INDONESIA
MILLENNIAL AND
GEN Z REPORT
2026

Understanding and Uncovering
the Behavior, Challenges,
and Opportunities

IDN Research Institute

IDN

About the Report

Indonesia Millennial and Gen Z Report 2026

A Behavioral, Psychological, and Value-Based Exploration into the Minds Shaping Indonesia's Future

In today's world, every decision — from how we spend to how we connect — reflects deeper beliefs about identity, security, and purpose. To truly understand Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia, we must go beyond surface-level trends. We need to explore the values behind their actions, the emotions that influence their choices, and the evolving context that shapes their lives.

The **Indonesia Millennial and Gen Z Report 2026** from IDN Research Institute offers that depth. This is not just a demographic analysis, but a human-centered study that connects behavior with intention and psychology with purpose.

Millennials, aged 29 to 44, and **Gen Z, aged 13 to 28**, are not simply adapting to a changing world. They are actively reshaping it. They are redefining success, reconstructing systems, and pushing for relevance, representation, and responsibility in the spaces they occupy. What drives them is not just external pressure but a deep internal desire to live more consciously and contribute more meaningfully.

They are choosing ethical finance over convenience, long-term well-being over hustle culture, and inclusive narratives over mass appeal. At the core of their decision-making is a strong sense of intention. Whether exploring a career pivot, joining online movements, or embracing simpler lifestyles, they move with clarity — even when outcomes remain uncertain.

This report captures that momentum. It unpacks the shifting values, goals, and behaviors that shape how these generations navigate family, finances, work, media, and civic engagement. It also looks ahead to how they are preparing the next generation, Gen Alpha, through new parenting models rooted in emotional intelligence and social awareness.

Objective and methodology of research

Listening to Behavior. Mapping Meaning. Understanding Intention.

Understanding Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z means more than just tracking trends. It requires listening closely to how they think, what they value, and why they behave the way they do in a rapidly changing environment.

From February to April 2025, IDN Research Institute conducted a mixed-method study involving 1,500 respondents, split equally between Millennials and Gen Z. The survey spanned 12 major cities and regions across Indonesia, including Jabodetabek, Bandung, Semarang, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Denpasar, Medan, Palembang, Solo, Banjarmasin, Balikpapan, and Makassar.

To ensure a deeper understanding, we combined quantitative surveys with qualitative deep-dive interviews. We also engaged with content creators, brand leaders, educators, and domain experts to provide real-world perspectives and enrich our data with lived experiences.

Our analysis includes variables such as socioeconomic status, educational background, employment, marital status, and whether respondents are parents. This approach allows us to understand the full context of decision-making across different life stages and identities.

Rather than asking just what these generations are doing, we focused on uncovering why. This provides us a more accurate, empathetic, and actionable understanding of Indonesia's emerging generation.

What to expect from this report

A Human-Centered Look at Two Generations in Motion

This report offers more than a snapshot. It provides a behavioral map of two generations who are navigating complexity with purpose, and who are shaping their future through daily choices grounded in personal values. Each chapter explores a different facet of their lives, including:

Personal values and identity development

Financial behavior and ethical decision-making

Career goals and attitudes toward work and purpose

Media preferences and content fatigue

Civic participation and trust in institutions

Parenting approaches and Gen Alpha's emotional world

We also examine urgent challenges such as rising living costs, job precarity, burnout, and digital overload. But rather than viewing these as obstacles, we explore how Millennials and Gen Z are transforming them into new ways of living, earning, connecting, and contributing.

For businesses, policy makers, educators, and culture-makers, this report offers grounded insights into what truly matters to today's youth. It is a guide to meet them on their terms and support them as they shape the Indonesia of tomorrow.

At IDN, we believe that meaningful change starts with deep understanding. Through this report, we invite you to see Millennials and Gen Z not only as consumers or citizens, but as intentional, thoughtful, and values-driven individuals building the next chapter of the nation.

Index

Generational Insights:

Two Generations, One Nation, Distinct Realities

Identity and Self-Expression

Millennials were raised during the *Reformasi era* and grew up with strong communal values. Their identity is often tied to achievement, responsibility, and fulfilling roles such as being a reliable provider or loyal family member. While they use digital platforms actively, they still value offline validation and social recognition through traditional milestones.

Gen Z, by contrast, came of age in a fully digital world. They are more comfortable expressing vulnerability, setting emotional boundaries, and defining their identities fluidly. Self-expression is not something they earn — it's the foundation for how they navigate life. They are emotionally fluent and often use online spaces to articulate their feelings and beliefs.

Finances and Lifestyle Choices

Millennials prioritize financial stability and long-term planning. They focus on building emergency funds, saving for property, and supporting both their children and parents. Many of them feel stretched across multiple responsibilities and use cautious financial planning to create a sense of control.

Gen Z links financial decisions with emotional needs. They save for concerts, skincare, therapy, or travel because these things help them stay grounded. While they are aware of financial risks, they view money as a tool to support wellbeing and expression rather than just a safeguard for the future.

Work, Aspiration, and Career Path

Millennials were taught that education and job titles would lead to success. Many followed the traditional path only to find themselves experiencing burnout or career stagnation. While they still appreciate structure and security, they have started to question whether the system actually rewards effort.

Gen Z never fully bought into the corporate ideal. They design their careers around autonomy, purpose, and flexibility. Freelancing, project-based work, and content creation are considered smart choices rather than backup plans. They define success by the control they have over their time and emotional energy.

Education and Learning

Millennials often feel let down by formal education. Despite years of study and degrees, many entered a workforce that did not value their credentials. Their frustration is grounded in lived experience, and they continue to call for reforms in the system.

Gen Z approaches formal education with skepticism from the start. They want education that feels relevant, practical, and aligned with their career goals. They learn through videos, explainer threads, peer communities, and platforms like YouTube. For them, learning is dynamic and not limited to classrooms.

Media and Entertainment Habits

Millennials turn to media for comfort and reflection. They enjoy stories rooted in emotional realism and nostalgia. Slice-of-life films, heartfelt music, and stories about family or struggle resonate deeply.

Gen Z uses entertainment as a mirror and a megaphone. They join fan campaigns, remix content, and express identity through memes, short videos, and livestreams. Content is not just consumed but co-created. They expect stories to reflect their emotional truth and social values.

Political Trust and Civic Participation

Millennials often engage with politics through established channels. They vote, volunteer, and advocate for reform within the system. Their belief in progress is tempered but persistent.

Gen Z is more direct and visual in their civic action. They use carousels, threads, and digital protests to call out injustice. Hashtags like #IndonesiaGelap reflects how they turn frustration into public critique. For them, social timelines have become the new civic squares, and digital activism is just as real as street protests.

Mental Health and Emotional Culture

Millennials serve as the transitional generation in mental health awareness. Many struggled quietly before gaining the tools to speak up. Today, they are more open but still carry emotional burdens from years of silence and pressure.

Gen Z prioritizes emotional safety from the start. They speak openly about therapy, burnout, and the need for rest. Their approach to mental health is proactive, and they expect workplaces, schools, and families to support their wellbeing. They believe emotional care is non-negotiable.

Parenting and Family Dynamics

Millennials are balancing traditional expectations with modern values in their parenting style. They try to be more emotionally available and emphasize respect and communication. However, they often feel overwhelmed by financial and emotional responsibilities.

Gen Z — including early parents — tends to parent more intentional. They are focused on co-regulation, emotional literacy, and digital safety. They want to raise children with empathy and curiosity rather than control. Parenting is seen as a partnership and a conscious decision.

Relationship with Technology

Millennials experienced the shift from analog to digital. They use technology for convenience, connection, and productivity. While they embrace digital life, they also value offline spaces and moments of disconnection.

Gen Z is fully native to technology. They understand its emotional and social implications. They use platforms for more than entertainment — for identity-building, activism, and learning. They are quick to adapt and just as quick to reject platforms that feel toxic or extractive.

Definition of Success

Millennials are redefining success as they move through adulthood. Once driven by external validation, they are now seeking meaning, purpose, and emotional balance. However, they still carry internal pressure from traditional metrics of achievement.

Gen Z sees success as alignment. It could mean making art, building a community, or working remotely. They care less about prestige, and more about how life feels. Success is about designing a life that supports their values, creativity, and emotional health.

Millennials Profiling

Data Collection

07 – 13 April 2025

n = 946

	Male	Female
	48%	**52%**

SEC

Upper	58%
Middle	39%
Lower	3%

Area*

5 Big Cities (NETT)	86%
Jabodetabek	40%
Bandung	13%
Surabaya	13%
Medan	7%
Makassar	6%
Other Cities (NETT)	14%
Semarang	4%
Yogyakarta	4%
Denpasar	4%
Palembang	2%
Solo	2%
Banjarmasin	2%
Balikpapan	2%

Marital Status

Single	15%
Married without Kids	6%
Married with Kids	79%

Education Level

Bachelor's Degree (D4/S1)	43%
Academy (D1/D2/D3)	9%
High School (SMA)	41%
Middle School (SMP)	2%
Primary School (SD)	3%

Religion

Muslim	89%
Hindu	4%
Christian	4%
Catholic	1%
Buddha	1%

Occupation

Working (NETT)	74%
Private employees	49%
Entrepreneur	6%
Skilled workers	2%
Part-time workers (freelance)	11%
Professional	3%
Government / BUMN employees	3%
Other Jobs	1%
Not Working (NETT)	26%
Housewife	6%
Not working	18%
Student / College Student	2%

*Quota was applied during data collection

Gen Z Profiling

Data Collection

07 – 13 April 2025

n = 903

	Male	Female
	45%	**55%**

SEC

Upper	46%
Middle	42%
Lower	6%

Area*

5 Big Cities (NETT)	85%
Jabodetabek	36%
Bandung	13%
Surabaya	13%
Medan	8%
Makassar	10%
Other Cities (NETT)	15%
Semarang	4%
Yogyakarta	4%
Denpasar	4%
Palembang	2%
Solo	2%
Banjarmasin	2%
Balikpapan	2%

Marital Status

Single	70%
Married without Kids	4%
Married with Kids	26%

Education Level

Bachelor's Degree (D4/S1)	34%
Academy (D1/D2/D3)	9%
High School (SMA)	50%
Middle School (SMP)	6%
Primary School (SD)	1%

Religion

Muslim	92%
Hindu	3%
Christian	3%
Catholic	1%
Buddha	0%

Occupation

Working (NETT)	82%
Private employees	49%
Entrepreneur	7%
Skilled workers	3%
Part-time workers (freelance)	3%
Professional	3%
Government / BUMN employees	3%
Other Jobs	1%
Not Working (NETT)	18%
Housewife	17%
Not working	0%
Student / College Student	0%

*Quota was applied during data collection

Chapter 1

Personal Values and Family

Redefining Personal Values in a Time of Change

When Tradition Meets Choice

Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia stand at a unique cultural crossroads. Raised within a culture of religious, familial, and cultural expectations, they carry forward values like respect for elders, family loyalty, and community responsibility. Yet, these generations are also acutely aware of the pressures these expectations can place on individual freedom.

Social norms around marriage, gender roles, and career paths are no longer accepted uncritically. Young people are negotiating between past and present, blending traditional practices with modern aspirations. For some, this means incorporating local rituals into contemporary weddings; for others, it's questioning assumptions about when or whether to marry at all.

This negotiation is not just cultural — it's deeply emotional, as young Indonesians work to honor their heritage without compromising their evolving sense of self.

The Rise of Individual Meaning

As young Indonesians negotiate tradition, they're also looking inward and seeking to define success and fulfillment on their own terms. Millennials and Gen Z increasingly prize autonomy, emotional honesty, and alignment between personal values and life choices. Success is shifting from material achievement such as homeownership, job titles or wealth, toward purpose, flexibility, and impact.

A Generation Rewrites the Rules

Old Playbook:
Own the house.
Land the title.
Stack the savings.

New Reality:
Make it matter.
Make it yours.
Make it count.

Today, Millennials and Gen Z aren't chasing success, they're designing it.

They want purpose over prestige.

Flexibility over fixed paths.

Alignment over approval.

Digital culture plays a key role. Online communities expose young Indonesians to diverse ways of living, giving them both the permission and the tools to craft meaningful, self-directed paths. Whether pursuing creative careers, activism, or entrepreneurship, this generation is showing that meaning matters as much as milestones.

Marriage and Parenthood as Conscious Commitments

Changing Timelines

With individual meaning taking center stage, traditional life milestones like marriage and parenthood are no longer assumed; they're actively reconsidered. Millennials and Gen Z are rewriting this script. Many are delaying or reconsidering these commitments altogether, driven by economic uncertainty, evolving gender dynamics, and shifting ideas about what it means to build a family.

This shift is backed by national data. Between 2018 and 2023, marriages in Indonesia fell from over 2 million to just 1.57 million. Among youth, the change is sharper: only 30.61% of young Indonesians were married in 2023 down from 44.45% in 2014. *The message is clear: fewer are getting married, and those who do, do it on their own terms.*

Indonesia's marriage rates have seen a decline, dropping from over 2 million in 2018 to approximately 1.57 million in 2023.

While rising costs and urban pressures are part of the story, *the deeper shift lies in the psyche.* Millennials and Gen Z now view marriage as a partnership grounded in emotional alignment, mutual growth, and shared purpose—not obligation. Education, career, and mental wellness are prioritized before traditional milestones. For many, this shift is rooted in a desire to break cycles, choosing emotional safety and shared intention over inherited obligation.

Even wedding aesthetics are evolving. The rise of curated, minimalist ceremonies tailored for emotional meaning rather than spectacle reflects a broader realignment: from performing tradition to living it authentically.

"In Indonesia's big cities, we're seeing more Gen Z couples rethink what weddings should be. While grand weddings are still important for many, there's a growing awareness that a wedding should feel right for the couple and not just meet societal expectations. Social media still influences wedding trends, but instead of blindly following them, more couples are starting to adapt them in ways that feel personal and financially sustainable."

— **Ayunda Shandini**, CEO of Bridestory

Partnership as Shared Growth

As the timeline shifts, so too does the emotional weight behind these decisions. For Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia, stress is no longer just external but rather it's about navigating identity, expectations, and the quiet urgency of surviving in a world that demands constant adaptation. Financial strain continues to weigh heavily, especially for Millennials who often juggle caregiving responsibilities alongside career demands. But that's only part of the story. Gen Z, in particular, carries a different emotional burden: the fear of being misunderstood. Raised in hyper-visible digital spaces where self-expression is constant but scrutiny is relentless, their stress is shaped as much by perception as by pressure.

Yet amid their generational differences, both Millennials and Gen Z are united by a shared pursuit of balance. Work-life boundaries are no longer seen as a luxury, but as a vital line of defense against burnout. What emerges is a desire for sustainability—not only financially, but emotionally, mentally, and energetically.

What's Weighing on Young Adults? ● Millennials ● Gen Z

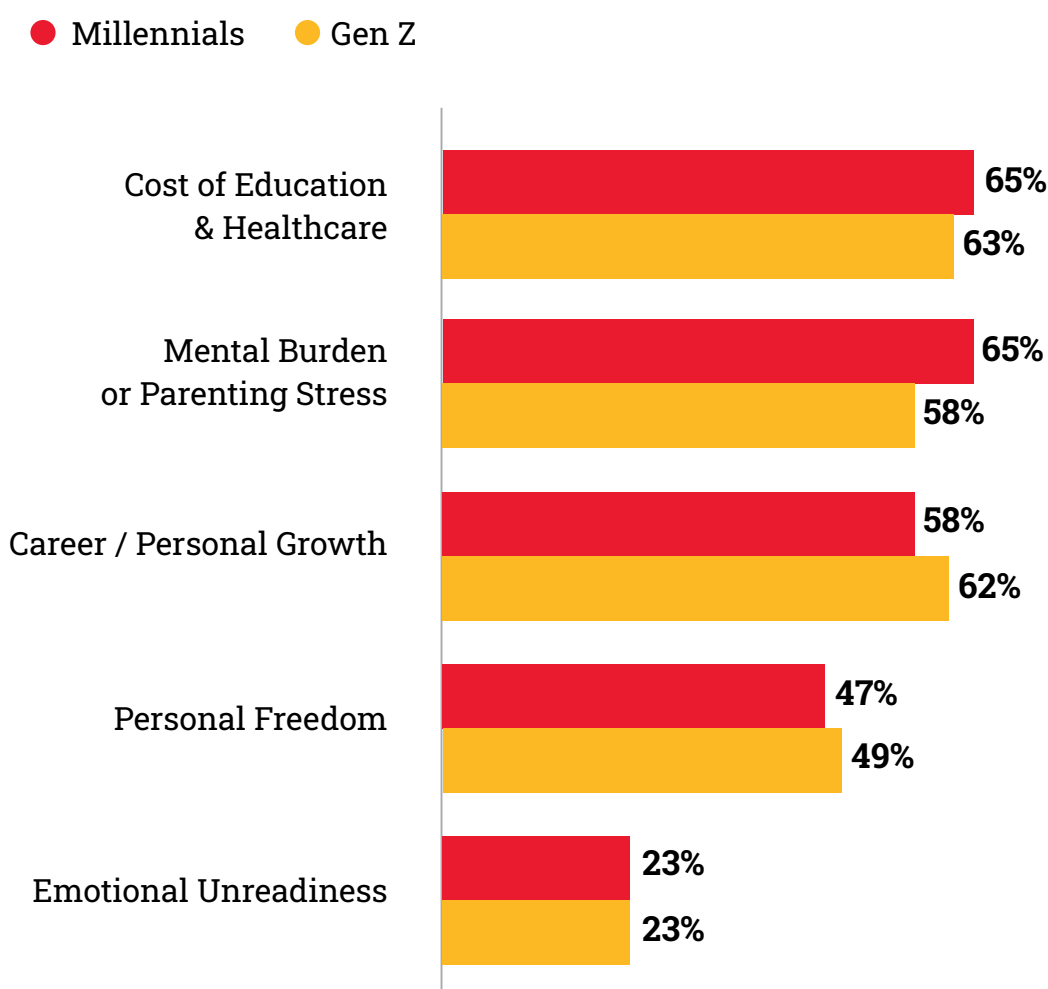| Stress Factor	Millennials	Gen Z
Financial Pressure	44%	39%
Fear of Being Misunderstood	35%	48%
Work-Life Balance	58%	52%
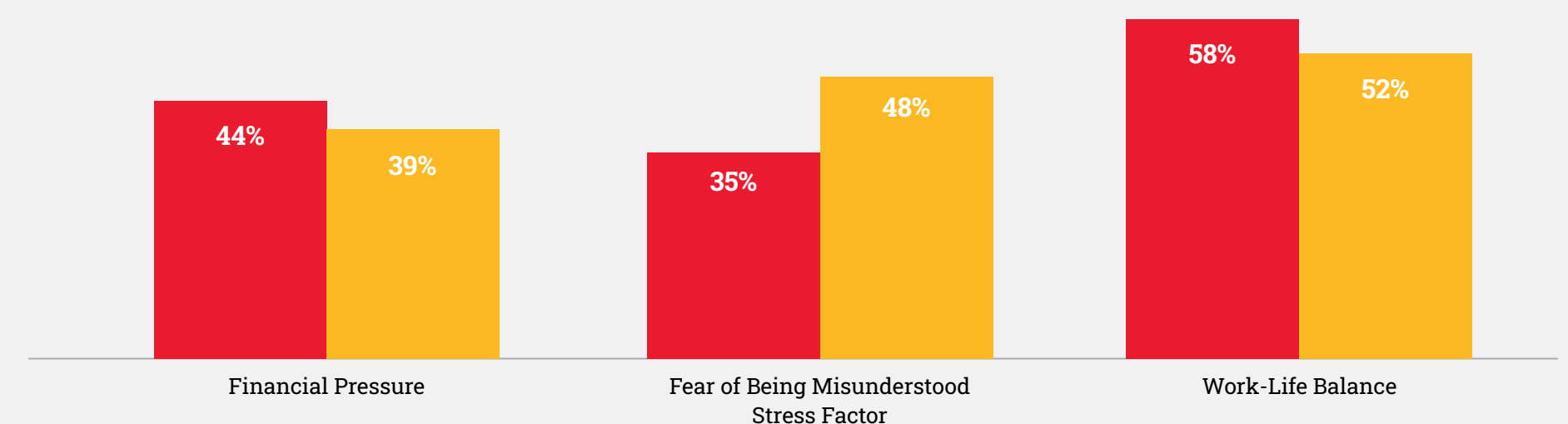
This mindset also shapes how young Indonesians view parenthood. It is no longer the assumed next chapter, but a deeply considered, values-driven choice. Rather than asking, "Am I ready?", many are asking, "Is the world around me ready to support the kind of parent I want to be?"

The data reveals a quiet but telling shift, revealing that emotional unreadiness, often assumed to be the main barrier, is cited by only a quarter of respondents. This challenges the outdated belief that young people are too immature or hesitant to parent. In truth, their caution stems from a more sobering reality: the lack of structural support—economic, emotional, and institutional support that makes sustainable parenting possible.

Gen Z approaches this decision with a mindset rooted in self-development. Their concerns are not just about having children, but about whether they can continue to grow personally and professionally within the context of family life. Career progression and personal autonomy top their list of considerations, even more than Millennials, reflecting a vision of parenting that evolves in tandem with the self.

Financial pressure remains a constant threat, especially in urban centers where annual childcare can exceed IDR 60 million per child, and international school fees reach IDR 400 million or more. It's no surprise that education and healthcare top the list of practical concerns, particularly for Millennials balancing demanding work and caregiving.

Mindful Considerations Before Having Children

● Millennials ● Gen Z

Consideration	Millennials	Gen Z
Cost of Education & Healthcare	65%	63%
Mental Burden or Parenting Stress	65%	58%
Career / Personal Growth	58%	62%
Personal Freedom	47%	49%
Emotional Unreadiness	23%	23%

Still, the numbers tell a more nuanced story. While Millennials report feeling weighed down by emotional and mental fatigue, Gen Z is consciously stepping away from inherited models, embracing autonomy and emotional fulfillment as guiding principles. When nearly half of Gen Z cites personal freedom as a meaningful factor, it's not about shirking responsibility, it's about protecting their sense of self in the parenting process.

"I see it often, young people today aren't just walking away from old milestones like marriage or homeownership. They're carrying the emotional weight of doing so. There's guilt, a sense of letting others down, even when they know their choices are healthier for them. Choosing purpose over pressure sounds empowering, but it's not always easy. Especially in cultures where success has long been tied to sacrifice. What this generation is trying to do is brave: they're not rejecting tradition, but really, they're trying to make peace with it on their own terms."

— **dr. Elvine Gunawan, Sp.KJ**, Psychiatrist & Founder of Mental Hub Indonesia

This shift marks a recalibration of what it means to raise a family. Millennials, stretched by the caregiving demands of their current stage, are making room for survival. Gen Z, looking ahead, is designing for sustainability. Both generations, however, are increasingly defining parenthood not through fear or pressure, but through the pursuit of flexibility, alignment, and emotional integrity.

Many young parents are also working to rewrite the emotional blueprints they were given. For some, this means becoming more emotionally available than their parents ever were. For others, it means breaking cycles of silence, shame, and control. Emotional safety, once seen as a bonus, is now central to how a new generation defines what a healthy home should be.

Friendship, Community, and Chosen Families

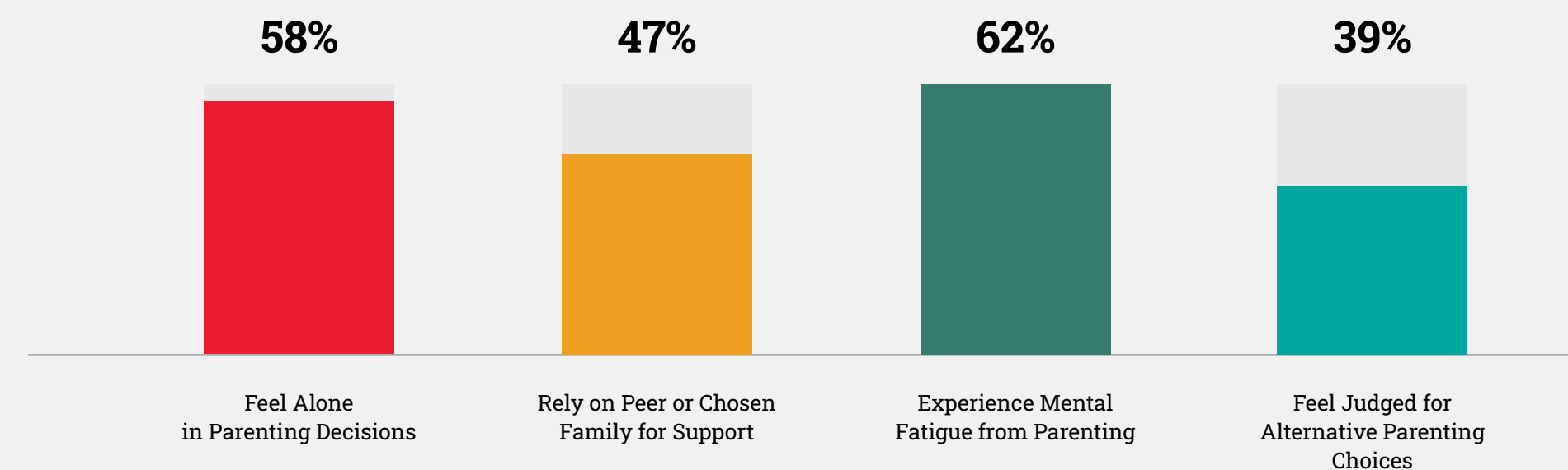## The Rise of Chosen Families and Digital Villages

As traditional caregiving structures evolve, so too does the emotional scaffolding of family life. For many Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia, raising a child is no longer seen as a solo endeavor, it's a community-anchored experience, deeply shaped by friendship, digital connection, and shifting expectations of support. Amid delayed marriage and changing household compositions, friends are no longer just companions; they are co-pilots in navigating emotional load.

For 1 in 3 Gen Z respondents, friends serve as their primary support system.

In urban hubs like Jakarta, and even more so in secondary cities where migration disrupts traditional structures, peer-based support has become foundational. Co-living, shared parenting tips, and online parenting groups now form the emotional architecture once shouldered by extended family.

Emotional Support Gaps in Parenting (Millennial and Gen Z Parents in Big Cities)

Feel Alone in Parenting Decisions	Rely on Peer or Chosen Family for Support	Experience Mental Fatigue from Parenting	Feel Judged for Alternative Parenting Choices
58%	47%	62%	39%

Data shows that 58% of parents in big cities feel alone in making parenting decisions, and 62% experience mental fatigue from it. Nearly half (47%) turn to chosen families—close friends, digital groups, or peer mentors in order to manage the weight of daily caregiving. These aren't casual interactions — they're lifelines that offer both accountability and affirmation in increasingly individualistic environments.

At the same time, digital platforms have emerged as emotional infrastructure. 78% of Indonesian mothers turn to social media not just for parenting information, but for solidarity and shared language. Meanwhile, 51% use telemedicine apps to care for their children, more proof that support is now instant, decentralized, and deeply personal.

78% of Indonesian mothers
turn to social media for parenting tips
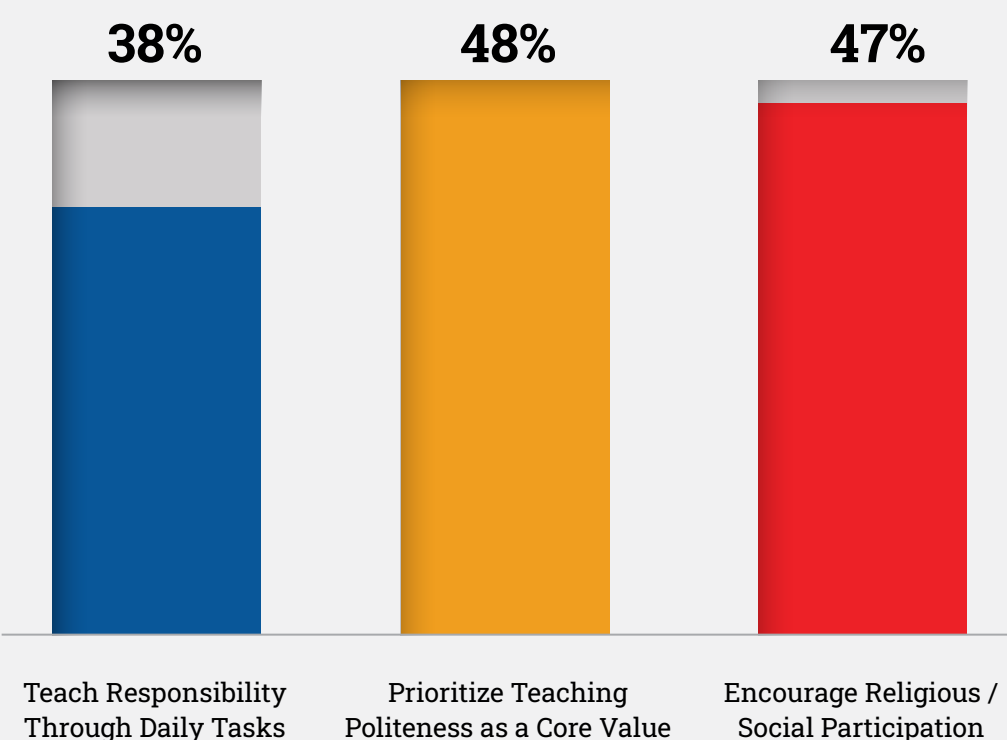
51% utilize telemedicine apps
for consultations

This networked model of care isn't just reactive as much as it's intentional. It reflects how young parents are redefining the "village." Support is no longer bound by geography or tradition, but by emotional alignment and shared values.

And even as parenting tools change, certain principles remain. Respect, empathy, and social participation are still core lessons passed down from parent to child. These values are not seen as rigid expectations, but as guides for nurturing grounded, emotionally literate children.

Whether drawn from friends, apps, or ancestral wisdom, the support systems shaping Indonesian parenting today are fluid, adaptive, and deeply human. In this era, raising a child also means raising one another.

Parenting Values and Everyday Practices:

38%	48%	47%
Teach Responsibility Through Daily Tasks	Prioritize Teaching Politeness as a Core Value	Encourage Religious / Social Participation

Gentle Parenting & Rethinking Authority

This evolution in support networks is echoed in how Indonesian parents are reshaping their approach to child-rearing from authority-driven to emotionally attuned. The once-dominant, authority-first parenting model is gradually giving way to a more relational and emotionally attuned philosophy—one that prioritizes empathy, communication, and trust. Concepts like gentle parenting, emotional literacy, and mindfulness have moved from the margins into the mainstream, becoming part of everyday conversations about raising the next generation.
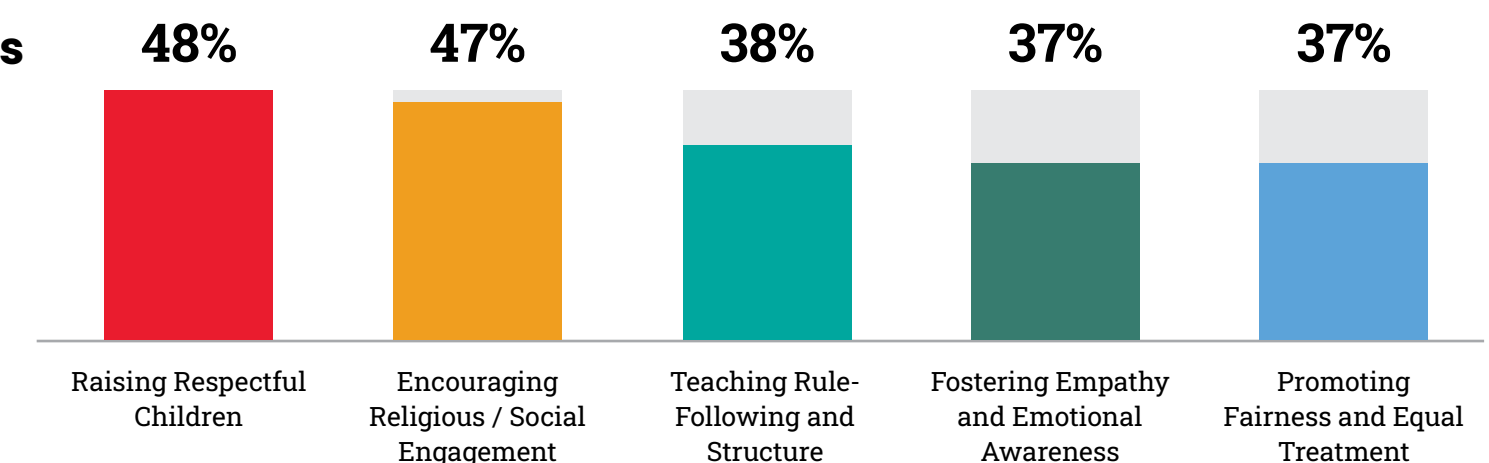
"Emotional intelligence, mental well-being, and digital literacy are just as important as reading and math... When we raise children who know how to regulate emotions and communicate with empathy, we're building a stronger, more conscious society."

— **Diwien Hartono**, Holistic Health Practitioner & Instructor

This shift is visible not only in parenting values but also in how they're put into practice. Respect and social engagement remain widely upheld, yet modern priorities are gaining ground. Empathy, fairness, and emotional awareness are increasingly viewed as equally essential to a child's development. Rule-following, long associated with obedience, is being redefined as an opportunity to teach boundaries through mutual respect.

Parenting Values Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z Want to Instill in Their Children

48%	47%	38%	37%	37%
Raising Respectful Children	Encouraging Religious / Social Engagement	Teaching Rule-Following and Structure	Fostering Empathy and Emotional Awareness	Promoting Fairness and Equal Treatment

While daily structure and discipline remain important, not all values are emphasized equally. For example, only 38% of parents say they actively teach responsibility through everyday tasks, making it the least emphasized value among the five. Yet among Millennial parents, there's a clear intent to change this dynamic. Half report assigning small, age-appropriate responsibilities to their children, not as chores but as everyday acts of trust. These moments, setting the table or organizing toys — help nurture autonomy, character, and emotional resilience.

50% of Millennials
report that they often assign small, everyday responsibilities to their children

One notable expression of this broader shift is the rise of **strawberry parenting**, a term that began as a critique of emotional fragility but has since evolved into a nuanced shorthand for a parenting style rooted in emotional responsiveness, secure attachment, and shared decision-making. Depending on the perspective, it is viewed with admiration or skepticism, reflecting society's ambivalence toward softness, sensitivity, and evolving norms of care.

Strawberry parenting emphasizes emotional responsiveness as a foundation for growth. It encourages parents to validate rather than dismiss their children's feelings, to set boundaries through trust and dialogue, and to nurture independence without relying on punitive discipline. At its best, it reflects an effort to raise emotionally secure children through mutual respect and connection.

Strawberry Parenting: What's the Debate Really About?

- Strawberry parenting is a term that often sparks debate.

- Some see it as a positive shift, one that focuses on emotional safety, empathy, and gentle communication. Others worry it means being too soft, raising kids who struggle with setbacks.

- It's a reflection of what society wants for the next generation: more care, but also more clarity.

- At its core, strawberry parenting reveals what we value, what we fear, and what kind of future we're preparing our children for.

Its growing visibility, however, has sparked both endorsement and critique. Supporters frame it as a much-needed alternative to rigid, authority-first models of the past—an approach that fosters vulnerability, self-awareness, and psychological safety. Critics, on the other hand, express concern that it may overprotect children from necessary discomfort, potentially undermining their ability to cope with stress, failure, or conflict in the real world.

This debate is less about the model itself and more about what it symbolizes. On one hand, it's seen as a progressive shift that values emotional intelligence, gentle communication, and trust-based boundaries. On the other, it is perceived by some as emblematic of a culture that increasingly equates discomfort with harm and raises concerns about whether children are being adequately prepared for the realities of life.

At its core, strawberry parenting reflects a deeper cultural tension: the balance between protecting children and preparing them. It raises broader questions of how much softness is too much? When does empathy tip into indulgence? How do we raise children who are both emotionally grounded and socially resilient?

Rather than offering clear answers, strawberry parenting captures the complexity of a society in transition. It is less a singular parenting trend and more a mirror in revealing how Indonesian families are negotiating the values of care, resilience, and emotional strength in an era marked by uncertainty and change.

These shifts are not without cost. Many parents, especially mothers, face the quiet strain of trying to do everything right: to be emotionally attuned, digitally aware, and constantly available. Gentle parenting requires not just empathy, but energy. And when that energy runs low, so does their sense of confidence. The pursuit of emotional connection, while noble, also exposes the invisible weight modern parents carry.

Emotional Resilience as The Blueprint for Parenting

Millennial and Gen Z parents are navigating a new era of parenting, one that values emotional awareness as much as discipline, and presence as much as protection. In a world shaped by digital distractions, mental health challenges, and rising social pressures, emotional resilience is increasingly recognized as a core life skill.

Rather than focusing on controlling behavior, today's parents are creating environments where children can name, understand, and process their feelings. This approach blends structure with empathy, giving children both the clarity of boundaries and the safety of being heard.

Still, experts emphasize that emotional responsiveness works best when paired with consistency. Children thrive not just on comfort, but on structure and through experiences that teach delayed gratification, healthy conflict, and frustration tolerance. Emotional growth is not a soft skill, it's foundational, and it must be nurtured with intention.
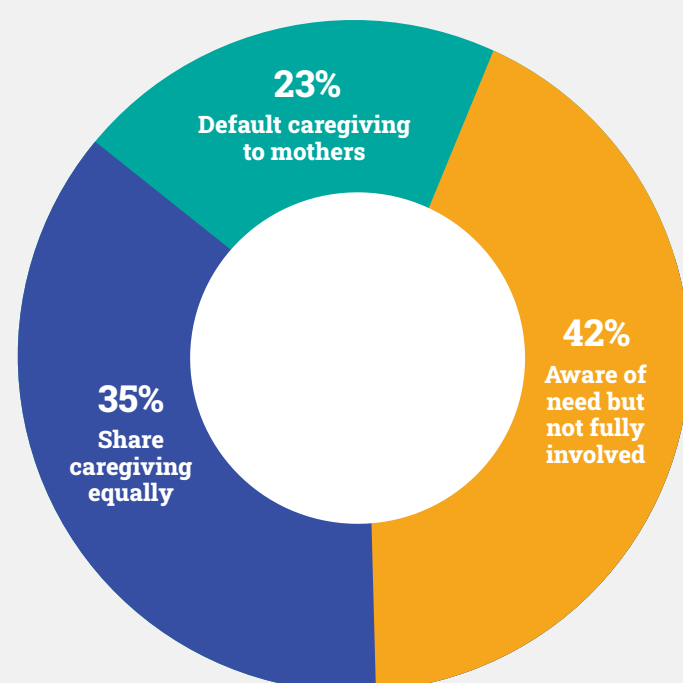
The Role of Fathers in Daily Care

Even as parenting ideals shift toward emotional intelligence and empathy, the reality at home tells a more complicated story. While 67% of Millennial and Gen Z parents say they prioritize respect and active listening, only 33% report regularly practicing vulnerability and affection, especially in secondary cities, where emotional restraint is still tied to cultural ideals of strength and order.

67% of Millennial and Gen Z parents say they prioritize respect and active listening, but only 33% report regularly practicing vulnerability and affection

Who Shares the Load? Fatherhood Roles in Dual-Income Millennial Households

- 23% Default caregiving to mothers
- 42% Aware of need but not fully involved
- 35% Share caregiving equally

As emotional intelligence becomes a more central part of parenting, the practical realities of caregiving at home reveal that change is still in motion. As seen through our data, in dual-income Millennial households, the division of parenting labor is evolving, but not yet equal.

Many fathers recognize the need for change, but not all follow through. Emotional presence matters, but shared action matters more. This isn't about blame but it's about acknowledging that many families are still in transition. As caregiving becomes more emotionally complex, presence alone isn't enough as participation must be active and attuned. When fathers engage in daily routines, talk about feelings, and validate emotional struggles, they're not just supporting their partner, they're helping their children build emotional resilience that lasts a lifetime. Balancing parenting roles in a fast-paced, high-pressure world isn't always straightforward. Legacy expectations and the mental load of caregiving still shape what "involvement" looks like day-to-day.

But what's clear is that *fathers matter*. And their emotional presence matters deeply. A father who shows up, whether during bedtime, in shared play, or open conversations is proven to help children develop better emotional regulation, communication skills, and long-term security. These aren't grand gestures, they're small, daily acts of connection that quietly shape a child's world. Interestingly, our research also found that as parents :

Millennials, especially those with higher education, are more likely to emphasize empathy, respect, and warm relationships in their parenting approach.

Gen Z, while more open to flexible roles and non-traditional structures, tends to prioritize *personal freedom* and *career growth* more prominently and often placing emotional parenting ambitions a few steps behind practical realities.

These differences don't reflect lesser values but more towards differing stages of growth, priorities, and societal context. Both generations are navigating how to raise emotionally intelligent children while learning to manage their own emotional inheritance.

Creating emotionally healthy homes is not about perfection, it's about participation. It's about showing up, learning together, and evolving alongside your children.

As families continue to rethink parenting in a rapidly changing world, the future of caregiving lies not in ideals alone, but in shared action. Emotional literacy thrives when caregiving is distributed—not just symbolically, but in the everyday rhythm of life. Ultimately, the good news? More parents, fathers included, are already taking those steps. And every step counts.

Digital Parenting in an Age of Influence and Exposure
From Controlling Tech to Modeling Values at Home

Raising Digital Natives with Integrity

In a world saturated with content and algorithm-driven attention, raising children today means raising digital natives, kids who are growing up online as much as offline. For Millennial and Gen Z parents, the goal is no longer just to enforce screen-time rules or app bans. It's about raising emotionally intelligent, critically aware children who can navigate the digital world not just safely, but wisely.

Digital spaces have become a second home for children whereby they socialize, learn, express themselves, and form values. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are no longer just entertainment zones; they're where identity is shaped and culture is consumed. And with this access comes risk: comparison culture, cyberbullying, online predators, and overstimulation. In response, platforms like Meta have introduced safety features such as private account defaults, restricted messaging, and content filters. But while these measures are important, they only address the platform side of the equation. *The deeper work still happens at home.*

Spotlight: Cerdas Digital 2025 — Empowering Parents and Teens in the Digital Age

As digital ecosystems become integral to how Indonesian youth learn, connect, and express themselves, the role of parents in shaping safe online experiences is more crucial than ever. In response, Meta launched #CerdasDigital2025, an initiative designed to help parents better support their teens' digital journeys while fostering healthy screen habits.

At the heart of this effort is the introduction of **Teen Accounts on Instagram**, tailored to ensure age-appropriate, secure digital interactions. These accounts include features such as:

- Private accounts by default
- Strongest content controls
- Limited notifications during nighttime
- Break reminders after 60 minutes of use
- Messaging restricted to followers or mutuals

With **54 million+ teens globally** already benefiting from these features, Teen Accounts are set to roll out soon on Facebook and Messenger as well—reflecting a platform-wide commitment to youth safety and digital wellness.

In Indonesia, Meta has partnered with **Yayasan Rangkul Keluarga Kita Berdaya** to provide tools and resources that equip parents with the skills needed to raise smart digital citizens. The initiative underscores a broader behavioral shift: today's families are navigating digital life together, and empowering both youth and parents is essential for creating a healthier online culture.

What children observe in their parents during conflict, while scrolling at dinner or when managing stress, becomes their emotional blueprint. Micro-habits like how a parent handles frustration or navigates disagreement teach kids what emotional regulation looks like, and whether vulnerability is safe or discouraged. It's these small moments, repeated daily, that form the emotional infrastructure of a child's values.

> "I don't believe we should completely eliminate social media. What we need is to raise a generation that can navigate it mindfully... Social media isn't inherently harmful—it's how we relate to it, how we model its use, and how we teach boundaries that makes the difference."
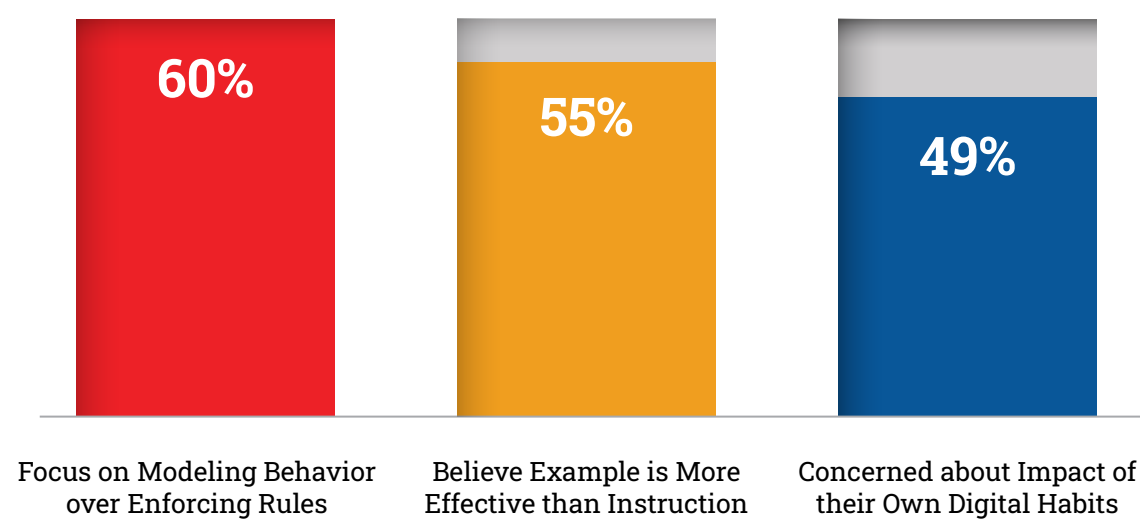
— **Diwien Hartono**, Holistic Health Practitioner & Instructor

This belief is echoed across the board. A full 60% of Millennial and Gen Z parents say they focus more on modeling behavior than enforcing rules—believing children learn best through observation, not instruction. Over half also believe that setting an example is more effective than verbal reminders, and nearly half worry about how their own online behavior shapes their child's development.

60% of Millennial and Gen Z parents say they focus more on modeling behavior than enforcing rules, believing that children learn best through observation, not instruction.

