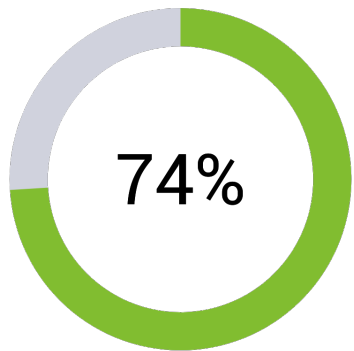
# Workplace expectations: Learning & development

With a forever changing work environment, the rise of automation technologies and a competitive labour market, Generation Z are in pursuit of workplaces that offer ongoing learning and development opportunities<sup>20</sup>.

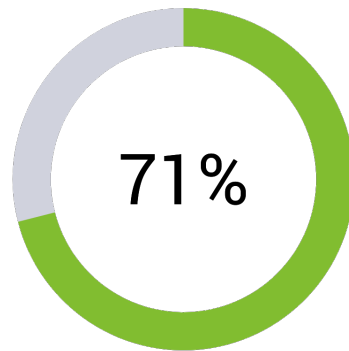
- MYOB's study found **60%** of Gen Z think they need to keep training to remain competitive<sup>11</sup>.
- Dell Technologies found **50%** of Gen Z want the opportunity to learn new skills and have new experiences<sup>9</sup>.

## Gen Z want learning opportunities

Year 12 Students



Lincoln University Graduates



Learning opportunities ranked as the #1 most important work environment value by both the Year 12 students and Lincoln University Graduates (n=100).

## What this means

- Showcasing opportunities for ongoing learning and development will be key to attracting Gen Z into the sector.
- Is there opportunity to expand on the current learning opportunities offered by your business?
- Learning opportunities, on-the-job training, online courses, professional development workshops, 'bite-sized' training modules.

*"I love learning and continue to try and pick up as many new opportunities in the workplace I can".*

- Lincoln University Graduate, 2020

*"The workplace and its demands are always changing so it's best to be **prepared** with the **right skills**"*

- Lincoln University Graduate, 2020



# Career Decision Making

# Key influencers: Career decision making

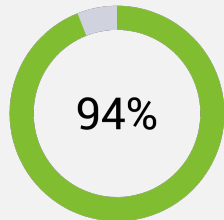
When it comes to career decision making, traditional, face to face interaction and personal connections with parents and family members, peers, teachers or talking to someone in the industry are most influential.

## Talking to someone in the industry

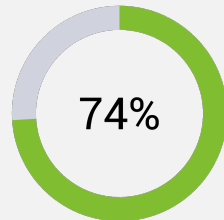
Learning about or listening to someone working the industry provides young people with realistic insight into what a job involves.

Research by PICA (2016) and Youth Insight (2018) support industry professionals as key influencers on career decision making<sup>12,18</sup>.

Year 12 Students



Lincoln University Graduates

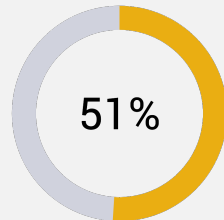


Talking to someone in the industry was ranked as the most influential source for career decision making by both Lincoln University graduates and the Year 12 students (n=99).

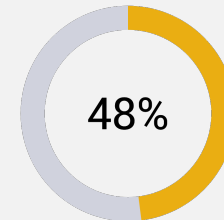
## Parents/teachers/lecturers

A plethora of New Zealand and Australian studies support parents and teachers as key influencers for youth career decision making<sup>12,14,15,17,18</sup>.

Year 12 Students



Lincoln University Graduates

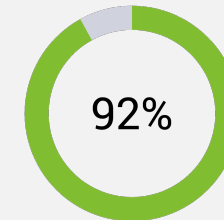


Almost half of the Lincoln University graduates, and the Year 12 students considered parents as a key influential source for career decision making (n=99).

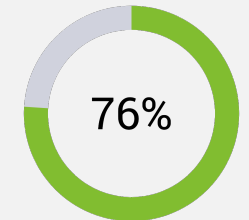
## Work experience/on-site visits

Work experience and on-site visits provide students with tangible experiences that enable them to make informed decisions about the job, workplace culture and people.

Year 12 Students



Lincoln University Graduates



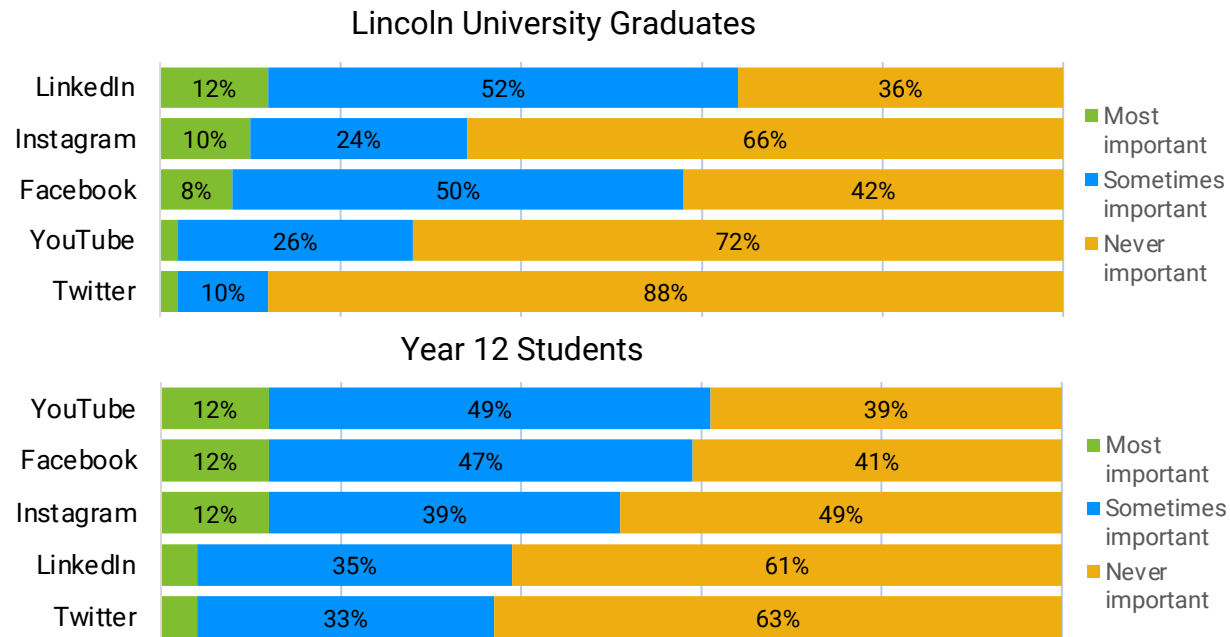
Work experience and on-site visits were ranked as the most influential source for career decision making by both the Lincoln University graduates and the Year 12 students (n=99).

# Key influencers: The role of social media

While social media is an integral part of Gen Z's lifestyle, when it comes down to career decision making, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube have little influence on career decision making.

- PICA (2016) found only **10%** of Gen Z rated social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as having a key influence on career decision making<sup>12</sup>.
- Youth Insight (2017) found social media platforms including, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter were least likely to be used as a source for career advice<sup>15</sup>.

## Social media – low importance for career decision making



## What this means

- Social media may be a suitable channel for disseminating information but it's not as influential for career decision making.
- Real and authentic engagement between students/ teachers/parents with people working in the food & fibre sectors is key to attracting people into the sectors.
- Work experience and on-site visits offer an opportunity to have tangible experiences and insight into the workplace.

Social media platforms were ranked of very low importance by both Lincoln University Graduates and the Year 12 students as a key information source for career decision making (n=99).