Parenting Priorities: Modeling VS Rule Enforcement (Millennial and Gen Z Parents)

60%	55%	49%
Focus on Modeling Behavior over Enforcing Rules	Believe Example is More Effective than Instruction	Concerned about Impact of their Own Digital Habits

This is why parenting has become deeply performative — not in the superficial sense, but in how values are mirrored through presence, reaction, and emotional tone. Whether it's teaching empathy before commenting online, respecting privacy and consent, or building critical thinking around algorithmic content, these aren't just digital rules, they're inherently internal values.

While 67% of Millennial and Gen Z parents emphasize listening and respect, only 33% prioritize vulnerability and affection, especially in secondary cities

This is especially true in secondary cities where cultural restraint still shapes expression. Emotional openness is a work in progress, often shadowed by inherited models that prioritize harmony over depth.

As Diwien Hartono notes, parenting in the digital age demands more than just meeting a child's physical or academic needs.

> "It's about raising them with emotional awareness in a world that moves fast and demands more. Kids need to learn how to process emotions, not just name them... if parents are constantly overstimulated or reactive, that becomes the foundation of their emotional habits."

— **Diwien Hartono**, Holistic Health Practitioner & Instructor

What Millennials and Gen Z Value Most in Relationships

- 33% **Emotional Expression** (e.g., affection)
- 67% **Respect and Support** (e.g., helping, listening)
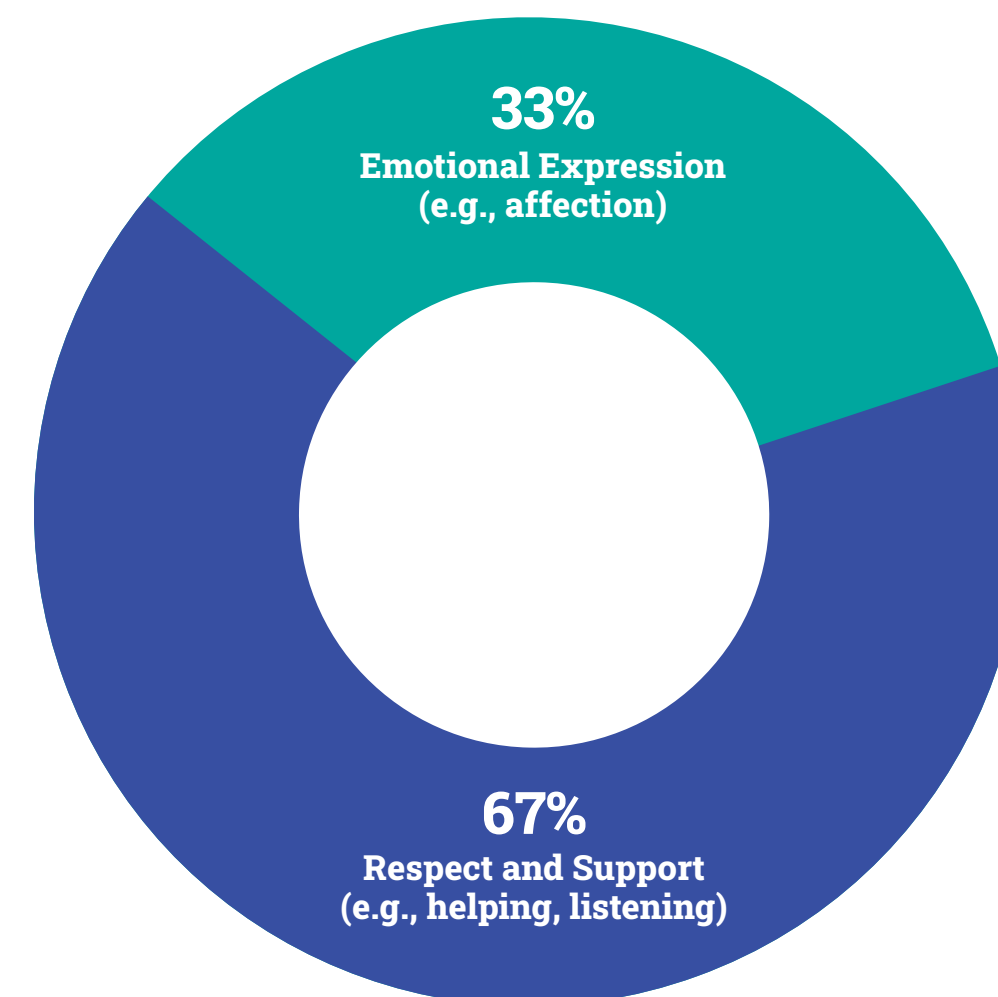
This is why emotional intelligence has become a new developmental benchmark which is just as important as literacy or numeracy. Skills like self-regulation, empathy, and critical thinking are no longer soft skills; they are survival tools for navigating both real and virtual life. And they don't come from parental lectures or safety settings. They're passed on in how we live, react, and relate. Because ultimately, children don't just listen. They observe, and in today's world, they're observing everything.

Aspirational Living and Redefining Success

Redefining Success

If parenting has become performative in the best sense by mirroring values through action, then so too has the language of aspiration. A new language of status is taking root and that comes in the form of things that favors depth over display. Among Millennials and Gen Z, especially within Jakarta's professional and creative circles, traditional markers like homeownership or luxury cars are giving way to more personal, values-driven symbols. A yoga teaching certificate, solo travel to lesser-known destinations, a sleek minimalist home, a second passport, or a carefully curated digital presence, all now serve as subtle but powerful indicators of aspiration.

These aren't just lifestyle choices; they're reflections of a worldview. They signal global fluency, a commitment to self-improvement, and a desire to live with intention. For Jakarta's urban middle class, these quieter signals of success often carry more weight than material possessions.

The Pursuit of Self-Actualization

Wellness is increasingly seen as a foundation, not a luxury. For many Millennials and Gen Z, success includes rest, therapy, boundaries, and the ability to say "no" to burnout culture. Emotional health is no longer treated as something separate from success, it's part of the infrastructure needed to sustain it.

The definition of success is shifting—from what you own to how you live. Flexibility, fulfillment, and mental wellness are fast replacing the pursuit of fixed assets.

Renting, co-living, and digital nomadism have become pragmatic responses to the realities of urban life.

Ride-sharing and public transport now take precedence over private car ownership in dense cities.

Travel, wellness retreats, and creative side projects are increasingly seen as modern-day luxuries—forms of wealth measured not in money, but in meaning.

In this new paradigm, aspiration is less about accumulation and more about alignment—between values, lifestyle, and a broader sense of purpose: Today, aspirational living is no longer just material, it is:

Essential   **Value Based**   **Adaptable**

Faith and Spirituality in a Changing World

Holding onto Faith, Rewriting the Narrative

Faith remains a meaningful part of identity for Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z, but how they engage with it is changing. Rather than abandoning religion, young Indonesians are reshaping it to fit the rhythms of modern life with urbanization, digital exposure, and the pursuit of intentional living. Across faiths in Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and indigenous beliefs, this generation is moving toward expressions that are more personalized, modular, and choice-driven.

Personalized   Modular   Choice-Driven

While Indonesia no longer holds the title of the world's largest Muslim-majority country, it remains deeply rooted in belief. What's changing is the way religion is lived. Traditions still offer a moral compass, but are increasingly interpreted in fluid, contextual ways. Today, 76% of young Indonesians consider themselves tolerant of other religions, according to the Religious Harmony Index (KUB), a sign that interfaith respect is becoming a personal ethic, not just a social expectation.

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Symbolic acts, like the "Tunnel of Friendship" connecting Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque and the Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral, reflect how young Indonesians are embracing pluralism as both civic and spiritual value. For many, tolerance isn't just a policy, it's a principle.

Tradition, Still Practiced with Purpose

As younger generations open themselves to new ideas around emotional expression, spiritual independence, and modern parenting, it would be easy to assume that traditional values are being left behind. But the reality is more nuanced. Millennials and Gen Z aren't discarding cultural norms, they're reshaping them to fit a faster, more complex world.

Many longstanding practices—such as using respectful language, greeting elders with salim, or bowing when passing them—are still widely observed, not out of social pressure, but from a sense of cultural rootedness. According to recent data, 69% still uphold everyday social ethics, and 65% continue to use respectful language, even in online interactions. More than half still engage in physical gestures of respect like salim (56%) or bowing (50%).

Cultural Behaviors still Common Among Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z

69%	65%	56%	50%
Practicing Everyday Social Ethics	Using Respectful Language (Including Online)	Salim Gesture to Elders	Bowing when Passing Elders
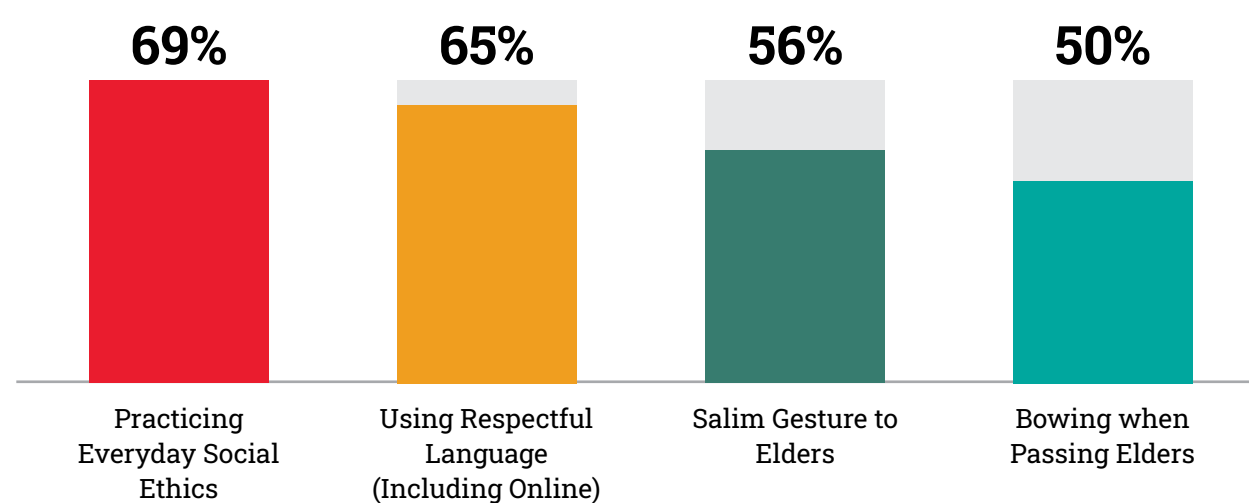
These are not performed as rigid routines. Instead, they function as adaptive social tools:

They signal humility and mutual respect across age and status.

They ground identity in shared cultural understanding, especially in moments of generational or interfaith interaction.

And they offer continuity, a way for younger Indonesians to carry forward inherited wisdom while navigating a world vastly different from that of their parents.

In today's context, the continued practice of these traditions speaks less to obligation and more to meaning. These rituals offer comfort, coherence, and belonging in a society undergoing rapid urbanization, digital transformation, and global influence. They are chosen and not just repeated because they reflect a desire to stay connected to heritage while living intentionally.

In essence, these behaviors represent not just what is remembered, but what is reclaimed. They are not the remnants of an outdated past as they are the foundations of a culturally grounded future.

Faith as a Moral Compass, Not a Social Obligation

For a growing number of young Indonesians, faith is no longer something passively inherited, it's something actively shaped. Among Millennials and Gen Z, especially those in urban centers, religion is shifting from routine to intention. Prayer, reflection, and spiritual learning still happen, but notably, these practices are increasingly accessed and discussed through modern formats, such as podcasts, livestreamed sermons, daily devotionals shared on WhatsApp, and short-form spiritual content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

These new formats don't replace tradition as much as they help reframe it. Faith is being curated to match the rhythm of modern life. For today's youth, what matters is not just believing, but believing on their own terms.

62% of Millennials claim to incorporate religion into their daily life and decision making

This shift reflects a broader reconfiguration of spirituality, not away from religious grounding, but toward greater alignment with personal values, emotional needs, and day-to-day realities. Faith is no longer just inherited, it's interpreted, contextualized, and woven into the fabric of daily decision-making.

1 in 10 respondents say spirituality meaningfully supports their ability to manage stress and anxiety

What's unfolding is not a decline in religious relevance, but a transformation in how it is lived. As belief becomes less about strict observance and more about intentional practice, faith continues to offer a moral anchor and guiding young Indonesians through life's complexities with a sense of purpose, reflection, and personal clarity.
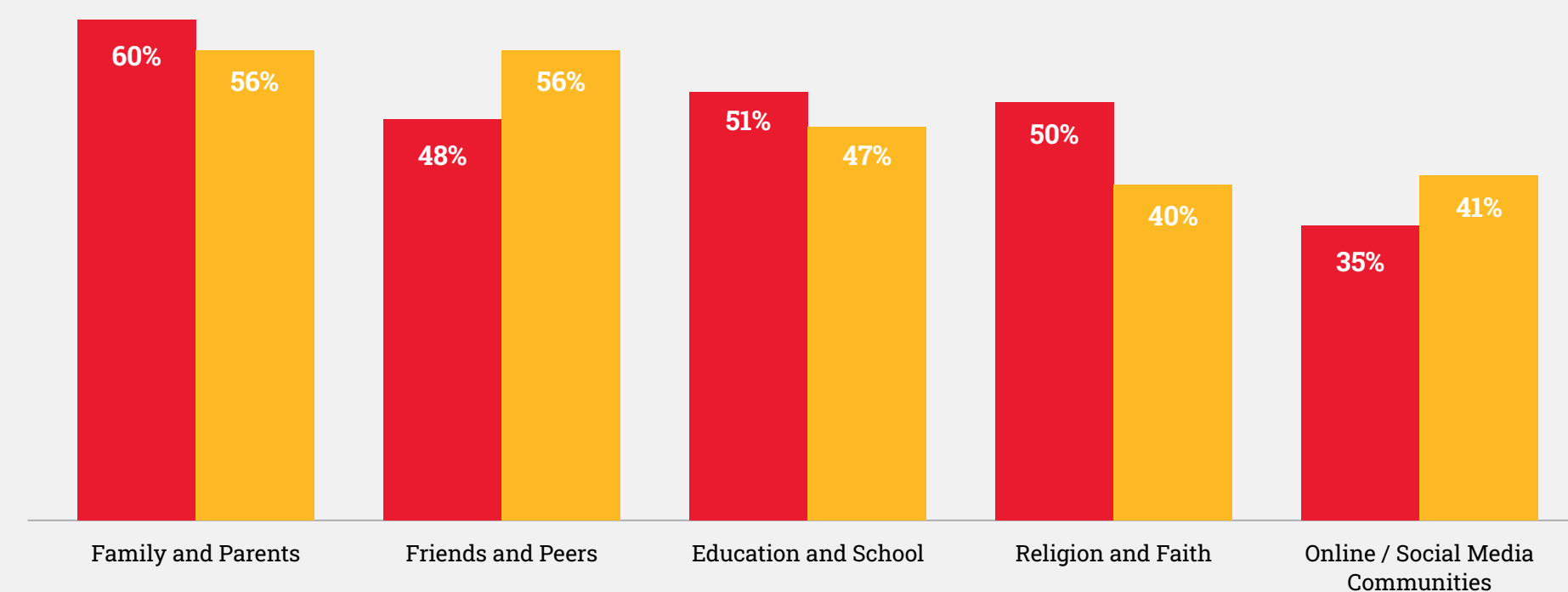
A Shifting Moral Landscape

Where religion, school teachings, and parental authority once stood as the primary pillars of moral education, today's youth are drawing from a broader and more dynamic set of influences. Among Millennials and Gen Z, especially those with higher education, values are increasingly shaped through lived experience, peer dialogue, and both online and offline communities.

Top Sources of Moral Influence ● Millennials ● Gen Z

Source	Millennials	Gen Z
Family and Parents	60%	56%
Friends and Peers	48%	56%
Education and School	51%	47%
Religion and Faith	50%	40%
Online / Social Media Communities	35%	41%

This data reveals a more pluralistic moral framework. Young people today are learning what's right and wrong not only from institutions, but from group chats, shared content, and values-driven digital spaces. Among Gen Z in particular, peer networks are not just sources of affirmation, they're spaces where ethics are co-constructed in real time.

Sustainability and Financial Consciousness

A Generational Recalibration of Value, Impact, and Intent

Just as faith is being reshaped with intention, so too is how value is defined. For Millennials and Gen Z, every purchase is now a reflection of belief. For these generations, financial decisions are not simply transactional but rather they are moral and reputational choices that reflect their beliefs, priorities, and aspirations for the future.

Sustainability, once viewed as a niche or idealistic goal, has become a core behavioral principle. Whether they are buying fashion, investing in brands, or choosing where to eat, consumers increasingly ask, "What impact does my choice have on the planet, on society, and on my own future?"

We've been conditioned to think we always need more, but true sustainability isn't about deprivation, it's about making intentional choices that align with our values. Every purchase carries an impact on the people who made it, on the resources used to create it, and on the world we're leaving behind. The goal isn't to completely stop consuming but to shift toward products that last, support ethical production, and contribute to a more responsible way of living."

— **Cempaka Asriani**, Founder of SARE Studio

Across income groups and regions, there is growing alignment around the idea that doing well and doing good can, and should, coexist. This ethos is driving behavioral trends such as:

Thrift culture and circular fashion where secondhand is a conscious choice, not a compromise.

Minimalist ownership choosing fewer, better products with longer lifespans.

Digital financial tools that help track expenses, reduce waste, and invest in ethical portfolios.

Preference for local, transparent brands especially those that integrate sustainability into both sourcing and storytelling.

This evolving financial literacy isn't just about saving money—it's about channeling money toward meaningful outcomes. The younger generation is actively redefining what constitutes financial security.

"Mindful consumption isn't just about reducing waste but rather it's about redefining what success and financial security mean. For us, security isn't built on stockpiling things, it's built on clarity, ethics, and long-term intention. You're not just making better purchasing decisions but you're laying the foundation for generational wealth that's not only material, but also moral."

— **Cempaka Asriani**, Founder of SARE Studio

This isn't a phase, it's a generational reset. Millennials and Gen Z are normalizing conversations around carbon footprint, low-waste living, and the ethics of production. Even small purchasing choices are viewed as signals of identity and tools for change.

For brands, this presents both a challenge and a mandate: sustainability is no longer a differentiator, it is a default expectation. Value propositions must now go beyond affordability and quality to include accountability, transparency, and alignment with lived values.

Ultimately, for Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z, sustainability and financial consciousness are not competing forces. They are interdependent drivers that shape behavior, define modern aspirations, and lay the foundation for a more intentional and inclusive economy.

> **"If I'm going to spend on something, I want it to say something about me. That I care, that I support locals, that I'm thinking ahead. For me and for many others that's the new luxury."**
>
> — **Cempaka Asriani**, Founder of SARE Studio

AQUA's cultural fluency is further demonstrated through GRADASI, an acronym for *Gerakan Santri dan Daur Ulang Sampah Indonesia*, or *The Santri Movement for Recycling Waste in Indonesia*. The program engages pesantren, mosques, and religious leaders, framing sustainability as part of spiritual practice—grounded in Islamic principles such as khalifah (stewardship) and thaharah (cleanliness). Between 2019 and 2023, GRADASI collected 280 tons of waste from religious institutions, not by imposing new behavior, but by aligning with values already present in Indonesia's moral landscape.

These programs are backed by measurable economic and social returns. According to third-party studies, AQUA's circular initiatives generated over IDR 1.2 trillion in economic value. For a generation fluent in skepticism and sensitive to greenwashing, this level of embedded, transparent impact is what defines credibility. Millennials and Gen Z are not just looking for brands that sound right as they're looking for those that are built right.

Why Values Need Infrastructure to Matter

As Millennials and Gen Z shift away from traditional milestones like homeownership or status-based success, a new framework has emerged to guide their decisions and that is, alignment.

Whether it's choosing where to work, what to support, or which brands to trust, alignment between stated values and structural action is non-negotiable. For this generation, trust is not something brands can declare and it's something they must build.

Danone-AQUA's #BijakBerplastik campaign offers a clear example of this principle in motion. Rather than relying on aspirational messaging, AQUA invests in tangible systems that make sustainability operational. In 2024 alone, the company collected over 31,500 tons of plastic waste and formalized the roles of more than 25,000 waste pickers through a national network of collection centers, waste banks, and TPSTs. These numbers aren't designed for optics—they reflect a functioning ecosystem that acknowledges environmental impact as a shared, structural responsibility.

This systemic approach is reinforced through SAMTAKU, short for *Sampahku Tanggung Jawabku* or *My Waste, My Responsibility*. It is AQUA's environmental education initiative that reaches over 3.8 million students across more than 2,900 schools in Indonesia. SAMTAKU integrates sustainability into early education by embedding waste literacy in curricula and reinforcing it through immersive storytelling, interactive exhibits, and play-based learning in places like KidZania and Taman Pintar. The behavioral logic is clear: worldviews are shaped young, and values taught early are more likely to stick.

What Brands Must Embody to Earn Trust

- **Alignment Between Message and Model**
  Say what you believe, but more importantly, build systems that reflect it.

- **Early and Ongoing Value Integration**
  Trust grows when values are introduced early and reinforced consistently over time, especially through education and lived experience.

- **Cultural and Contextual Relevance**
  Speak in the language of your audience and not just linguistically, but morally, socially, and spiritually.

- **Structural Transparency**
  Metrics, partnerships, and impact must be traceable. If your values can't be audited, they won't be believed.

- **Long-Term Commitment Over Campaign Cycles**
  This generation is not persuaded by seasonal slogans. They watch what you invest in over years, not weeks.

Success, Redefined With Meaning Over Milestone

For many young Indonesians today, success is no longer measured by traditional milestones like job titles, homeownership, or climbing a corporate ladder. It's becoming a more fluid, self-authored journey, one shaped by autonomy, personal values, and emotional purpose.
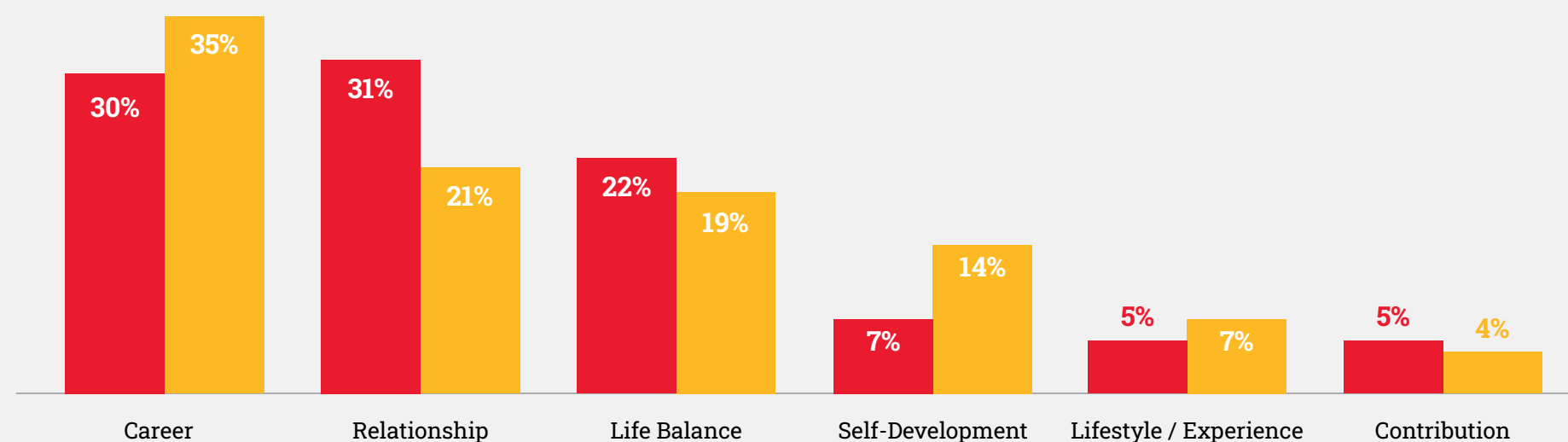
Rather than asking "What should I achieve?", many now ask deeper, more reflective questions: Does this path reflect who I am? Can I make a meaningful impact while sustaining a livelihood?

While both Millennials and Gen Z place career first, Gen Z's emphasis reveals a subtle but profound shift. They're more likely to link success to self-development and creative autonomy, while Millennials lean more on relationships and balance, reflecting their stage of life and responsibilities. For Gen Z, building a career isn't just about external reward—it's about internal alignment. It's not just a job; it's a means to grow, express, and evolve.

In urban centers, this redefinition is already taking shape. Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and other metropolitan cities have become testing grounds for new modes of ambition, ones that blend flexibility with purpose. Digital entrepreneurs, educators, content creators, and freelancers are building multi-hyphenate careers that value intention over intensity.

Top Life Priorities Among Millennials and Gen Z Indonesia   ● Millennials   ● Gen Z

Category	Millennials	Gen Z
Career	30%	35%
Relationship	31%	21%
Life Balance	22%	19%
Self-Development	7%	14%
Lifestyle / Experience	5%	7%
Contribution	5%	4%

Side projects aren't seen as distractions, but as viable expressions of self-worth. Remote work, hybrid roles, and portfolio careers have become attractive not because they are easy, but because they offer something traditional structures often can't: room to breathe, create, and stay relevant in a fast-changing world.

In rural areas and secondary cities, success takes a different shape—but the values are no less intentional. Here, community, responsibility, and contribution are deeply embedded in how success is defined. Building a family business, becoming a civil servant, or running a local enterprise is not just a practical choice, it's a legacy choice.

Rather than abandoning tradition, many young people are expanding it by bringing in digital literacy, sustainability practices, or new creative skills to strengthen their communities. In these regions, success is often about lifting others while rising yourself. Growth is measured not in isolation but in impact.

Interestingly, the data shows that Gen Z ranks self-development twice as high as Millennials, indicating a generational turn toward inward growth and self-authorship. This is not a rejection of ambition but a redefinition of what ambition looks like. Meanwhile, Millennials' stronger prioritization of relationships speaks to their lived experience of balancing connection and responsibility.

What unites both generations is this: they are no longer chasing a fixed definition of success. Instead, they are choosing paths that allow them to feel aligned, not just accomplished.

Across regions, professions, and stages of life, a new ideal is emerging. Success is not a singular destination. It's a lifelong practice of choosing, adjusting, and staying true to what matters most.

Redefining Legacy and Fulfillment

Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia are moving away from the playbook of past generations. Life is no longer defined by fixed milestones such as marriage by a certain age, a steady job, a house. Instead, these generations are making active choices: when to commit, what kind of family to build, and what success looks like. Tradition hasn't disappeared, but it's being reworked. People aren't rejecting it, they're asking what parts still feel true.

In family life, that means more open conversations, more emotional involvement from both parents, and a growing sense that raising children should be a shared, intentional effort and not just something you do because it's expected. In bigger cities, that shows up as co-parenting and flexible roles. In secondary cities, values like respect and responsibility still hold strong, but with a softer, more relational tone.

Faith is still present, but it's less about routine and more about relevance. Prayer and religious learning are still part of life, but now through livestreams, group chats, and daily devotionals on Instagram. For many, faith has become a tool for emotional grounding and not just a moral rulebook.

And when it comes to success, the rules are changing fast. Younger Indonesians, especially in cities aren't chasing status symbols the way their parents did. They're looking for work that's meaningful, flexible, and aligned with who they are. In rural areas, success is still linked to family and service, but it's also being shaped by digital tools and a growing awareness of sustainability.

Through it all, one thing stands out: this generation is living on purpose. They're not drifting, they're choosing. Choosing what to keep, what to let go of, and what to build in its place. This isn't a generation that's lost, it's a generation that's rewriting the story on its own terms.
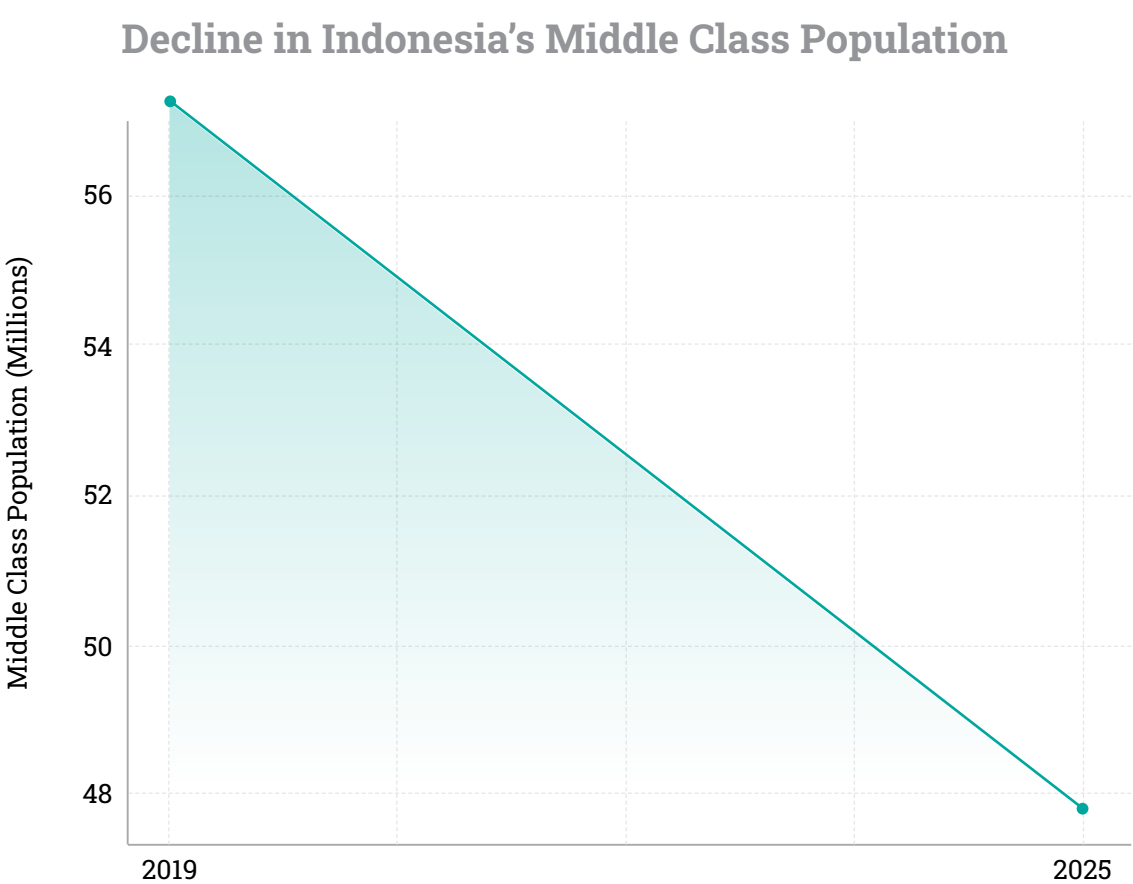
Chapter 2

Finances and Consumption

The Decline of Indonesia's Middle Class and Its Implications

Decline in Indonesia's Middle Class Population

The erosion of Indonesia's middle class is no longer just an economic trend—it's reshaping aspirations and lifestyle choices. Nearly 10 million people exited the middle class between 2019 and 2024, while the aspiring middle class grew significantly (World Bank, 2024).

Indonesia's middle class shrank by nearly 10 million people between 2019 and 2024, while the aspiring middle class grew to 137.5 million (World Bank, 2024)

Today's youth face job instability, stagnant wages, and rising costs in a post-industrial economy that offers fewer protections. The social contract that once promised upward mobility is fraying. Delaying marriage or homeownership, adopting minimalist lifestyles, and taking on side hustles are not trends; they're survival strategies.

Inflation and Consumption Slowdown

While Indonesia reported a record-low inflation rate of 1.57% in 2024, this seemingly positive indicator masks deeper fragility. According to the Institute for Demographic and Affluence Studies, reduced household spending, particularly from the middle class, has significantly contributed to this figure—raising urgent concerns about the sustainability of domestic consumption as a key driver of growth.

64% of Indonesian Gen Z experiences financial stress, driven by inflation, stagnant wages, and social and digital pressures

> **"The middle class drives domestic consumption. Their decline disrupts this balance, posing significant risks to Indonesia's consumption-driven economy."**
>
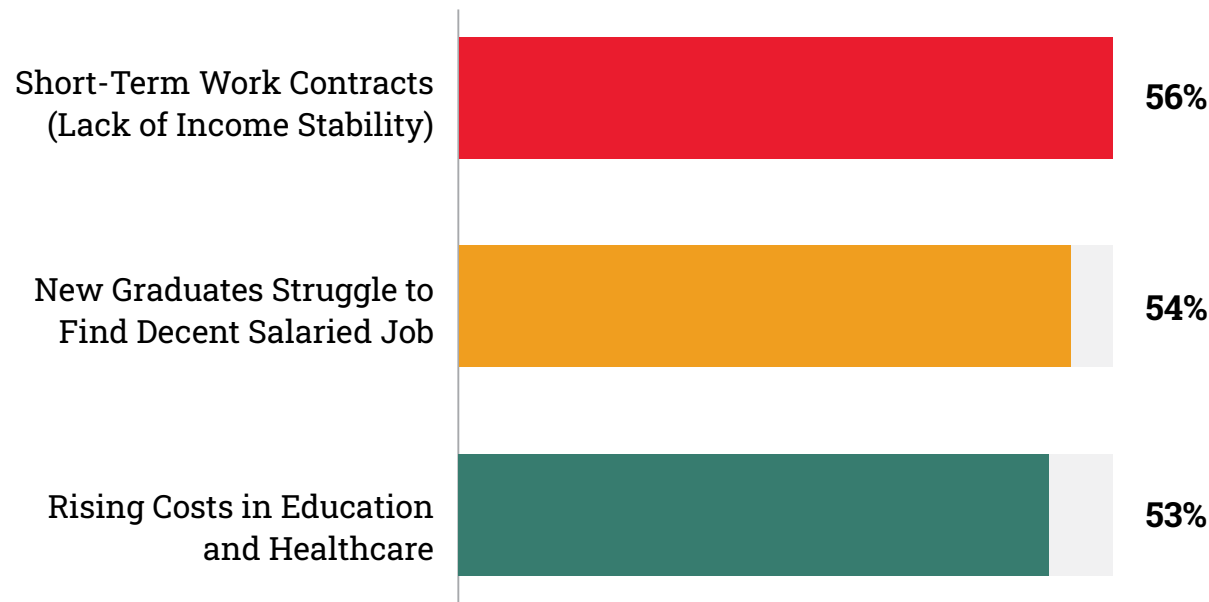> — **Tira Mutiara**, a researcher at the Institute

The social implications are equally striking. As younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, enter life stages traditionally associated with upward mobility in purchasing homes, starting families, building assets, they do so in a fundamentally altered economic reality. For many, financial security no longer rests on climbing the middle-class ladder but on finding ways to survive outside of it.

The Social Consequences of Middle-Class Erosion

What was once seen as prudent financial behavior such as saving diligently, spending cautiously, delaying life milestones has become a survival strategy for Indonesia's middle class. This group isn't just shrinking; it's being squeezed from all sides.

Top Economic Pressures Facing Indonesia's Middle Class

Short-Term Work Contracts (Lack of Income Stability)	56%
New Graduates Struggle to Find Decent Salaried Job	54%
Rising Costs in Education and Healthcare	53%

Economic vulnerability is widespread even among those considered 'secure.' Income instability, weak job markets for new graduates, and skyrocketing essential costs have hollowed out the financial safety net. With financial safety nets eroding, minimalist living, side hustles, and postponing marriage or home ownership aren't just lifestyle trends. They are signs of a deeper shift—young Indonesians adapting in real time to a system that offers less stability, fewer guarantees, and growing uncertainty.

In short, the fate of Indonesia's middle class is no longer just an economic issue, it's a societal one. Its decline reshapes how young Indonesians define success, plan for the future, and navigate an increasingly unpredictable world. For policymakers, brands, and institutions alike, this shift signals an urgent call to rethink not only economic strategy but also the social contract that underpins Indonesia's next chapter of growth.

Against this backdrop, young Indonesians are rethinking what financial wellbeing means—not just as individuals, but as a generation shaped by uncertainty.

What Indonesia's Youth Say Needs to Change

These challenges are not just statistics, they reflect lived realities for many Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia. Building a stable future is no longer a given. It's an uphill climb. And yet, young Indonesians remain clear-eyed about what needs to change. When asked what would meaningfully improve their financial situation, their answers weren't idealistic, they were structural.

Top Solutions Proposed by Youth to Improve Financial Stability

Solution	Percentage
Create More Formal Job Opportunity and Reduce Informal Employment	57%
Improve Access to Affordable Health and Education	53%
Strengthen Employee Welfare (E.g., Facilities, Benefits)	50%

Young people are not just asking for inclusion, they are also collectively demanding reform. The call is clear: stable jobs, fair benefits, and access to basic services.

These demands point to a deeper concern. Without reform, Indonesia risks locking its next generation into a low-value employment trap, where insecurity, underemployment, and limited upward mobility become the norm.

"To remain competitive, Indonesia must invest in labor productivity and strengthen regulations. Competing on low wages is no longer viable. Instead, focusing on emerging industries like technology and innovation can offer stable, higher-paying jobs and rebuild the middle class."

— **Adinova Fauri**, Economic Researcher

This is more than an economic concern, it's a generational reckoning. Middle-class erosion is reshaping how Millennials and Gen Z define success, delay life decisions, and navigate adulthood in an era of uncertainty. For policymakers, businesses, and institutions, this moment demands more than economic strategy. It calls for a renewed social contract, one that reflects today's realities and builds a more inclusive, resilient future.

Rethinking Financial Wellbeing Through Empowerment, Lifestyle, and Risk

As the middle class shrinks and economic guarantees dissolve, young Indonesians are not waiting for the system to catch up as they're building their own scaffolding of safety and self-reliance.
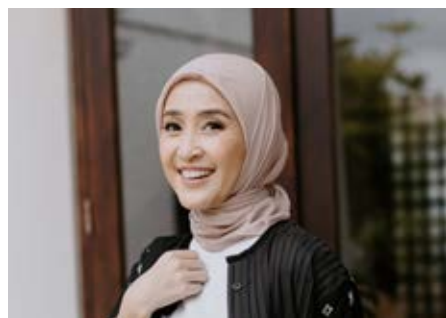
Saving in an Age of Instability

In today's volatile world, caution has evolved from a personal virtue into a generational survival strategy. For Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia, saving money isn't just about future goals, it's about protecting themselves in the now.

Beneath the surface of visible lifestyle choices such as travel, concerts, dining out lies a quieter, more calculated behavior. Experiences might be shared online, but emergency funds are being quietly built offline. Despite the noise of consumption, many are focused on security.

Emergency Funds are the #1 Saving Priority - But Not Equally Accessible

63%	70%	56%
Total	Big Cities	Secondary Cities

Our data shows that emergency savings are the number one financial priority for young Indonesians. A total of 63% of respondents rank it above all other saving goals. But this urgency isn't distributed evenly.

Even in a culture centered on expression and experience, Indonesian youth are preparing for risk. Emergency funds now top their saving goals yet access and urgency vary by location. The 14-point gap between big and secondary cities reveals an uneven landscape of financial security.

Only 23% of Gen Z hold a 3-month emergency fund. This is not due to carelessness, but contextual volatility.
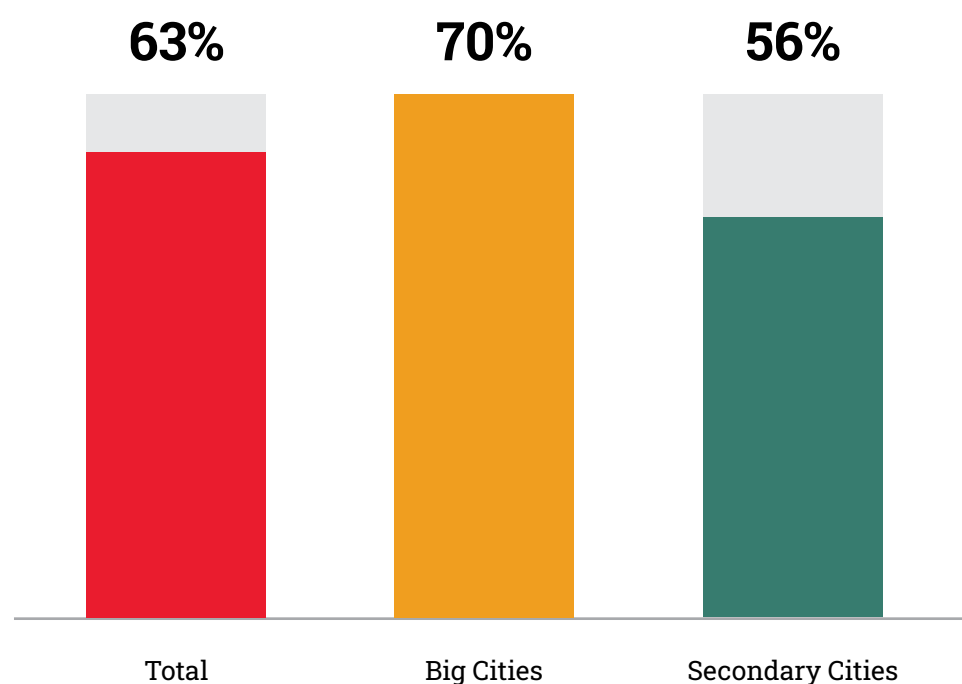
For young people in secondary cities, saving for emergencies may not be a proactive choice as it may be an unattainable luxury. Lower income levels, fewer formal job opportunities, and rising living costs make it harder to set aside anything at all. What is seen as prudence in big cities may feel like a privilege elsewhere.

"**Financial clarity is the new currency of wellbeing. It's about having clarity, control, and confidence. Millennials and Gen Z want to live well now, but the challenge is doing so without sacrificing their future.**"

— **Prita Ghozie**, Financial Planner & CEO of Zapfinance

What Are They Saving For?

Self-Care
Whether it's therapy, skincare, or taking a break, young Indonesians see self-maintenance as non-negotiable

Travel
Escaping routine, reconnecting with purpose, or simply taking a breather, travel remains a form of healing.

Concerts
Shared joy matters. From music festivals to fan meets, spending on emotional experiences is part of how they stay resilient.

For many young Indonesians, saving is no longer just about building a safety net — it's about reclaiming a sense of control in an unpredictable world. In this context, finding comfort in the present becomes just as important as planning for the future. This shift recognizes the emotional weight money carries, the need for joy today, and the mental toll of living with constant uncertainty. Still, as financial expert Prita Ghozie reminds us, balance is essential.

The rise of "soft saving" among Millennials and Gen Z signals more than a change in financial behavior — it marks a psychological and emotional recalibration. Soft saving refers to a more flexible, emotionally attuned approach to money management, where individuals allow room for small pleasures and self-care, even if it means saving less aggressively. Unlike the rigid saving ideals of older generations, soft saving values mental well-being as part of financial wellness.

In an age of relentless volatility, this mindset offers a helpful coping mechanism — but it also introduces new vulnerabilities. The challenge isn't choosing between the present or the future; it's designing a life that respects both.

The Upside: Soft Saving as Emotional Strategy

Rooted in Intention

While some critique soft saving as short-sighted, a closer look reveals its emotional logic. Young Indonesians aren't opting out and they're adapting inward. Soft saving isn't a sign of avoidance, it's a reflection of adaptive intelligence. In a world defined by volatility, many Millennials and Gen Z are choosing to prioritize emotional clarity and presence over rigid accumulation. Saving, for them, is not about hoarding but rather, it's about aligning money with mental peace.

Investing in Wellbeing

Spending on things like therapy, skincare, travel, or concerts isn't indulgent, it's intentional. These experiences function as emotional infrastructure, helping young Indonesians preserve their energy and avoid collapse. For this generation, wellbeing isn't separate from survival as it's part of the budget.

Redefining Success and Security

Traditional markers like property or fixed assets are no longer the universal goal. Instead, young people are investing in what makes them feel whole, be it education, rest, or creative growth. This redefinition challenges older assumptions about what it means to arrive, succeed, or "have enough."

Planning Against Burnout

Rather than repeating the cycles of delayed gratification that exhausted older generations, Millennials and Gen Z are building buffers against burnout. They budget not just for bills, but for breath. And in doing so, they're redefining financial maturity as the ability to sustain, not just to endure.

The Downside: When Emotional Coping Risks Long-Term Stability

Undermining Long-Term Financial Security

When soft saving isn't paired with formal planning—such as emergency funds, retirement savings, or insurance—it can create a fragile safety net. Emotional spending may offer short-term relief but weaken resilience in the face of unexpected crises.

Inequity in Access to "Intentional Living"

This mindset often assumes a minimum level of disposable income. In reality, only those with a certain level of privilege can afford to prioritize travel, concerts, or skincare alongside bills. For many in secondary cities or informal sectors, soft saving becomes aspirational rather than achievable.

Blurred Lines Between Self-Care and Consumption

Without clear boundaries, emotional spending can quickly become consumerism disguised as healing. The line between "treat yourself" and "debt yourself" is thin, especially in a culture driven by social comparison and FOMO.

Vulnerability to Economic Shocks

A generation already facing job precarity and high living costs cannot afford to deprioritize structured financial planning. Without discipline or tools for long-term saving, they risk being unprepared for layoffs, medical emergencies, or inflation shocks.

Soft saving doesn't need to be abandoned, but it must be rebalanced. Financial wellness should not come at the cost of emotional wellbeing, nor should emotional fulfillment jeopardize future security. The most empowered youth are not those who spend recklessly or save fearfully, but those who design a life that makes room for both.
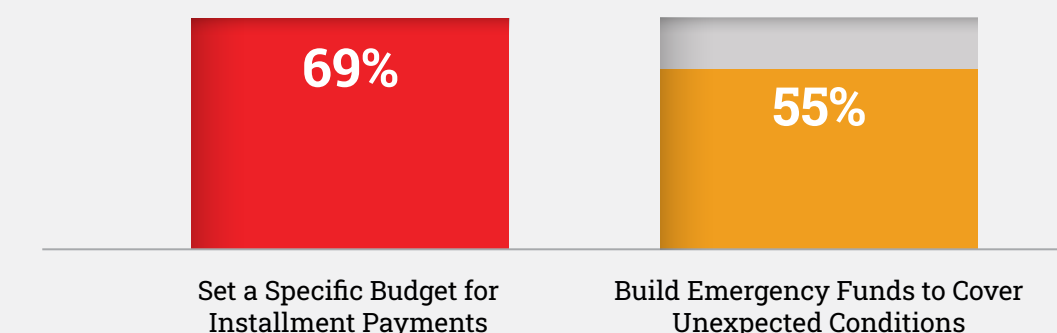
Emergency Funds and Adaptive Resilience

When it comes to financial preparedness, Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia are navigating a generational balancing act and one shaped less by irresponsibility and more by context, pressure, and evolving values. Rather than planning the same way previous generations did, they're building different strategies to cope with a more unpredictable world.