# Implications for attracting and engaging Generation Z

Create **authentic** marketing campaigns; real people, real stories

Positioning food & fibre careers as **'high tech'** and **meaningful**

**Connect** food & fibre professionals with teachers and students

Promoting the **variety** of job opportunities available

Short and engaging **case studies** of young people in the industry

Abundance of **learning** opportunities

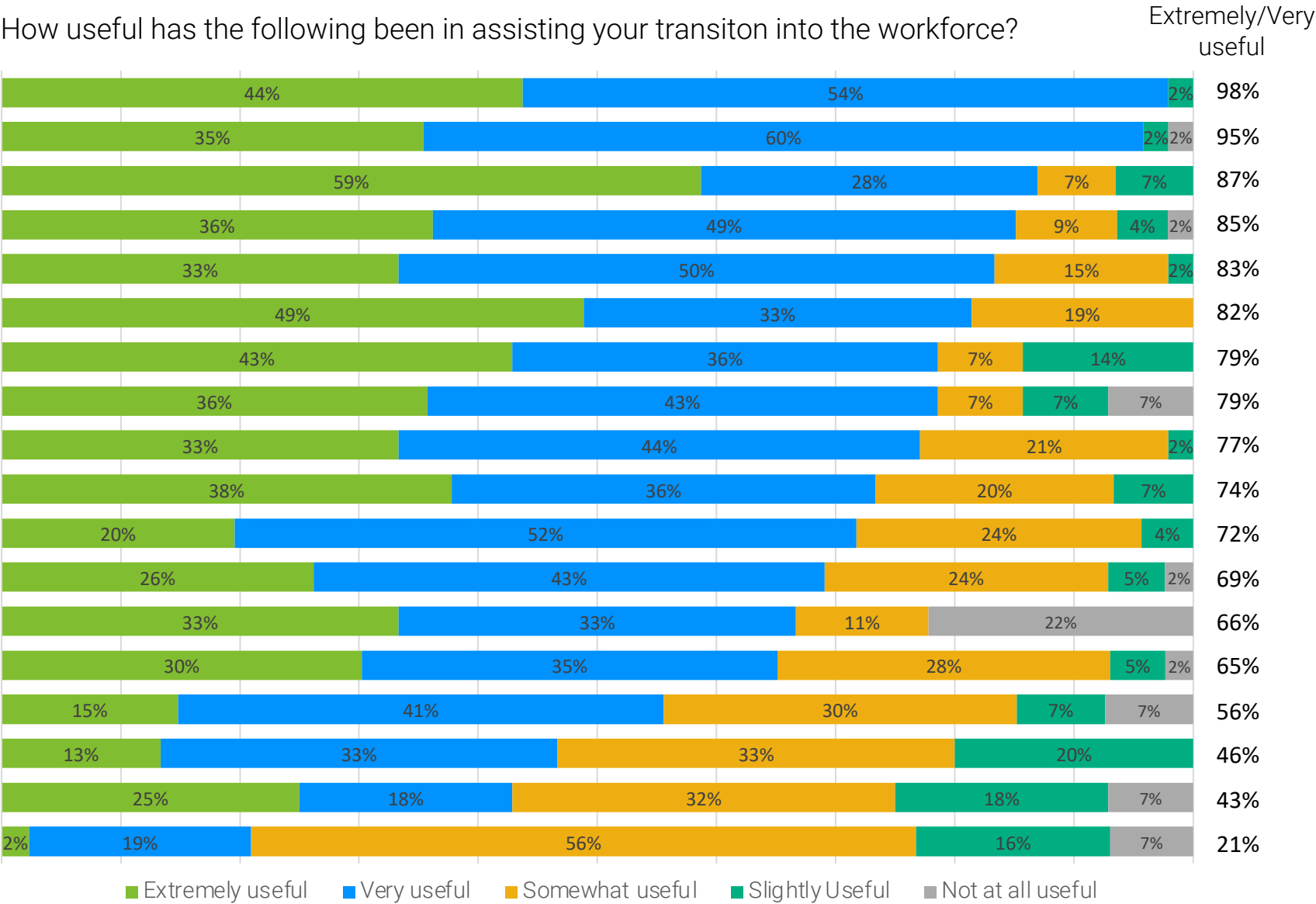
**Career progression** opportunities

Provide **work experience** and job site visits



# Transitioning into the workforce

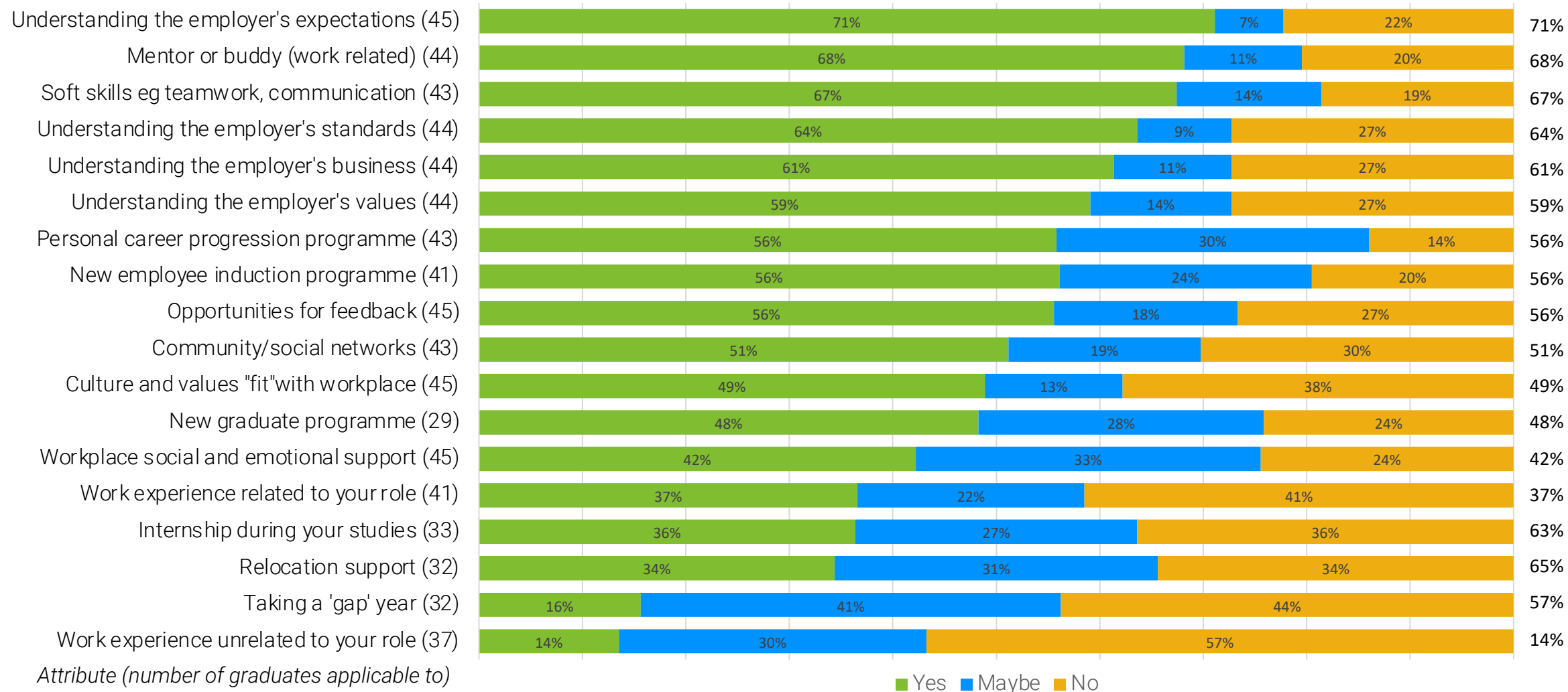
# Generation Z: Transition into the workforce



# Generation Z: Transition into the workforce

Is there anything else that could have been provided by your employer or other organisation to better support your transition into the workforce?

Yes



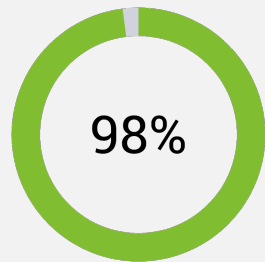
# Gen Z: Transition into the workforce

## Workplace standards

Clearly outlining workplace expectations and standards was considered most useful when transitioning into the workplace for Lincoln University graduates.

Effective inductions and ongoing communication and feedback will ensure Gen Z employees understand workplace expectations and standards.

Lincoln University Graduates



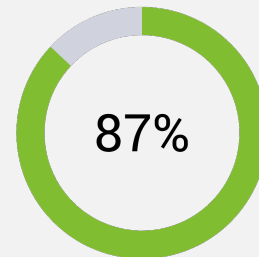
98% of Lincoln University graduates ranked understanding the employers' standards as very or extremely useful when transitioning into the workforce (n=48).

## Work experience

Longitudinal studies in Australia, the U.S. and the U.K. show that students who combine study with part-time work will do better in the labour market<sup>8</sup>.

Providing opportunities for job shadowing, internships or work experience for school leavers and undergraduates will assist their transition into the food & fibre sectors.

Lincoln University Graduates



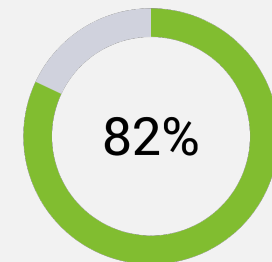
87% of Lincoln University graduates ranked work experience related to their role as very or extremely useful when transitioning into the workforce\* (n=46).

## Mentorships

Providing a workplace mentor or 'buddy' provides a higher level of support for Gen Z employees and fosters an open, inclusive work environment<sup>16</sup>.

Generation Z's desire for ongoing feedback and reassurance can be met by having a workplace mentor that can check in more regularly than a time poor manager.

Lincoln University Graduates



82% Lincoln University graduates ranked having a work-related mentor as very or extremely useful when transitioning into the workforce (n=43).

\*Majority of Lincoln University graduates in the study had completed practical work placements in order to complete their degree.

# Implications for supporting a transition into the workforce

Provide on-going  
**feedback**

Workplace social  
and emotional  
**support**

High level of  
**pastoral care**

Effective  
employee  
**induction**  
programme

Provide a  
workplace **mentor**  
or '**buddy**'

Clearly outline  
**workplace**  
**expectations** and  
standards

**Soft-skill**  
development

**Career**  
**progression**  
programme



# Retaining Gen Z

# Retaining Generation Z

Competitive salaries are an important extrinsic retention factor however, providing learning opportunities and a high level of pastoral care will ensure Gen Z feel supported and are engaged in their role for long term retention.

## Learning opportunities

- What learning opportunities does your business provide?
- On the job training
- e-learning
- Soft skill development
- 'Bite-sized' training courses
- Rotating departments to offer variety
- Job sharing

## Pastoral care (on-farm)

- Positive, inclusive culture
- On-going feedback and communication
- Accommodation with WiFi access
- Staff meals during peak periods
- Work-life balance
- Mental health and wellbeing support
  - Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)
  - Mentor or 'buddy'

## Pastoral care (supply chain)\*

- Ongoing communication and feedback from top and middle management
- Workplace flexibility
- Workplace mentorships
- Mental health and wellbeing support
  - Health and wellness apps
  - Expert seminars/webinars
  - Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP)

\*The supply chain includes support services, processing & manufacturing, logistics and other businesses beyond the farm gate.

# Retaining Generation Z

On-going  
**feedback**

Workplace social  
and emotional  
**support**

Offer a high level  
of **pastoral care**

Communicate in  
real-time,  
**face-to-face**

Provide a  
workplace **mentor**

Opportunities for  
**Career**  
progression

Provide ongoing  
**learning**  
opportunities

Work  
environments that  
offer **variety**



# Summary

## To attract, transition and retain Gen Zs:

**Connect** food & fibre professionals with teachers and students

Promote food & fibre jobs as '**high tech**' and **meaningful**

Offer a high level of **pastoral care**

Communicate in real-time, **face-to-face**

Provide workplace **mentors** and '**buddies**'

Clearly outline **workplace expectations** and standards

Provide ongoing **learning opportunities**

Offer **variety** in the workplace

# Future research

## Larger scale research into Gen Z in New Zealand

Limited research has been undertaken on a large-scale sample of Generation Z in New Zealand. This is an area that could be further explored to strengthen conclusions about their workplace attitudes, values and expectations.

## Transition research

Qualitative research (interviews and focus groups) with Generation Z would allow for a deeper understanding of how to best transition and retain them in the food & fibre sectors. This would include Generation Zers who have recently transitioned and those who have been in the workforce for 2-5 years.

## Keep in touch



Facebook: @growingnz



Twitter: @growingnz



Email: [info@growingnz.org.nz](mailto:info@growingnz.org.nz)



[www.growingnz.org.nz](http://www.growingnz.org.nz)

# Primary Industry Capability Alliance (PICA)

*An alliance of industry, education providers and government working together to attract and grow talented people in our innovative primary sectors.*