Only 23% of Gen Z have a three-month emergency fund as compared to 69% of Millennials. But this isn't about irresponsibility. Gen Z's behavior reflects a different world:, one where short-term control matters more than traditional stockpiling.

According to the 2024 OCBC NISP Index, only 23% of Gen Z Indonesians have a 3 month emergency fund—compared to 69% of Millennials.

**Financial Strategies:
Short-Term Control VS Long-Term Safety Nets**

Set a Specific Budget for Installment Payments	Build Emergency Funds to Cover Unexpected Conditions
69%	55%

Instead of stockpiling savings in the traditional sense, Gen Z tends to prioritize short-term financial control. 69% of respondents say they set a specific budget for installment payments, deliberately avoiding new debt until old loans are cleared. Only 55% prioritize building emergency reserves, highlighting a trade-off between immediate stability and long-term shock protection.

This pragmatic shift is also driven by technology and emotional awareness. Gen Z is drawn to financial tools that reflect their identity, budgeting apps with gamified goals, savings platforms tied to social or environmental causes, and systems that reward micro-habits over rigid planning. Their financial language is not about hoarding but it's about alignment: with personal values, emotional wellbeing, and day-to-day survival.

Millennials, by contrast, still carry the imprint of early economic instability and post-reformasi uncertainty. Raised with a stronger emphasis on security, many of them blend traditional caution with aspirational ambition. For them, financial resilience often means building buffers to guard against future disruption.

What emerges is a portrait of **adaptive resilience**. Millennials and Gen Z are not avoiding financial responsibility, they're rewriting it. Gen Z, in particular, is experimenting with "soft saving," blending emotional and experiential spending goals with gradual, tech-supported safeguards. For this generation, resilience is less about preserving wealth and more about preserving momentum—emotionally, digitally, and financially in an unpredictable world.

High-Risk Investments and Identity Expression

Middle-income Indonesians allocate 41% of monthly expenses to discretionary spending

Amid rising uncertainty, discretionary spending is no longer just leisure—it's a form of identity building and emotional release. As Prita Ghozie highlights, middle-income Indonesians (earning IDR 6–18 million per month) now spend 41% of their monthly income on discretionary expenses—surpassing transportation (29%) and even basic household needs (28%).

Household Spending Priorities Among Middle-Income Indonesians

41%	29%	28%
Lifestyle	Transport	Basic Needs
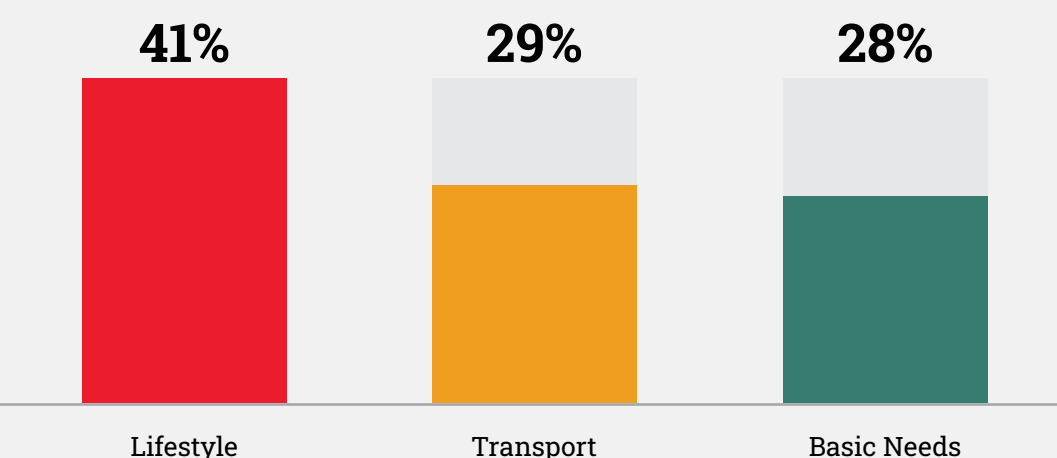
Only 29% of Indonesians aged 25–34 own homes, driven by high down payments, stagnant wages, and changing financial priorities (Indonesia Property Watch, 2024).

Discretionary spending refers to the portion of income used for non-essential expenses, or what's left after covering necessities like food, housing, transportation, and healthcare. For many, this includes dining out, entertainment, travel, hobbies, fashion, and gadgets. While such spending can enrich life and social connections, it's also the most flexible part of a budget—the first to be cut in times of financial strain. Rising discretionary spending, then, not only signals shifting values but also highlights growing financial vulnerability.

Among Indonesia's middle class, this shift reveals more than a change in lifestyle; it points to a recalibration of priorities in a world where the line between "needs" and "wants" is increasingly blurred. Understanding how and why people spend beyond essentials offers a window into their aspirations, coping mechanisms, and the pressures they face in balancing security with self-expression.

We see a similar trend in investment behavior. According to our data, 42% of Gen Z Indonesians are drawn to high-risk assets like cryptocurrencies and NFTs. For many, investing isn't just about chasing profits—it's about identity, culture, and belonging. In today's digital world, investments serve as a form of self-expression, signaling alignment with innovation and support for communities or causes. This marks a shift from viewing wealth purely as accumulation to understanding it as alignment and agency. For these young investors, risk-taking isn't irresponsibility—it's a meaningful way to engage with a fast-moving world.

42% of Gen Z are drawn to high-risk assets like cryptocurrencies and NFTs—not just for profit, but as a way to express identity and values.

However, enthusiasm without preparation can easily lead to missteps. Ghozie advises young investors to first build a solid foundation: understand your risk profile, master core financial principles, and start with safer options like money market funds.
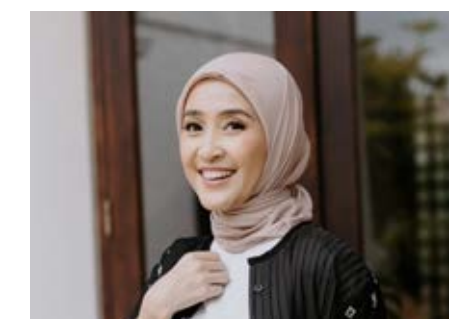
"You don't need to start with the riskiest tools to build wealth. Sustainable investing depends on diversification, discipline, and patience—not on hype or viral trends."

— **Prita Ghozie**, Financial Planner & CEO of Zapfinance

5 Investment Platforms Reshaping How Young Indonesians Build Wealth

Bibit
Popular among first-time investors for its intuitive robo-advisory and goal-based investing model.

Ajaib
Known for its easy onboarding and stock-trading features tailored for Gen Z and Millennial users.

Bareksa
A pioneer in mutual fund marketplaces, integrating government bonds and Sharia-compliant options.

Pluang
Offers a diversified gateway into gold, crypto, and U.S. stocks—catering to risk-tolerant digital natives.

Stockbit
Blends investing with community-driven insights, making stock discussions part of the experience.

Financial Literacy vs. Financial Inclusion

Access is no longer the barrier. Understanding is. And for many first-time earners and borrowers, the gap between the two can be financially devastating. But a closer look reveals a critical gap: That 10-point discrepancy isn't just a statistical footnote—it signals a growing vulnerability, especially among younger generations navigating complex financial decisions for the first time.

75% of Indonesians have financial access—but only 65% have the literacy to use those tools well (OJK, 2024)
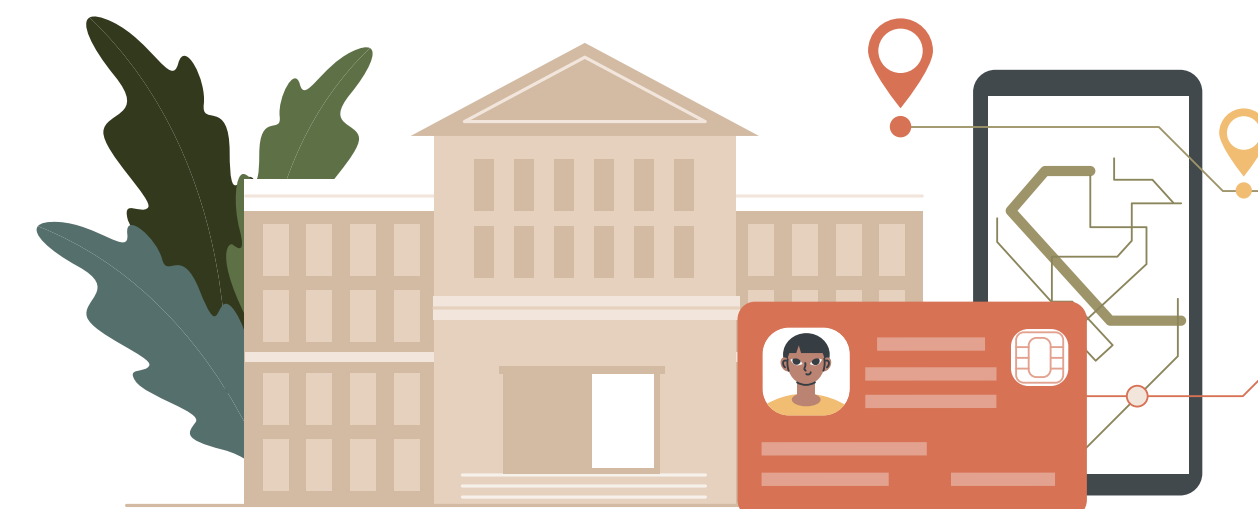
In today's world, opening a digital bank account takes minutes, and Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) options are seamlessly integrated into online checkout flows. Access, once the main hurdle, is no longer the primary challenge—understanding is. Without basic financial knowledge, tools designed to empower can easily backfire. Rising debt, misuse of credit, and overconfidence often stem not from recklessness, but from a lack of education and guidance.

> "Social media is where young people are learning about money. That's the reality. But if we want long-term financial resilience, content alone isn't enough—we need critical thinking, structure, and regulation."
>
> — **Rumman Amanda**, Business Partner of Allianz Indonesia

This landscape has sparked a new wave of educators—financial influencers, fintech platforms, and advocates—working not just to inform but to change behavior. They are shifting the conversation away from quick, viral tips and toward ethical, accurate, and culturally relevant education. True financial empowerment isn't measured by how many people can open an account; it's measured by how many can manage it wisely, plan sustainably, and make decisions with confidence. Looking ahead, the real measure of Indonesia's financial progress won't be access alone—it will be whether access is paired with literacy, accountability, and lasting trust.

The Role of Financial Influencers and Digital Learning
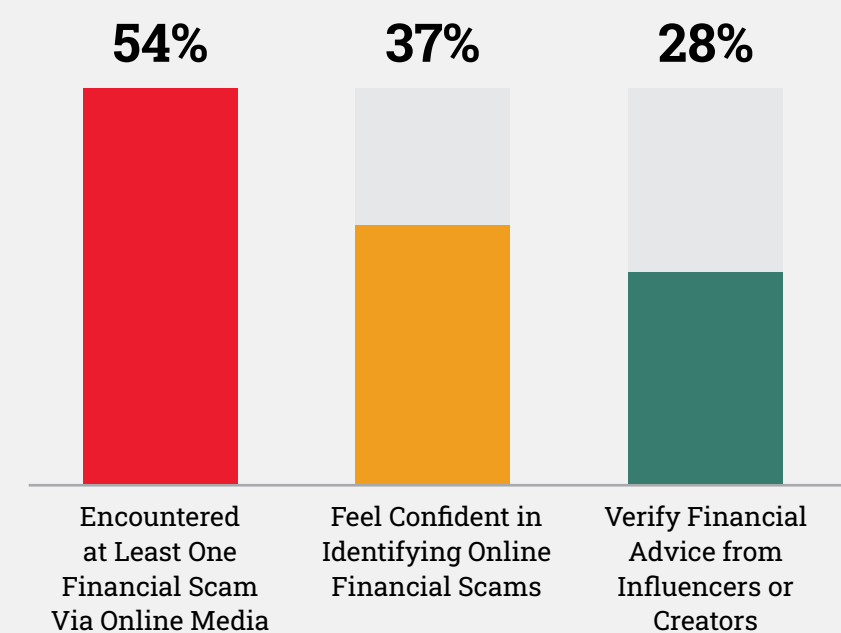## Ethical Influence and Measurable Impact

Influencers are becoming the new financial gatekeepers—but with that influence comes risk, especially when guidance is unverified, emotional, or commercialized. Yet with this accessibility comes heightened vulnerability. Today, 54% of Gen Z and Millennial Indonesians report encountering at least one financial scam on social media—ranging from fake investment schemes to misleading influencer endorsements. This growing exposure signals a widening trust gap, especially in a digital landscape where financial influencers often wield more persuasive power than traditional institutions.

54% of Gen Z and Millennial Indonesians report encountering at least 1 financial scam on social media

Despite their digital fluency, many young Indonesians struggle with the emotional regulation and critical thinking needed to navigate financial risks online. Only 37% feel confident spotting financial scams, and just 28% consistently verify the advice they receive from influencers or content creators. This highlights a crucial gap: what's lacking isn't just access to financial tools, but a deeper kind of financial literacy—one built on skepticism, discernment, and emotional awareness.

Digital Trust and Financial Scams: Risk Awareness Among Gen Z and Millennials

- 54% — Encountered at Least One Financial Scam Via Online Media
- 37% — Feel Confident in Identifying Online Financial Scams
- 28% — Verify Financial Advice from Influencers or Creators

Financial literacy today is no longer just about understanding numbers—it's about understanding motives, emotions, and the mechanics behind what shows up in your feed.

For a generation raised in an on-demand economy, digital platforms have become the go-to source for financial knowledge. From budgeting hacks on TikTok to investment tips on Instagram Reels, Millennials and Gen Z increasingly turn to content creators—not traditional institutions—for guidance on managing their money.
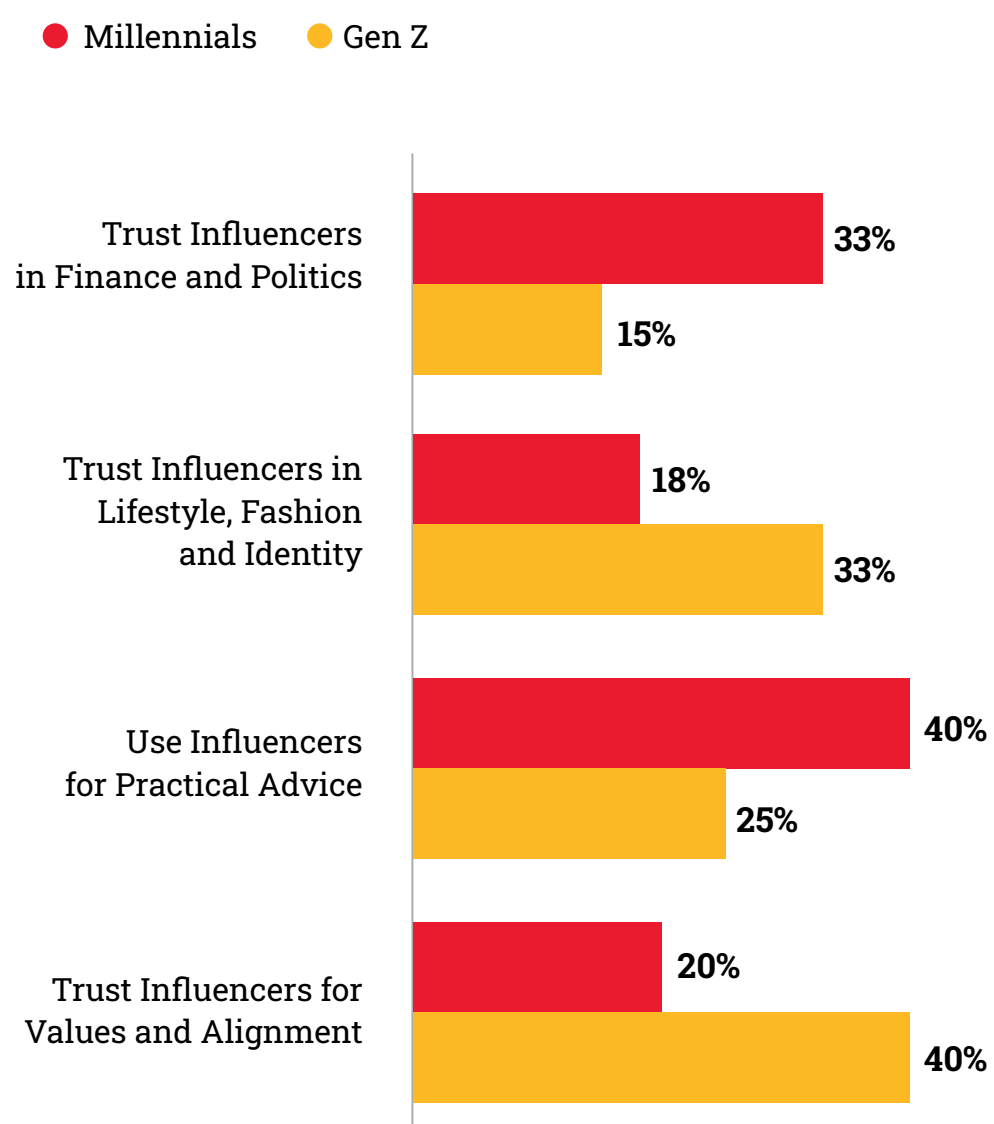
This shift has democratized financial education but also opened the door to new risks. Without regulatory oversight, misleading advice, oversimplified strategies, and aggressive investment promotions can spread unchecked, leaving young audiences exposed to harm.

As the digital economy evolves, so too does the way younger generations seek knowledge, guidance, and inspiration. Today, both Millennials and Gen Z report equal levels of trust (33%) in content creators—but the types of content they gravitate toward reflect different life contexts, not differing levels of seriousness.

Millennials often turn to '*financialfluencers*' for insights into finance and politics—topics that mirror their current life priorities: building assets, navigating family planning, managing debt, or preparing for long-term stability. For this generation, influencers serve as strategic guides—translating complex systems into actionable knowledge that supports growth in an increasingly high-stakes economy.

Millennials and Gen Z trust influencers at equal levels (33%), but Millennials focus on finance and politics, while Gen Z leans into lifestyle and identity.

How Millennials and Gen Z Use Influencers

- ● Millennials
- ● Gen Z

Category	Millennials	Gen Z
Trust Influencers in Finance and Politics	33%	15%
Trust Influencers in Lifestyle, Fashion and Identity	18%	33%
Use Influencers for Practical Advice	40%	25%
Trust Influencers for Values and Alignment	20%	40%

Gen Z, on the other hand, places equal trust in influencers focused on lifestyle, fashion, and identity. Far from being superficial, this trust reflects how Gen Z makes meaningful decisions about where and how they spend. Whether it's selecting sustainable brands, crafting personal style, or supporting creators aligned with their values, Gen Z uses influence to navigate the emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of modern life. Their spending is attuned towards a more expressive, purposeful, and identity-driven.

Rather than a divide, this generational distinction reveals the flexibility and power of creator influence: it adapts to serve the most immediate needs of its audience. Millennials seek clarity and optimization; Gen Z seeks expression and alignment. In both cases, influence empowers individuals to make intentional, informed choices—on their own terms.

The chart on the left illustrates this parallel trust in creators, driven by relevance, not hierarchy—underscoring that influence, when grounded in authenticity, can inspire purpose in many forms.

AI Tools and the Automation of Advice

Parallel to the rise of influencers is the increasing use of AI-driven personal finance tools. Budgeting apps, robo-advisors, and auto-saving platforms now offer real-time, personalized financial planning. These innovations simplify decision-making and reduce friction, particularly for users without formal financial education.

But automation has limits. Predictive analytics cannot fully account for emotional spending, structural inequality, or the nuances of individual financial goals. Over-reliance on algorithmic recommendations, especially without critical literacy, risks creating a generation of users who follow advice without understanding the rationale behind it.
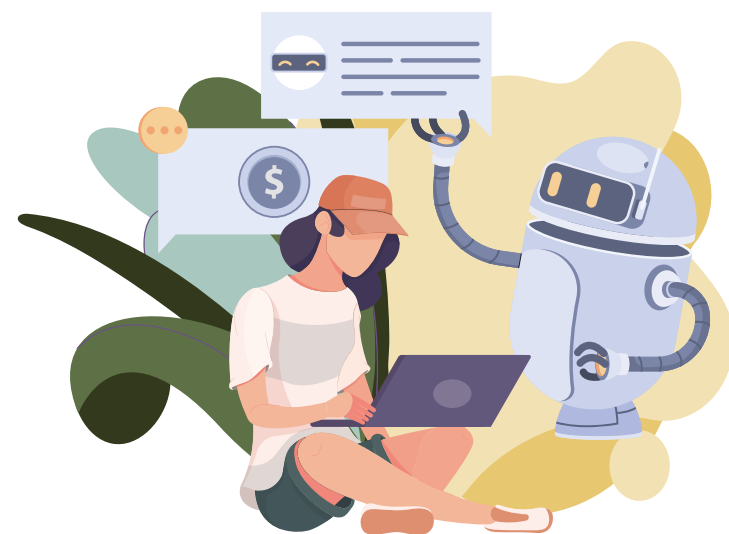
From Legacy to Lifestyle: Flexible, Modular Insurance

The insurance landscape in Indonesia is undergoing a significant structural transition. Once positioned as a long-term security tool bundled with employment benefits, insurance is now being redefined by a younger generation that favors autonomy, real-time relevance, and flexibility over rigid, multi-decade commitments.

88% of Indonesians now have some form of health insurance

Modular and Lifestyle-Based Coverage

However, today Millennials and Gen Z are shifting focus—from long-term policies to :

Modular Coverage

Offers flexibility by allowing you to build your coverage piece by piece, adding or subtracting specific features or coverages to match your needs.

Lifestyle Based Coverage

Aims to provide comprehensive protection based on your lifestyle choices, such as your profession, hobbies, or family structure.

Millennials and Gen Z are less interested in static life or retirement plans and more drawn to modular protection—coverage that adapts to short-term risks, lifestyle needs, and digital convenience. Allianz Indonesia has observed growing uptake in microinsurance products for travel, personal electronics, and short-duration health risks. These choices signal a move away from traditional asset preservation toward daily risk management.

> **"Gen Z doesn't want to be locked into something they don't fully understand. Flexibility and clarity are non-negotiable."**
>
> — **Rumman Amanda**, Business Partner of Allianz Indonesia

Digital Transformation and Transparency

Allianz

Allianz's Flexi Medical is one such product that embodies this shift. The plan is customizable and pay-as-you-go, tailored for mobile-first users who prioritize value, simplicity, and immediacy. Since 2020, the company has eliminated all handwritten policies, adopting 100% paperless enrollment and issuing digital insurance cards (e-Cards). With features like EzCharge, users can access cashless claims quickly—meeting the real-time service expectations of a digitally fluent audience.

Despite improved access, the industry still contends with gaps in insurance literacy. Many users misunderstand basic components—such as waiting periods, eligibility criteria, or claim submission protocols—which often leads to disputes and rejected claims. Allianz addresses these issues through AI-powered guidance tools, simplified language, and structured onboarding—but the root issue remains: digital access does not guarantee comprehension.

"We can't assume that digital equals understood. Making insurance accessible is not enough—making it clear and contextual is just as critical."

To strengthen user support, Allianz also redesigned its servicing model to avoid the widely reported "disappearing agent" problem, particularly in bank-distributed insurance. By deploying a team-based servicing approach, clients now have multiple points of contact throughout their policy lifecycle—ensuring continuity, accountability, and trust, especially for younger consumers wary of financial institutions.

Gen Z now makes up 41% of Allianz's agency force—16,000 agents strong. Together with Millennials, they drive 68% of the company's annualized premium contributions.

On the distribution side, Allianz is also experiencing generational change within its workforce. This demonstrates that the same generation transforming consumer behavior is also actively reshaping the profession itself. These agents are trained not only to sell, but to function as long-term financial partners to their peers, equipped with tools, weekly SOP-based training, and a consultative approach rooted in user understanding.

"We're seeing young professionals enter insurance not just for the earnings, but for the ownership it offers. They're not just selling—they're growing with their clients."

The regulatory environment has also accelerated the need for clarity and inclusion. Under OJK Regulation 36/2024, insurers can now participate in government-backed guarantee schemes—expanding reach to underserved sectors while being held to tighter compliance standards. For Allianz, this has meant faster digital claims processing, more transparent disclosures, and broader integration of consumer education initiatives.

These developments point to a broader industry inflection point. Insurance is no longer a passive financial product sold for future protection. For Millennials and Gen Z, it is becoming an active lifestyle enabler—a tool to manage uncertainty in real-time, shaped by personal choice, digital access, and trust in the system. To remain relevant, insurers must move from legacy to lifestyle, embedding modularity, transparency, and education into every layer of their offering.

The Rise of Mindful and Value-Driven Consumption

Minimalism and Emotional Resilience

In a world overflowing with noise, consumption has become more than a transaction—it's a decision about energy, identity, and emotional clarity. In the face of rising living costs, digital saturation, and relentless algorithmic nudges to consume, young Indonesians are rethinking what it means to spend. Nearly half (49%) of urban Gen Z say they have intentionally reduced their spending—not merely to save money, but to "mentally declutter." In this context, restraint is not seen as scarcity, but as a form of self-possession and control in a world that rarely slows down.

49% of urban Gen Z say they've intentionally reduced spending—not just to save, but to 'mentally declutter.'

This intentionality goes beyond budgeting apps and account balances. About 36% of Gen Z report canceling subscriptions or engaging in digital detox practices as part of their financial routine, explicitly linking their mental wellness with their spending behavior. These are not one-off actions—they are recurring rituals of clarity. For Gen Z, minimalism becomes a quiet but powerful form of resistance: a way to push back against noise, excess, and the emotional drain of unconscious consumption.

"Minimalism isn't about having less—it's about making space for what truly matters. Every financial decision becomes a reflection of values and priorities."

— **Cynthia Suci Lestari**, Minimalist & Sustainability Advocate

Conscious Consumption & The Rise of Value-Driven Spending

When faced with economic uncertainty, older youth show stronger reflexes to restrict spending, hinting at how past shocks have shaped their financial instincts. What once felt like sacrifice is now being reframed as intentionality. Budgeting is no longer just a financial strategy; it's a values-based lifestyle choice.

This shift is most visible in how younger generations respond to impulse culture. Rather than defaulting to doom spending driven by anxiety or FOMO, they're choosing to spend with purpose. 50% of respondents cited "eating out and impulse shopping" as the first things they cut when tightening their budgets with Millennials (54%) more likely to do so than Gen Z (46%), likely due to deeper economic scars.
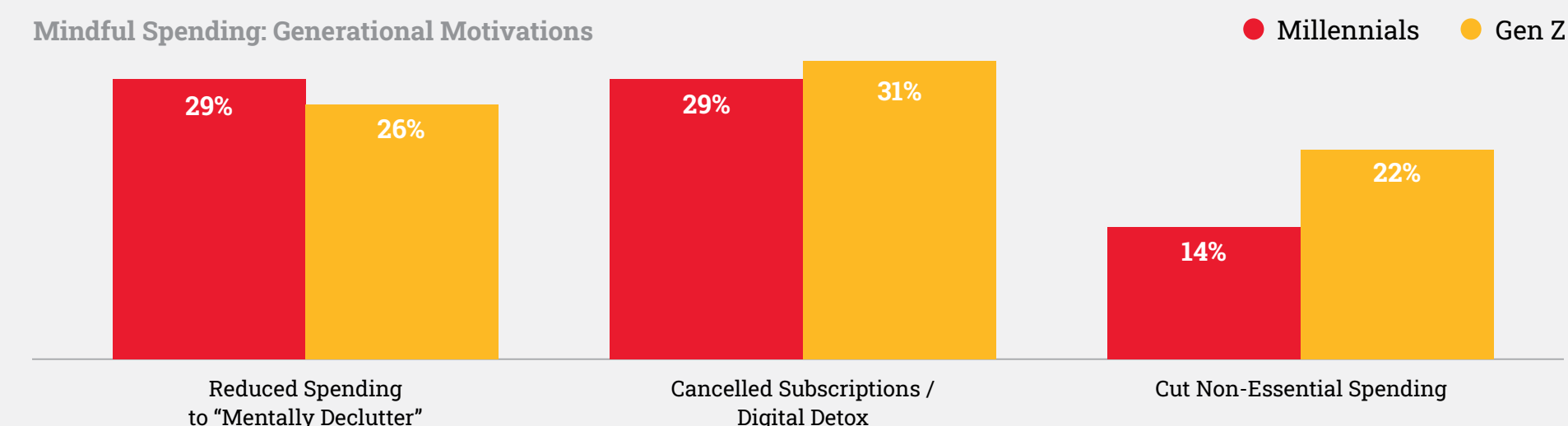
Cutting Back on Eating Out and Impulse Shopping

Millennials	Gen Z
54%	46%
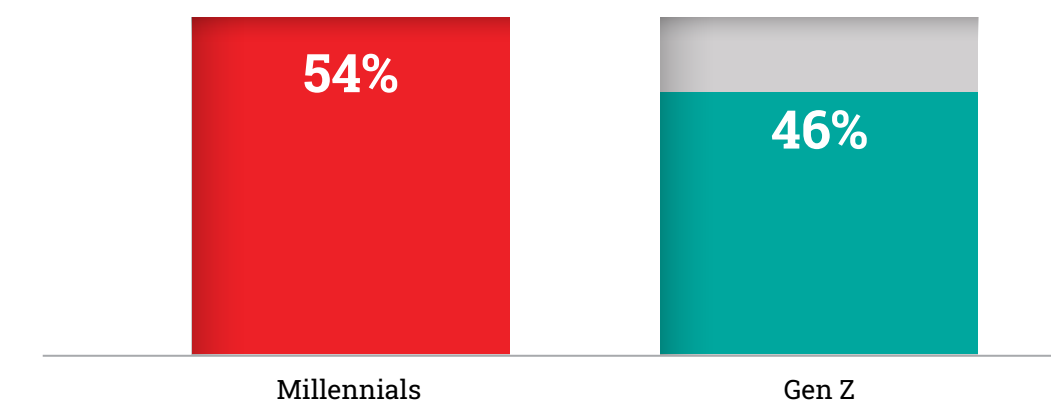
Millennials tend to adjust more defensively due to memories of instability, while Gen Z is still negotiating between emotional release and financial restraint. But behind what they cut lies an even deeper meaning on what each generation chooses to eliminate reflects the kind of clarity they're trying to preserve.

Millennials reduce spending to regain control and simplicity as part of a broader push for emotional clarity. Gen Z, in contrast, is detaching from non-essential consumption as a way to protect experience-based joy and avoid burnout.

Mindful Spending: Generational Motivations   ● Millennials ● Gen Z

	Millennials	Gen Z
Reduced Spending to "Mentally Declutter"	29%	26%
Cancelled Subscriptions / Digital Detox	29%	31%
Cut Non-Essential Spending	14%	22%

But behind what they cut lies an even deeper divergence, what each generation chooses to eliminate reflects the kind of clarity they're trying to preserve.

This evolving mindset has made frugality aspirational. From TikTok's cash-stuffing trend to slow-consumption influencers, financial restraint has become a form of cultural expression. It's not about buying less, it's about buying right.

For Millennials, that means protecting against instability with disciplined structure.

For Gen Z, it's about spending in ways that reflect who they are by aligning purchases with peace of mind, clarity, and meaning.
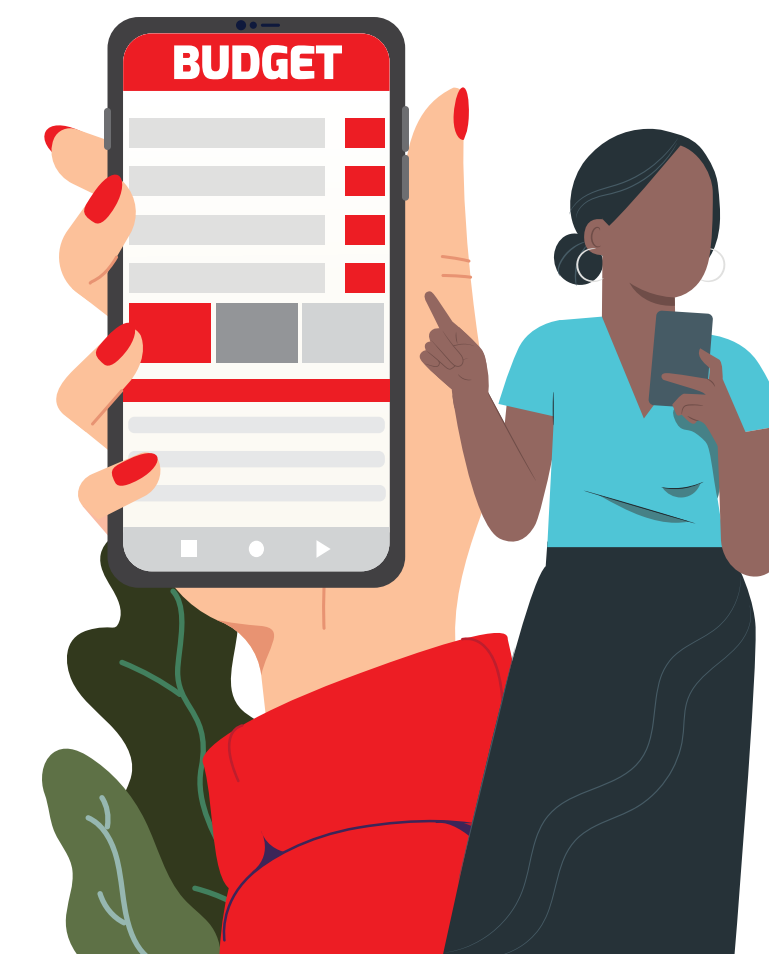
These values are also transforming how young Indonesians evaluate brands. Purchases are no longer driven solely by price or popularity, but by deeper criteria:

Durability and utility

Sustainability and ethical production

Transparency and brand values

Ultimately, for today's youth, money is not just a medium of transaction, but rather, it's a tool for self-expression. The rise of conscious consumption reveals a powerful insight: the new financial maturity is measured not in how much you spend, but in why you spend at all.

Financial Empowerment Through Entrepreneurship

Side Jobs & Entrepreneurship as Autonomy and Survival

Financial restraint is only one half of the story. The other half is income generation whereby side hustles and small ventures have become a blueprint for self-reliance. Today's youth are not just hustling to survive, they do it because they're actively redesigning their financial futures.

Why They Work Side Jobs: Financial Priorities Among Youth

| 63%	60%	46%
Support Family Finances	Build Personal Savings	Increase Income (Side Jobs / Freelance)
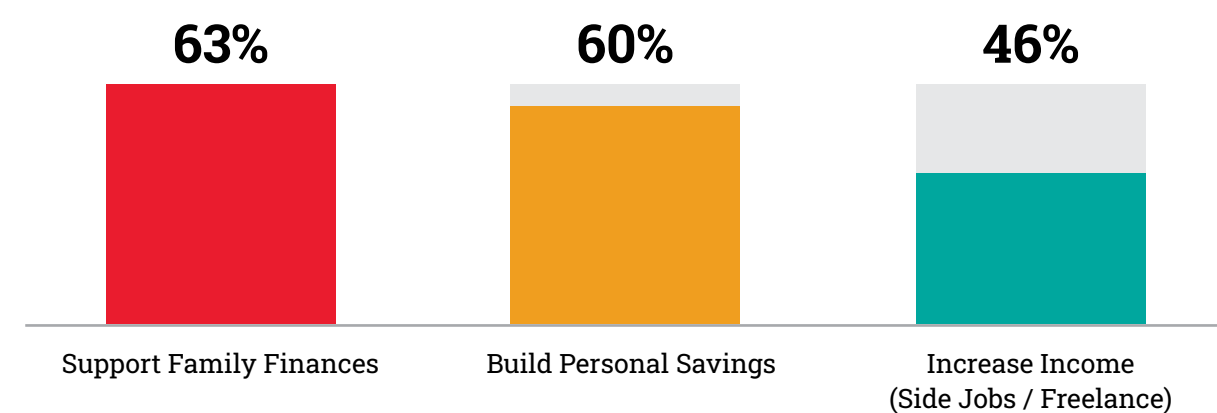
According to our survey, 46% of Indonesian youth engage in side jobs or freelance work. But this isn't simply about making extra cash—it's about responsibility and long-term goals. 63% say they do it to support their families. 60% cite building personal savings. The data reveals a layered picture: side jobs aren't just economic quick fixes, they're core to how youth balance family support, independence, and foresight.

How Youth Manage Their Finances Today

61%	43%	36%
Cut Non-Essential Expenses	Track Budgets Regularly	Use Side Jobs for Planned Purchases

What's most striking is how side gigs fit into a broader financial strategy. These roles are not isolated efforts but part of a larger, more mindful ecosystem of financial behavior.
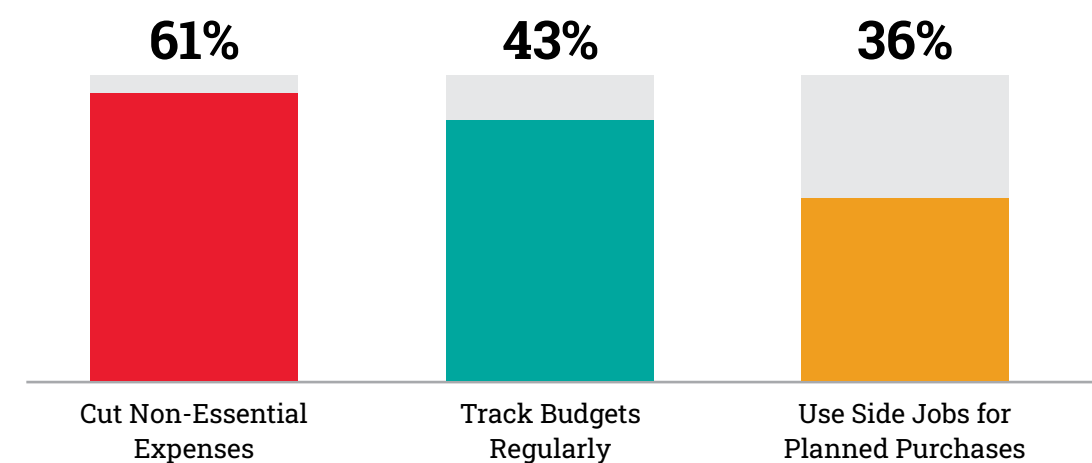
Young Indonesians are planning with purpose, adopting practical strategies that go beyond daily budgeting. A significant **61% report cutting back on non-essential expenses** as a foundational habit to stay financially resilient. Meanwhile, **43% make it a point to track their budgets regularly**, reinforcing discipline and financial awareness. Importantly, **36% use side job earnings not for splurging, but for planned high-ticket purchases**—such as electronics, education, or housing down payments—demonstrating a shift toward intentional, long-term financial planning.

36%
of Millennials and Gen Z
use side job earnings for planned, high-ticket purchases (e.g. electronics, education, housing)

This reflects a clear trend: income generation is not impulse-driven, it's planning-driven instead. In a time of rising costs, stagnant wages, and limited job security, entrepreneurship has shifted from aspiration to necessity. For many, formal employment no longer guarantees stability or mobility. Side jobs and startups provide what traditional jobs often don't:

Flexibility

Agency

Value alignment

Due to the growth of the digital economy, launching a business has never been more accessible. Platforms like e-commerce, peer-to-peer lending, mobile payments, and social media have lowered the barriers to entry—even for youth outside Jakarta. From F&B pop-ups in rural areas to agriculture tech in secondary cities, young people are creating income streams that are personal, local, and scalable.

This shift isn't just about profit, for many, it's about purpose. Many young entrepreneurs are building ventures rooted in community, sustainability, or cultural identity. In doing so, they redefine what economic activity looks like: Not just something to survive on, but something that reflects who they are. For Indonesia's youth, side jobs and entrepreneurship are no longer alternatives to employment. They're the new default path toward security, autonomy, and meaningful work. They're not just hustling to survive, they're designing a life.

Access Gaps and Structural Risks

Despite digital platforms lowering entry barriers, structural challenges persist. Many young entrepreneurs still lack:

Limited access to financial literacy, including budgeting, risk management, and debt handling

Lack of mentorship and business networks, particularly outside urban areas

Inconsistent digital access, especially in regions where connectivity and digital banking infrastructure remain underdeveloped

These challenges hinder the scale, stability, and long-term viability of youth-led ventures. In rural areas, for example, despite the growth of fintech platforms, gaps in broadband coverage and banking penetration continue to constrain financial inclusion and market reach.

Ethical Finance and Institutional Trust
Purpose-Driven Finance and Faith-Based Goals

For today's Millennials and Gen Z, finance is no longer just about wealth—it's about worth. A growing number of young Indonesians are rethinking how money fits into their lives, not just as a tool for transactions, but as an extension of their ethics, identity, and long-term purpose. Their expectations of financial institutions are evolving. Products must not only deliver function, but reflect values.

"Financial maturity is not about how much you own, it's about how well your money reflects your values."

— **Astri Yunfia**, Group Head Digital Banking Retail, Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI)

This shift is behavioral and deeply psychological. Millennials and Gen Z weigh ethical alignment as much as convenience. For many, this means gravitating toward banks, savings tools, and investment options that embody transparency, sustainability, and fairness. One clear example is the growing interest in syariah-compliant finance—seen not just as religious adherence, but as a system that offers moral clarity.

In Indonesia, this has real cultural traction. Long-term goals like **Umrah** and **Hajj** aren't just spiritual milestones; they're motivational structures that encourage discipline, goal-setting, and delayed gratification. They help young people move from abstract faith to concrete planning, creating a sense of both emotional and financial fulfillment.

"Faith-based goals like Umrah or Hajj require both intention and discipline. When young people commit to these long-term plans, they begin practicing structured saving, currency hedging, and clearer financial boundaries—all of which improve their overall financial health."

— **Prita Ghozie**, Financial Planner & CEO Zapfinance

Faith-Based Finance: Interest VS Understanding

Interested in Sharia-Compilant Finance	Understand How it Works
65%	39%
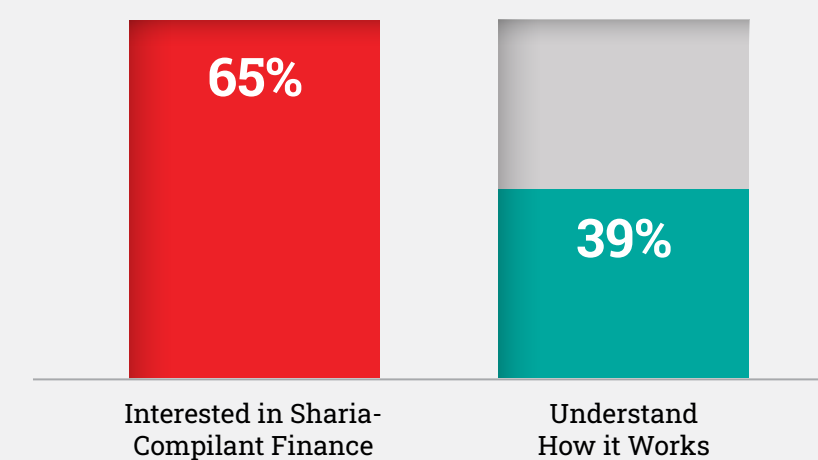
Strong interest meets a knowledge gap. While 65% of young Indonesians express interest in syariah-compliant finance, only 39% say they understand how it works. This highlights the need for more accessible education and purpose-first tools.

This mismatch between interest and understanding reflects a broader trend. While purpose-driven finance appeals to younger generations, many still feel ill-equipped to navigate the systems that offer it. Financial institutions must bridge this gap through content, context, and community—making finance not just inclusive but intuitive.

Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI) stands at the forefront of this movement. Rather than marketing syariah banking as exclusive or religious, BSI positions it as a universal model of ethical finance. Its foundation—no speculative investment, profit-and-loss sharing, full contract transparency—aligns with the justice-oriented mindset of young consumers.

"Shariah isn't about conversion, it's about contracts. Shariah finance isn't about religious conversion only, much of it is about ethical conviction. At its core, it offers a contract-based system built on transparency, fairness, and shared responsibility. It's a values-driven model designed not to exclude, but to empower anyone seeking clarity and trust in how their money is managed."

— **Astri Yunfia**, Group Head Digital Banking Retail, Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI)

This approach works: as of March 2025, 12.48% of BSI customers were non-Muslim, drawn by the model's transparency and fairness.

12.48% of BSI users in 2025 were non-Muslim, showing strong cross-faith appeal for ethical finance.

Spiritual Goals as Financial Discipline

BSI's digital-first features, like Tabungan Haji and its upcoming BYOND Life app, make spiritual saving seamless. Users can track savings progress, plan Umrah, and even secure Hajj slots, all digitally. This gives long-term spiritual aspirations a modern structure.

"Saving for Hajj isn't just a ritual—it's a deeply personal roadmap that shapes how young people plan, prioritize, and commit to their future. It teaches discipline, goal-setting, and financial responsibility, while grounding each step in spiritual meaning. For many, it's the first time money becomes more than a tool, it becomes a reflection of faith, purpose, and long-term intention."

— **Astri Yunfia**, Group Head Digital Banking Retail, Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI)

In March 2025, 88.54% of new Hajj savings accounts were opened digitally—showing how faith and tech can work hand in hand.

88.54% of new Hajj accounts were opened in BSI digitally
(March 2025)

When Products Reflect People

Millennials and Gen Z no longer compartmentalize their beliefs, habits, or spending. They want financial platforms that reflect their entire selves. This is why BSI's BYOND app integrates spiritual services (prayer times, zakat calculators) alongside practical needs (bill pay, digital cash, gold saving). It's not just a bank app, it's a lifestyle hub that aligns with how young people see and shape their future.

Gold, in particular, has become an emotional asset class. Long seen as stable, it's now also viewed as faith-aligned and symbolic. BSI's gold installment accounts saw a 168.84% year-on-year growth in 2025, not just from market volatility, but from what gold now represents: permanence, protection, and piety.

BSI experienced +168.84% YoY growth in gold installment accounts

Trust Is the New Currency

In a world of scams and surface-level marketing, Gen Z doesn't just trust big brands, they trust value alignment.

That's why BSI's broader impact matters:

IDR 14.66 trillion
in green financing

IDR 57.97 trillion
in social financing
(March 2025)

These numbers aren't optics as they reflect intention in action.

"For this generation, return on investment isn't just measured in profit, it's measured in purpose. Every financial decision is a reflection of their identity, values, and long-term vision. They're not just managing money, they're using it to express who they are and what they stand for."
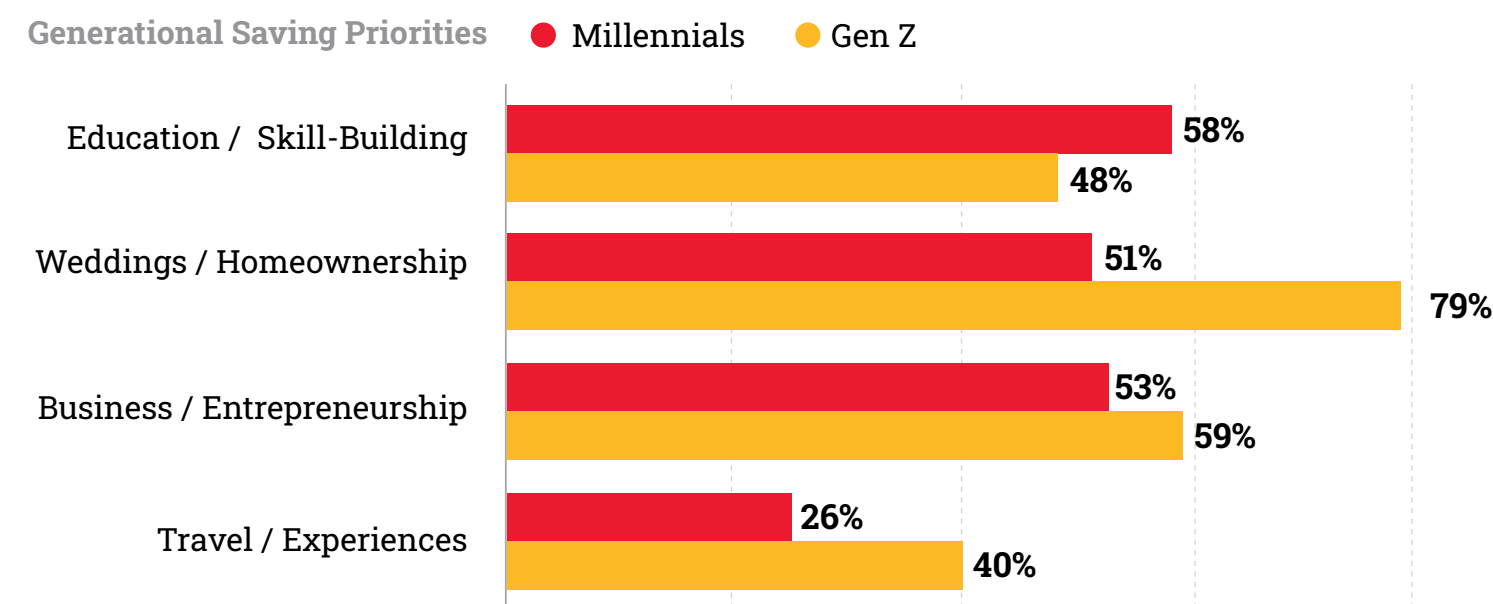
— **Astri Yunfia**, Group Head Digital Banking Retail, Bank Syariah Indonesia (BSI)

This isn't just a trend, it's the new baseline. Financial brands that can't align with values will struggle to stay relevant. Because for young Indonesians, what something stands for is just as important as what it offers.

Generational Shifts in Saving Priorities

Saving behavior among Indonesia's youth is no longer just a matter of financial discipline, it's an expression of identity, values, and emotional alignment. As the meaning of "security" evolves, so too do the goals behind saving.

Generational Saving Priorities ● Millennials ● Gen Z

	Millennials	Gen Z
Education / Skill-Building	58%	48%
Weddings / Homeownership	51%	79%
Business / Entrepreneurship	53%	59%
Travel / Experiences	26%	40%

Millennials, shaped by economic caution and long-term pragmatism, continue to prioritize future stability. 58% save for education or skill-building, reflecting their investment in structured growth and resilience.

Gen Z, on the other hand, leans toward emotionally resonant goals. A striking 79% save for weddings or homeownership, a major leap from 51% of Millennials. These aren't just traditional milestones for Gen Z as the data symbolize belonging, autonomy, and life on their own terms.

This generational divide also shows up in business and lifestyle ambitions:

59% of Gen Z are saving for entrepreneurship or starting a business, compared to 53% of Millennials.

And when it comes to travel and experiences, **Gen Z outpaces Millennials 40% to 26%**—a signal that self-expression and memory-making carry weight in how they define a well-lived life.

Taken together, these patterns mark a transition from pragmatic to purpose-driven saving. For Millennials, saving is a strategy of protection. For Gen Z, it's an act of self-definition by blending financial responsibility with mobility, fulfillment, and emotional meaning.

Demands for Accountability and Systemic Change

As Millennials and Gen Z become more financially engaged, they aren't just asking for better products—they are demanding accountability and systemic reform.

This generation expects financial institutions to offer clearer communication, ethical governance, inclusive design, and environmental responsibility. They want products built for long-term impact, not short-term profit.

What Young Indonesians Expect from Financial Institutions

| Transparent Fees	Ethical Governance	Inclusive Products	Environmental Responsibility
65%	55%	50%	45%
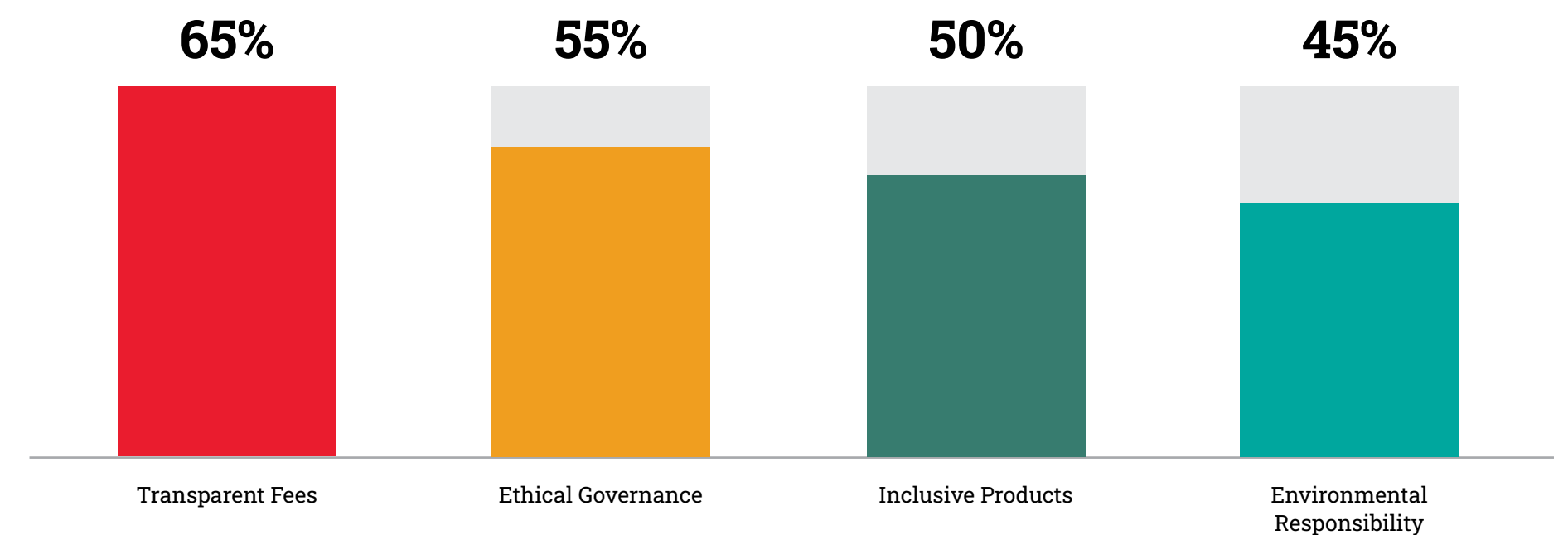
Regulating Digital Credit

Buy Now, Pay Later and the New Risks of Easy Credit

The surge of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) platforms in Indonesia has changed how younger generations navigate money—offering flexibility, but also exposing new vulnerabilities. These services, which allow users to delay or spread out payments, have made credit more accessible—but also more invisible. And that's where the risk begins.
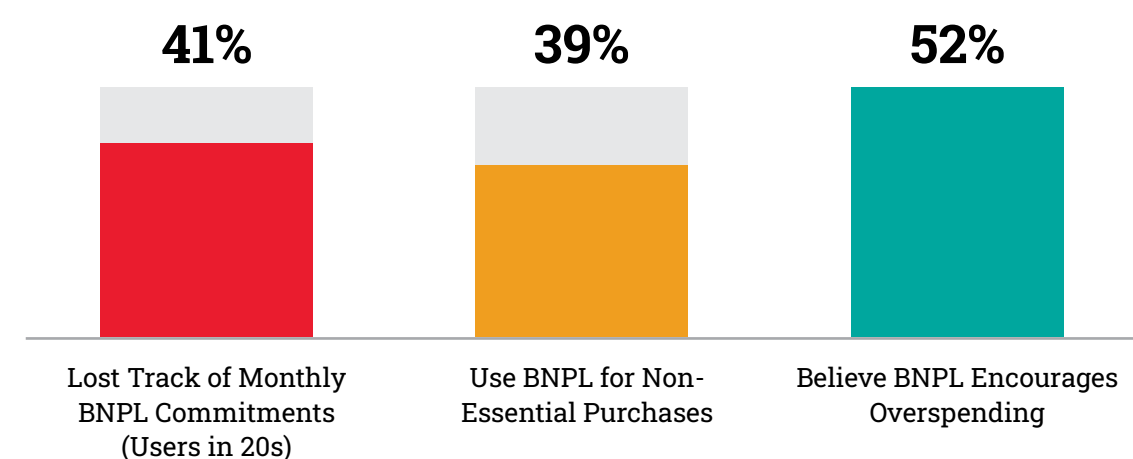
Despite the boom in Buy Now, Pay Later, only 26% of Gen Z express concern about its risks—compared to 34% of Millennials.

% Concerned About BNPL Risks

34% Millennials
26% Gen Z
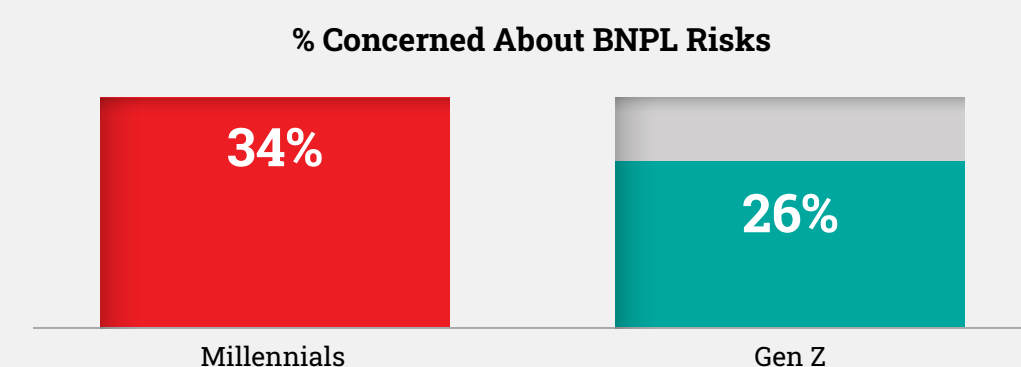
Despite BNPL's popularity, young Indonesians are beginning to question its long-term consequences. Just 26% of Gen Z respondents express concern about the risks, compared to 34% of Millennials. While flexible payment schemes are widely used, the level of critical awareness—especially among Gen Z—remains relatively low given the platform's growing reach.

The concern gap isn't about confidence, it's about normalization. For many Gen Z users, BNPL has become a survival tool in a volatile economy. Platforms like Shopee PayLater, GoPayLater, Kredivo, and Akulaku offer low-friction borrowing with minimal checks. But with ease comes opacity in terms of the repayment terms, late fees, and hidden charges often go unnoticed. This has created a debt landscape where the danger is not always visible but deeply felt.

BNPL Use and Invinsible Spending Among Indonesian Youth

41% — Lost Track of Monthly BNPL Commitments (Users in 20s)

39% — Use BNPL for Non-Essential Purchases

52% — Believe BNPL Encourages Overspending

These numbers reveal a new financial norm, one where convenience masks risk, and spending is disconnected from visibility. As BNPL continues to expand its reach, it's no longer just a consumer convenience—it's a test of financial fairness and policy readiness. To ensure this convenience doesn't become a trap, Indonesia must move toward:
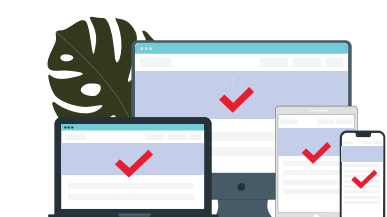
Building digital financial literacy, especially around short-term debt.

Setting clear user protections and repayment boundaries.

Strengthening regulation to safeguard against predatory practices.

Without proactive safeguards, the line between financial empowerment and financial erosion will only get thinner.

Regulatory Interventions and Guardrails

To address these risks, Indonesia's Financial Services Authority (OJK) plans to introduce stricter BNPL regulations in 2027, which will likely include:

Stricter eligibility and risk assessment

Clearer disclosure of repayment terms and fees

Limits on maximum borrowing amounts

Enhanced user protections against predatory practices

These measures aim to curb high-risk borrowing, reduce debt accumulation, and promote responsible credit use—particularly among younger users who are still developing long-term financial habits.

However, these safeguards come with trade-offs. Tighter eligibility rules may restrict access to credit for people who genuinely depend on BNPL for essentials like groceries, transportation, or medical needs. For many low-income Millennials and Gen Z, BNPL has become not just a spending tool, but a lifeline for cashflow management in the absence of formal credit options.
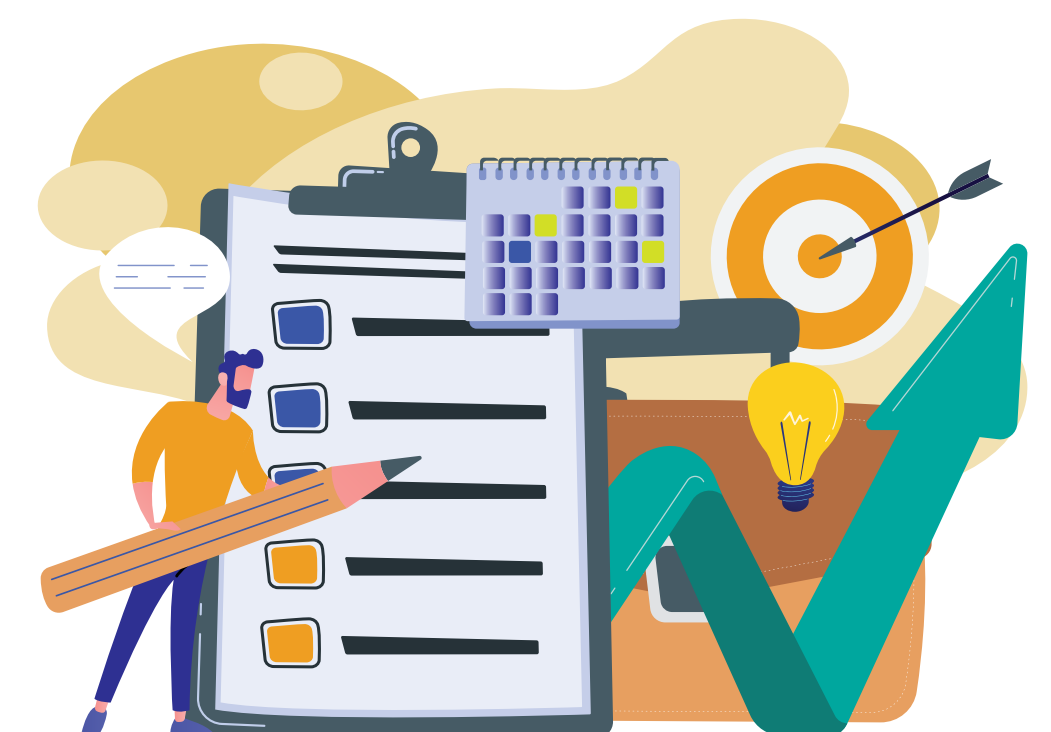
"BNPL isn't inherently dangerous—but using it without a clear repayment plan turns convenience into crisis. The habit of relying on credit for everyday needs signals deeper gaps in financial planning and self-awareness."

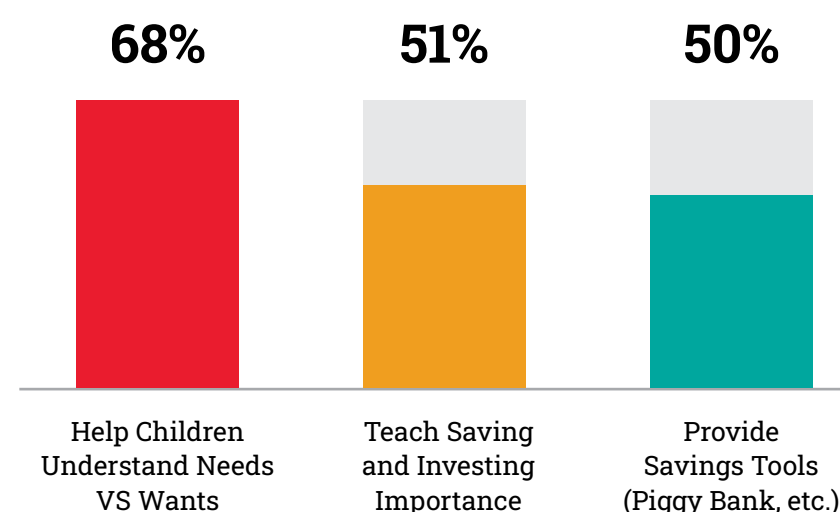— **Prita Ghozie,** Financial Planner & CEO Zapfinance

What makes BNPL riskier than traditional credit isn't just the speed of approval—it's the lack of long-term accountability. Many users remain unaware of cumulative interest rates, penalty fees, or the impact of missed payments on their credit scores. In a landscape where financial literacy is uneven and where repayment terms are often buried in app interfaces, BNPL can escalate quickly from utility to liability.

The Need for Financial Literacy and Transparency

As Indonesia's financial ecosystem becomes increasingly digital, the conversation around financial access must evolve. Access without education risks harm. Platforms, regulators, fintech firms, and digital literacy advocates must now align—not just to scale inclusion, but to build trust, understanding, and resilience.

The stakes are high. As credit becomes more platform-based and frictionless, the ability to swipe, borrow, or buy with a tap brings both opportunity and risk. In this environment, financial literacy must go beyond understanding interest rates. It must equip young Indonesians to recognize hidden fees, resist impulse purchases, and plan repayments before debt becomes a trap.

How Parents are Teaching Financial Values at Home

68%	51%	50%
Help Children Understand Needs VS Wants	Teach Saving and Investing Importance	Provide Savings Tools (Piggy Bank, etc.)

This urgency is even more apparent for parents raising Gen Alpha. According to our data, 38% of parents cite the rising cost of education, property, and basic needs as one of their biggest financial concerns for their children's future. In response, parents are stepping into the role of early financial educators. This signals a powerful shift: financial education is no longer being outsourced to schools or apps. Parents are embedding it into everyday life, through conversations, role modeling, and shared decision-making.

38% of parents say the rising cost of education, property, and basic needs is a major financial concern for their children's future, underscoring the urgency of embedding financial literacy from an early age.

This urgency is even more apparent for parents raising Gen Alpha. According to our data, 38% of parents cite the rising cost of education, property, and basic needs as one of their biggest financial concerns for their children's future. In response, parents are stepping into the role of early financial educators. This signals a powerful shift: financial education is no longer being outsourced to schools or apps. Parents are embedding it into everyday life—through conversations, role modeling, and shared decision-making.

Real financial decisions today are made digitally—inside apps, e-commerce checkouts, and mobile wallets. That's why in-app education must evolve too. Nudges, reminders, transparent terms, and clear repayment countdowns can transform passive users into informed decision-makers.

"The goal of financial literacy isn't just to inform—it's to equip people with the mindset and tools to pause, reflect, and make intentional choices, even in a fast-moving digital world. In a landscape where transactions happen in seconds and borrowing is just a tap away, true literacy means knowing when to say yes, when to delay, and when to walk away. It's about developing not just knowledge, but judgment. Financial literacy should build clarity, foster confidence, and ultimately protect people from decisions they might later regret—because in the digital era, empowerment begins with awareness."

— **Prita Ghozie**, Financial Planner & CEO Zapfinance

In this fast-paced landscape, trust is the new currency. Financial platforms that prioritize ethical design, clarity, and user education won't just protect users—they'll earn their long-term loyalty. Ultimately, the future of Indonesia's financial system won't be built on access alone. It will depend on accountability, education, and ethical transparency. A generation raised on screens doesn't just need credit—they need clarity. They need tools to make smart, sustainable financial decisions that serve them long after the tap, swipe, or buy.

From Coping to Recalibrating Finance with Purpose

Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia are not just weathering a tough financial climate but they're rewriting the rules of how to live meaningfully within it. While older generations may have pursued stability through traditional markers of success—home ownership, fixed careers, and long-term savings, today's youth are navigating a more precarious reality. And they're doing it with remarkable intentionality.

Millennials, often caught between economic turbulence and familial expectations, are blending pragmatism with principle. They've learned to stretch their resources, explore side hustles, and balance multiple roles and not out of luxury, but necessity. Gen Z, raised in the age of fintech and financial influencers, leans toward experimentation but also wrestles with the risks of a hyper-digital money landscape. Their literacy is growing, but so is the pressure to perform financially in a system that doesn't always support them.

What unites both generations is a clear desire to make money matter. Budgeting isn't just about numbers; it's about values. Whether through ethical consumption, mindful saving, or rejecting material excess, they are reframing financial choices as acts of identity and resistance. Profit without purpose no longer resonates.

This isn't a generation defined by lack, it's one defined by alignment. Their financial strategies reflect not just survival tactics, but the pursuit of autonomy, impact, and integrity. The systems around them will need to evolve just as quickly because these young Indonesians aren't just adapting to change, they're demanding better ways to thrive in it.
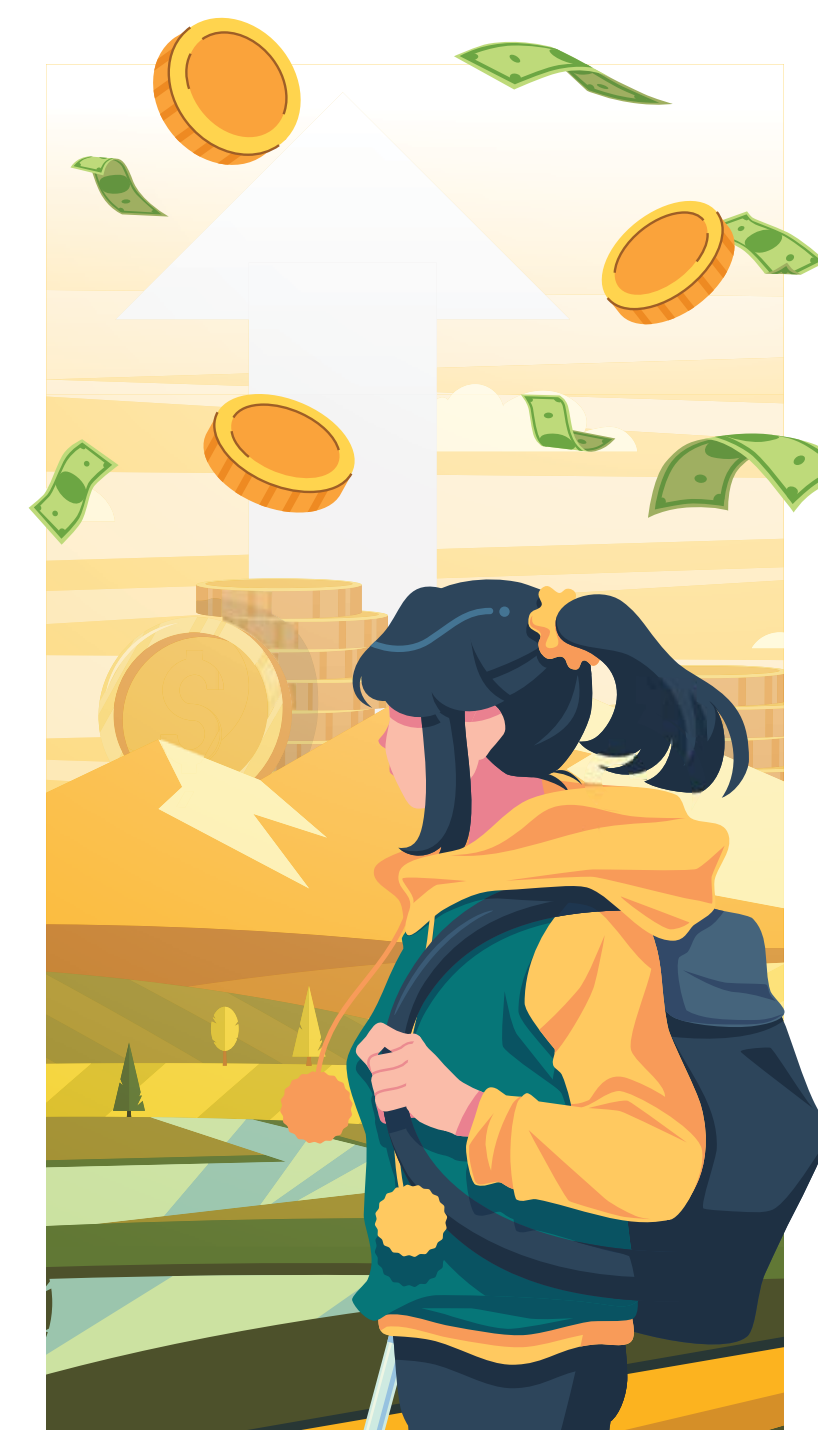
Chapter 3

Education and the Future of Work

Reframing Education for the Future

From Standardization to Personalization

Despite more students entering classrooms than ever before, Indonesia's education system continues to struggle in preparing them for the world they will face. While school enrollment rates have improved over the past decade, indicators of quality and equity remain inconsistent. According to PISA 2022, 75% of Indonesian 15-year-olds did not meet the minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, while 66% fell short in science. These results reflect more than academic shortcomings—they suggest that the system is still not responsive to the diverse needs and contexts of its students.

These outcomes reflect a structural issue: a system designed around uniformity, not learner diversity, while prioritizing standardization over personalization, and administrative compliance over contextual relevance.

The frustration runs deeper than low test scores; it's about a system that no longer fits the world these generations are entering.

"Access to education in Indonesia has come a long way. It's true that we've made real progress in terms of enrollment, school availability, and even digital outreach. But let's be honest, access alone isn't enough. We have to face a bigger issue that often gets overlooked — the quality and relevance of what we're actually teaching. Too many young people finish school and step into the real world completely unprepared. And it's not because they didn't try hard or lack ambition. It's because the system didn't meet them where they are.

When learning is too rigid, too standardized, and disconnected from real-life context, it can't equip students for a world full of complex, interdisciplinary problems and constant change. Education becomes more about compliance and passing exams, instead of sparking engagement, creativity, or civic participation. This happens all the way from early childhood education to university.

The good news is we're not starting from zero. Across Indonesia, hundreds of communities and organizations are already showing what works at the grassroots level. Nearly half of our teachers are under 40. That's a huge opportunity to reimagine the system from the inside, led by educators who get both the challenges and the potential of this generation.

But here's the catch. We can't expect meaningful change if we keep isolating and overloading these young teachers. What they need is real autonomy in the classroom, a sense of purpose that connects them to their students and communities, and the kind of professional development that nurtures both their skills and their passion. We can't rely on top-down mandates, one-off programs, or flashy tech solutions that only scratch the surface.

Real reform means rebuilding trust, rethinking roles, and realigning our goals so that both learners and educators can grow in ways that truly matter. Because in the end, it's not just about asking, 'Are our students going to school?' It's also about asking, 'Are they being seen for what they're truly capable of?'"

— **Najeela Shihab**,
Founder of Guru Belajar Foundation

These concerns are consistent across both generations, though their contexts differ. Gen Z, as digital natives, often express that what they learn in school does not align with the practical demands of their desired careers. The issue, for them, appears to be less about access and more about relevance and adaptability.

# Strengthening Foundational Skills

The Reading Proficiency Gap

Reading proficiency remains alarmingly low and it is not because of one single issue, but due to a web of overlapping barriers that start early and compound over time.

Limited Access to Reading Resources. Libraries and bookstores are few and far between, especially outside urban areas and often operate with limited hours and outdated collections.

Educational Inequality. Not all students have access to schools with adequate facilities, trained teachers, or literacy-focused curricula, putting many at a disadvantage from an early age.
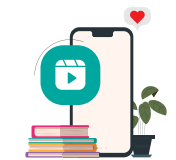
Digital Distraction Without Direction. In the absence of a reading habit, digital devices are often used for entertainment rather than learning, limiting their potential to support literacy.

Economic Constraints. The high cost of books, combined with low household incomes, makes reading materials a luxury rather than a household priority.

These barriers don't operate in isolation as they compound each other, making it harder to move beyond basic literacy and foster a lifelong love of reading. Addressing them requires a coordinated effort across education, infrastructure, digital strategy, and economic access.

Only 25% of Indonesian Students Achieve Adequate Reading Proficiency

According to UNESCO, reading just 3 or more books annually can significantly enhance reading comprehension

National Strategies to Boost Literacy

Building a culture of reading in Indonesia means more than access as it requires making literacy a part of everyday life, across all layers of society. According to UNESCO, reading just three or more books annually can significantly enhance reading comprehension and foster a habit of lifelong learning. This seemingly simple benchmark reflects a much larger truth in that literacy is built not only through instruction but through daily exposure to meaningful reading experiences.

Countries that consistently perform well in international literacy benchmarks share a few key characteristics.

They invest in public libraries

Support the production of affordable and locally relevant books

Design government-led initiatives that promote reading across all page groups

These are not just academic interventions but they are national strategies embedded in cultural policy, urban development, and community engagement.

For Indonesia to move toward this direction, several strategic priorities are critical:

Expand access to reading spaces. Build and support libraries, reading corners, and community centers especially in rural and remote areas where resources are limited.

Make books more affordable. Work with publishers and the private sector to lower book prices and expand digital lending options so more families can access quality reading materials.

Promote reading as a habit. Launch national campaigns that encourage reading for fun, not just for school, especially among children and teens.
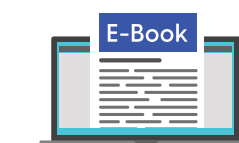
Use digital tools to support reading. Offer e-books, audiobooks, and interactive stories on platforms young people already use to make reading more engaging and accessible.

Support local language and cultural content. Publish more books in regional languages and stories that reflect local culture, so young readers feel connected to what they're reading.

If reading is to become a national habit, it must be made visible, accessible, and enjoyable across all levels of society. Literacy is not just an educational outcome, it is a foundation for civic participation, personal growth, and long-term national development.

When Education Promises, but the Job Market Doesn't Deliver

For many Indonesian youth, the promise of higher education is cut short—not by ambition, but by cost. For many, the cost of tuition, living expenses, and opportunity loss from not working outweighs the perceived benefits of a university degree.

60% of Millennials and Gen Z cite financial constraints as the main reason they are unable to pursue higher education

This isn't just about who can afford school but it's about who gets to imagine a future on their own terms. Young people are adjusting their expectations around job opportunities, financial independence, and even family planning, often delaying major milestones in favor of more immediate and attainable goals.

Rather than aiming for what's ideal, many are forced to choose what's practical. This points to a generation making value-based decisions, navigating their futures with a sharp awareness of economic reality and personal sustainability.

## Disillusioned by Design: When Education No Longer Delivers

Young Indonesians are starting to question whether the systems they trusted to shape their future are even built for the world they now face. Years of effort and financial sacrifice often end not in empowerment, but in disillusionment. The issue isn't a lack of ambition—it's structural misalignment.

Millennials who followed the conventional path—earn a degree, get a job—are frustrated by a labor market that doesn't reflect what they were prepared for. Gen Z, entering the system with sharper skepticism, is asking a different question: Is this model even built for us?

This disillusionment is reflected in the data. When asked why they feel unprepared for today's workforce, Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z cited:

49%
Outdated curriculum that hasn't kept pace with technology and industry

48%
Lack of real-world experience or internship exposure

46%
Insufficient training in soft skills like leadership, communication, and time management

Top Reasons Why Indonesian Youth Feel Unprepared by the Education System

Curriculum Lags Behind Tech	Lack of Real-World Exposure	Lack of Soft Skill Training
49%	48%	46%
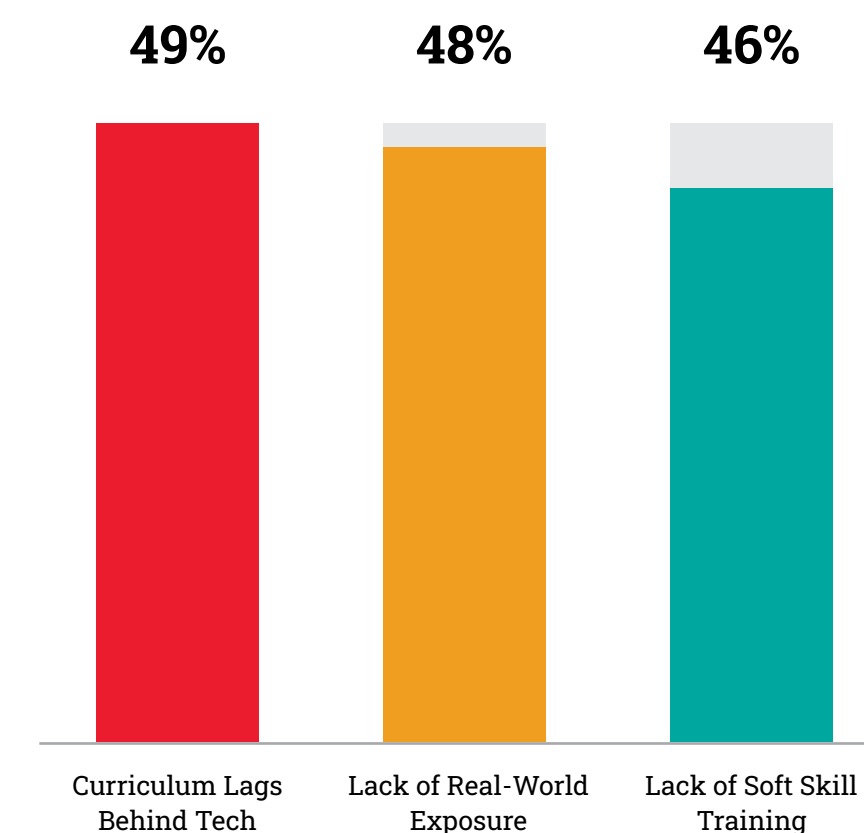
An Education-to-Employment Gap That Keeps Growing

Graduation is no longer a guarantee of opportunity, instead, it marks the start of a new mismatch between skills and jobs. Graduate unemployment doubled between 2020 and 2025, reaching 12.5%. The mismatch is especially stark in oversaturated majors like social sciences and humanities, which account for 60% of unemployed graduates.

These fields nurture valuable analytical and ethical thinking—but the volume of graduates far outpaces available opportunities. The issue isn't a lack of value. It's a lack of viable placement.

Graduate unemployment hit 12.5% in early 2025, double the 2020 rate.

60% of unemployed graduates are from oversaturated majors like social sciences and humanities

Career Challenges Across Educational Backgrounds

41%

26%

Struggling with Salary Vs Cost of Living

Frustrated by Limited Growth Oppurtunities
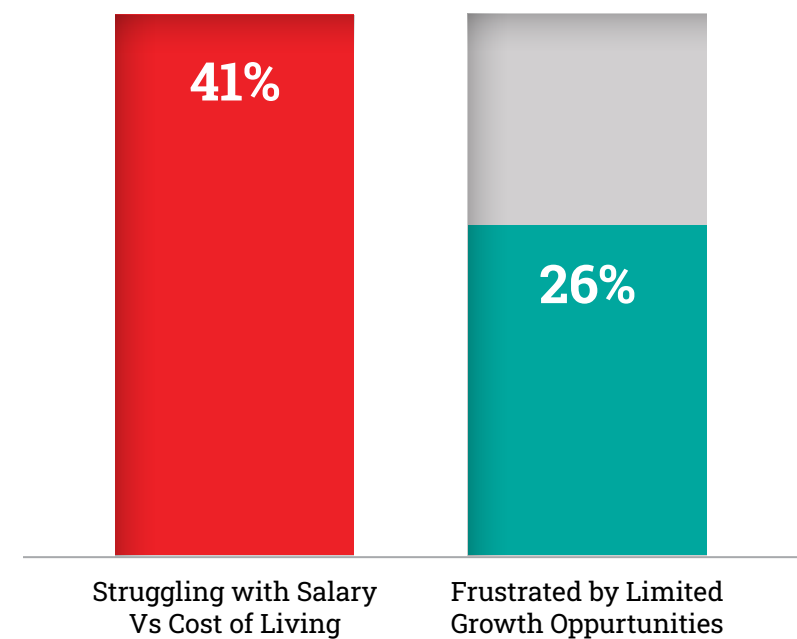
These aren't students who failed the system. It's the system that failed to adapt to the future they're trying to enter. Indonesia's challenge isn't just about increasing access to education—it's about ensuring relevance. The system still emphasizes test scores and credentials, while today's employers prioritize agility, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving.

Millennials and Gen Z both value critical thinking and innovation, but Gen Z places more emphasis on emotional intelligence and empathy—skills essential for hybrid and cross-functional work.

Yet many youth, especially in rural and underprivileged areas, lack access to these opportunities. The demand for reform now goes beyond schools and companies—young people are turning to the government for real solutions.

Top Skills for Staying Relevant   ● Millennials   ● Gen Z

	Critical Thinking	Innovation	Emotional Intelligence	Empathy
Millennials	44%	47%	39%	43%
Gen Z	57%	49%	47%	39%
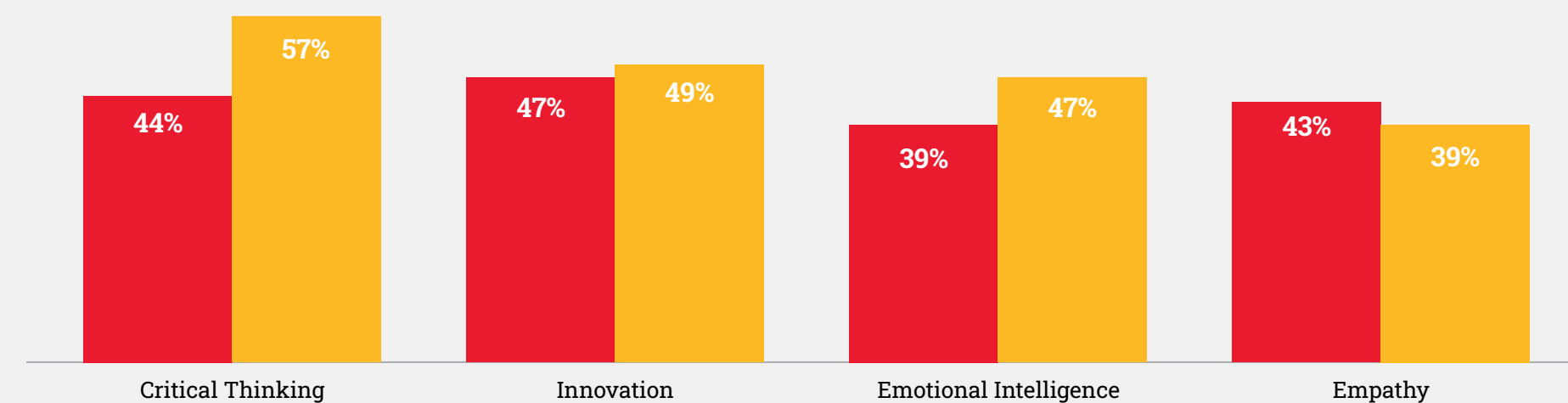
This isn't about handouts. It's about infrastructure. Without access, talent can't translate into opportunity. To move from frustration to future-readiness, Indonesia must reshape its education-to-employment pipeline. That means:

Embedding career mentoring into schools and campuses

Integrating digital, entrepreneurial, and soft skills into curricula

Expanding access to non-traditional career paths like vocational, technical, and sustainability-aligned fields

Because this is no longer just an education problem. It's a workforce readiness crisis, with direct implications for economic growth, social mobility, and youth wellbeing.

An Education-to-Employment Gap That Keeps Growing

Where a young person grows up in Indonesia can shape not just their access to education, but also how useful they believe that education actually is.

Respondents in secondary cities were 67% more likely to say their education prepared them well for the workforce compared to those in big cities, who expressed sharper criticism.

This contrast suggests a divide not only in access but in expectations. Urban youth, facing faster-changing industries and tighter competition are more likely to see where the system falls short and demand change. Meanwhile, those in secondary cities may feel relatively more satisfied, potentially because of lower pressure or more stable job expectations in their environments.

Together, these insights point to a pressing need: Indonesia's education system must not only catch up to the digital age as it must respond to the lived realities of a generation that is already thinking forward.

Rethinking What a Career Looks Like

Freelance, Flexibility, and Side Hustles

Young Indonesians are redefining careers on their own terms through embracing side gigs and freelancing as tools for freedom, not fallback options. For this generation, work isn't just about earning a living, it's about building a life that feels sustainable and aligned with their identity.

84% of respondents are pursuing freelance or side gigs, whether to express creativity, boost income, or test out new career paths.

This reflects a major shift in how younger Indonesians think about career building. Side jobs are no longer just income boosters as they also serve as creative outlets, safety nets, and launchpads for new careers.. For some, freelance work is a creative outlet that offers more freedom than traditional roles. For others, it's a strategic financial buffer that brings in extra income amidst rising living costs. And for many, side hustles act as testing grounds for low-risk ways to explore potential career pivots before making a full transition.

As the definition of success shifts for Millennials and Gen Z, so do their expectations of what work should look and feel like. These generations are increasingly pragmatic and value-driven, prioritizing purpose, balance, and autonomy over traditional markers of achievement like titles or high salaries.

While 51% of young respondents still prefer a high-paying job with a physical office, this points to a continued appreciation for stability and structure, particularly among those juggling financial obligations or family responsibilities. At the same time, 33% would rather pursue meaningful and interesting work, even if it comes with a lower paycheck. For them, engagement and personal fulfillment are more valuable than status

What Young Indonesians Value in Work Environments

51%	**33%**	**17%**
High-Paying Job with Physical Office	Interesting Work, Even if it Pays Less	Lower Pay for Remote Flexibility
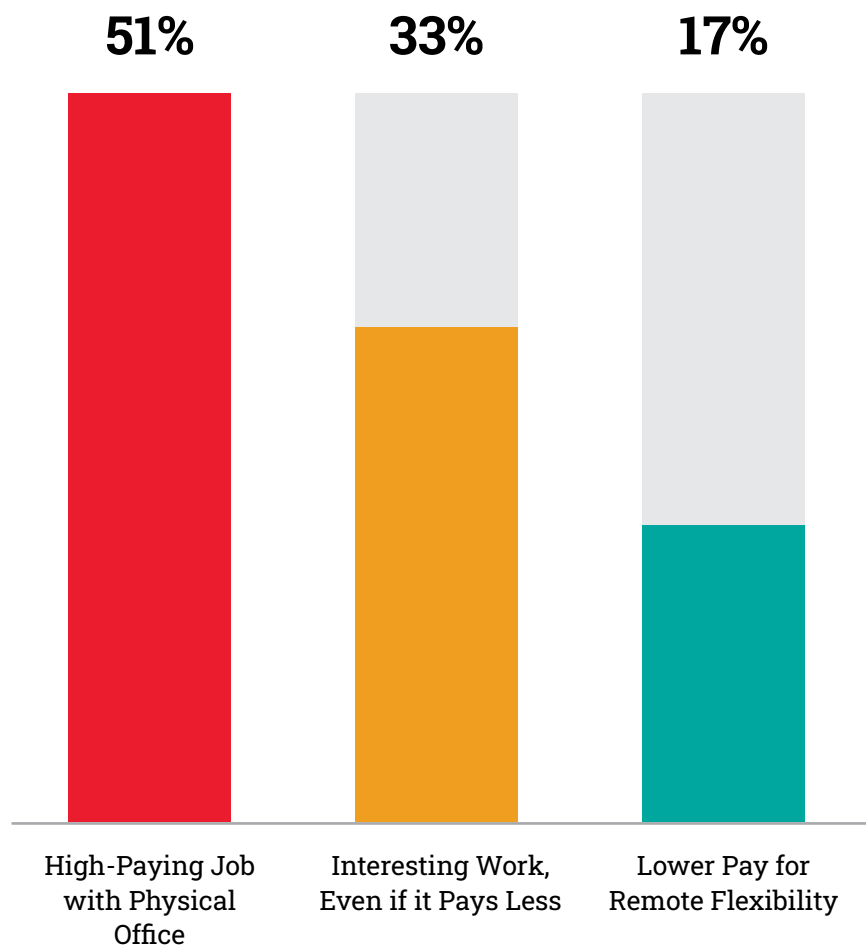
Meanwhile, 17% say they are willing to accept lower pay in exchange for remote work flexibility. This reflects a strong desire for greater control over their time, environment, and lifestyle—a preference that's grown more pronounced in the wake of the pandemic and the normalization of digital-first careers. Together, these figures reveal a generation that's not turning away from work, but instead reshaping it to better fit their values and the realities of a changing world.

52% are actively considering leaving corporate jobs altogether in search of greater flexibility and control over their time.

The number above reflects more than a trend, it's a signal. Many Millennials and Gen Z feel that traditional corporate jobs offer limited flexibility, low personal fulfillment, and increasing mental strain. Their desire to exit is rooted in a pursuit of time sovereignty, the ability to set their own pace, avoid unnecessary burnout, and work in environments that align with their emotional and professional needs. This isn't about escaping responsibility, it's about reclaiming control over when, how, and why they work.

Together, these data points highlight a growing reality: young people are no longer optimizing for titles and tenure, they're optimizing for alignment. Alignment with purpose. Alignment with lifestyle. And alignment with a world of work that recognizes the whole human and not just the role they fill.

Reality Check: Why Middle Management Isn't the Dream

Middle management is no longer the goal it once was as for many, it represents burnout, not progress. For many Millennials and Gen Z, middle management doesn't symbolize progress as it signals pressure and compromise. Often tied to long hours, high expectations, and limited influence, the role lacks the reward or purpose that makes the sacrifice worthwhile.

57% of Millennials and Gen Z actively avoid middle management roles

Top Deterrents to Career Advancement

57%	**40%**	**27%**
Workload and Stress Level	Salary Vs Cost of Living	Lack of Growth Opportunities
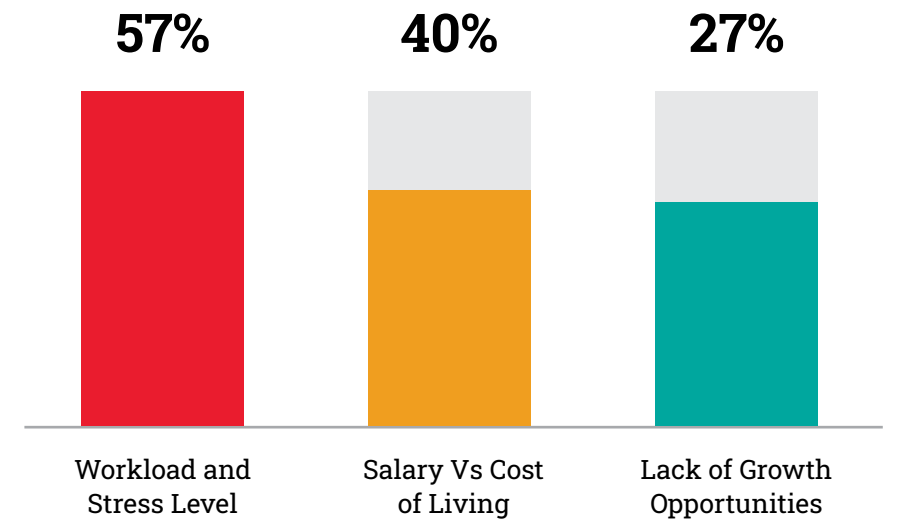
The reasons young professionals feel held back in their careers reflect both practical pressures and deeper emotional disillusionment. A striking 57% cite workload and stress as their main deterrents, signaling how chronic burnout can drain motivation and blur long-term goals. Another 40% say their salaries haven't kept pace with the rising cost of living, making added responsibilities feel more like a burden than a reward. Meanwhile, 27% point to a lack of meaningful development or growth opportunities, resulting in a sense of stagnation rather than momentum.

This sense of discontent reveals a growing generational divide. Millennials, having spent years navigating conventional systems, often voice frustration over burnout, limited upward mobility, and the slow churn of bureaucratic environments. Their dissatisfaction is rooted in endurance—they've played by the rules, only to find the rewards increasingly out of reach. Gen Z, in contrast, enters the workforce with sharper skepticism. They're not just eager to improve the system—they're questioning whether the system is even worth maintaining. To them, rigid hierarchies and outdated structures feel irrelevant. Instead, they seek out environments that prioritize collaboration, speed, and substance over status.

This comparison highlights a deeper shift in how success and leadership are defined:

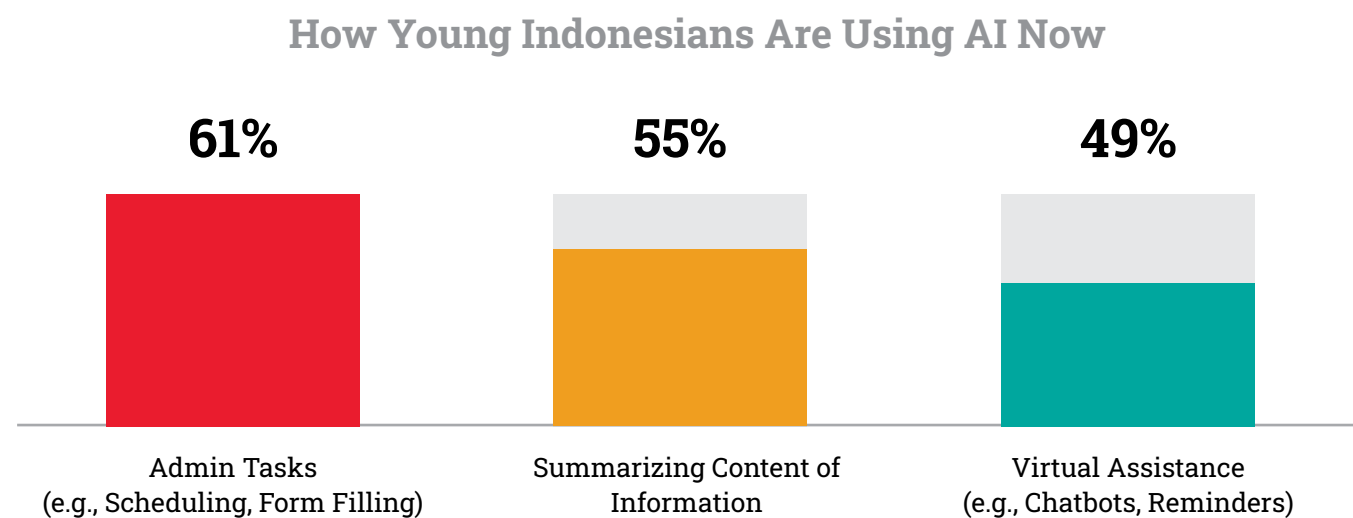| Aspect	Millennials	Gen Z
System Perception	Disappointed by the system after extended exposure	Question the system's relevance from the beginning
Key Frustrations	Burnout, stalled growth, and bureaucratic overload	Rigid structure, lack of autonomy, outdated work norms
Work Preference	Seek balance, still open to structured roles	Favor flexibility, creativity, and autonomy
View on Hierarchy	Accept hierarchy but demand reform and fairness	Prefer flat, idea-driven environments

These patterns reveal more than individual preference, they reflect a generational reevaluation of what work should offer. Roles that once signified success are now being scrutinized through the lens of well-being, agency, and long-term fulfillment. The result? A noticeable drift away from traditional structures that prioritize stability and tenure, toward systems that value adaptability, trust, and human-centered design.

The AI Generation: Between Caution and Capability

How Millennials and Gen Z Use AI

From productivity hacks to creative tools, AI is already embedded in how Millennials and Gen Z work—and what they expect from the future. The way they use it reflects a practical, goal-oriented mindset focused on efficiency, learning, and personal productivity.

How Young Indonesians Are Using AI Now

Admin Tasks (e.g., Scheduling, Form Filling)	Summarizing Content of Information	Virtual Assistance (e.g., Chatbots, Reminders)
61%	55%	49%

AI as a Co-Pilot, Not a Threat

While Millennials use AI for time management, Gen Z sees it as a creative partner.

34% of Millennials fear job loss

**35%** of Gen Z believe AI destroys and creates jobs.

It's not just about tech, it's also about mindset.

Millennials tend to use AI primarily as a tool for efficiency and time management, reflecting their experience in balancing workloads and responsibilities. Gen Z, meanwhile, sees AI as a partner in learning and exploration—using it to expand skills, experiment with new tools, and personalize their educational or creative processes.

Closing the AI and Skills Gap

As AI transforms work, the biggest challenge isn't automation, it's making sure people are equipped to thrive alongside it. More fundamentally, the very nature of employability is being reshaped. According to LinkedIn's 2024 Work Change Report,

94% of executives across Asia Pacific plan to prioritize AI by 2025
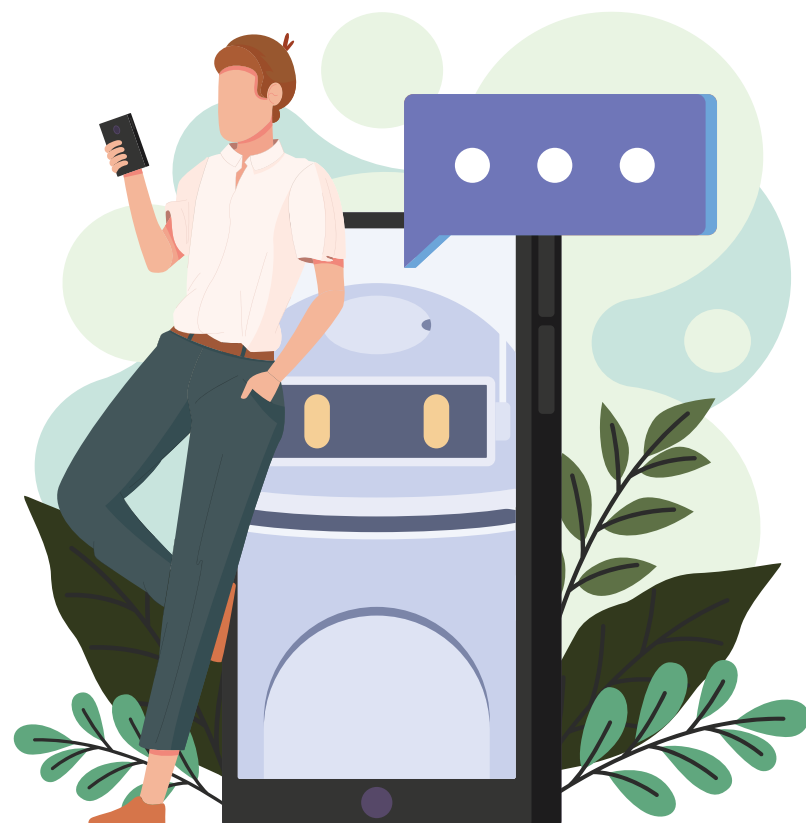
Importantly, the gap isn't just about technical skills. Companies report the biggest challenges in finding talent with AI expertise (45%), software engineering capabilities (40%), and — just as crucially — soft skills like communication, problem-solving, and adaptability (32%). These are the capabilities that help young workers navigate uncertainty, pivot between roles, and thrive in increasingly hybrid, collaborative environments.

Top Skills Gaps Reported by Companies in Indonesia
(Source: LinkedIn Work Change Report 2024)

| AI Expertise	Software Engineering	Communication, Problem-Solving, and Adaptability (Soft Skills)
45%	40%	32%
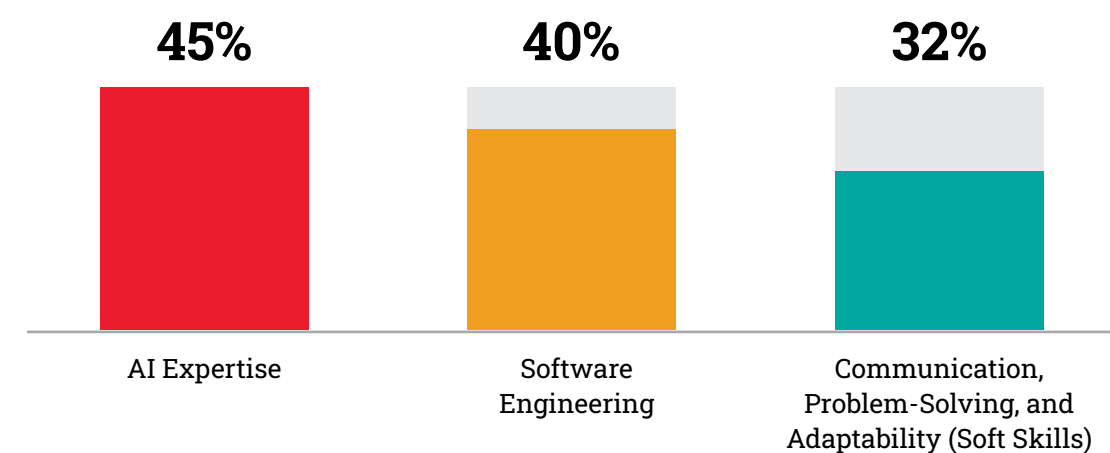
While 34% of Millennials fear AI will take away jobs, 43% of Gen Z see it as a double-edged sword due to it destroying some jobs, but often also creating new ones

51% of businesses that adopted generative AI over the past two years report at least a 10% increase in revenue

For Millennials and Gen Z, this landscape presents both risk and opportunity. While formal education alone is no longer enough, this shift opens the door to a wider recognition of continuous learning, resilience, and flexibility. Many young Indonesians are beginning to understand that success today demands not just a degree, but a growth mindset and the ability to learn and adapt throughout life.

Employers are also evolving. Across sectors, companies are moving away from degree-based hiring and toward skill-based recruitment in prioritizing candidates with practical abilities and learning agility. However, for this shift to avoid widening inequality, it must be accompanied by clear standards, broad access to training, and safeguards against bias. Globally, the transition is already delivering impact:

AI Daily Usage by Sector

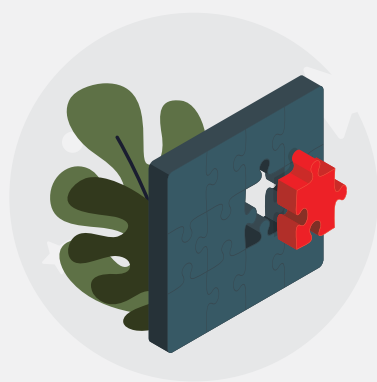| IT	Creative	Education	Marketing
64%	37%	26%	20%
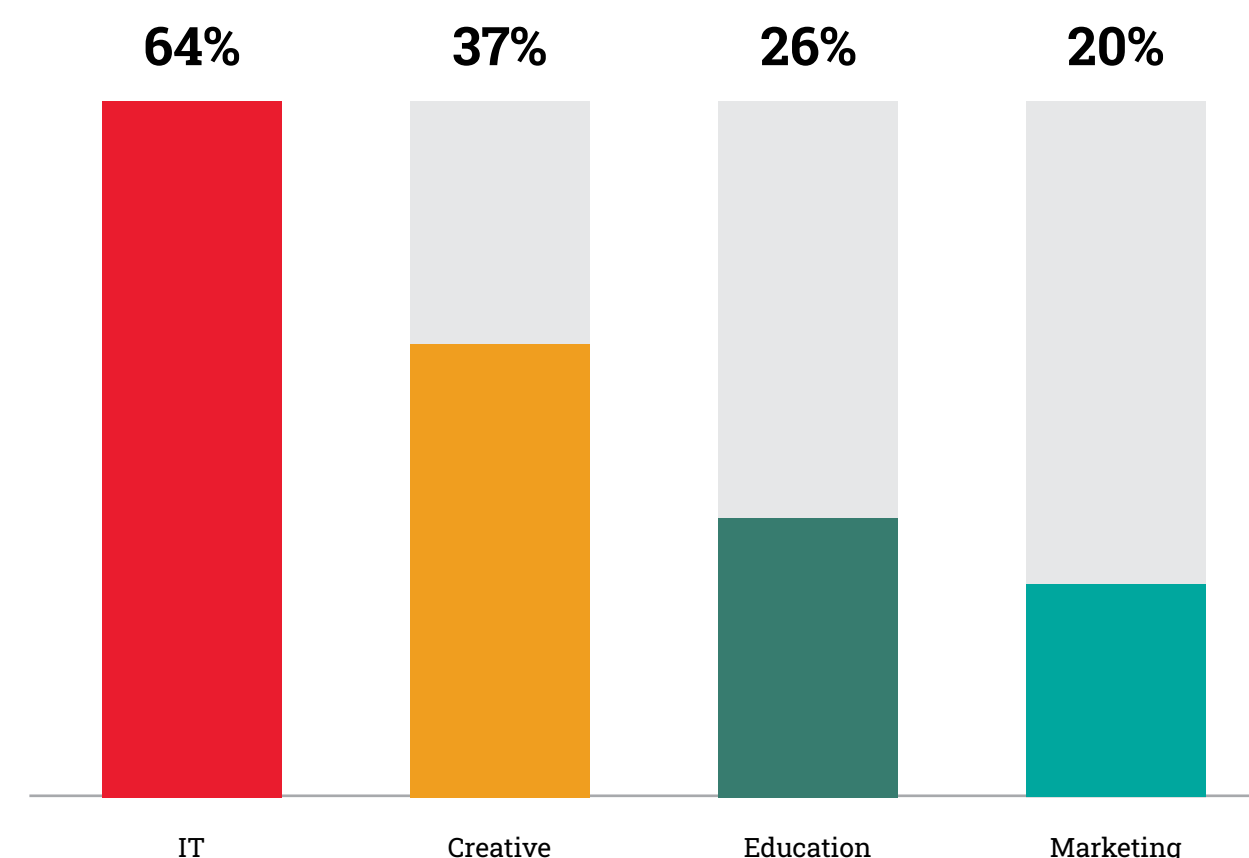
Human Skills AI Can't Replace

Despite AI's rise, certain sectors—healthcare, education, mental health, and social services—are thriving. These rely on human empathy, communication, and decision-making. To stay competitive, Millennials and Gen Z must develop hybrid skillsets that combine:

Emotional Intelligence

Problem-Solving and Adaptability

Tech Fluency and Creative Thinking

Employers increasingly value the ability to lead, collaborate, and continuously learn over traditional credentials.

Navigating Automation and the Green Economy

Key factors that make a job vulnerable to automation:

- **Tasks are repetitive and rule-based**
  Examples: cashiering, basic accounting

- **Minimal need for human judgment or emotional intelligence**
  Routine decisions can be made by algorithms.

- **Environments are structured and standardized**
  Common in manufacturing or assembly lines.

- **Businesses favor scalability and low-cost efficiency**
  Automation often reduces operational costs at scale.

- **Self-service technologies reduce face-to-face interaction**
  From kiosks to chatbots, human roles are replaced.

Digital and Green Jobs Are Reshaping the Market

As traditional roles fade, new pathways are emerging in digital innovation and sustainability—areas where young Indonesians are stepping forward with clarity, purpose, and drive.
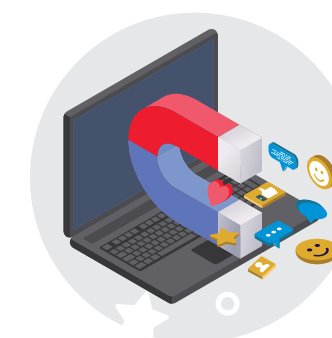
Software engineering and data analytics

Cybersecurity and fintech

Content production and creative technologies

E-commerce and digital marketing

At the same time, green roles are expanding rapidly. Companies are investing in renewable energy, ESG reporting, climate resilience, and circular economy practices. Millennials and Gen Z, with their strong concern for climate, social equity, and community impact, are naturally aligned with these fields—not only in Jakarta but increasingly in secondary cities and rural regions.
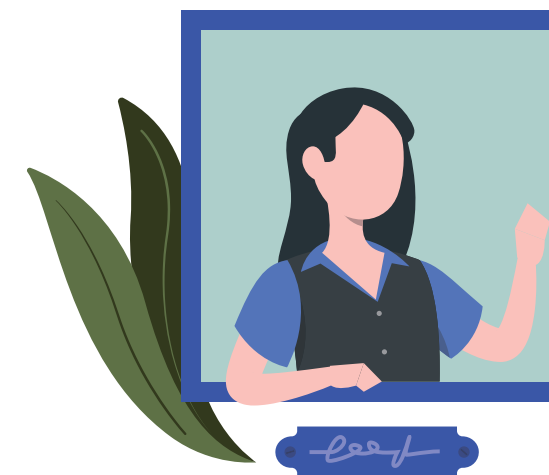
"I don't want to do what's safe—I want to do something that matters, even if it's uncertain."

— **Amira, Master's in Sustainability Graduate, Columbia University, now working in climate innovation for a clean energy startup in Jakarta.**

"I joined an advocacy lab because I was tired of waiting for change. Policy feels slow, but working with communities gives me a sense of urgency and impact I never found in corporate internships."

— **Alya, Program Associate at a youth-led democracy initiative, Surabaya.**

"I always thought NGOs were for volunteers—until I realized how strategic they are. My work in child nutrition isn't just charity; it's policy, logistics, and data. And I get to lead projects that actually shift public systems."

— **Bima, Field Program Manager at a global health NGO in West Nusa Tenggara.**

Crucially, the green economy is no longer just an urban story. Across rural areas, young Indonesians are bringing sustainability to life at the grassroots—delivering meaningful change for their communities and the environment.

"We set up a youth waste bank where we collect, sort, and sell plastic to recycling partners. It's not just about money—it's about raising awareness and keeping our river clean." — Annisa Hasna, 24, Depok, West Java – Founder of Bumi Bawa, a youth-driven waste management and recycling social enterprise that runs waste banks and community workshops, promoting waste sorting and recycling while generating income for residents. Featured in IDN Times.

"Our team is developing solar-powered cold storage for coastal fishermen. Before, so much of the catch was lost. Now we're cutting waste and helping families improve their income."— Asep Mulyadi, 30, Indramayu, West Java – Founder of Energi Surya Nusantara, Asep works with local fishermen to deploy solar-powered ice and cold storage units, reducing post-harvest losses and improving fish quality for markets. Featured in IDN Times.

These stories show that the green economy isn't just a top-down trend—it's becoming a grassroots movement. From regenerative farming and waste reduction to renewable energy and local entrepreneurship, young people across Indonesia are proving that sustainability can be adapted to local realities and deliver real social and economic benefits.

Yet for rural youth to fully participate in this transformation, they need equitable access to training, mentorship, funding, and infrastructure. Supporting these local innovators is essential to ensuring that Indonesia's economic future is not only nationally significant but also deeply rooted in the resilience and well-being of its communities.

The Urgent Need to Bridge the Green Skills Gap

According to LinkedIn's Global Climate Talent Stocktake 2024, global demand for green talent has grown by 11.6% year-on-year, yet talent supply in the same sector has only increased by 5.6%.

According to projections:

The renewable energy sector in Indonesia has already employed 2.3 million people.

By 2030, wind energy jobs are expected to rise by 2.1 million, while solar energy could see a 6.3 million job increase.

New employment is also emerging in construction, transportation, agriculture, forestry, and waste management.

The green economy is growing fast—but without the right education and pathways, Indonesia risks leaving its youth behind. But unless education, policy, and industry align, Indonesia risks building a green economy that is technologically promising but socially exclusionary.

More than just a mismatch of job titles, this gap reveals a lack of structured pathways, from education to employment in green sectors. A survey by SUMA UI and Yayasan CERAH found that 55% of respondents either don't understand or have never heard of the concept of green jobs. This stems from several systemic issues:

As a result, millions of potential jobs in renewable energy, circular economy, ESG compliance, and sustainable agriculture risk going unfilled, not because the interest is lacking, but because the system isn't preparing the workforce for it.

Lack of exposure to green job information in mainstream education and career guidance.

Limited training programs or coursework focused on sustainability in universities and vocational schools.

Inadequate local programs to prepare rural youth for future-facing employment in green industries.

For Indonesia to unlock the full potential of its green sector, it must build an education system that prepares learners for complexity, cross-sector collaboration, and sustainability-centered problem solving which includes :

A strong grasp of sustainability concepts and global relevance, including how local decisions impact climate, communities, and economic systems.

The ability to work across sectors and disciplines, navigating local governance, global frameworks, and corporate ESG landscapes.

Skills in risk management and sustainable operations, from identifying regulatory gaps to applying ESG principles in real business contexts.

Without this shift, millions of potential green jobs could be lost to under-preparation, a missed opportunity not just for the economy, but for the planet.

Reclaiming the Green Economy for All

Grassroots innovation—from youth-led waste banks to farmer cooperatives adopting organic methods is already proving that sustainability does not have to be elitist or urban-centric. But scaling this movement requires more than inspiration—it needs systems change. This includes:

Curriculum reforms that integrate sustainability across disciplines, not just in environmental studies.

Government incentives and private partnerships to fund local green entrepreneurs and rural innovators.

Community-based training and mentorship programs that translate global frameworks into locally actionable skills.

Public awareness campaigns to normalize green careers—not as a niche, but as the new mainstream.

The future of Indonesia's workforce doesn't just depend on how many jobs are created, it depends on who gets to access them, shape them, and thrive in them. And the time to prepare that workforce is now.

Building a Culture of Lifelong Learning

Learning, Burnout, and Balance

Younger generations are being praised for their adaptability, but it's coming at a personal cost. But with this demand comes real pressure. While continuous learning is now essential, many young workers feel overwhelmed. Burnout is on the rise, not from a lack of drive, but from being expected to grow without the support to do so.

Burnout Drivers Among Millennials and Gen Z

| 35%	30%	20%	15%
Upskilling Pressure	Job Uncertainty	Workload	Lack of Support
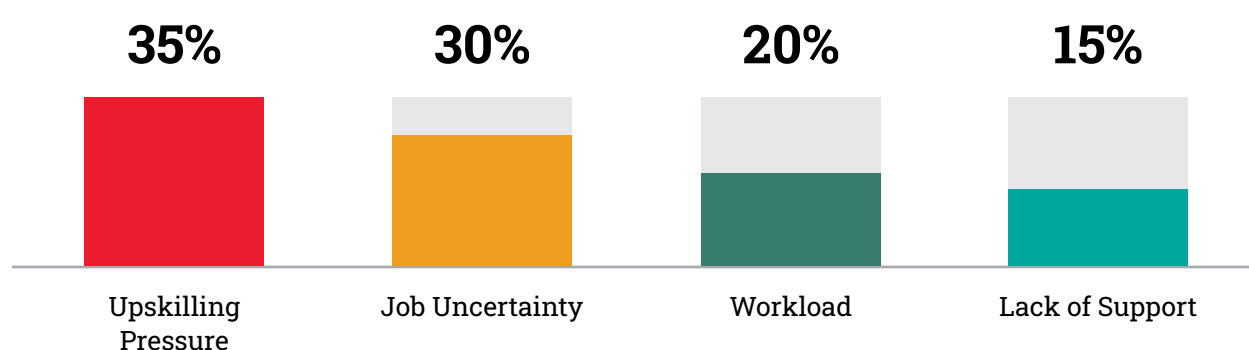
True resilience doesn't come from pushing harder, it comes from having the right systems in place: access to training, emotional support, and time to grow. Career development and mental health shouldn't be in conflict, but rather, they should reinforce each other.

"Burnout today isn't just the result of long hours, in my opinion it's the emotional cost of constantly proving your worth in systems that offer little support. When upskilling becomes a survival strategy rather than a growth opportunity, rest starts to feel like failure. Many young workers I see aren't driven by ambition, they're driven by fear of falling behind. That's not resilience. That's exhaustion in disguise."

— **dr. Elvine Gunawan, Sp.KJ**, Psychiatrist & Founder of Mental Hub Indonesia

Today's schools must do more than teach, they must prepare students for a world where soft and hard skills carry equal weight. They must help students gain practical, real-world skills like problem-solving, communication, and adaptability while also prioritizing emotional wellbeing and sustainable learning habits.
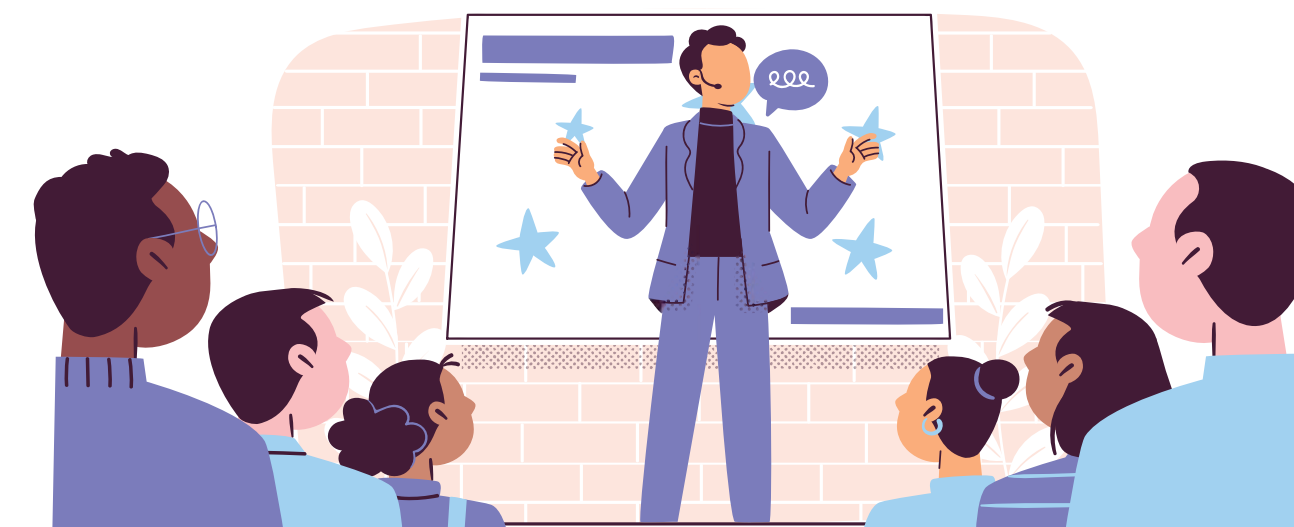
The Future of Work, Reimagined

Rethinking Work: What Millennials and Gen Z Want to Change

For Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia, the call for change goes well beyond classrooms as it reaches deep into the workplace. Many are demanding a transformation of outdated work systems, pushing for the removal of age restrictions, the reduction of insider bias, the lowering of experience barriers, and an end to appearance-based hiring practices. These demands reflect a powerful shift in values: young Indonesians increasingly want a job market where talent, potential, and contribution matter more than background or image. They are seeking workplaces that are not only more inclusive and fair, but also better aligned with the realities of a diverse, dynamic workforce.

Millennials and Gen Z Priorities for Fairer Work Systems

70%	65%	60%	55%
Remove Age Restrictions	Reduce Insider Bias	Lower Experience Barriers	End Appearance-Based Hiring
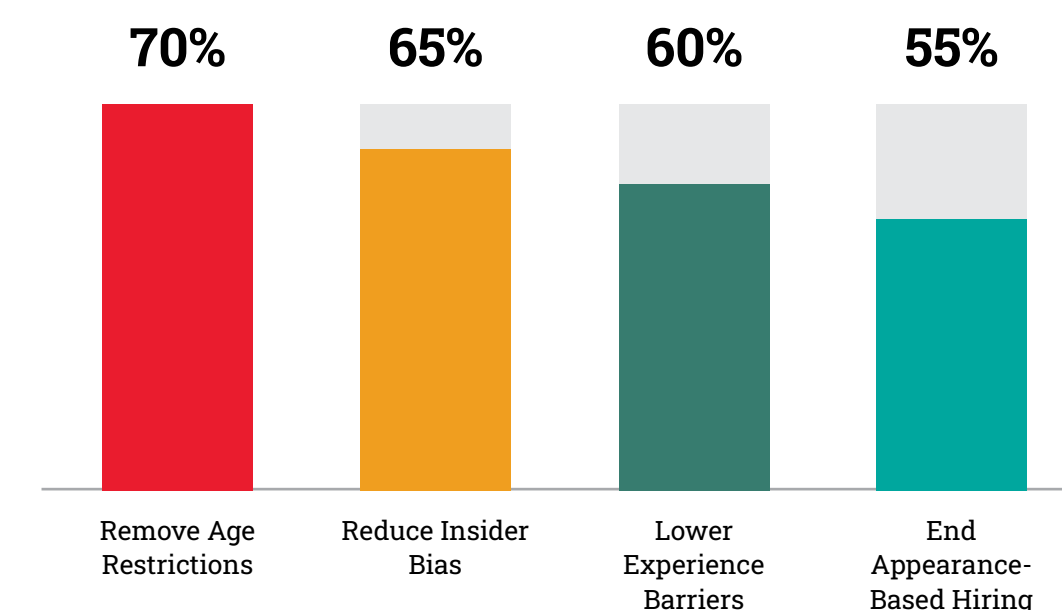
Why Millennials and Gen Z Lead AI Adoption

Generative AI is not just automating tasks—it's transforming how people work, create, and solve problems. Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia are actively embracing AI as a co-pilot, not a competitor. Millennials and Gen Z are at the forefront of today's workplace transformation and not by chance, but because of the distinct conditions that have shaped their experience.

They've grown up in an era of rapid digitalization, experienced the surge of remote work during the pandemic, and have become increasingly comfortable with tools like ChatGPT, Notion AI, and data platforms. Unlike older generations who often view AI primarily as an efficiency tool, many young Indonesians see it as a means of creativity, experimentation, and innovation.

Key Factors Powering This Shift :

Remote work adoption normalized dynamic, flexible systems

Generative tools are now accessible even in local startups

Younger talent is self-teaching AI skills, especially in coding, content, and design

A 2024 Deloitte study found that Southeast Asian countries including Indonesia are outpacing many developed nations in generative AI adoption, positioning the region as an emerging innovation hub. As Indonesian startups increasingly integrate AI-driven solutions, from fintech to entertainment, Millennials and Gen Z are not just keeping up with change — they are helping to shape its direction.

But to ensure no young people are left behind, targeted policies must address the steepest barriers, whether those stem from geography, education level, or socioeconomic background. The opportunity is real, but so is the responsibility to make this transformation inclusive.

Human-AI Collaboration at Work

Case Study: Tiket.com's People-Centered Transformation

Indonesia's evolving workforce—dominated by Millennials and Gen Z—has prompted forward-thinking companies to restructure how work is defined, measured, and experienced. At the center of this shift is a demand for greater flexibility, continuous learning, and leadership that prioritizes people as much as performance.

Dudi Arisandi, Chief People Officer Officer at tiket.com, identifies this transition not as a passing trend but as a necessary response to structural shifts in the labor market and workforce expectations. With 60% of Tiket.com employees being Millennials and 34% Gen Z, the company has embraced a model rooted in autonomy, adaptability, and data-informed culture-building.
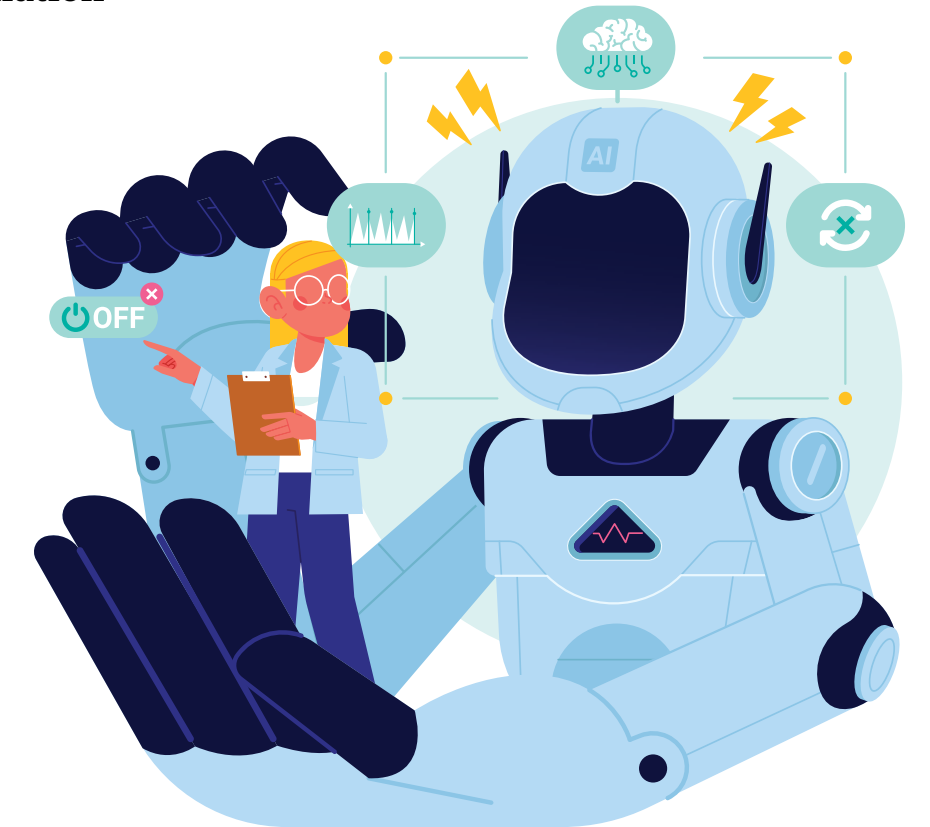
> "Rather than 'Work-Life Balance,' we advocate for 'Work-Life Harmony'—where individuals create their own rhythm. The idea of balance evolves with generational shifts."

— **Dudi Arisandi**, Chief People Officer, tiket.com

To operationalize this, Tiket.com adopted a permanent hybrid work structure supported by AI-driven tools for engagement, including Amber—an AI-based sentiment analysis platform. Amber operates as a "Chief Listening Officer," conducting periodic check-ins and identifying patterns of disengagement, burnout, or misalignment. With an 80% adoption rate, this tool equips HR with early-warning signals, enabling timely and targeted interventions. However, Dudi is careful to emphasize that data alone is insufficient.

Skills-Based Hiring and Leadership Development

The role of AI at Tiket.com is thus framed as augmentative and not a substitute for human judgment. This principle also informs how talent is recruited and evaluated. The organization places increasing emphasis on skills, mindset, and adaptability, rather than academic pedigree alone. A notable case includes a top-performing engineer with no formal tech background, whose potential was surfaced through AI-assisted evaluation but confirmed through holistic human assessment.

> "AI enhances efficiency, but decision-making must still be driven by human insight, empathy, and strategic thinking."

— **Dudi Arisandi**, Chief People Officer, tiket.com

This skills-first approach is further supported through a series of targeted early-career interventions:

Kampus Merdeka and Internship Programs:
Providing students with real-world exposure aligned with industry needs.

Goes to Campus Initiatives:
Facilitating direct interaction between students and practitioners.

Mentorship-led onboarding:
Bridging the gap between entry-level roles and leadership readiness.

The hybrid model is now a baseline expectation. Internal survey data aligns with broader national trends:
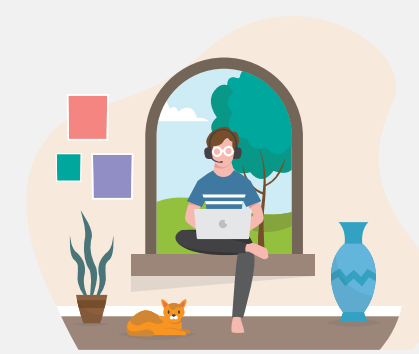
35% of Gen Z employees prefer fully flexible work-from-anywhere options.

32% favor hybrid setups combining home and office.

Only 12% prefer fully remote work.

Recognizing that leadership development must begin early, Tiket.com introduced the X Leadership Pathway, a structured program for first-time managers. It is complemented by diagnostic leadership assessments and internal mobility programs designed to help employees explore different pathways before advancing.

"A good leader must also be a good manager. Leadership and management must go hand in hand and mentorship is just as important as achieving business goals. Especially for middle managers, who stand between vision and execution, the job is incredibly demanding. They're expected to deliver results while guiding teams through uncertainty, often without enough support themselves. That's why being a manager isn't just operational but it's also very much emotional, strategic, and deeply human."

— **Dudi Arisandi**, Chief People Officer, tiket.com

Building Learning Organizations

Furthermore, retention efforts are equally strategic. The company leverages regular pulse checks, quarterly engagement surveys, and structured learning formats such as DEAL Hour (Drop Everything, Anyone Learn) to foster a culture of continuous development. These efforts respond to a key generational reality: Gen Z, in particular, prioritizes purpose, growth, and recognition— and is more likely to exit workplaces where these are lacking.

Tiket.com's response to this generational transition reflects a larger philosophical shift: from compliance-based HR systems to learning organizations that prioritize agility, trust, and co-ownership. AI is used not to reduce costs, but to enhance the human experience of work. Culture is treated not as a set of benefits, but as a system of shared values, designed and iterated upon with employee input.

This case underscores how human-centered design, backed by data, can enable organizations to adapt to the future of work— where flexibility, purpose, and meaningful engagement are not perks, but core drivers of resilience and growth.

A Shift in Mindset, A Shared Mission

For Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia, the journey into adulthood is not defined by traditional milestones but by navigating systems that were not built with them in mind. Education, once seen as the great equalizer, is now being questioned for its relevance. Work, once a clear path, is now a moving target. These generations are not simply looking for jobs, they are looking for meaning, agency, and systems that evolve with them.

Millennials, having spent years inside rigid structures, are now pushing for reform from within by advocating for security, fairness, and recognition in a world that often demands constant reinvention. Gen Z, born into disruption, approaches the same problems with sharper questions and higher expectations. They challenge legacy models, demand personalization, and treat adaptability as a baseline, not an ambition.

Yet despite their different vantage points, both generations share a powerful commonality: they are no longer waiting to be invited to the table. They are building new ones. Whether in classrooms, startups, rural cooperatives, or digital ecosystems, they are co-creating a vision of Indonesia that is equitable, dynamic, and grounded in values.

What's emerging is not just a generational pivot, but a cultural one. One that values relevance over routine, purpose over prestige, and systems that serve people, not the other way around. Indonesia's youth are not merely responding to the future as they are designing it.

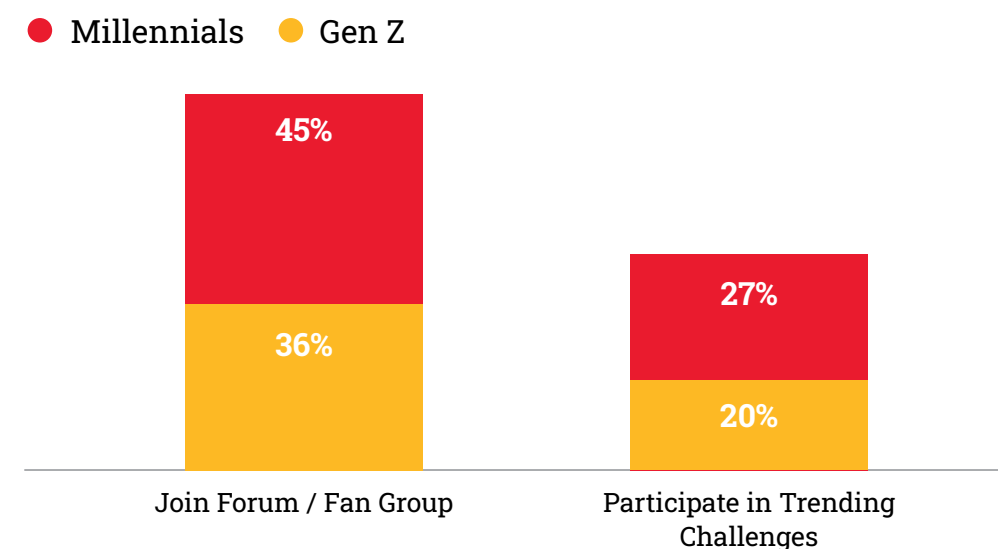# Chapter 4

Media and Entertainment

Why Fandom Feels Like Family

Entertainment as Identity, Not Just Escape

Entertainment today is no longer just background noise. For Indonesia's younger generations, it's a core part of how they express who they are, what they value, and who they belong with. Their relationship with media is deeply personal and inherently social, shaped by the desire to belong, to be seen, and to make meaning. Whether through cinema, streaming, short-form content, gaming, fandoms, or audio platforms, entertainment has become a mirror for their values and a stage for their agency.

Engagement in Fandom Activities by Generation

● Millennials   ● Gen Z

	Join Forum / Fan Group	Participate in Trending Challenges
Millennials	45%	27%
Gen Z	36%	20%

One way this manifests is through fan-driven communities. Nearly half of Gen Z (45%) join fan forums or groups, compared to 36% of Millennials. These aren't just spaces for discussion; they're emotional ecosystems where shared creativity, identity-building, and belonging take root.

Participation also extends to digital trends: 27% of Gen Z actively engage in trending challenges, significantly more than the 20% of Millennials who do the same. This signals a broader generational shift: younger audiences don't just consume content but take part in shaping it. They thrive in participatory ecosystems where interaction is as important as the story itself.

In a media landscape defined by speed, spectacle, and saturation, Gen Z's behaviors reveal something more intentional: a move toward community, co-creation, and cultural imprint.

Participation is the New Consumption

Across platforms, Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z have transitioned from audience members to active participants. They no longer passively consume entertainment; they engage amplification, adaptation, and co-creation. Entertainment now serves as a medium for signaling values, affiliating with communities, and accruing social capital.
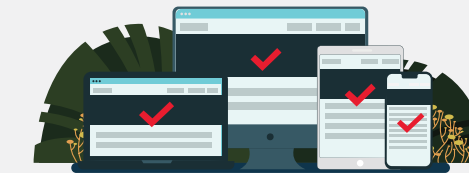
40% of surveyed music fans in Indonesia report that their favorite artists play a significant role in shaping their personal identity.

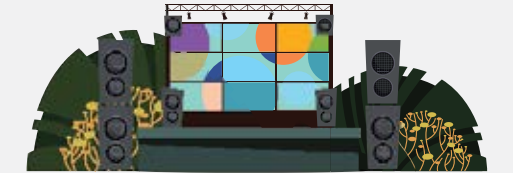#freedom   #community   #selfExpression

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This attachment is reflected in several behaviors:

Higher likelihood to pay for streaming subscriptions;

Sustained cross-platform engagement, including following musicians on social media, purchasing official merchandise, and listening to artist-hosted podcasts
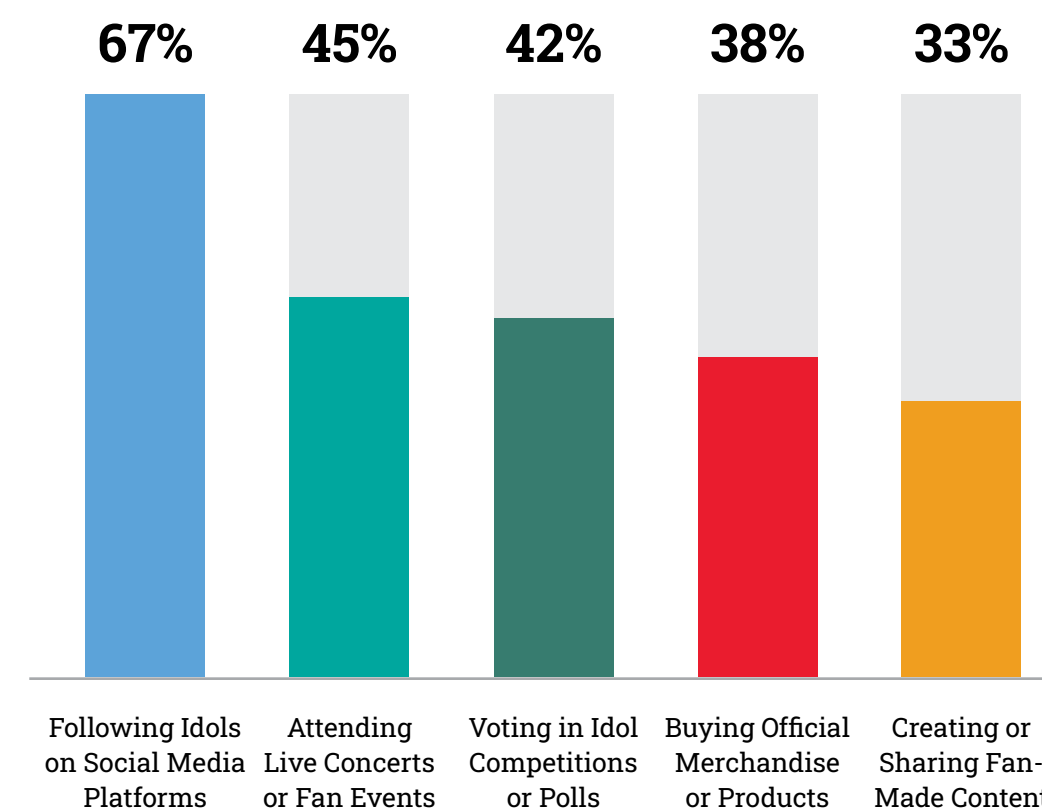
Robust offline participation, with one-third of respondents attending a live concert in the past three months which reflects an engagement rate notably higher than among casual listeners.

Live events in Indonesia today serve as more than mere entertainment, they function as collective rituals that cultivate social cohesion, shared meaning, and community identity. Nowhere is this more visible than in *JKT48's Sousenkyo* general election, one of the most distinctive and consequential fan-driven phenomena in the country's pop culture landscape.

Adapted from the AKB48 model in Japan, the *Sousenkyo* allows fans to vote for their preferred group members, determining each member's rank and prominence in future group activities. What began as a fan engagement strategy has evolved into a highly organized system of participation: fans purchase multiple CDs to secure voting ballots, pool resources through crowdfunding, and coordinate voting blocs across online platforms.

Yet this intense fan participation also raises important questions. As supporters invest time, emotion, and money into campaigns, critics point to the blurred line between empowerment and exploitation, where emotional loyalty becomes a commercial commodity. The outcome of the election reflects not just individual preferences but the collective power and resourcefulness of fan communities.

How Indonesian Youth Express Their Idol Fandom

Following Idols on Social Media Platforms	Attending Live Concerts or Fan Events	Voting in Idol Competitions or Polls	Buying Official Merchandise or Products	Creating or Sharing Fan-Made Content
67%	45%	42%	38%	33%

Fandom among Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z is deeply immersive and multidimensional. Social media serves as the primary gateway, where following an idol becomes the foundation of connection and community. But support doesn't stop at digital admiration as it extends into real-world participation through concerts and voting campaigns, creating a sense of shared mission and impact. For many, being a fan is also an act of self-expression, whether through collecting official merchandise or producing and sharing fan content. These behaviors reveal that fandom today is not just about consumption; it's a performative, participatory culture where identity, creativity, and emotional investment converge.

JKT48's Sousenkyo and the Rise of Emotional Capital

For Millennial fans, many of whom have followed JKT48 since its debut—the *Sousenkyo* is a ritual of continuity and nostalgia, reinforcing years of emotional investment. For Gen Z, however, the spectacle prompts a more critical gaze: questions of access, fairness, and the commodification of influence come to the fore. The rising costs associated with participation is increasingly described in global media as "funflation" and have exposed new tensions around inclusivity and the material barriers to belonging. As live events, fan activations, and cosplay conventions proliferate, access is no longer equal, creating subtle hierarchies that privilege those who can afford to engage.

Importantly, the *Sousenkyo* is not confined to the election moment itself. The surrounding ecosystem which includes pre-election campaigns, social media coordination, fan-made videos, and post-election analyses has already created a dense, hybrid cultural space where online and offline engagement intersect. In this space, entertainment transforms into cultural labor, as fans not only consume but actively co-produce meaning, visibility, and narrative.

These patterns reveal a broader behavioral shift among Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z: entertainment is no longer a passive diversion — it's a space for identity, emotional processing, and cultural expression. The *Sousenkyo* thus becomes more than a pop spectacle as it is a mirror reflecting the complexities of fandom, aspiration, and participation in a fast-changing cultural landscape.

PAPION and the Rise of Emotion-Driven Fandom

A Girls Group Born in Indonesia, Built for Global Resonance

In 2025, PAPION entered the regional and global spotlight as a girls group formed in Indonesia, with a multicultural lineup including members from Indonesia, Thailand, and the United States. More than a musical debut, their emergence marks a shift in Southeast Asia's creative identity, where personal storytelling, cultural grounding, and emotional resonance shape the foundation of youth-driven fandom.

PAPION takes its name from papillon, the French word for butterfly, symbolizing transformation, growth, and individuality. Each member contributes a distinct personality and creative perspective, forming a collective that is diverse, dynamic, and emotionally attuned. Their debut single, Push the Button, is positioned not just as a track but as a manifesto. It invites listeners to trust their pace, embrace change, and take ownership of their narrative.

For Gen Z, particularly young women, this message is timely and affirming. In a digital ecosystem where 73 percent of Gen Z listeners use music to express their identity, PAPION stands out by offering emotional clarity over perfection. Their music and visual storytelling emphasize authenticity, reflection, and the freedom to evolve. In doing so, they reflect the values of a generation that seeks meaning in content and connection in community.

Industry analysts underscore that female acts are driving genre growth, amid signs of stagnation among male groups. This shift is not just about market performance, but about alignment with deeper behavioral and emotional preferences. Industry analysis highlights that female consumers—who make up the majority of K-pop and global pop audiences—prioritize personal values, emotional resonance, and two-way interaction. These are the very elements that many girl groups are now structured around, making them more culturally and commercially resonant with younger audiences.

Beyond their artistic expression, PAPION represents a larger behavioral shift. Their audience participates through short-form content, fan edits, dance challenges, commentary threads, and visual remixes. This mirrors how entertainment functions for Millennials and Gen Z: as a participatory ecosystem rather than a one-way broadcast. The line between audience and community continues to blur.

Several trends from this chapter are echoed in PAPION's trajectory:

Their emotional storytelling reflects Gen Z's preference for slice-of-life narratives, where vulnerability and personal growth matter more than perfection.

PAPION's creative direction shows growing confidence in Southeast Asia's cultural voice, offering global appeal rooted in local identity.

Their early fandom is built on participation, with fans not just consuming but actively sharing, interpreting, and co-owning the story.

PAPION is not only a musical act. They are a reflection of what happens when emotional truth, local identity, and creative agency converge. For a generation that seeks not only entertainment but recognition and belonging, PAPION offers a cultural blueprint grounded in individuality, connection, and self-expression.

Cinema That Sees Us

Jumbo Redefines What's Possible in Indonesian Animation

In a market historically dominated by live-action blockbusters, the success of Jumbo marks a critical inflection point in the evolution of Indonesia's film industry. As the first locally produced animated feature to surpass 10 million viewers, Jumbo defied expectations to become the highest-grossing Indonesian film of all time. This milestone was reached after an impressive 63-day theatrical run, a rare achievement that signals both commercial strength and long-term audience engagement.

Produced by Visinema and directed by Ryan Adriandhy, Jumbo follows the emotional journey of Don, an orphaned boy navigating themes of courage, identity, and belonging. These universal themes, grounded in local cultural cues, proved especially resonant with Millennial and Gen Z families, who are increasingly drawn to storytelling that reflects both personal and collective experiences.

What sets Jumbo apart is not only its narrative, but the way it was made. Over 200 Indonesian creators contributed to the project across nine studios, spanning disciplines such as animation, illustration, scoring, and post-production. The decentralized and collaborative production model mirrors the distributed nature of Indonesia's creative economy and showcases the country's growing technical capabilities in animation.

"Bringing the team together felt like assembling the Avengers. But once people saw the vision and the scale, they realized this wasn't just another project, it was an opportunity to make history."

— **Ryan Adriandhy**, Director of Jumbo

A key innovation in the production process was the reversal of the conventional animation workflow. Instead of synchronizing voice work to pre-rendered scenes, Jumbo prioritized voice recordings early in the pipeline. This gave actors creative freedom to perform without constraint, leading to emotionally grounded vocal performances that informed the animation process. Improvised moments, such as Prince Poetiray's spontaneous celebratory lines, were preserved and integrated into the final edit.

"I didn't constrain the actors with visuals, instead, I offered them context and let them interpret the moment. That's where the most powerful scenes came from—raw, unscripted emotion."

— **Ryan Adriandhy**, Director of Jumbo

The film's visual world, set in the fictional Kampung Seruni, reflects Southeast Asian architectural styles and early-2000s Indonesian nostalgia. Elements such as tiled floors, payphones, and street-level aesthetics were designed with cultural specificity in mind. In a rare move for animated films, characters in Jumbo wear multiple outfits across scenes, signaling a commitment to realism and narrative continuity.

Jumbo is not merely a milestone for Indonesian animation. It represents the convergence of creative ambition, technical innovation, and generational demand for stories that feel both intimate and iconic.

Released during the Lebaran holiday period, Jumbo benefited from a well-coordinated promotional campaign supported by both government and private sector partners. It has since become Southeast Asia's most-watched animated film and is preparing for theatrical release in 17 countries. In response to its success, Visinema has committed an additional USD 10 million toward the development of future animated intellectual properties, indicating a broader strategic investment in the genre.

From a cultural perspective, Jumbo highlights the readiness of Indonesian audiences to embrace high-quality local animation, provided the emotional depth and storytelling sophistication are in place. For Millennials and Gen Z, whose content preferences are increasingly shaped by a blend of global exposure and local relevance, Jumbo stands as a model of what culturally grounded, exportable storytelling can achieve.

"Selalu Ada di Nadimu" Becomes Indonesia's Anthem of Hope and Unity

At the heart of Jumbo's unprecedented cultural phenomenon lies its emotional soundtrack, anchored by the viral hit "Selalu Ada di Nadimu", crafted by acclaimed Indonesian musical trio Laleilmanino. More than just a soundtrack, the song rapidly evolved into a powerful anthem, uniting Indonesian Millennials, Gen Z, and families around its universal message of hope, courage, and resilience.

"We knew the music had to resonate not only with the emotional journey of the characters but also with the audience, Laleilmanino was a natural choice for us because of their incredible ability to blend modern pop with rich, emotional depth, which perfectly matched the vibe we were looking for."

— **Ryan Adriandhy**, Director of Jumbo

Immediately following its release, "Selalu Ada di Nadimu" echoed beyond the cinema screens, resonating deeply within everyday life across Indonesia. Its inspiring melody and heartfelt lyrics became widely embraced in schools, churches, family celebrations, and community events, solidifying its position as a modern-day cultural anthem.

The success of the song significantly amplified audience engagement, prompting a massive surge of User-Generated Content (UGC) across digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Audiences enthusiastically shared dance routines, heartfelt covers, and emotional performances inspired by the song, collectively amassing millions of views and reinforcing a vibrant, participatory fan culture.

Critically, the emotional power of "Selalu Ada di Nadimu" played a pivotal role in Jumbo's narrative depth and world-building. The song seamlessly complemented key emotional moments, providing audiences with an immersive and authentic storytelling experience that lingered long after leaving theaters. It expanded the film's emotional landscape, enriching the connection between viewers and Jumbo's animated universe.

The Rise of Slice-of-Life Cinema

A new wave of Indonesian filmmakers has shifted the spotlight, from spectacle to subtlety, telling stories that unfold in life's quieter, more vulnerable moments. Directors like Yandy Laurens have stepped away from spectacle and leaned into something more intimate, stories grounded in emotional realism and the unspoken rhythms of everyday life. His most recent film, *1 Kakak 7 Ponakan* (2025) *Jatuh Cinta Seperti di Film-Film* (2023), is arguably the clearest expression of this shift. The film captures the awkwardness of modern love, the hesitation to open up, and the beauty of restraint. It speaks directly to a generation that finds meaning not in grand romantic gestures, but in vulnerability, emotional nuance, and the quiet courage of being seen.

Laurens continues to define a quiet movement in Indonesian cinema—one where emotion is not performed, but felt. From the tender reimagining of *Keluarga Cemara* (2019) to the contemplative arcs in *Jatuh Cinta Seperti di Film-Film* (2023) and *1 Kakak 7 Ponakan* (2024), his stories gently hold space for themes like caregiving, unspoken emotional labor, and the ongoing negotiation between ambition and family responsibility.

His latest release, *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* (2025), folds these familiar tensions into a new container. Subtly dressed as a sci-fi fantasy, at its core, it remains a slice-of-life story—a quiet mirror of Millennial and Gen Z anxieties around time, relationships, and purpose. Barasuara's stirring soundtrack "*Terbuang Dalam Waktu*", which has since become the film's anthem, captures this emotional undercurrent with haunting precision. The lyrics echo the film's central question: what does it mean to love someone across time, across dreams, across unfinished versions of ourselves? In just 11 days, Sore drew 1,393,072 admissions. Not because it was loud, but because it understood. In a generation learning to redefine love—not as possession, but as presence—the film offers a soft, timely answer.

— **Yandy Laurens**, Filmmaker

"I didn't set out to make slice-of-life films. It started from looking inward, my childhood, my family, the everyday moments I never used to think twice about. Over time, I realized those quiet moments held the most meaning. We're taught to chase dramatic arcs, but what stays with people are the small, unresolved things: a father struggling to connect with his son, someone finally putting their feelings into words after years of holding back.

People don't go to the cinema to be told what to feel. They go to feel seen. And in a world that moves fast and talks loud, what they crave most is recognition, the sense that their joys, struggles, and contradictions matter. That's why I always tell younger filmmakers: don't just write stories, live them. Live well, and the stories will follow.
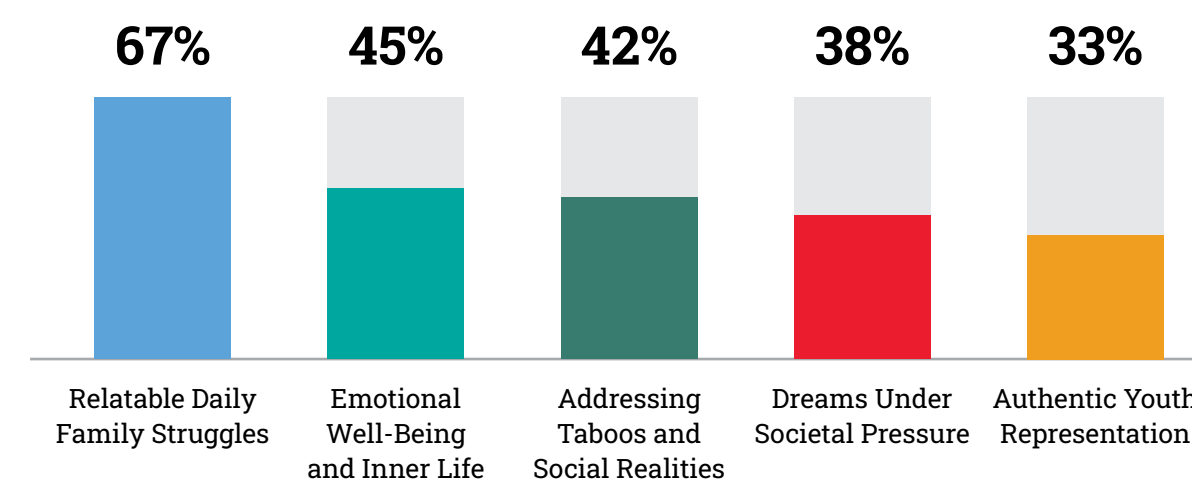
For me, directing is about listening to the story, to the actors, to the silence between lines. I spend more time in reading sessions than on set because I want the actors to find their own rhythm, their own truth. When they do, something clicks. And that's where the magic happens, when a personal story starts to feel universal."

For Millennials and Gen Z, this kind of storytelling offers something rare: permission to slow down. In a culture that often prioritizes output, milestones, and aesthetic perfection, Laurens' films validate the quiet reckoning of everyday life. They honor emotional truth over performance, empathy over resolution. And in doing so, they remind young Indonesians that their lives, however imperfect, tender and unresolved, are worthy of being told.

Emotional Honesty Over Spectacle

Slice-of-life storytelling has emerged as one of the most meaningful forms of expression for young Indonesians. Departing from sensational or escapist narratives, these films highlight the complexities of everyday life with emotional honesty and cultural nuance.

Defining Themes that Resonate in Indonesian Films (Millennials and Gen Z)

Relatable Daily Family Struggles	Emotional Well-Being and Inner Life	Addressing Taboos and Social Realities	Dreams Under Societal Pressure	Authentic Youth Representation
67%	45%	42%	38%	33%

Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z are drawn to films that mirror their emotional landscape and social realities. Stories about family, mental health, and societal pressure resonate deeply not just as entertainment, but as reflections of their own lives. This generation values authenticity, vulnerability, and representation, seeking narratives that help them process their experiences and feel seen.

Key Examples

Cek Toko Sebelah (2016)
A warm and witty take on the tension between career ambition and family expectations.

Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini (2019)
A heartfelt exploration of intergenerational trauma that sparked national dialogue on healing within families.

Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap (2022)
A Batak family story that found nationwide relevance through its honest portrayal of cultural pride and generational friction.

Home Sweet Loan (2024)
A relatable portrait of the sandwich generation caught between financial independence and family duty. Over 1.7 million viewers; now streaming on Netflix.

Bila Esok Ibu Tiada (2024)
A poignant drama about four siblings grappling with grief as they face the impending loss of their mother.

Two Blue Hearts (2024)
The sequel to Two Blue Stripes, revisiting Bima and Dara as they navigate the complexities of parenthood and second chances.

1 Kakak 7 Ponakan (2025)
A quiet reflection on caregiving, exploring how family responsibilities shape personal identity over time.

Perayaan Mati Rasa (2025)
A poetic look at emotional numbness and Gen Z's search for meaning amid burnout and disconnection.

Jumbo (2025)
Indonesia's highest-grossing animated film, following a bullied orphan who finds his voice through a magical talent show journey. International release in 17 countries begins June 2025.

Lupa Daratan (2025)
A Netflix original dramedy about a narcissistic actor who loses his ability to perform, offering a sharp yet sincere take on fame and self-worth.

Youth Engagement with Intimate Storytelling

The way Millennials and Gen Z engages and consume stories has evolved over the years. Today, Millennials and Gen Z :
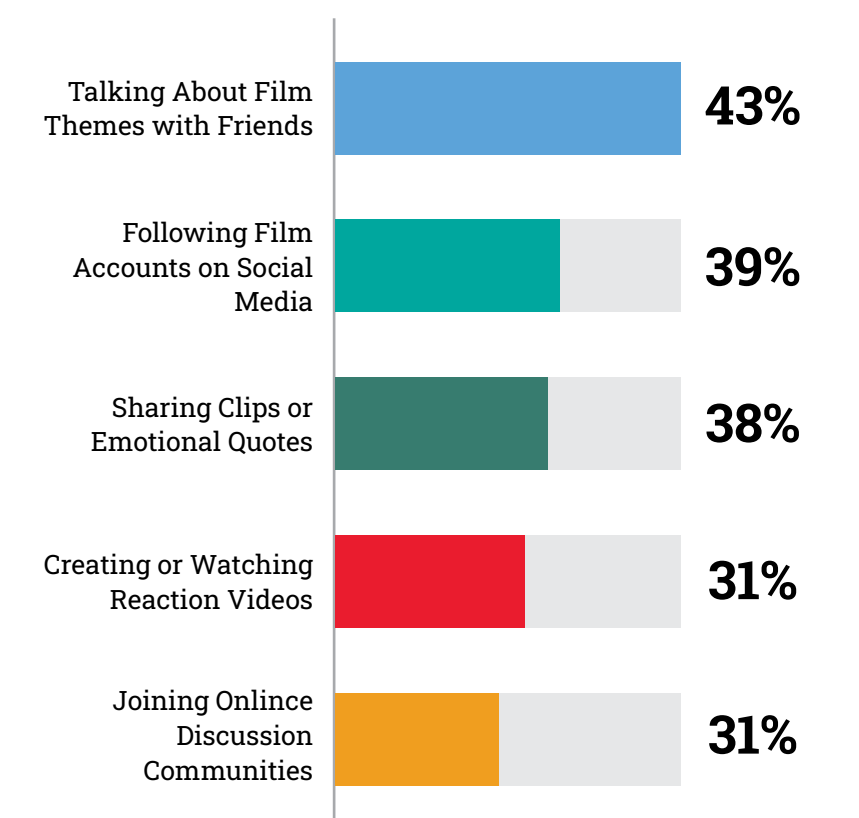
Circulate **Dissect** **Co-Own**

Slice-of-life films do more than entertain. They often spark a wave of user participation long after the story ends. According to the data, 43 percent of viewers discuss a film's themes or characters with friends or followers. Another 39 percent follow social media accounts dedicated to similar content, and 38 percent share their favorite clips or quotes. Additionally, 31 percent engage by creating reaction videos or joining online communities that discuss films. These patterns show how deeply this genre connects with audiences and encourages ongoing engagement.

What makes slice-of-life films stand out is their ability to present emotionally honest and highly relatable moments. These moments often prompt viewers to reflect and respond publicly. Whether it's a quiet realization, a powerful quote, or an everyday conflict that feels personal, audiences are inspired to share their thoughts and feelings. For Millennials and Gen Z, this genre becomes more than just something to watch. It becomes a space for connection, conversation, and creative expression.

How Indonesians Millennials and Gen Z Engage with Slice of Life Films Online

Talking About Film Themes with Friends	43%
Following Film Accounts on Social Media	39%
Sharing Clips or Emotional Quotes	38%
Creating or Watching Reaction Videos	31%
Joining Onlince Discussion Communities	31%

Factory Horror: Turning Structural Anxiety into Genre

Alongside the rise of slice-of-life cinema, another compelling movement has taken shape in Indonesia: factory horror, which is a genre that transforms the nation's industrial landscapes into haunting stages of fear, sacrifice, and class struggle. These films cut deep into Indonesia's socio-economic undercurrents, confronting themes such as wage stagnation, labor exploitation, debt traps, and the steady erosion of worker protections.

At its core, factory horror draws not from supernatural threats, but from the everyday terrors of working-class life. The monsters here are familiar: predatory employers, unsafe machinery, toxic workplaces, and the relentless psychological toll of precarious labor.

In Indonesia, the genre carries a sharp cultural edge. Rapid industrialization and widening economic divides have turned factories, warehouses, and construction sites into not just economic centers, but social flashpoints. On screen, these everyday spaces become symbolic battlegrounds where workers face more than physical dangers as they confront the deeper forces of wage theft, job insecurity, and systemic injustice.

What makes factory horror resonate so powerfully is its ability to blur the line between fiction and reality. The factory floor becomes a moral stage where poverty, inequality, corruption, and gender violence are magnified and dramatized. While global cinema offers versions of "blue-collar horror," Indonesian factory horror is distinct in the way it weaves local labor histories, cultural codes, and communal ideas of sacrifice and justice into its stories.

Angkara Murka (2025)
A construction crew is haunted by the spirits of workers sacrificed in the name of profit.

Zona Merah (2022)
A factory lockdown during a viral outbreak spirals into a brutal fight for survival against both disease and corporate greed.

Hutang Nyawa (2023)
A desperate worker trapped in a deadly debt scheme must outsmart his employer before time and his life runs out.

Pabrik Gula (2024)
In a decaying sugar mill, laborers unearth a violent past still powering the machines and haunting the present.

Qodrat 2 (2025)
An exorcist returns to face an ancient evil embedded within the walls of a cursed garment factory.

Perempuan Pembawa Sial (2025)
A young female factory worker becomes the scapegoat for a series of workplace accidents, uncovering deep-rooted patterns of gendered blame and systemic neglect.

Horror That Hits Too Close to Home

In Indonesia's factory horror films, the monsters aren't imagined, they're inherited. They echo real fears about work, injustice, and survival. Over the past two decades, the country's rapid economic expansion has produced profound inequalities. Urbanization, industrial growth, and the rise of insecure, low-wage work have widened the gulf between the middle class and the working poor.

Factory Horror as Collective Catharsis

- These stories blur fiction and reality, turning wage theft, gendered blame, and job precarity into metaphorical monsters.

- For Gen Z, watching isn't just about fear, it's about processing the trauma of being raised in an economy that promises progress but rarely delivers protection.

For Millennials, factory horror stirs memories of the post-1998 reform era, when mass layoffs, factory shutdowns, and chaotic economic restructuring left deep scars. For Gen Z, it speaks to a more immediate anxiety: a symbolic rebellion against structural inequality, gig economy precarity, and a world where work no longer guarantees dignity or protection.

From a behavioral perspective, these films serve as collective coping mechanisms. They transform diffuse, often unspoken fears, disposability, invisibility, exploitation into vivid, shared narratives, helping audiences process feelings of vulnerability and abandonment.

Sociologically, Indonesia's industrial zones are more than just worksites as they are full social ecosystems, shaped by gendered labor roles, intergenerational sacrifice, and tight-knit community ties. Gender dynamics loom especially large: many factory horror stories spotlight the double burden faced by women, who endure both economic hardship and domestic responsibility. For Gen Z, raised with heightened awareness of social justice and gender equity, these films hit with particular urgency.

The visual grammar of the genre's endless assembly lines, whirring machines, exhausted bodies and unpaid debts taps into a collective memory shaped by inequality. These are not merely stories of individual suffering; they are fables about systems where hard work does not guarantee survival, and loyalty can be punished instead of rewarded.

What ultimately sets factory horror apart is its unsettling closeness to everyday life. Unlike escapist horror, which offers a temporary detachment, factory horror draws tension from lived reality. That proximity makes the genre not only more relatable, but also more cathartic and politically charged.

In the end, factory horror matters because it doesn't just aim to scare, but rather, it seeks to expose, challenge, and bear witness. It holds up a mirror to Indonesia's unfinished promises of progress, pushing Millennials and Gen Z alike to grapple with the human costs of modernization.

Meme Culture
Humor as Resistance, Commentary, and Community

The Meme Equation

Emotion + Recognition + Timing = Share

Memes that hit hardest reflect how audiences already feel, just quicker, funnier, and more publicly.

For Gen Z in Indonesia, memes aren't just funny as they're flexible, fast, and often deeply political. In an attention economy saturated with noise, memes cut through with speed, irony, and shared cultural language. Whether critiquing political hypocrisy, amplifying fandom in-jokes, or poking fun at daily struggles, memes have become the generation's shorthand for commentary, therapy, and belonging.

MAPLE
"IZIN CUTI YA MBA"

MAPLE
"EH HARI INI BIKIN 6 KONTEN YA SEBELUM LIBUR"

MAPLE
KATA UMPATAN YANG SERING KITA DENGAR SEHARI-HARI

Nomad media platforms and influencers on social media often blend humor and information to engage young audiences on serious issues from elections and gender equality to climate change and cancel culture. Their memes don't trivialize as they translate, turning abstract or overwhelming topics into digestible, emotional cues. When traditional media feels detached, memes step in with cultural fluency and peer credibility.

> "Meme culture is proof that entertainment doesn't stop at the content as it continues in the comments, the screenshots, and the fan-made edits. For us, memes are modern-day reflections. They turn slice-of-life moments, awkward pauses, or even misquotes into something that sticks with the audience. It's not just about going viral, it's about being understood, reshared, and made part of everyday humor."
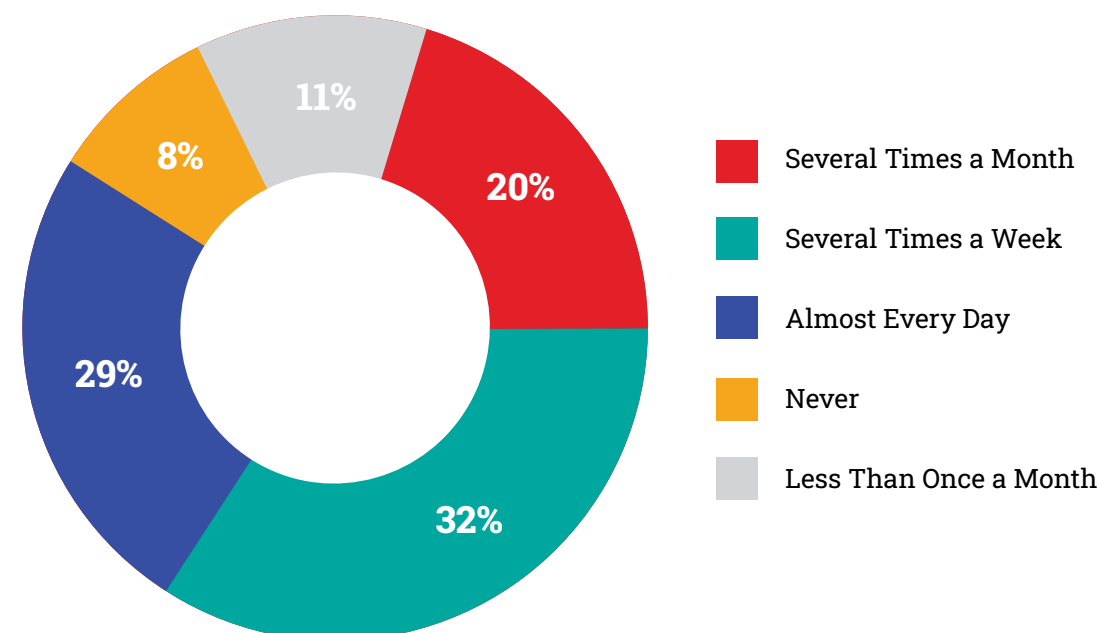
— **Tiara Dianita & Desy Maharani**, The Maple Media

In fandoms, meme pages are emotional archives: a JKT48 reaction meme says as much about loyalty and heartbreak as a full fan essay. For anime, K-pop, and local indie fans, memes are the connective tissue between content, creators, and community. They reinforce in-group identity while inviting playful critique. Memes today are more than entertainment, they're tools of influence, powered by shareability, irony, and cultural nuance. Their virality isn't just about laughter, it's about resonance.

Binge and Belong: The Scroll-Driven Story

Microdrama as the New Medium

The rise of microdramas represents a defining shift in Indonesia's digital entertainment landscape. In March 2025, IDN responded to this trend by launching NONTON, a dedicated microdrama platform within the IDN App, tailored to the evolving content habits of Millennials and Gen Z.

Microdrama Exposure Frequency

- 20% Several Times a Month
- 32% Several Times a Week
- 29% Almost Every Day
- 8% Never
- 11% Less Than Once a Month

Survey findings show that 61 percent of Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia watch microdramas almost every day or several times a week. This high frequency signals a clear behavioral shift with microdramas no longer considered a niche format but a staple in their everyday media diet. The appeal lies in their ability to reflect real-life emotions, relationships, and dilemmas in a format that is fast, accessible, and easy to share.

Microdramas Are More Than Just Content, They're Company

- Designed for scroll-time and snack breaks, microdramas offer emotional payoff without long commitment.

- They're not replacing long-form stories, they're fitting themselves into the rhythm of daily life. For Gen Z, they're part coping tool, part entertainment, part habit.

Typically running between one to five minutes per episode, microdramas deliver a complete story arc or emotional moment in a compact format. Unlike traditional television or film, they are designed for mobile-first consumption and perfect for short breaks, daily commutes, or background viewing during multitasking. By combining the immediacy of short-form video with the emotional pull of scripted storytelling, microdramas have found a powerful resonance with younger, time-conscious audiences seeking both connection and convenience.

Behavior by Design: Fast Feeds, Deep Feels

While microdramas meet the demand for bite-sized storytelling, they also invite reflection on whether this format nurtures creativity or feeds into shrinking attention spans. Audiences may crave efficiency, but at what cost to narrative depth?

62% of viewers aged 18-34 now favor short-form serials on weekdays, with microdramas delivering 1.5x more engagement than long-form shows.

Every scroll tells a story. Microdramas are reshaping how Indonesia's young audiences engage with content that is fast, emotional, and made for mobile. Its short, emotionally resonant structure fits naturally into their scroll-heavy routines, offering moments of escapism without demanding long attention spans. The consistency of exposure suggests that microdrama isn't just a casual watch as it's habit-forming. Its popularity reflects a broader shift in content preference: quick, relatable narratives that deliver impact in under a minute. In a digital culture where entertainment competes with everything else on the feed, microdrama is winning by design.

Local Relevance vs Global Templates

The platform's design reflects a broader generational shift toward speed, accessibility, and relatability.

"Microdrama on IDN App is designed to accompany users' daily lives who want to enjoy short yet meaningful entertainment. With relatable stories and appropriate durations, we hope this platform becomes the main choice for those who want to enjoy drama without having to spend much time."

— **Zefanya Deby**, Head of IDN App

For this generation, the behavioral appeal of microdramas is clear: they deliver immediate emotional payoff, aligning with multitasking habits and mobile-first lifestyles. Recent findings show that 62% of Indonesians aged 18–34 prefer short-form series over traditional formats, with this demand cutting across gender, socioeconomic status, and geography.

"Microdrama is the future of Indonesian entertainment. In the digital era, where time is increasingly valuable, microdrama offers a faster, more intense, and relevant viewing experience for the modern generation. Through microdrama, we are opening a new chapter in the entertainment industry— connecting the best stories with millions of viewers in a more dynamic and innovative format."

— **Winston Utomo**, Founder and CEO of IDN

While microdramas meet the demand for bite-sized storytelling, they also invite reflection on whether this format nurtures creativity or feeds into shrinking attention spans. Audiences may crave efficiency, but at what cost to narrative depth?

NONTON's content strategy spans romance, friendship, suspense, and social commentary, reflecting both local experiences and cross-cultural appeal. The inclusion of microdramas from Korea, China, and other Asian markets underscores the regional curiosity and global outlook of Indonesian youth.

The global microdrama market is set to triple from $8 billion in 2024 to over $24 billion by 2032.

Globally, the microdrama market is experiencing explosive growth. Industry forecasts estimate that the global microdrama and short-form video sector that is valued at $8 billion in 2024 and is on track to surpass $24 billion by 2032, effectively tripling in size within less than a decade. Platforms like TikTok, Kwai, and China's Mango TV have popularized ultra-short scripted content, particularly across Asia, where mobile-first audiences crave stories that deliver both speed and emotional resonance. Crucially, this trend is no longer confined to entertainment; industries such as advertising, education, and health are increasingly leveraging microdrama formats to capture attention, communicate complexity, and boost engagement.

Microdrama and the New Creative Pathways

For Indonesia, this signals a moment not just of opportunity, but of cultural leadership. Local platforms like NONTON are doing more than keeping pace with global trends as they are helping shape them, crafting homegrown stories that reflect the emotional texture, aspirations, and social realities of Indonesian audiences. These aren't simply copies of foreign formats; they are narratives grounded in local experience.

Beyond changing audience preferences, microdramas have also expanded creative pathways for local talent. By lowering production barriers and offering an accessible entry point into the industry, platforms like NONTON are actively fueling Indonesia's creative economy, allowing emerging creators to experiment with format, voice, and audience reach.

What distinguishes Indonesian microdramas from their Chinese or Korean counterparts is their thematic focus. While East Asian formats often center on romance or escapist fantasy, Indonesian microdramas lean toward slice-of-life realism and social critique, offering viewers a form of emotional authenticity that feels closer to lived experience.

More broadly, the rise of microdrama reflects a deeper global shift toward attention-driven media consumption. For Millennials and Gen Z, the appeal is both immediate and profound: fast, relatable, emotionally charged stories that fit seamlessly into the rhythm of their daily lives.

Global Platforms, Local Soul
OTT and the Era of Cultural Participation

80% of OTT users in Indonesia are between the ages of 18 and 44, with a strong skew towards Millennials and Gen Z

Netflix has reshaped Indonesia's media landscape not only by expanding access but also by delivering cultural relevance. Titles like Gadis Kretek, Dear David, and Ali & Ratu Ratu Queens rank among Netflix's most-watched shows in Indonesia. These successes demonstrate the power of stories anchored in local experiences.
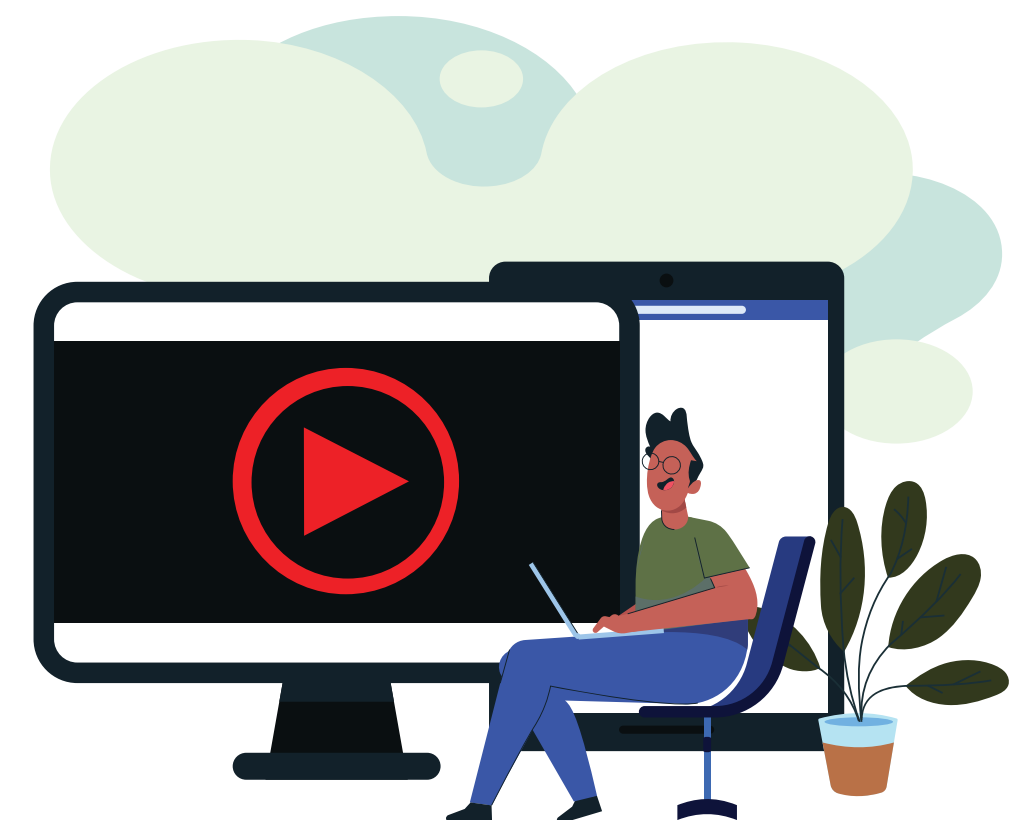
NETFLIX

— Netflix Indonesia

"It's about connecting with shared emotion and identity. For us, local content isn't just a box to tick. It's about showing Indonesian audiences that their experiences, struggles, humor, and dreams can resonate with people in any country. We've learned that when people see themselves authentically reflected on screen, their engagement deepens. Not just as viewers, but as fans and advocates who help carry the story forward.

These genres, which include content from Hollywood, Korea, and Indonesia, remain among the most-watched in the country. We've seen that local stories are gaining remarkable traction. Cultural relevance isn't just a bonus. It is key to building audience loyalty."

Netflix's Strategy: Not Just Streaming, But Belonging

This approach reflects a precise understanding of audience needs. For Gen Z, representation is no longer optional as it is foundational. Data shows that 73% of Gen Z viewers are more likely to complete a series when it reflects their cultural and emotional reality. Authenticity isn't just appreciated—it's expected.

73% of Gen Z viewers are more likely to complete a series when it reflects their cultural and emotional reality. Authenticity isn't just appreciated, it's expected.

What sets Netflix apart is not just its content, but its strategy for weaving entertainment into everyday cultural life. This goes beyond streaming, it's about building cultural participation.

Cultural Activations that Work

Red Light Green Light Challenge (2024)
A Squid Game-themed activation drew thousands of registrants at Gelora Bung Karno and 2.4 million livestream viewers, blurring the line between media consumption and experiential fandom.

Gadis Kretek (2023)
Stayed in Netflix's Top 10 for four consecutive weeks; generated over 140 million TikTok views, with fans producing commentary, edits, and fan theories that extended its cultural footprint.

One Piece Live Action (2024)
Sparked a 240% surge in user-generated content (UGC), from cosplay to local commentary, demonstrating how global IP can meet local fandom in ways that inspire creativity and ownership.

This strategy integrates fan-driven activity, from Gadis Kretek fan reactions to One Piece cosplay, alongside targeted social media and influencer campaigns. Netflix's strength lies not in chasing trends but in anticipating audience desires through data-driven personalization and sustained investment in local stories. Indonesian viewers, as Netflix has observed, do not gravitate toward a single genre. They move fluidly across slice-of-life dramas, action thrillers, and fantasy epics. It is not star power but narrative authenticity and cultural specificity that drive loyalty.

Netflix Indonesia, adds, "We see ourselves not just as a streaming service but as a cultural participant. That means going beyond the screen and into real-life moments, social media conversations, and fan communities. When we create activations like the Red Light Green Light Challenge or support local cosplay movements around One Piece, it's about inviting audiences to play an active role in the story. That connection is what makes a title last in people's hearts and conversations long after the credits roll."

In a competitive OTT environment, Netflix's capacity to marry global scale with local nuance has proven decisive. It has shifted expectations of what a streaming platform can be. Not just a content provider, but a cultural actor. For Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z, Netflix offers more than entertainment. It offers recognition, connection, and belonging.

Indonesia-Core Goes Global
no na and the Rise of Cultural Confidence

In April 2025, 88rising introduced **no na**, its first all-Indonesian girl group marking a bold moment for Indonesian pop culture. The group's name comes from nona, meaning "young woman" in Indonesian, a subtle but intentional nod to their roots and identity.

The four members, Baila Fauri, Christy Gardena, Shazfa Adesya, and Esther Geraldine, come from diverse creative paths, from music competitions and ballet to digital storytelling. Their debut single "Shoot" arrived with sweeping visuals of Bali's rice fields and waterfalls, blending polished pop production with unmistakably local imagery.

Since their debut, **no na** has captured attention with a confident embrace of local identity. Their first single, "Shoot," quickly found momentum across digital platforms. On TikTok, the track sparked dance challenges and high engagement, with one video by 88rising racking up over 545,000 likes and thousands of comments in its first week, an early sign of a fanbase extending beyond Indonesia.

By May 2025, Shoot had soared past 3.2 million streams on Spotify, an impressive milestone powered by 138,000 first-day plays

By May 2025, "Shoot" had surpassed 3.2 million streams on Spotify, after an impressive debut of 138,282 streams on day one. The group now draws nearly a million monthly listeners on the platform, signaling both staying power and rising global curiosity. Meanwhile, the official music video, featuring sweeping shots of Bali's Banyumala Twin Waterfall, has since crossed 3.9 million views on YouTube, earning praise for its lush visuals and grounded cultural aesthetic.

More than just a debut, "Shoot" introduced a bold new visual and sonic vocabulary for what Indonesia-core could be—unapologetically local, emotionally layered, and aesthetically uncompromising. With follow-up releases like "Superstitious" and "Falling in Love," **no na** continues to challenge the idea that global relevance requires imitation. Rather than echoing global trends, they are reframing what it means to lead with cultural specificity and creative agency from the Global South.

For many Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z, this isn't just about representation, it's about reclamation. Local pride is no longer just something to celebrate; it's something to aspire to.

Podcasts and the Emotional Economy
## Why the "Zero to Hero" Formula Works

Resilience, hard work, and perseverance are not just individual values in Indonesia but rather, they are collective cultural ideals. Studies such as the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS) and national youth reports consistently rank these qualities among the most admired across generations. From early childhood, Indonesians are surrounded by stories of overcoming adversity: families sacrificing for children's education, entrepreneurs building businesses from the ground up, and migrant workers enduring hardship to provide for their families.

Against this backdrop, the "From Zero to Hero" narrative holds a powerful emotional pull. It offers not only examples of personal triumph, but also a reflection of widely shared social values and the belief that determination and sacrifice can lead to a better life. This cultural resonance gives video podcasts in this genre a distinct edge: they don't just entertain, they validate the aspirations and struggles of their audience.

The Power of Seeing Yourself in the Story

Preffered Podcast Format

Audio · Video · Both Equally Liked
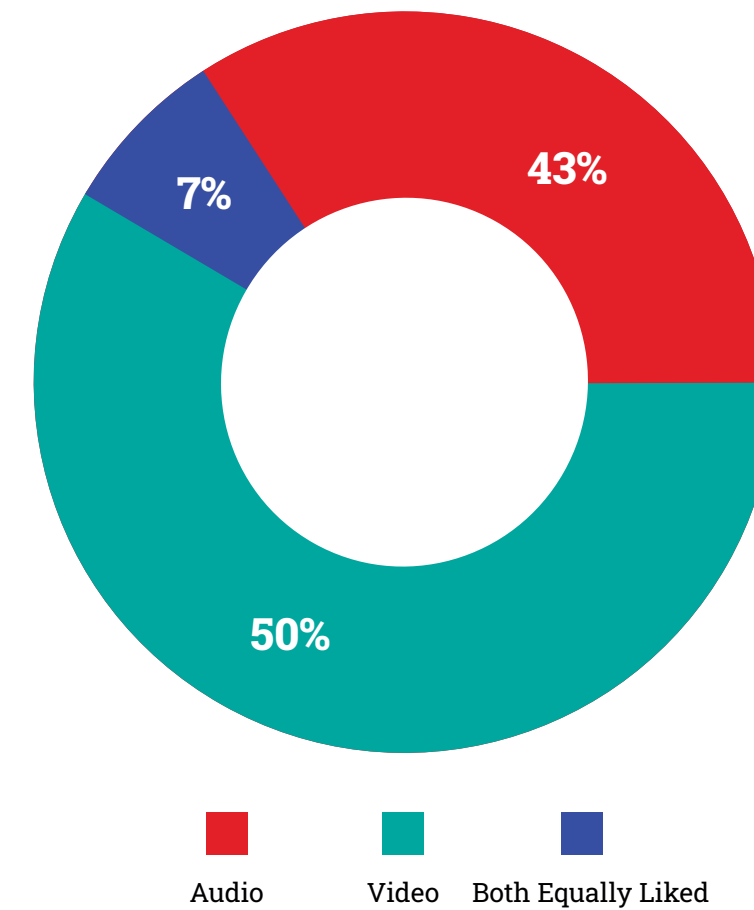
The pie chart underscores a clear behavioral shift in content preferences: half of Indonesian audiences now favor video podcasts, while 43% prefer audio, and only 7% enjoy both formats equally. This trend highlights the growing dominance of visual-first content, especially among Millennials and Gen Z, generations deeply accustomed to expressive, emotionally engaging platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. For them, video podcasts are more than just a content preference, they're a natural extension of how they connect, learn, and reflect.

With a median age of 30, Indonesia is one of the youngest populations in Southeast Asia, with Millennials and Gen Z making up over half the population. Research from McKinsey and IDN Research Institute shows that these generations are ambitious and upwardly mobile but also face rising economic pressures, from a volatile job market to widening income inequality. They are seeking not only inspiration but also practical guidance to navigate these challenges.

Video podcasts have emerged as a vital medium to meet this need. By blending candid personal stories with actionable advice, they offer young Indonesians a roadmap for resilience, whether it's launching a business, switching careers, achieving financial stability, or maintaining mental well-being. This mix of emotional authenticity and tactical insight has made the format particularly appealing.

Importantly, the visual nature of video podcasts heightens their impact. Seeing body language, expressions, and emotional nuance deepens the sense of authenticity, making the content more relatable than text or audio alone. In a highly visual, mobile-first media landscape, this format is perfectly aligned with the habits of digital-native audiences.

Redefining Life Inspiration for a New Generation

Merry Riana
Financial independence, empowerment, and motivational strategy

Dudi Arisandi
Leadership coaching, career development, and personal branding

Samuel Ray
Mental wellness, resilience, and youth-focused self-improvement

Grace Tahir
Entrepreneurship, innovation, and societal impact

Rene Suhardono
Purpose-driven work, career alignment, and meaning at work

Ligwina Hananto
Accessible financial literacy and everyday money management

Yoris Sebastian
Creativity, innovation, and youth mindset transformation

Alanda Kariza
Productivity, youth advocacy, and civic engagement

Raditya Dika
Creative entrepreneurship, humor, and digital adaptability

Gita Savitri Devi
Critical thinking, self-reflection, and social consciousness

Fellexandro Ruby
Emotional leadership, personal growth, and intentional living

Andini Effendi
Civic journalism, media integrity, and global perspective

Pancatera
Womanhood, identity, and everyday emotional narratives

DVET
Daily reflection, life values, and light-hearted personal wisdom

MAKNA Talks
Honest conversations, inner growth, and multidimensional storytelling

KumpulLeaders
Practical leadership, team dynamics, and resilience at work

Video podcasts offer a compelling blend of emotional intimacy and visual storytelling. They combine the familiar closeness of audio with the expressive depth of face-to-face conversation, making them a powerful medium for connection. Platforms like YouTube and Spotify, already central to how Indonesians consume content, have made these formats highly accessible, available on demand and across devices.

What sets video podcasts apart is how easily they extend beyond the original episode. Interactive features like live Q&A sessions, polls, and shareable video clips help push conversations into broader digital spaces, whether on TikTok, Instagram, or LinkedIn. This cross-platform presence transforms individual stories into shared dialogue, increasing both reach and resonance.

Music Podcasts: From Sound to Substance

The rise of music podcasts in Indonesia reflects a shift from pure music discovery to deeper narrative and cultural exploration. Rather than focusing solely on playlists or new releases, artists and brands are using podcasts to share behind-the-scenes stories, creative journeys, and personal struggles in recasting musicians as multidimensional cultural figures.

Key Trends

Artist Branding
Building authentic, loyal connections through personal narrative

Cultural Documentation
Highlighting Indonesia's diverse genres, from dangdut to indie

Niche Storytelling
Amplifying underrepresented voices and regional perspectives

AI and Personalization
Tailoring podcast recommendations to audience tastes

Emerging Trends Among Indonesian Content Creators

Relatable Resilience
Personal stories of perseverance, hardship, and triumph

Interactive Formats
Reels, clips, and live streams driving real-time audience engagement

Cross-Platform Presence
Expanding reach across TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn

Niche Expertise
Focused content in finance, healthcare, entrepreneurship

Mental Well-being Focus
Addressing burnout, balance, and emotional resilience

Cross-Platform Wisdom
From Creators to Communities

As Indonesia's digital audiences continue to evolve, video and music podcasts are poised to play an even greater role in shaping cultural identity and generational aspiration. By centering authenticity, community engagement, and multidimensional storytelling, these formats go beyond entertainment—they become tools for social connection, personal growth, and collective reflection. For brands, creators, and audiences alike, this marks a shift in how media is consumed: not just passively watched or heard, but actively lived and shared.

From Screens to Spaces
When Leisure Becomes Media

For today's youth, entertainment doesn't end with a screen as it spills into how they eat, dress, shop, and even travel. Leisure itself is now a form of storytelling, and travel becomes the next frontier for cultural participation and emotional resonance. Whether it's community sports, slow travel, purpose-driven stays, or the documentation of offbeat experiences, Millennials and Gen Z increasingly treat where they go as an extension of who they are. In this emerging landscape, emotional ownership is no longer limited to what they watch but rather, it includes how they explore, reflect, and reconnect.

Community Sports as the New Social Scene

Complementing digitally-driven lifestyles, Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z are turning to accessible, community-focused sports such as padel and pickleball as expressions of leisure and social connection. These sports aren't just about staying active as they've become integral social rituals, perfectly aligned with younger generations seeking meaningful, offline interactions that are as enriching as their digital experiences.

Fueled by social media, padel and pickleball have rapidly transformed from niche interests into mainstream cultural phenomena, significantly driven by platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp groups. Content featuring tournaments, casual matches, and lifestyle highlights consistently attracts high engagement, amplifying the visibility and popularity of these activities.

More than mere physical exercise, these sports facilitate genuine social bonding through friendly competitions, community meet-ups, and shared experiences. Facilities in Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Bali now regularly host events that amplifies real-world community building, deepening interpersonal connections while simultaneously creating rich digital content that extends these experiences online.

What Makes Community Sports Gain Prominence?

Offline Engagement Complements Digital Life
Community-based sports enhance real-world interactions, effectively complementing digital-first lifestyles by offering authentic physical experiences.

Leveraging Social Media to Drive Participation
Digital platforms provide powerful opportunities for amplifying community-driven sports, turning niche interests into broader cultural trends through participatory content.

Building Sustainable Communities through Sport
Encouraging accessible, socially inclusive activities like padel and pickleball fosters sustainable community-building among Millennials and Gen Z, deepening emotional and cultural bonds.

Redefining Leisure Through Regeneration
Sleep Tourism and the Rise of Rest as a Travel Priority

In an always-connected and overstimulated world, rest is no longer a luxury. It has become a necessity. For Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z, whose lives are shaped by digital fatigue, constant performance pressure, and irregular routines, rest is no longer something to fit in when time allows. It is now a conscious decision, a form of self-preservation, and increasingly, a reason to travel.

This emerging preference has sparked the rise of sleep tourism, a growing travel trend that places sleep and recovery at the center of the experience. Hotels and resorts are responding with offerings such as blackout curtains, soundproof rooms, high-quality mattresses, and calming interiors. Some go further by providing guided meditation, aromatherapy, and personalized sleep rituals.

Sleep tourism is more than a hospitality trend. It reflects a cultural shift in how rest is valued. For younger Indonesians, rest is no longer passive. It is intentional and restorative. Amid the fast pace of urban life and the pressure to stay productive, rest has become an act of reclaiming time, energy, and control.

Over 60% of Millennials and Gen Z travelers in Indonesia prioritize rest and recovery over sightseeing and exploration.

This shift mirrors larger global trends:

Quietcations have become increasingly popular, with Pinterest reporting over 40 percent growth in searches for "quiet places" and "calm places." Travelers are intentionally seeking low-sensory, peaceful environments that reduce stimulation and encourage mental reset.

Emotional fitness retreats are on the rise, according to the Global Wellness Summit's 2024 report. These retreats are designed to support emotional health, signaling a broader turn toward holistic well-being in the wellness tourism space.

Micro-wellness getaways, often lasting just one to three days, cater to digital detoxes, nature immersion, and mindfulness practices. These short, focused trips are especially popular with urban professionals and younger travelers looking for quick restoration.

Across Indonesia, destinations such as Ubud, Lembang, and remote coastal areas are seeing increased demand for wellness-centered travel. Spa hotels and eco-lodges are blending Indonesian cultural elements with thoughtful design and healing environments. Guests are no longer just booking a room. They are looking for space to recharge—physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Hospitality is beginning to take on a new role. It is no longer just about service and comfort. It is about creating experiences that improve health and emotional well-being. The integration of wellness elements, such as scent therapy, circadian lighting, and quiet zones, signals a shift toward a hospitality model built on restoration and care.

Sleep tourism is not simply about slowing down. It is about actively recovering from the demands of modern life. For Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z, rest is not just a pause from the noise. It is a powerful reset. The value of travel is shifting. It is no longer judged by how far one goes, but by how much better one feels after the journey.

From Local to Regenerative

Travel, once seen as an escape, has become something more purposeful, especially for younger Indonesians seeking connection with culture, impact, and meaning. What began as a push for local tourism has evolved into something more layered: a commitment to regeneration. Unlike sustainable travel, which focuses on minimizing harm, regenerative tourism actively seeks to restore ecosystems, revive local economies, and rebuild cultural confidence. For Millennials and Gen Z, travel becomes another arena where they assert emotional ownership not just by documenting it, but by curating impact and identity.

One of the most compelling models of this shift is **Potato Head** in Bali. Far from positioning itself as merely "eco-friendly," **Potato Head** has adopted a regenerative systems approach since 2017 diverting 99.5% of its waste from landfills, designing spaces that prompt behavioral change, and co-creating community initiatives that extend far beyond their beachfront property.

> "A regenerative approach should feel like a natural part of the experience. From the tumbler guests receive during Tune-In, to the amenities made from recycled materials in their rooms, to the Follow the Waste tour—every touchpoint is designed to spark a conversation. It's not about telling people what to do, but about inviting them to see things differently."
>
> — **Amanda Marcella**, Director of Sustainability at Potato Head.

From zero-waste kitchens and AI-powered food tracking systems to community farmer collectives and shared waste facilities with other beach clubs, **Potato Head** sees hospitality as a living system, one that's cultural, environmental, and economic in nature.

> "Hospitality is about how you make people feel—like they're part of the community. We want the impact to go beyond Potato Head. Whether it's co-founding a local waste facility or rethinking how we grow and serve food, we're focused on making regeneration work in real life."
>
> — **Amanda Marcella**, Director of Sustainability at Potato Head.

Design-Led Consciousness and the Rise of Hospitality as Soft Power

What sets **Potato Head** apart is its soft-power approach. Rather than imposing rigid eco-rules, it invites participation through thoughtful design and cultural immersion. Guests encounter subtle, sensory cues through amenities made from recycled materials, *upcycled jamu* (Indonesia's traditional herbal drink made from ingredients like turmeric and ginger, reimagined here as part of the wellness experience), gamelan-based sound healing, and even trash-picking sessions after meditation. These touchpoints aren't didactic as they're designed to evoke curiosity, reflection, and a renewed connection between leisure, impact, and identity.

For younger travelers, especially those fluent in the aesthetics of Instagram and TikTok, this model resonates. It's immersive, intentional, and emotionally sticky, blending sustainability with local storytelling. Even humor isn't left out: some signage and programming embrace dagelan, a form of distinctly Indonesian absurdist comedy that invites guests to engage with environmental issues not through guilt, but through wit and cultural charm.

TikTok Inspires, Regeneration Grounds

Platforms like TikTok have transformed how destinations are discovered. Hashtags like #ExploreIndonesia and #HiddenGemIndonesia has sparked a boom in domestic curiosity and spontaneous travel. But with virality comes volatility and what's trending today can overwhelm fragile ecosystems tomorrow.

In a 2024 Booking.com study, 73% of global travelers stated they want their travels to positively impact local communities.

Potato Head offers a counterweight to this dynamic. It shows that once the algorithm fades, what remains is meaningful design, transparent systems, and rooted cultural experience. In a 2024 Booking.com study, 73% of global travelers stated they want their travels to positively impact local communities. In Indonesia, 62% of Gen Z say they're "very interested" in sustainability-focused stays but most still don't know how to evaluate them. Spaces like **Potato Head** bridge that knowledge gap through immersive education over explicit instruction.

Travel as Return, Not Escape

For Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z, the emotional currency of travel is shifting. Regeneration offers more than a better brand experience as it promises a better relationship with place, people, and purpose. From agrotourism collectives in East Java to slow-travel lodges in Sumba, a quiet revolution is underway.

In this new paradigm, travel is no longer a form of escape—it's a form of return. To land. To values. To intention.

The Future of Media Is Personal, Participatory and Proudly Local

For Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z, media is no longer something they simply consume. It is a space to express identity, process emotion, and build community. This generation engages with content not as passive viewers, but as co-authors of the narrative.

From TikTok edits and meme culture to idol voting and microdrama binges, media is lived in real time. Participation is the baseline. It is how they assert agency, challenge systems, and build cultural relevance on their own terms.

What matters most is honesty. Young audiences want stories that feel grounded and emotionally true. They prefer music that speaks directly to their experience, not something engineered to follow trends. They want podcasts that offer raw conversations instead of rehearsed advice. Representation only works when it feels earned, not performative.

Authenticity is the standard. From the quiet introspection of slice-of-life cinema to the social realism of factory horror, Indonesian Millennials and Gen Z are drawn to narratives that reflect the full range of their realities—joy, grief, burnout, and hope.

This cultural shift is also evident in the rise of **no na** and the embrace of Indonesia-core, signaling a deeper confidence in local identity. The media is not just about escape. It is about reflection. Hospitality venues like **Potato Head Bali** are blurring the lines between experience and storytelling, offering design that invites pause, connection, and cultural pride.

For this generation, the divide between media, lifestyle, and values is disappearing. Content is not just content. It is how they explore who they are, where they belong, and what kind of world they want to build. They are not just watching. They are creating, curating, and connecting—with purpose.

Chapter 5

Youth, Civic Advocacy, and the Future of Indonesia

Rethinking Civic Advocacy for a New Generation

The Generation That Won't Wait

In 2024, while hashtags trended and timelines exploded, thousands of young Indonesians transformed digital presence into political pressure. From carousel protests to budget breakdown memes, their activism didn't wait for elections; it responded to everyday injustices.

Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z, who now make up over half the electorate, are no longer satisfied with symbolic gestures or transactional politics. They live their politics in what they resist, how they spend, and who they hold accountable.

These generations grew up with the promise of Reformasi and the reality of its slow, uneven delivery. Disillusionment didn't make them indifferent; it made them adaptive. Rather than rejecting politics altogether, they have redefined it on their own terms: less about performance, more about participation. Less about ideology, more about values.

Trust Must Be Earned, Not Inherited

More than half of respondents in secondary cities (54%) cite political opacity and broken promises as reasons for distrust, which is far higher than the 43% in big cities.

For Millennials and Gen Z in Indonesia, trust in institutions is no longer a given. It must be earned through action, not legacy. In 2025, two high-profile cases brought this crisis of institutional confidence into sharp focus and catalyzed a new wave of political awakening among youth.
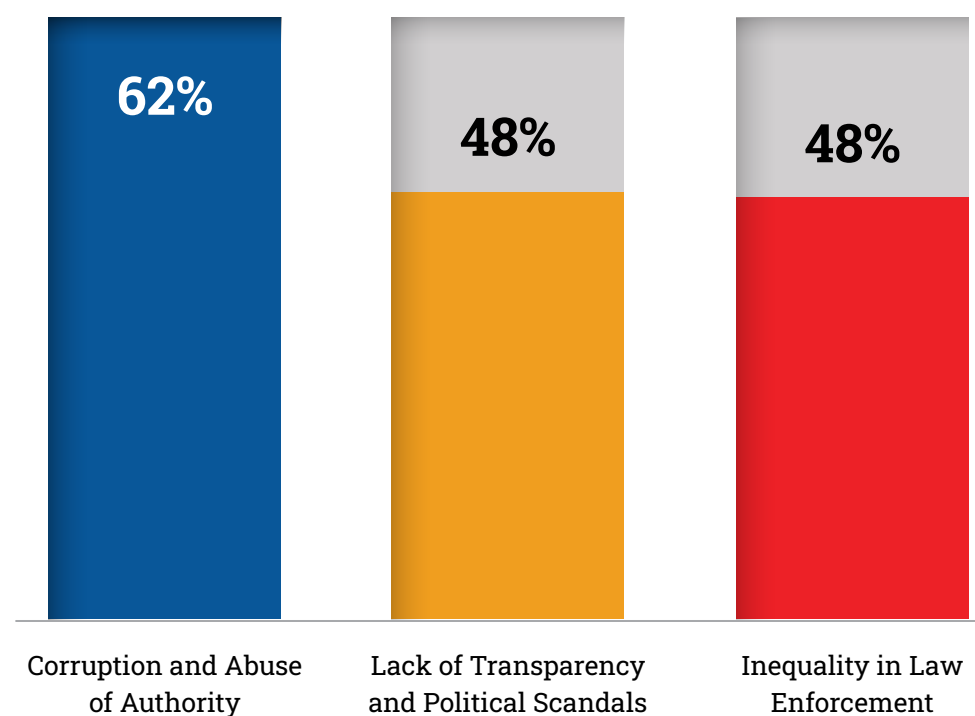
The Pertamina Corruption Case became a symbol of betrayal. As one of Indonesia's most strategic state-owned enterprises, Pertamina was expected to deliver public goods. Instead, it was revealed to be mired in embezzlement and elite impunity. What should have served the people instead served private interests quietly drains national resources while everyday Indonesians paid the price.

The Danantara Sovereign Wealth Fund, by contrast, never descended into scandal. But it never climbed into public confidence either. Designed to be a long-term instrument for shared prosperity, Danantara faltered under the weight of vague oversight, political appointments, and public skepticism. For many, it echoed the troubling shadows of 1MDB, an example of how even the promise of prosperity can flounder without transparency and accountability.
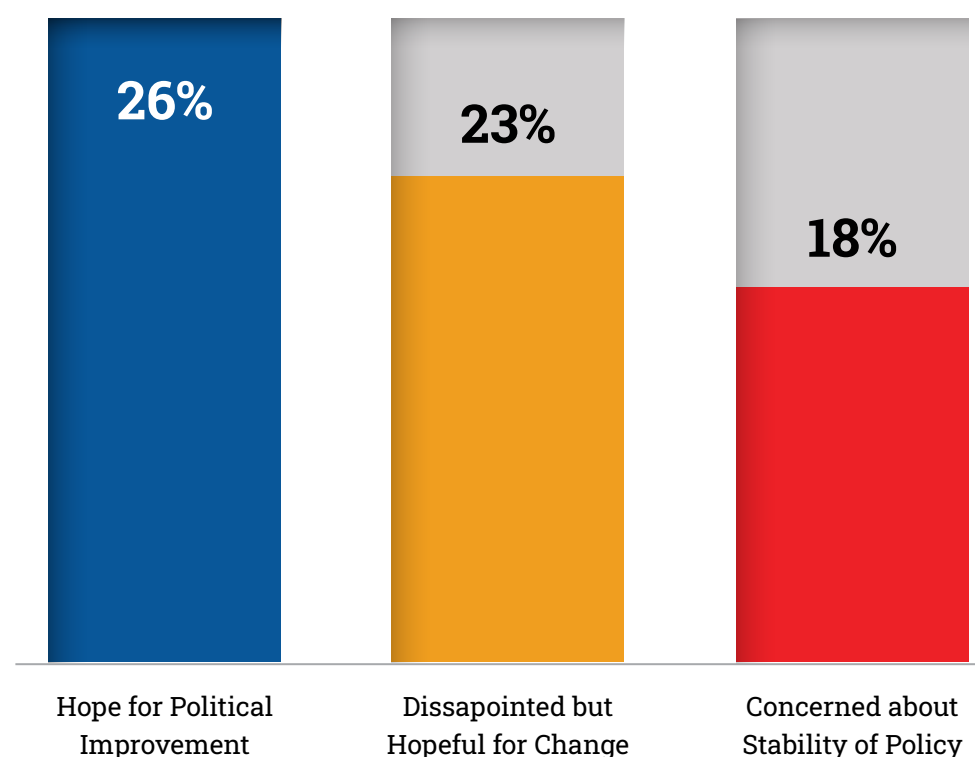
In secondary cities, 54% of respondents cite political scandals and policy opacity as key drivers of distrust. This is significantly higher than the 43% recorded in Indonesia's major cities. For many outside the urban centers, broken promises aren't just theoretical as they're lived experiences. This isn't passive disappointment. It's a reflection of a generation that feels extracted from and not represented by the system. Their trust must be earned, not assumed.

Reasons for Distrust in Political Institutions

Corruption and Abuse of Authority	Lack of Transparency and Political Scandals	Inequality in Law Enforcement
62%	48%	48%

Despite frustration, many young Indonesians still believe in reform. Their disappointment hasn't turned into disengagement, however, it's turned into vigilance.

Public Reactions to Political Scandals

Hope for Political Improvement	Dissapointed but Hopeful for Change	Concerned about Stability of Policy
26%	23%	18%

This isn't about being apathetic but rather, it's about being fed up, and stepping up. Millennials and Gen Z aren't waiting for change, they're demanding it. And in doing so, they're holding up a mirror to the institutions meant to serve them. For those in power, this isn't a moment to dismiss. It's a moment to respond.

When Political Education Goes Viral

For Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z, political literacy doesn't begin with official statements or state broadcasts, it begins in stories, slides, and scrolls. In a world where policies can shift overnight and outrage travels at the speed of a retweet, political education has found a new home: the algorithm. It's no longer parliament that sets the tone, it's the timeline.

From viral threads unpacking controversial bills to carousels simplifying legislative jargon, young Indonesians aren't waiting for institutions to catch up, they're translating civic complexity into language their peers can actually use. In the face of bureaucratic opacity, they offer clarity. In the face of apathy, they offer community.

This is where initiatives like **Gen Z Memilih by IDN Times**, **What Is Up Indonesia**, **Think Policy**, and the **Malaka Project** stand out. They don't speak from pedestals, they speak from the ground up. Rooted in curiosity, concern, and lived experience, these platforms turn politics from something distant and performative into something shared, relatable, and real.

In a climate where institutional trust is thinning and performative politics dominate the headlines, these creators offer something rare: civic education that is honest, human, and emotionally intelligent. They don't just teach, they validate, question, and empower. This isn't a passing trend. It's a generational shift. For Millennials and Gen Z, understanding policy isn't a niche interest, it has become a form of participation. It's how they stay alert, stay involved, and most importantly, stay in the conversation.

Trust Must Be Earned, Not Inherited

In a landmark moment for institutional dialogue, **seven of Indonesia's most respected media figures** sat down with President **Prabowo Subianto** in April 2025. This wasn't just symbolic as it was a direct bridge between journalism and national leadership.

Participants included:

Uni Lubis (IDN Times)

Alfito Deannova (detikcom)

Lalu Mara Satriawangsa (TVOne)

Najwa Shihab (Narasi)

Sutta Dharmasaputra (Kompas)

Retno Pinasti (SCTV-Indosiar)

Valerina Daniel (TVRI)

"We asked the hard questions regarding RUU TNI, on transparency, on youth trust. And while the answers weren't always satisfying, the space for dialogue itself mattered. The younger generation wants leadership that listens, not just speaks. They are not cynical, they are discerning. They are watching, questioning, and expecting better from their leaders. That's a kind of hope we should respect and certainly not dismiss. In a time when misinformation spreads faster than truth, journalists must not antagonize but illuminate. That's our job."

— **Uni Lubis**, Editor-in-Chief, IDN Times

Another one of the most compelling civic education efforts today comes from *Bahasa Bayi* ("Baby Language"), a YouTube segment led by Ferry Irwandi, founder of the Malaka Project. Designed for the digital-native generation, *Bahasa Bayi* breaks down complex political and economic issues into narratives that feel relevant and digestible. With clear analogies and everyday context, it transforms abstract policies into tangible stories in connecting headlines with lived realities.

By unpacking difficult topics through relatable storytelling, *Bahasa Bayi* empowers young Indonesians to understand not just what's happening, but why it matters and how it affects their lives.

Why Simplify These Topics?

TKDN and Import Quotas:
Discussions around TKDN (local content requirements) and import quotas are often filled with policy jargon. But their impact is deeply personal, from job security in local factories to the price of everyday goods. Simplifying this topic helps people understand how government decisions ripple into their wallets and work lives.

Danantara Sovereign Wealth Fund:
On paper, Danantara sounds like a financial innovation. But beneath the surface are complex questions of governance, national debt, and transparency. Making this topic digestible allows citizens to ask the right questions and hold institutions accountable, especially when billions are on the line.

China's Import Tariffs and Global Ripple Effects:
A tariff change in China can set off a chain reaction that affects Indonesian exporters, local farmers, and even online shoppers. Simplifying this helps people see the hidden connections in the global economy and why international policy isn't just a headline, but a force that shapes local realities.

Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z are hyper-connected and constantly exposed to floods of information. But information alone isn't empowerment, understanding is. In an attention economy dominated by noise, segments like *Bahasa Bayi* help cut through the clutter. They equip digital-savvy youth with the tools to interpret, question, and engage with policy and not just passively consume it. In an age where civic literacy is increasingly shaped by content algorithms, *Bahasa Bayi* proves that relevance and clarity can spark real engagement. Understanding politics isn't a niche interest as it's a form of power.

The Message Youth Are Sending

Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z are not indifferent, they're intentional. They don't take trust at face value, it has to be earned, not claimed. It must be:

Visible
Shown in transparent decision-making

Consistent
Maintained through accountability, not crisis response

Reciprocal
Built on listening, not commanding

In a landscape flooded with misinformation, what this generation craves isn't just truth, but rather, trustworthiness. And that can only be earned, never assumed. Young Indonesians today are not only demanding accountability, they are articulating clear, concrete priorities for the nation's future. Across surveys, jobs, healthcare, education, MSME support, and food security consistently rise to the top, reflecting both economic anxieties and a forward-looking desire for inclusive progress.

This data makes one thing clear: young people are far from disengaged. They are highly attuned to how national priorities shape everyday life, and they are calling for spending that delivers on both immediate needs and long-term aspirations.

Public Priorities for National Budget Allocation

Employment and Economic Stability	Health	Education	MSME Support	Food Stability
22%	17%	16%	16%	14%
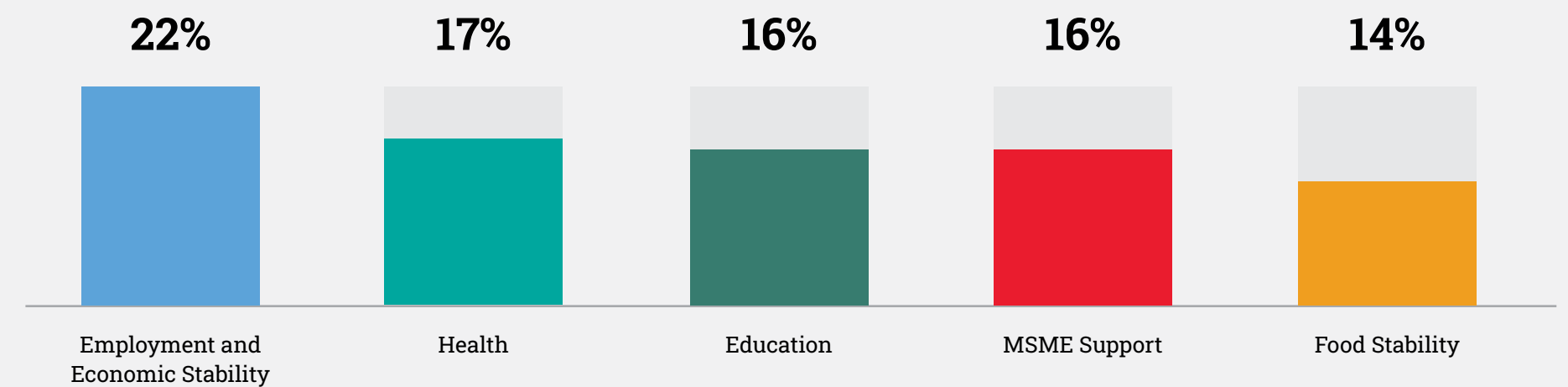
Digital Advocacy and Everyday Resistance

Digital Protest Is Real Protest

In a landmark moment for institutional dialogue, seven of Indonesia's most respected media figures sat down with President Prabowo Subianto in April 2025. This wasn't just symbolic as it was a direct bridge between journalism and national leadership.

1 in 5 young Indonesians sees digital protest as a direct response to failed governance and public policy

Movements like #IndonesiaGelap aren't fringe conversations, today they have made it their front and center. For many young Indonesians, online protest is protest. It's not a side act, for them it's the main stage. In fact, 22% of respondents say digital protests are direct expressions of their dissatisfaction with governance and failed public policies.

Today's civic action doesn't always fill the streets like it used to, it fills timelines. From memes and explainer carousels to profile overlays and hashtags, protest has gone visual, viral, and algorithm-aware. Visibility is the new volume. For this generation, activism lives in group chats, surges through comments, and gains traction through collective momentum online.

This isn't disengagement. It's a new kind of engagement. In an era where attention is power, Millennials and Gen Z are reshaping protest to be faster, sharper, and platform-native. They're not stepping away from civic life, they're reshaping it for the digital arenas where decisions are made and narratives are contested.

#IndonesiaGelap and the Power of Online Movements

The generational rupture became most visible in the response to Inpres 1/2025, which diverted Rp 750 trillion from essential services to fund free school meals and the Danantara fund. The public cost was not abstract:

Ministry	Cutback Impact
BMKG	71% cut to disaster early warning systems
BRIN	Research suspended; self-funding became the norm
LPSK	Victim protection services reduced
Public Works	Emergency infrastructure development delayed

This triggered a mass, decentralized protest known to the public as #IndonesiaGelap, unfolding across feeds, explainers, and group chats. Black profile photos replaced banners. Budget breakdowns replaced slogans. In the absence of street protests, the digital space became a civic square.

% Who View Online Movements Like #IndonesiaGelap as Legitimate Forms of Protest

Millennials	Gen Z
61%	60%
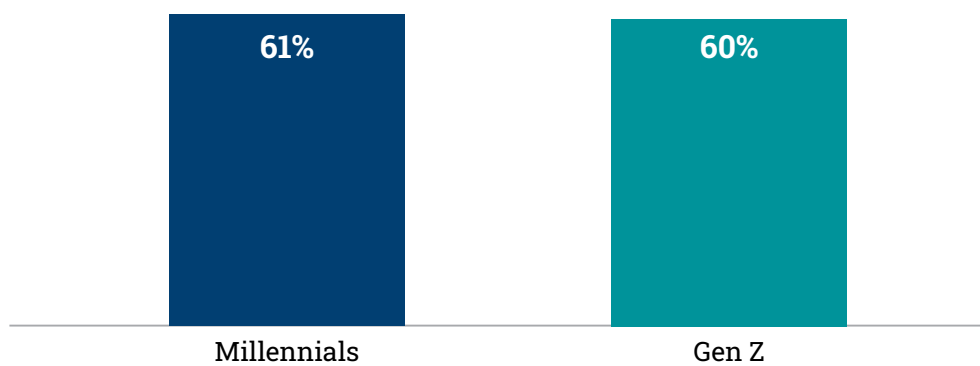
The #IndonesiaGelap movement revealed that digital protest isn't just noise, it's a diagnostic tool. Beneath the memes and hashtags, young Indonesians articulated precise grievances: corruption, lack of transparency, and broken promises. Data shows these three issues top the list of why trust erodes, helping explain why budget cuts weren't seen as isolated missteps, but as proof of a deeper pattern of institutional failure. In the hands of a digitally fluent generation, online movements became a way to turn diffuse frustration into focused critique.

"Young people often speak up about what needs to change but speaking up is only the beginning. If we want to shape policy and influence decisions that directly affect our generation, we need to be present where those decisions are made. That's why civic participation at every level is essential. In my case, I choose to stay inside the system and not because it's easy, but because that's where durable change can take root."

— **Sekar Tandjung**, DPRD Solo

Protest Has Gone Platform-Native:

22% of youth say digital protest reflects dissatisfaction with governance.
For Gen Z, activism lives not in rallies but in reposts, reels, and rhythm.

Women's Representation and Youth Expectations

The makeup of Indonesia's cabinet is more than a political arrangement; it is a signal of whose voices are valued in national leadership. For Millennials and Gen Z, this has become a focal point for demands around fairness and inclusion.

In May 2025, only 13% of current ministers are women

In the current administration, only five women hold ministerial posts, alongside ten deputy ministers, accounting for just 13% of cabinet positions which is far below the internationally recommended 30% benchmark for gender parity. This marks a decline from Jokowi's first-term cabinet, which included nine women ministers, and his second term, which saw six. For many young Indonesians, this is more than a disappointing statistic; it is a symbol of unfulfilled political promises and a system slow to embrace change.

Millennials and Gen Z, who consistently rank fairness, diversity, and representation as top values, are watching closely. The presence of prominent figures such as Sri Mulyani (Minister of Finance) and Meutya Hafid (Minister of Communications and Digital) signals what is possible when women are empowered to lead. Yet, these examples also underscore how rare such leadership remains and how much more work needs to be done to normalize diversity at the highest levels of power.

When Numbers Fall Short

"Inclusion isn't just about having women at the table, it's about whether their presence changes the agenda. Representation must disrupt inequality, not just decorate power."

— **Kalis Mardiasih**, Writer & Gender Justice Advocate

While a handful of women occupy influential roles, the real test lies not in titles but in outcomes. A closer look at current women-led ministries reveals both the challenges and opportunities shaping Indonesia's gender policy landscape:

Arifatul Choiri Fauzi (Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection) faces a steep 48% budget cut, which severely limits the ministry's ability to deliver services for survivors of violence and at-risk children.

Widiyanti Putri (Minister of Tourism) champions greater recognition of women in tourism, a sector where women represent 54% of the workforce but earn 14% less than men, highlighting the persistence of the gender pay gap.

Rini Widiyantini (Minister of Bureaucratic Reform) oversees civil service appointments where delayed promotions have disproportionately impacted female teachers, leaving many without stable employment.

Meutya Hafid (Minister of Communications and Digital) has prioritized tackling illegal online loans, a crisis contributing to household debt and domestic violence, disproportionately harming women.

Sri Mulyani (Minister of Finance) continues to face public pressure to remove VAT (PPN) on menstrual products, a cost young women increasingly frame as both an economic burden and a matter of dignity.

From Symbolism to Real Change

For today's youth, representation without impact feels hollow. Millennials and Gen Z are calling for a shift from performative inclusion toward systemic change, one that reshapes not only leadership tables but also public life.

"Policy impact is the real measure of representation. If women are in leadership but the budget still fails to protect the most vulnerable, then we're not progressing, we're performing."

— **Andhyta Firselly Utami**, CEO of Think Policy & Co-Lead of Bijak Sekretariat

Their demands are clear:

Budget allocations that match public commitments.
Young Indonesians expect governments to follow through on promises with adequate resources.

Gender-sensitive policies across all ministries.
They reject the notion that women's issues belong only to women-led ministries, insisting on mainstreaming gender across all sectors.

Structural reforms for wage equality, economic justice, and digital safety.
For these generations, social justice is inseparable from gender justice.

The disconnect between campaign promises and policy delivery has bred frustration, but it has also fueled youth activism. Millennials and Gen Z are leveraging social media, public discourse, and grassroots campaigns to push for a political culture where inclusion delivers real outcomes, not just headlines.

Beyond Quotas, Toward Equity

Indonesia's young generations are no longer satisfied with progress measured in percentages. They are pushing for a politics where inclusion is deeply embedded in governance, a system in which women's leadership brings meaningful change to laws, policies, and everyday lives. This moment marks a generational turning point. For Millennials and Gen Z, women's representation in politics must go beyond numbers and symbols. It must bring measurable change whether it be in budgets, in policies, and in everyday lives. As they confront the gap between promises and action, young Indonesians are not retreating into cynicism; they are raising their voices for a political future where inclusion is not aspirational, but foundational. The path forward will be measured not only by how many women rise to power, but by how meaningfully they shape a more just and equitable Indonesia.
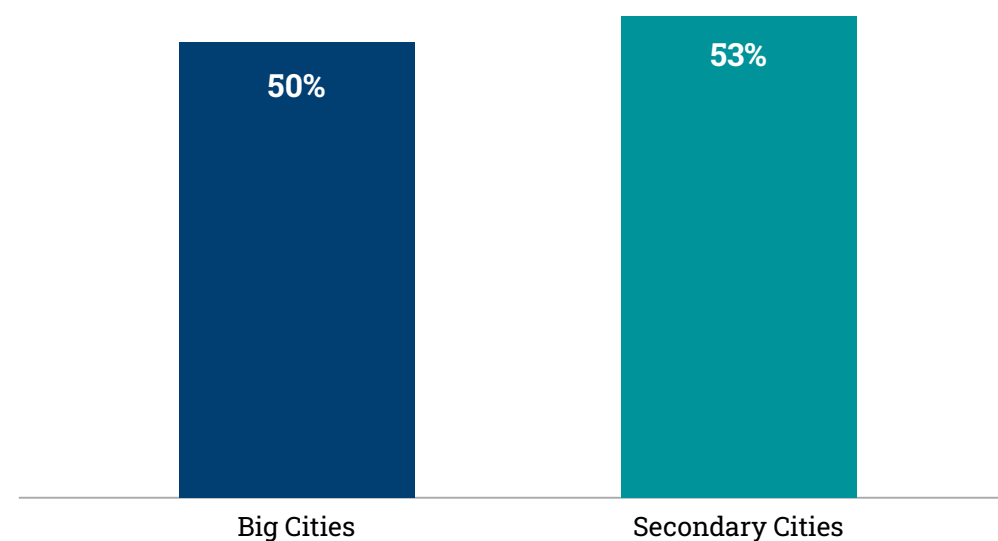
Why Youth Support Political Quotas

Support for youth quotas isn't fringe, 50% of Gen Z back it, and the number climbs even higher outside major cities.
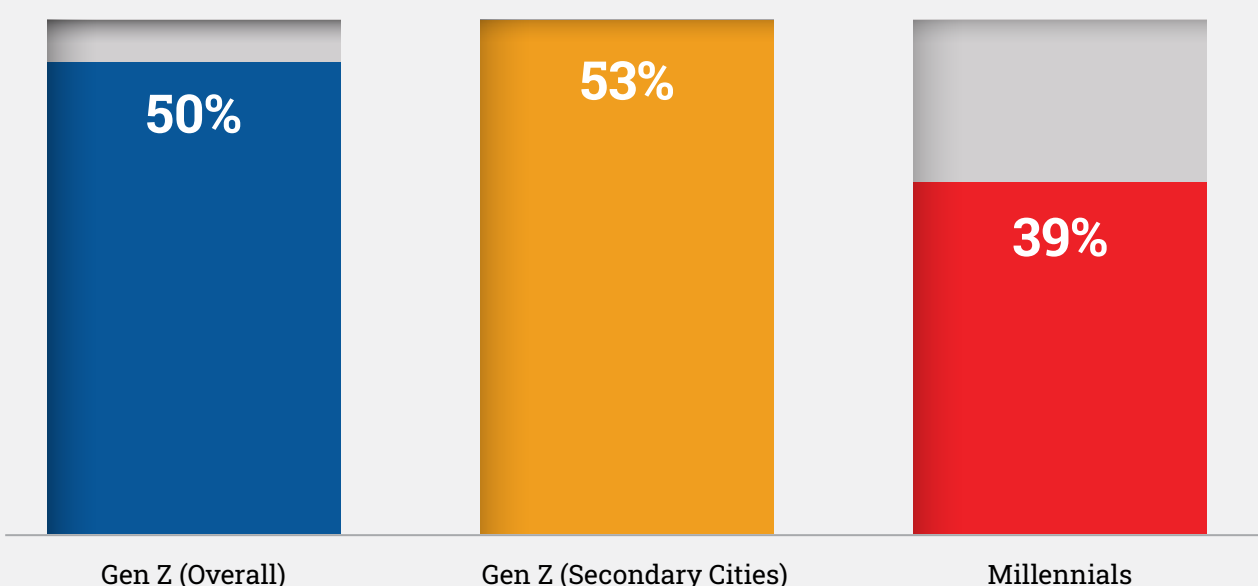
By the Numbers:

- **50% of Gen Z support youth quotas**
- **53% support youth quotas in secondary cities**
- **Only 39% of Millennials support the same**

The momentum for youth inclusion in Indonesian politics is unmistakable and driven especially by Gen Z, who are no longer satisfied with token representation. According to our findings, 50% of Gen Z support formal political quotas for young representatives, with support climbing to 53% in secondary cities (areas outside Indonesia's five major metros). For this generation, quotas aren't just about visibility, they're seen as necessary guardrails to ensure real influence in decision-making spaces that have historically sidelined young voices.

Importantly, support for quotas reveals regional nuance. In secondary cities, where access to political channels often feels more remote, the demand for structural inclusion is even stronger. Here, quotas represent more than fairness as they signal a call for proximity, access, and relevance. Meanwhile, 39% of Millennials express support for such quotas. This isn't a rejection of youth potential; rather, it reflects a generational difference in how leadership legitimacy is imagined. Shaped by the post-Reformasi era, many Millennials lean toward gradual progression, valuing competence-building and performance-based credibility as the path to power.

Support for Youth Political Quotas by Region

Big Cities	Secondary Cities
50%	53%

The contrast between these generations is not ideological, it's strategic. Gen Z, raised in a digital era that prizes speed, transparency, and direct action, gravitates toward mechanisms that deliver immediate impact. Millennials, by contrast, tend to emphasize endurance, institutional accountability, and the long game.
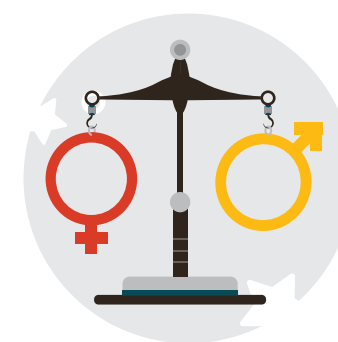
% Who Support Youth Representation Quotas

Gen Z (Overall)	Gen Z (Secondary Cities)	Millennials
50%	53%	39%

Between 2024 and 2025, a series of political and cultural events galvanized youth across Indonesia, many of whom were engaging with civic life for the first time. These weren't just headlines; they struck at the heart of what young people value:

Fairness   **Transparency**   **Inclusion**

Here's a snapshot of what triggered their response:

RUU TNI: Proposed giving the military expanded power to occupy civilian posts, raising fears of backsliding into militarism and undoing Reformasi-era boundaries.

RUU Penyiaran: A media bill seen as a threat to press freedom and creative expression, especially for journalists and digital creators.

RUU KIA: A well-intentioned bill on maternal and child welfare, but criticized for reinforcing outdated gender roles and marginalizing non-traditional families.

Proposed social media ban for under-16s: Intended as protection, but widely seen as exclusionary and out of touch with how young people build identity and community online.

UU TPKS (Sexual Violence Law): Despite being passed, its slow and inconsistent enforcement particularly in high-profile abuse cases as it sparked frustration over performative justice.

Environmental degradation in Kalimantan and Papua: Large-scale extraction projects backed by the state fueled youth concern over climate justice, indigenous rights, and the unequal cost of "progress."

Confidence in Youth Vote Impact in 2029 Elections

Confident in Youth
Vote Impact

Unsure
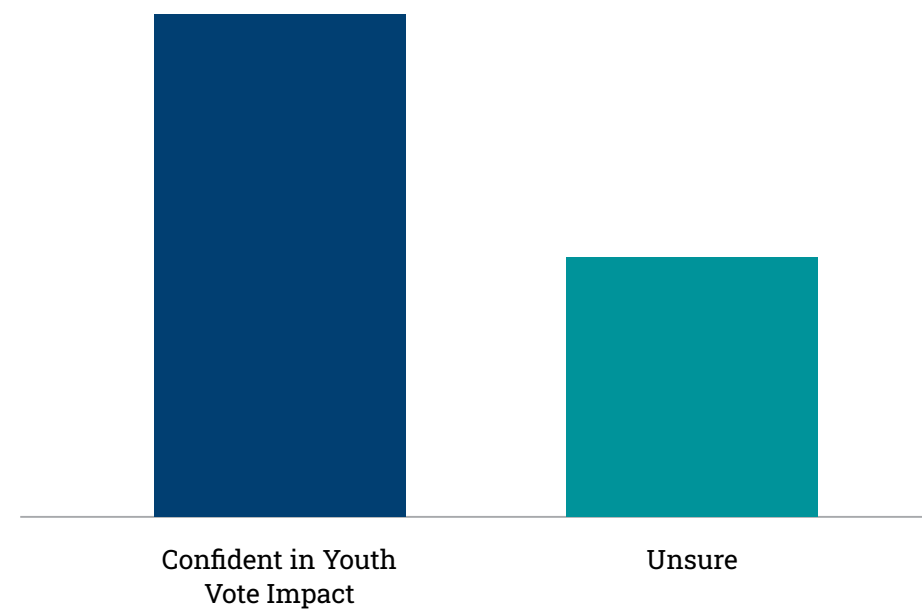
Each of these moments revealed a consistent pattern: young Indonesians are not passive observers. They are unafraid to speak up, organize, and demand better. Their activism is rapid, values-driven, and deeply focused on protecting the future and not merely reacting to the present.

The belief in the power of the youth vote stands as one of the most hopeful signals in Indonesia's political landscape. A clear majority of young Indonesians express confidence that their votes will shape the 2029 elections, signaling not just political enthusiasm but a growing sense of agency. To harness this momentum, it's critical to move beyond mobilizing voters for a single event and build pathways for long-term civic engagement, turning votes into enduring participation.

"It's easy to criticize, but real progress comes when we stay involved after the elections, when we keep showing up, pushing for accountability, and supporting the government to do better. Youth voices matter not just in protest, but in partnership. Change is a marathon, not a sprint, and staying engaged is how we make sure promises turn into action."

— **Sekar Tandjung**, DPRD Solo

Environmental Justice and Climate Advocacy

Climate as a Justice Issue

Environmental degradation and in particular. Kalimantan and Papua has become a flashpoint not just for ecological concerns but for civic reckoning. Mega-projects framed as development were interpreted by youth as systemic failures, reinforcing extractive policies at the expense of people and the planet. Movements like #SaveKalimantan reframed the climate crisis as an issue of justice, demanding accountability from the state and private sector alike.

At the same time, sustainability itself is now seen by youth as a structural matter. Climate-linked disasters, pollution, and resource mismanagement are pushing the question of sustainability into the realm of political obligation.

"Sustainability isn't just about bamboo straws or organic soap, it's about whether we still have air to breathe and land to grow on. It's about what kind of country we're leaving for the next generation."

— **Cynthia Suci Lestari**, founder, LyfewithLess and Bersaling Silang

Through her barter-based platform and digital storytelling, Cynthia reframes sustainability as resistance: a challenge to overproduction, consumerism, and superficial eco-branding. Her message is clear as climate action must be collective, regulated, and structural.

"If our only solution to climate change is to shop better, we're not solving the problem, we're feeding it. What we need is systemic change, and that means pushing governments and corporations to act, not just individuals."

— **Cynthia Suci Lestari**, founder, LyfewithLess and Bersaling Silang

How Youth Are Framing Sustainability

For Gen Z in Indonesia, climate change isn't just a crisis, it's a confrontation with injustice. From deforestation in Kalimantan to displaced Indigenous communities, the environmental fight is inseparable from questions of power, equity, and accountability. Movements like #SaveKalimantan reflects a broader shift: environmental activism is no longer just about protecting nature, it's about protecting people, cultures, and the democratic right to a livable future.


"Treating conscious consumption as the solution to climate change misses the point. Without systemic reform, it becomes a distraction and that will hinder progress."

— **Cynthia Suci Lestari**, founder, LyfewithLess and Bersaling Silang

This framing resonates deeply with Millennials and Gen Z, who increasingly view sustainability not as a personal virtue, but as a structural responsibility. While individual habits still matter, they recognize that real climate action demands something more:


Legislation
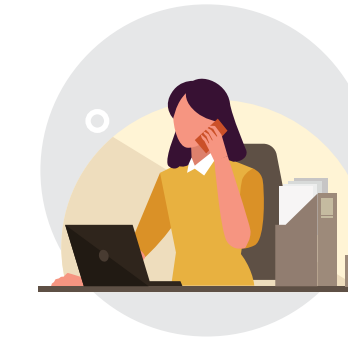
Corporate Accountability

Institutional Transparency

Recent data reinforces this shift. Half of young Indonesians support government-led solutions like subsidies and tax incentives for renewable energy, alongside major investments in infrastructure and research development. This even split reveals a dual focus: the need for immediate tools to accelerate clean energy adoption and long-term commitments to innovation. For Indonesia's youth, sustainability is no longer a matter of personal virtue as it's a call for governments and corporations to meet the urgency of the climate crisis with action that is as bold and systemic as the challenge itself.

Support for Renewable Energy Policies

Subsidies and
Tax Incentives

Infrastructure and
Research Development
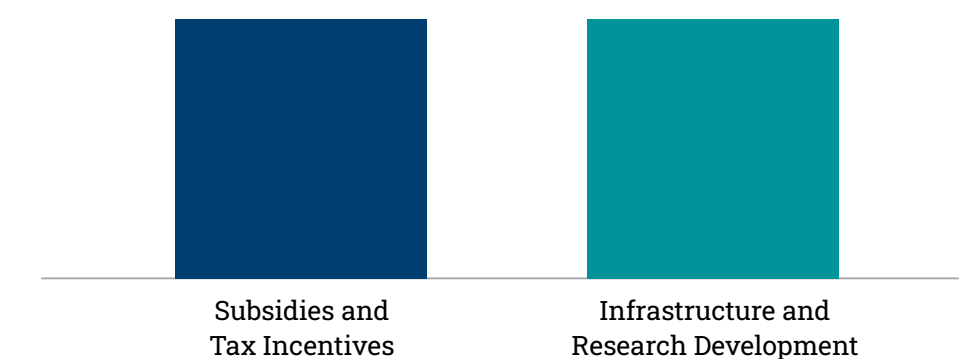
Political expression doesn't stop at rallies or the ballot box. It spills into the spaces where Millennials and Gen Z live, work, and create from coffee shops to concert stages.

Culture and Creativity as Advocacy

While environmental justice movements call for collective action at the policy level, young Indonesians are also driving civic change through personal and cultural choices. From sustainability to daily rituals, their actions ripple across public life.

Coffee Culture as Civic Expression

When we speak of civic movements, it is tempting to imagine only protests, petitions, or the ballot box. Yet for Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z, civic participation has evolved into a wider spectrum of action embedded not only in public spaces, but in daily rituals, cultural choices, and economic behaviors. These generations are reshaping the idea of engagement, shifting it from episodic moments of resistance into a sustained practice of intentional living.

Indonesia's booming coffee culture was marked by the rise of kopi susu brands, local cafés, and neighborhood coffee shops. The landscape offers a sharp lens into how these generations mobilize values, identity, and community to shape change. Far beyond lifestyle trends, this shift reveals a civic disposition rooted in choice, belonging, and cultural stewardship.

From Consumption to Community

For previous generations, drinking coffee was functional: it was a morning stimulant, a workday companion, a quiet indulgence. For Millennials and Gen Z, coffee has transformed into participatory culture, a kind of medium through which they express values, form communities, and influence urban life. This generation gravitates toward coffee brands that:
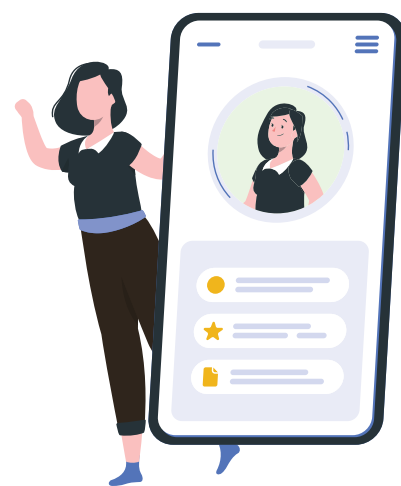
Reflect local identity and cultural pride.

Uphold ethical sourcing and environmental sustainability.

Create spaces of community, creativity, and belonging.

Behaviorally, this shift signals a profound civic instinct. Coffee is no longer just a product; it is a statement. These generations want their consumption to mirror the society they want to build: one that is inclusive, local-first, ethical, and culturally resonant.

Agency, Belonging, and Authenticity

The rise of coffee as civic expression is not accidental; it is rooted in psychological needs central to these generations:
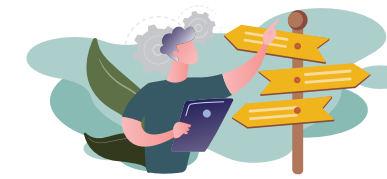
A drive for agency
Millennials and Gen Z seek to ensure even small decisions carry social meaning, allowing them to actively shape cultural and economic ecosystems.

A hunger for belonging
Cafés and local brands offer a sense of connection in an otherwise fragmented urban world, functioning as third spaces where identity and community are negotiated.

A search for authenticity
In a landscape saturated by global brands, young Indonesians favor businesses that tell honest, locally grounded stories, prioritizing craftsmanship and cultural specificity over mass-market sameness.

Choosing a cup of kopi susu from a homegrown brand over a multinational chain becomes a quiet but potent act, a form of reaffirmation in the context of "I belong here, and I support what this place stands for."

Small Actions That Shape Big Change

A striking example of how local businesses can rise to civic prominence is the collaboration between Tuku, the beloved neighborhood coffee brand born and bred in Cipete and MRT Jakarta's Cipete Station. What began as a small neighborhood café evolved, through youth-driven enthusiasm and social media amplification, into a national cultural force. When Tuku's name appeared on Cipete MRT Station, it became more than a sponsorship deal; it was a public affirmation of local pride and community agency. In this way, local businesses like Tuku become civic architects in their own right and eventually shaping how identity, pride, and public space intersect.

For Millennials and Gen Z, this partnership symbolizes:

The power of grassroots entrepreneurship to influence urban life.
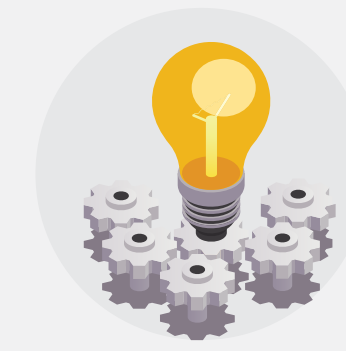
The legitimacy of local innovation in shaping civic space.

A moment where public infrastructure mirrors the communities and businesses that animate it.

Crucially, this is not merely economic activity; it is civic meaning woven into everyday life, a living testament to how young Indonesians expand the boundaries of political expression into the domains of culture, consumption, and urban design.

Resisting Echo Chambers and Driving Dialogue

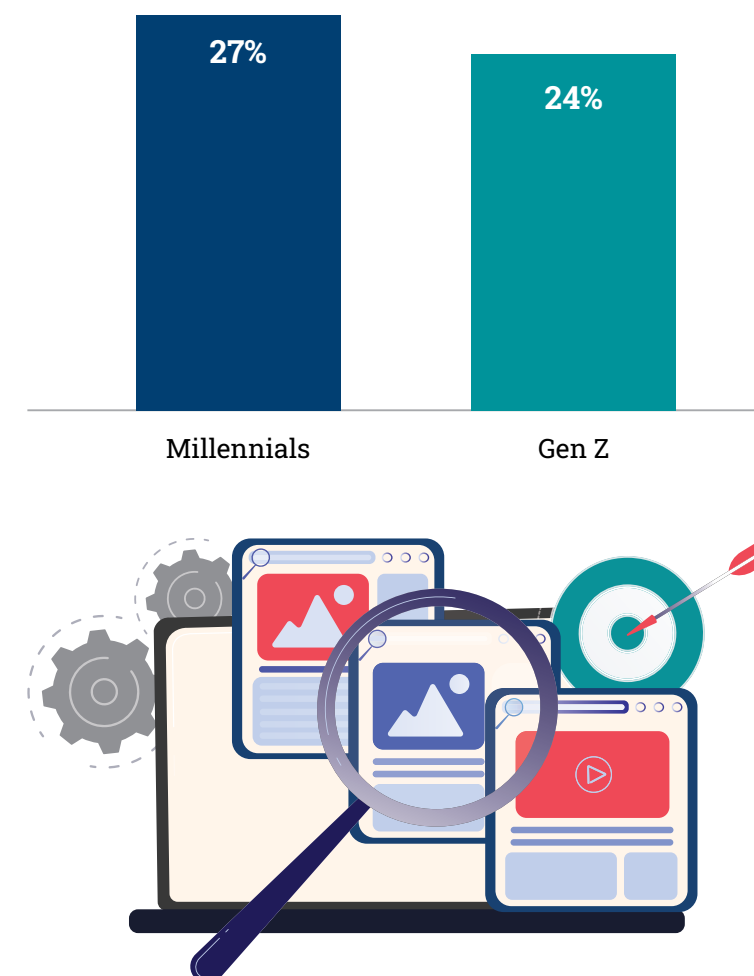## Algorithmic Resistance and Digital Awareness

In a world of endless scrolling and algorithm-shaped feeds, some young Indonesians are quietly pushing back. According to our findings, 27% of Millennials and 24% of Gen Z report deliberately curating their social media to avoid echo chambers. Though still a minority, this behavior signals a growing awareness of how digital environments influence not just how we think but what we believe is worth thinking about.

An echo chamber forms when algorithms repeatedly serve users content that aligns with their existing views, gradually filtering out perspectives that challenge or complicate them. While this tailoring can feel convenient, it narrows discourse, reinforces ideological silos, and weakens democratic engagement. Over time, echo chambers don't just distort reality as they dull our ability to empathize with difference.

That's why even small acts like following voices outside one's bubble or engaging with content that makes us pause can be seen as a form of quiet resistance. These users aren't opting out of digital life; they're choosing to confront it with greater intentionality. It's a reflection of a new civic mindset and one shaped not just by what's trending, but by a desire for depth, nuance, and ideological balance.

% Who Curate Their Social Media Feeds to Avoid Echo Chambers

Millennials: 27%
Gen Z: 24%

In fact, 27% of Millennials and 24% of Gen Z say they deliberately seek out content that contradicts or challenges their personal views. These seemingly small digital choices reflect a deeper civic mindset, one driven by a desire for ideological diversity, critical thinking, and informed engagement. Far from passive scrolling, this behavior represents a quiet resistance to echo chambers and a growing commitment to digital self-awareness.

Youth Who Actively Seek Content that Challenges Their Views

Millennials: 27%
Gen Z: 24%
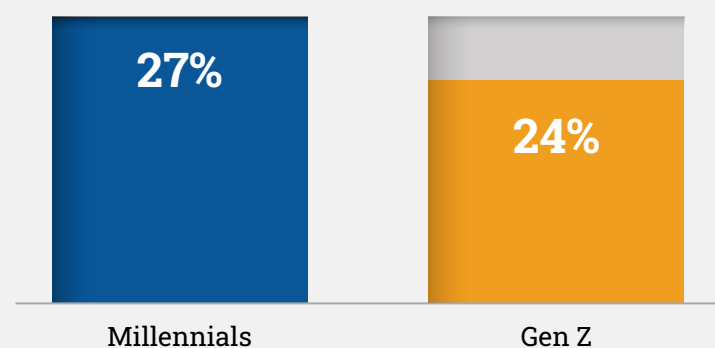
For today's youth, cultural work is civic work. From royalty rights to platform fairness, the creative sector has become a new frontier for political organizing.

Creative Industries and Collective Advocacy

Cultural Organizing in Music and Entertainment

FESMI (Federasi Serikat Musisi Indonesia) was founded in 2020 to tackle structural issues in Indonesia's music industry. Despite the industry's creative growth, many musicians, especially in live performances and production still work without formal contracts, insurance, or basic worker protection.

What FESMI Does:

- Advocates for fair pay and royalties
- Connects musicians to BP Jamsostek for social security and performance-related risk coverage
- Provides legal assistance and mediation
- Partners with government and industry to influence music-related policy
- Hosts public workshops and campaigns to raise awareness

Why It Matters:
FESMI is building a safer, more sustainable future for Indonesia's musicians by ensuring that creative work is supported by legal and social protection.

For many young Indonesians today, activism no longer belongs solely in the streets or at the ballot box, it has moved into the industries, creative communities, and cultural spaces that shape their everyday lives. For Millennials and Gen Z, political engagement has outgrown traditional categories like voting, demonstrations, or online petitions. Increasingly, these generations are channeling their sense of agency into the cultural and economic systems around them and transforming entertainment, labor, and creative industries into powerful new frontiers of activism.

One of the most striking examples comes from the music industry. Founded in 2020, FESMI (Federasi Serikat Musisi Indonesia) has become a key voice advocating for fairer conditions for musicians across the country.

FESMI
Federasi Serikat Musisi Indonesia

Halaman facebook resmi Federasi Serikat Musisi Indonesia
Official facebook page of Federation of Indonesian Musician's Union
facebook.com/FESMI.ID

"We need to share knowledge so people understand that the music industry can only grow if the entire ecosystem is supported. It's no longer just about celebrating one successful artist or band. Without fair royalties, proper worker protection, and legal safeguards, talent will continue to slip through the cracks. We're fighting to make sure the next generation of musicians has a real chance—not just to survive, but to thrive."

— **Febrian Nindyo Purbowiseso**, HIVI!

Despite music's cultural importance, most Indonesian musicians still face systemic precarity: weak royalty systems, no formal healthcare, and a freelance-heavy workforce lacking stable contracts. For Millennials, this often clashes with nostalgia-driven fandom; for Gen Z, it sparks political awakening, as audiences become more conscious of the labor and ethics behind the entertainment they consume.

"Since I live and depend on music, I should be able to stand together with others who face the same struggles. We have to stop treating musicians as if they succeed only through luck or talent. Behind every hit is a chain of people working without contracts, health insurance, or legal protections. Joining FESMI is about saying: we deserve better, and so do those who come after us. We're not just fighting for a better industry—we're fighting for basic dignity and fairness."

— **Endah Widiastuti**, Endah n Rhesa

FESMI's advocacy work through campaigns, workshops, and cross-industry partnerships marks a move from individual survival to collective empowerment, reflecting Millennials' and Gen Z's broader demands for social justice and fairness. Importantly, this shift is part of a global wave: movements like the UK's Fair Play campaign and South Korea's K-Music Initiative show how cultural organizing can reshape industries. For Indonesia's youth, FESMI signals that meaningful political action doesn't only happen at the ballot box as it happens inside the industries, fandoms, and creative spaces they care about.

FESMI's work reflects a broader movement toward cultural solidarity, but they are not alone. VISI (Vibrasi Suara Indonesia), another collective effort, met with the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) in April 2025 to push for legal certainty and royalty justice. Their demands were clear: fair regulation, transparent systems, and protection for singers from criminalization.

"Singers are not a hindrance to the ecosystem, we are a vital bridge between works and the public. That's why legal protection must be granted, so we can continue to work with professionalism and integrity."

— **Armand Maulana**, Chairperson of VISI

VISI brought three core demands to the DPR RI:	Their stance is anchored in international norms:
Legal Certainty: Any collective system for royalty distribution must provide legal clarity, so singers can perform without fear of overlapping billing or criminal accusations. **Rejecting Criminalization:** VISI opposes criminalization of singers due to unclear or unpublished licensing systems, reaffirming that under copyright law, singers are not prohibited from performing works they didn't write. **Data Privacy Protection:** VISI firmly rejects royalty tariffs based on personal or financial data of singers, calling it a violation of the Data Protection Law and ethical business practice.	Globally, performers are not required to seek direct permission from songwriters before performing. The responsibility for royalties lies with event organizers, venues, and platforms, not the performer. Indonesia is a signatory to WIPO and TRIPS, meaning national policy should reflect global standards, not diverge into confusion.

The movement is clear: Indonesian artists are done with survival mode. They're organizing legally, economically, and culturally for structural change. Movements like FEMSI and VISI reflect the evolving identity of creative activism among Millennials and Gen Z: rooted in solidarity, driven by systems change, and grounded in the belief that art workers deserve rights, not just standing ovations.

"VISI affirms that singers continue to uphold strong communication, ethics, and a spirit of kinship with songwriters. Maintaining good relations and supporting increased royalty income for creators remains a priority as a form of solidarity in building an inclusive and sustainable Indonesian music industry. Singers need legal protection, not intimidation."

— **Armand Maulana**, Chairperson of VISI

Pandji Pragiwaksono and Civic Reflection Across Borders

For many, Pandji Pragiwaksono's decision to move his family from Jakarta to the United States might, at first glance, look like an exit from Indonesia's public stage. But in truth, he claims that it has sharpened, not diminished his civic voice. Rather than stepping away from Indonesia's political currents, Pandji has carried them across borders, using his platform to reflect on his homeland with renewed urgency.

"I didn't leave Indonesia to escape it. I left so my kids could have new opportunities, but my roots, my concerns, and my work will always be tied to home. When you live far away, you start seeing things differently and not because you care less, but because you want better. Distance doesn't dilute concern. Sometimes it sharpens it"

— **Pandji Pragiwaksono**, Stand Up Comedian

From his YouTube channels and stand-up specials to podcasts and social media feeds, Pandji has carved out a unique space in Indonesia's civic ecosystem. He navigates multiple registers including humor, sarcasm, critique, vulnerability and oftentimes inviting his audience not into one-off laughs but into a sustained conversation about inequality, corruption, and civic fatigue.

Pandji's move overseas has deepened his reflections on identity, privilege, and responsibility. He speaks candidly about the privilege of mobility and the fact that many Indonesians can't simply "choose" to leave. Yet this awareness fuels his sense of obligation: to keep amplifying the voices and struggles of those back home, even from a different time zone.

"Moving abroad didn't erase my frustrations. It just gave me a different microphone. I may live in a new ZIP code, but the issues I care about don't stop at immigration lines. To love a country is to want better for it even when it doesn't want to hear it. Laughter disarms. That's why comedy can cut through noise in ways other mediums can't. You don't change minds by winning arguments. You change them by making people feel seen"

— **Pandji Pragiwaksono**, Stand Up Comedian

In this day of age, Pandji models a form of activism that feels distinctly of its time: less about rigid ideology, more about cultural negotiation; less about outrage for outrage's sake, more about sustaining connection and critique. He frames civic participation as a spectrum and not just protests or petitions, but the small, persistent acts of making issues visible in everyday conversation.

In his podcasts and longform YouTube videos, Pandji pushes beyond punchlines to grapple with the emotional texture of public life such as the moral fatigue, the disappointment, but also the stubborn hope that things can change.

"The goal is never to lecture. It's to invite people in by turning stats into stories, and issues into emotions. We don't need perfect answers. We need more spaces where people can wrestle with discomfort without turning away. At the end of the day, we're not here to perform perfection. We're here to remind each other that we're in this together."

— **Pandji Pragiwaksono**, Stand Up Comedian

Pandji's latest project, his 10th stand-up comedy special titled Mens Rea, deepens this dual commitment to comedy and civic critique. Named after the legal term meaning "guilty mind" or "criminal intent," Mens Rea uses the courtroom metaphor to explore one central question: what's really driving the actions of Indonesia's political elite?

On stage, Pandji is careful to clarify his own intent: "I'm here to make you laugh, not to harm. Comedy, at its best, builds bridges and not walls." But in the same breath, he flips the question outward, inviting audiences to reflect on the motivations, ambitions, and betrayals shaping public life.

What makes Mens Rea so compelling is its refusal to settle into easy cynicism. Pandji balances sharp humor with humility, outrage with curiosity. He reminds audiences that the heart of activism isn't moral purity but rather, it's the willingness to stay engaged, to keep asking hard questions even when easy answers feel tempting.

"On stage, my intent is clear: make you laugh. But off stage, we all need to collectively ask what's the intent behind those in power? So, what is it?"

— **Pandji Pragiwaksono**, Stand Up Comedian

The Future of Civic Engagement

How Civic Participation Takes Shape

For Indonesia's Millennials and Gen Z, political engagement is no longer limited to casting a ballot, it has expanded into a dynamic spectrum of everyday actions. From digital advocacy to grassroots organizing, these generations are redefining what it means to participate in a democracy shaped by speed, visibility, and constant connection.
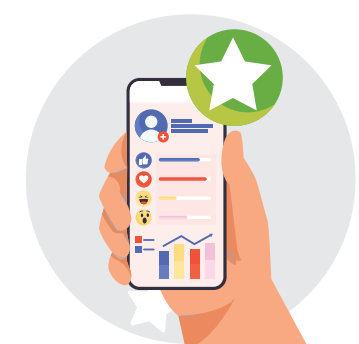
Civic action doesn't have one shape, one voice, or one lane. It doesn't always mean speaking the loudest or taking to the streets. Sometimes, it looks like:

Translating policy into plain language so others can understand it.

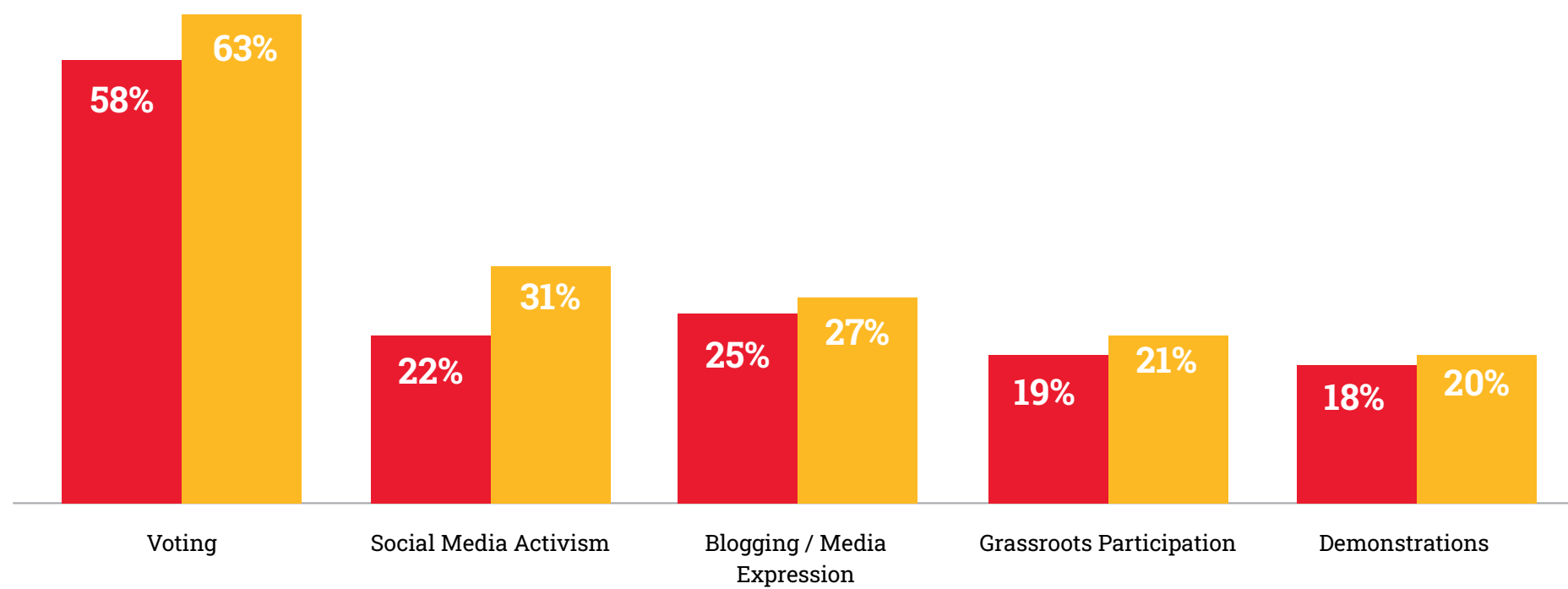Using humor, storytelling, or creativity to build awareness and reflection.

Choosing who and what to amplify in your digital circles and curating with intention.

Our findings reveal that 63% of Gen Z and 58% of Millennials report voting as a key form of civic participation by demonstrating that traditional democratic engagement remains strong. But beyond elections, youth are also building new arenas of influence. 31% of Gen Z and 22% of Millennials engage in social media activism, using carousels, hashtags, and explainers to challenge narratives and spotlight urgent issues. Others use content creation as a form of political expression: 27% of Gen Z and 25% of Millennials contribute through blogs, podcasts, and independent media platforms.

% Engaging in Different Civic / Political Actions 🔴 Millennials 🟡 Gen Z

	Voting	Social Media Activism	Blogging / Media Expression	Grassroots Participation	Demonstrations
Millennials	58%	22%	25%	19%	18%
Gen Z	63%	31%	27%	21%	20%

Offline, civic participation remains equally strong. 21% of Gen Z and 19% of Millennials have taken part in grassroots initiatives, while 20% and 18%, respectively, have joined public demonstrations. These numbers reveal a simple truth: digital activism isn't replacing real-world action and yet instead, it's fueling it. For today's youth, screens and streets are not separate arenas, but interconnected platforms for change.

This evolving spectrum of engagement shows that Millennials and Gen Z aren't just waiting for election day to speak up, they're shaping the narrative every day. Whether through content, conversation, community organizing, or protest, their politics are embedded in daily decisions: what to share, support, resist, or build. Their vision for democracy is bold: active, participatory, and values-driven. They expect more than symbolic representation and they demand structural impact. And they're not asking for permission to lead.

Indonesia's future won't be shaped by institutions alone. It will be shaped by a generation that shows up early, questions with purpose, and stays committed long after the headlines fade.

Not everyone will protest. Not everyone will go viral. But every voice holds weight, and every action, no matter how small, can help shape the story of this democracy. Power, for them, isn't always loud. Sometimes, it's deliberate. Sometimes, it's quiet.

They don't treat civic duty as an obligation, it's a way of life. Whether through memes, policy critiques, or creative solidarity, Indonesia's youth are building civic power from the ground up. And while institutions may be slow to change, this generation won't wait. They're already reshaping what politics means, one post, one policy, one protest at a time.

Redefining Civic Power on Their Own Terms

For Millennials and Gen Z, politics is no longer a formal affair, it's personal, fluid, and lived daily. While earlier generations may have followed predefined paths to civic participation, these young Indonesians are forging new routes, often far from the ballot box or parliamentary halls. Their engagement is not less than before as it's simply elsewhere.

Millennials, shaped by reform-era hopes and growing disillusionment, often carry a pragmatic activism rooted in lived experience. They push for representation and policy change with a sense of responsibility and resilience. Gen Z, by contrast, moves with sharper instincts and digital fluency, using satire, story, and speed to challenge the status quo in real time. For them, political critique can take the form of a meme, and advocacy might look like a viral thread or a collaborative Google Doc.

Yet these generational styles converge on the same goal: building systems that listen, respond, and evolve. Today's youth are not just protesting what is broken, they are prototyping what's possible. From local clean-up campaigns to national conversations on gender, climate, and governance, they are crafting movements that are as creative as they are strategic.

They don't treat civic duty as a one-off. It's stitched into everyday life. For them, participation is persistent, intersectional, and often subversive. They're not just part of Indonesia's democratic story, but rather, they are rewriting it in their own language, with their own tools, and on their own terms.

Chapter 6

Gen Alpha, Indonesia's First Generation of Intentional Childhood

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What kind of world are we preparing our children for and how will they shape it in return?

Foundations of a Generation
Childhood, Rewritten Across Generations

Every generation is shaped by the world it inherits and in turn, reshapes what it means to grow up. In Indonesia, the story of childhood has evolved dramatically over the last three decades, marked by shifting priorities, technologies, and parenting philosophies.

Millennials were raised to adapt and conform. Stability was prized, and success was defined by structure: good grades, steady careers, clear milestones. Obedience and endurance were often seen as virtues.

Gen Z entered a more fluid world. They were raised to perform and self-brand, coming of age alongside social media and online visibility. Expression became currency, and identity was something to curate in public view.

Gen Alpha, the youngest of the three, is being raised differently. In a world marked by climate anxiety, algorithmic influence, and societal flux, their developmental goals are no longer just about success or survival. Instead, they're being raised to process, self-regulate, and co-create. Emotional intelligence is a core skill. Flexibility and curiosity are non-negotiables.

And just beginning their journey is **Gen Beta**, the first generation to be born entirely into a post-pandemic, AI-integrated, climate-unstable reality. Their world is being designed in real time, by parents, educators, and systems still recovering and recalibrating. For them, the line between human and machine, home and screen, nature and nurture, will blur even more and how we parent them today will determine whether that blurring becomes a source of confusion or resilience.

This chapter traces how the shift from adaptation to intention is quietly redefining what it means to be a child in Indonesia today.

A Generation Born into Choice

Gen Alpha or those born between 2010 and 2024 are not entering a stable world. They're growing up in the thick of it: climate disruption, AI acceleration, and social and political unrest are not distant forecasts, but daily realities. For Millennials and Gen Z, many of these shifts arrived gradually, first as abstract concepts, then as lived experience. For Gen Alpha, there is no such buffer. Uncertainty isn't on the horizon. It's the starting point.

This uncertainty is reshaping how Indonesian families, particularly in urban middle-class settings, think about parenting. Instead of preparing children to fit into the world as it is, many are raising them to engage with the world as it changes. Reflexivity, emotional awareness, and adaptability are no longer considered bonus traits, instead they are seen as foundational tools.

By 2030, an estimated two-thirds of Indonesia's population will live in urban or peri-urban areas

This demographic shift will define how Gen Alpha experiences childhood:

Digitally Immersed

Globally Influenced

Shaped by deeply local values & unequal access to resources

Redefining Parenting
From Control to Connection

That complexity is changing how parents parent. The age of obedience as a household ideal is giving way to something more emotionally attuned: empathy, respect, and co-regulation. What was once dismissed as "soft" parenting, often mocked under labels like **strawberry parenting** is now being actively re-evaluated.

Strawberry parenting, once shorthand for emotional fragility, is being redefined. It doesn't mean overprotection. It means tuning in and helping children name emotions, regulate responses, and make sense of the world, not just survive it. Critics argue this style coddles. But a growing body of research says otherwise: kids raised in emotionally responsive households often show stronger resilience, better social-emotional regulation, and greater intrinsic motivation.

In Jakarta, Bandung, and increasingly in secondary cities, we see Millennial and Gen Z parents adopting this model. Not because it's trending, but because the world their kids will face demands it.

Neuroscience and Early Development

Behind every shift in parenting and play lies something more fundamental: the developing brain. In the early years of life, children's brains are especially sensitive to environmental input, whether it's emotional, sensory, or digital. For Gen Alpha, the architecture of the mind is being built in a context that's radically different from any generation before them.

Modern neuroscience shows that early emotional attunement, particularly through co-regulation with caregivers obviously plays a critical role in strengthening neural pathways responsible for empathy, emotional control, and decision-making. When a child is upset and a parent helps them name and navigate that feeling, it isn't just comforting but it's also biologically constructive. These moments of shared emotional processing help build the foundation for mental flexibility and self-regulation later in life.

But while emotional responsiveness is a powerful support system, it now competes with constant digital stimulation. Bright screens, fast-paced content, and algorithmic feedback loops deliver a different kind of input and one that can bypass reflection and over-activate the brain's reward systems. The result is a risk of overstimulation, particularly in the developing prefrontal cortex, which governs attention, impulse control, and working memory.

At the same time, real-world interaction which is essential for building social intelligence, is increasingly being traded for digital substitutes. The danger is not in technology itself, but in the imbalance: when screen-based learning replaces tactile play, or when digital pacification replaces emotional dialogue. In this context, parenting isn't just about managing screen time. It's about curating experiences that balance stimulation with regulation, digital fluency with emotional grounding.

Childhood as Emotional Curriculum

As digital systems become more influential, parents are reclaiming something equally powerful: the emotional landscape of early life. In many homes, emotional development is no longer treated as a bonus—it's embedded into the daily rhythm of childhood. Storytelling, symbolic play, and family rituals become vehicles for teaching empathy, consent, and emotional vocabulary.

Parents under age 40 are 4x more likely to seek mental health consultation for their children compared to parents above age 50

This is not an isolated trend. Data shows that parents under 40 in Indonesia are four times more likely to seek mental health consultations for their children compared to those over 50. The shift is most visible among urban, upper-middle income families, where emotional safety is becoming a household value. Seeking support is no longer taboo but rather, it's a sign of proactive, values-based parenting.

As dr.Elvine Gunawan, Sp.KJ., Psychiatrist, notes:

"We talk a lot about preparing children for the future, but the real work starts in how we respond to them today. When a child is upset, and the parent stays present not just physically, but emotionally then that moment builds the brain. It teaches trust, regulation, and resilience. For Gen Alpha, who are growing up in a world that's constantly shifting, emotional safety is no longer optional. It's the bare minimum. Parenting in this era isn't about control, it's about connection."

— **dr. Elvine Gunawan, Sp.KJ,**
Psychiatrist & Founder of Mental Hub
Indonesia

Growing Up in the Digital Era
Growing Up with the Algorithm

Indonesian children aged 5–11 spend an average of 2.8 to 3.5 hours daily on screens, mainly on YouTube and TikTok

Indonesian children aged 5 to 11 now spend an average of 2.8 to 3.5 hours per day on screens, with platforms like YouTube and TikTok dominating their digital time. For Gen Alpha, technology is not a tool they grow into, it's the environment they grow up in.

From playtime to learning to emotional expression, digital platforms are embedded into nearly every facet of their daily lives. Content is not just consumed, it's curated, personalized, and served by algorithms that quietly shape how they see the world, how they play, and who they become.

Digital Sovereignty and Privacy Literacy

If Gen Alpha is growing up in a world shaped by algorithms, they are also growing up under constant observation. From baby monitors and GPS-tracked school transport to smart speakers and parental control apps, surveillance is quietly embedded into their earliest routines. What begins as safety can quickly normalize the idea that being watched is a given.

Beyond physical monitoring, algorithmic systems also track attention, predict preferences, and shape behavior through curated content. For this generation, personalization is not a novelty, it's the baseline. But as algorithms anticipate their choices, a deeper question emerges: What happens when personalization begins to replace autonomy?

This makes privacy literacy — the ability to understand and critically engage with systems that monitor and influence behavior — is a crucial developmental need. Just as previous generations were taught to protect their physical space, Gen Alpha must learn how to protect their digital one.

Yet, in most Indonesian households and classrooms, conversations about privacy are still rare, especially for younger children. The focus remains on screen time limits rather than digital agency. As their lives become increasingly quantified, Gen Alpha will need not just access to technology, but the tools to question it.

"We're raising the first generation to be tracked before they can speak and influenced before they can think critically. Gen Alpha is growing up with algorithms shaping their curiosity, attention, and sense of self. Teaching them emotional literacy without digital literacy is no longer enough—they need to understand the system they're inside."

— **dr. Elvine Gunawan, Sp.KJ,**
Psychiatrist & Founder of Mental Hub Indonesia

This isn't just about cybersecurity. It's about helping children recognize where their choices end and algorithmic nudges begin. For a generation being raised in full view, reclaiming a sense of digital sovereignty may be one of their most important challenges and opportunities.
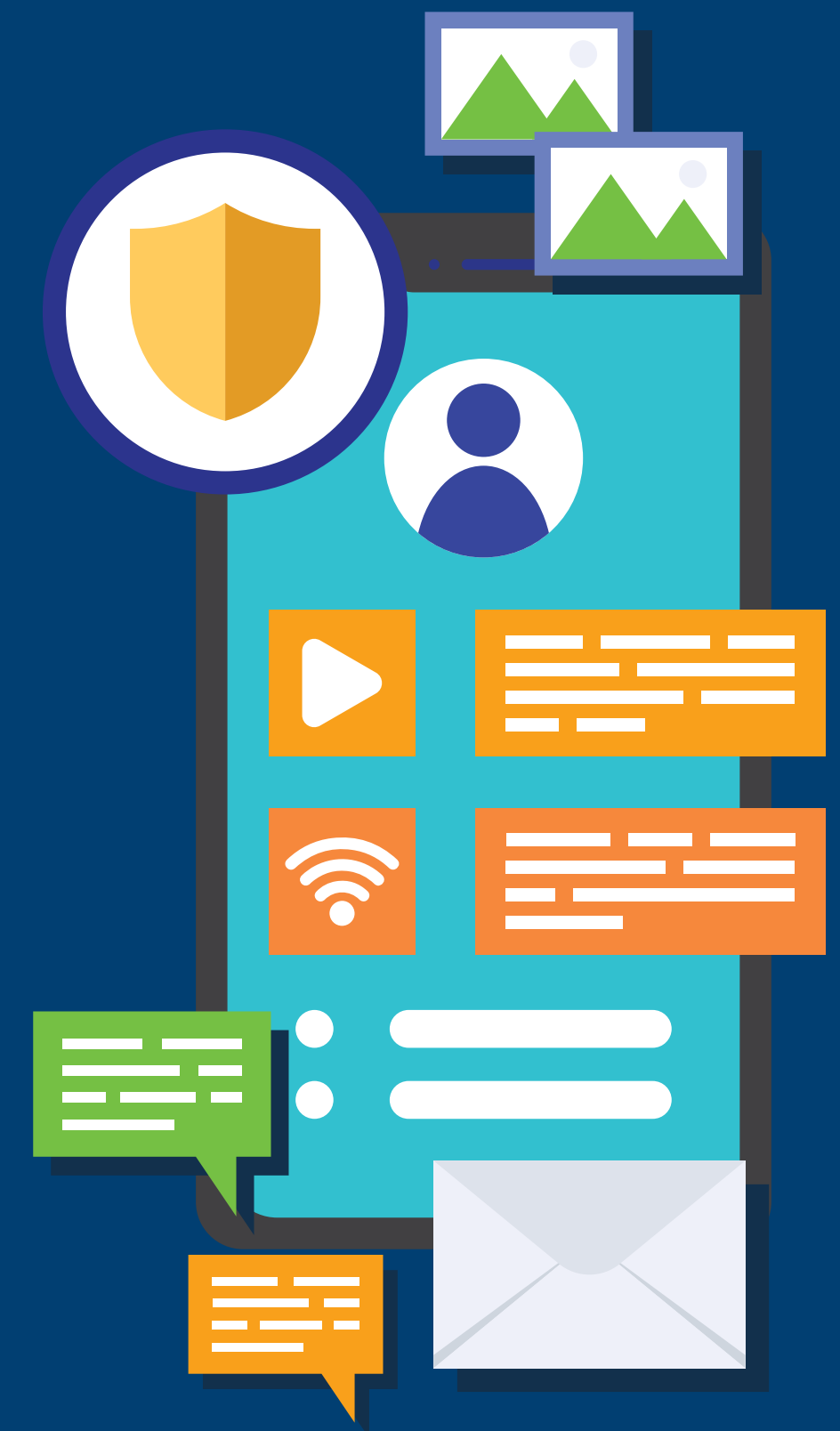
History Repeats, But Not Quietly

The emphasis on emotional safety isn't a coincidence but rather, it's a response to deeper systemic changes. If the Industrial Revolution once standardized childhood around routine and uniformity, today's Gen Alpha is growing up in a world shaped by customization, prediction, and constant optimization.

But what sets this era apart isn't just the technology? it's the consciousness around it. Millennial and Gen Z parents are more reflexive than the generations before them. They're no longer asking how to prepare their children to fit into the system but rather, they're questioning the system itself. What values should be passed down? What structures deserve to be rebuilt?

The result is a generational pivot: childhood is no longer seen as a rehearsal for adulthood, but as a meaningful phase in itself that is so rich with emotion, exploration, and intentionality.

Identity and Culture
Indonesia on the World Stage

This new lens on childhood is unfolding at the same time Indonesia itself is undergoing a cultural awakening. As the country's creative economy gains global momentum, Gen Alpha is growing up not just in Indonesia, but with Indonesia on the global map.

Gen Alpha is exposed to global trends, yet grounded in local aspirations.

Being Indonesian for Gen Alpha isn't about nostalgia. It's about expression, remix, and contribution.

But while globalization sets the stage, cultural pride is writing the script. These children are not just absorbing international content—they're singing along to *Jumbo* at school, bingeing *Nussa* on YouTube, and exploring local folktales through mobile games. Local IPs like *Jumbo, Nussa,* and *Kiko* consistently rank among the top five most-watched children's programs on YouTube in Indonesia. Their popularity reflects more than entertainment preference as it signals a shift in what this generation finds meaningful.

For Gen Alpha, being Indonesian isn't about tradition frozen in time but rather it's about culture in motion. Their digital lives don't erase their roots; they remix them. As Indonesia's creative economy gains international visibility, Gen Alpha will grow up seeing their own culture reflected back from the global stage and not as something niche, but as something with weight, relevance, and voice.

Preparing for the Future
The Complexities They'll Inherit

Of course, digital literacy and cultural pride are just part of the story. The world Gen Alpha is inheriting is layered but can also be perceived to be deeply unequal.

Climate instability will dictate migration, safety, and access.

Algorithmic loops will influence self-perception and social validation.

Economic polarization will shape education access and mobility.

Information distortion will make truth harder to verify.

Surveillance normalization may redefine privacy.

Fragmented attention will make focus and meaning harder to sustain.

But what separates this generation isn't protection, but rather, it's preparation. Gen Alpha is being raised with emotional vocabulary, digital fluency, and ethical reflexes embedded early.

As a result, Gen Alpha will become the first in Indonesia to:

Be raised with emotional intelligence as a household value, not a bonus.

Experience parenting rooted in negotiation, not just instruction.

Build identity through both regional pride and global fluency.

View civic participation as daily practice, not just election-day performance.

They are not expected to be perfect. But they are expected to be present, aware of the world's complexity, and equipped to live meaningfully within it.

Why They're Called Generation Alpha

The term *Generation Alpha* was not assigned retrospectively, like many generational labels before it, it was chosen with intention, much like the way this generation is being raised. Coined by Australian social researcher Mark McCrindle, the name marks the beginning of a new cycle: the first cohort born entirely in the 21st century. Rather than continuing down the Latin alphabet after Gen Z, the shift to the Greek alphabet signals something deeper, a reset.

Alpha, by definition, means *beginning.* And Gen Alpha isn't just the start of a new sequence, they represent a new kind of childhood altogether. They are the first to grow up entirely in the algorithmic age, the first to have their earliest experiences shaped by smart devices, predictive content, and global flux. But they are also the first generation being raised with intentionality at the center: emotional intelligence, cultural pride, digital fluency, and ethical reflexes are not add-ons but they are the framework.

To understand Gen Alpha and beyond is to understand not just where they are headed, but what they symbolize: A generation not defined by what they inherit, but by how they are prepared to respond. They're not just born into change — they're built for it.

This report is proudly presented to you by:

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Author

Project Director:
Kania Aisha Pasaman

Project Manager:
Ferina Giovanca Hotnauli

Collaborators:
Winston Utomo & William Utomo

Main Writers:
Kania Aisha Pasaman & Ferina Giovanca Hotnauli

Contributing Writers:
Marcella Anindita Davisca & Dini Maharani

Art Director:
Kevin Ryno Lapian

Graphic Designer & Illustrator:
Kevin Ryno Lapian & Raganis Tahmidya

Stock Photography & Illustrations:
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