LONDON

GZ

Partnership for Young London

Partnership for Young London believes in a future where every young person's right to wellbeing is recognised and fulfilled.

With young people making up a quarter of London's population, we have to respect that they are crucial to its future.

Generously funded by Trust for London.

Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality

Overview

Partnership for Young London believes in a future where every young person's right to wellbeing is recognised and fulfilled. Find out more about us here: www.partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk/about

Our Aims

Developing and sharing knowledge and skills
Equipping others to help young people in London access the support they need.

Connecting everyone who cares about young people in London
Bringing together organisations, local and regional government, and young people themselves.

Influencing policy and practice
Generating the new ideas that will help young Londoners thrive.

Our Values

Collaborative - We know that change happens when we work together, and we take a systemic approach across our work.
Equity - We believe that tackling inequalities is core to everything we do.
Youth-led - We believe that young people's voices and needs are a key part of our decision-making processes.

For more details, please see our manifesto for 2021-22 https://www.partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk/manifesto

Photography credit: Adiam Yemane

Contents

Generation 'Z' is the term used to describe the generation of young people born between the years 1996 and 2012. As generational cohort, the term Gen-Z is used to predict the differences in behaviours and attitudes in people born between that period (1996 and 2012), compared to their older and younger counterparts. Examining this cohort's formative experiences is valuable as they now comprise the youngest adult population. This enables researchers and policy makers to make clear observations on how young people interact with their local services and communities, in, and around London.

This document is a literature review of research about Gen-Z in London. It cites papers of this age group within the past three years. With this generation touching early adulthood, it will be interesting to see how life is changing for those born after 1996, in comparison to their older counterparts, therefore we have chosen to also include some research from as early as 2009.

As 'Gen-Z vs millennial' twitter debates reveal, the current generation of young people are increasingly becoming resentful of the everyday practices of key policy makers. This generations first experience of a Global Pandemic highlights the need for informed changes as to how we design youth policy and young people's services. Therefore, it is vital we gather both conventional and less typical evidence from young people to create a detailed picture on the many faces of young Londoners. In this review, we have aimed to create a snapshot of many facets that should be considered, with the hopes of being able to compare attitudes of young Londoners over time.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020, our work at Partnership for Young London has naturally homed in on the experiences of young Londoners during this time. Through the continuous work with our youth boards and conducting over 22 focus groups on other research projects, we began to see how inequalities among young people were exacerbated during the lockdowns.

Part 1: Data snapshot

What are the criteria to which reports are listed and summarised in this report?

At the beginning of this study, we delivered a research proposal to our Mayoral Elections/Hustings Youth Board, who agreed with the priorities we identified in our report 'We are the Youth of Today' were reflective of young people. However, there were concerns raised about key aspects were unaccounted for in the overall findings; the comparison in ages, the influence of music in the daily life of young people and, their shared concern to advocate for other underrepresented and marginalised groups. Over the last year we have held more than 17 focus groups and engaged with 6000 young people using online surveys to gather their perspective across a range of areas. Alongside this, we weighed up our previous reports and campaigns to assess the resilience of young Londoners and how services need to adapt to the current global health crisis and resurgence of high-profile civil rights movements in the UK (United Kingdom). With all this information, we were able to confidently construct questions for the focus group, and then identify what reports to include in this review.

This overarching analysis of Gen-Z in London is much needed, as our current search for insights in London are disjointed, small scale and most commonly single issue based. Wide-reaching, government led research (either local or central) is outdated, with Greater London Authorities last research on attitudes of young people, taking place in 2009. Deciding which issues young Londoner's care about is complex and this report is does not try to simplify or minimise these. It aims to take a snapshot of Gen-Z's key characteristics as a group: focusing on multiculturalism, diversity, digital access, and shared culture.

Kelsea Sellars (she/her)
Youth Campaigns Officer

Case Study: Methodology Design, Generation Z in London: A review – Partnership for Young London's Youth Policy Advisory Board:

Co-designing our work with young people is a core part of our practice at Partnership for young London. As part of this report, we spoke to young people in several focus groups to agree their priorities and discussion points moving forward. This included our 2020 youth board, who are part of our 'Manifesto for Young Londoners Campaign' this group is focused on how young people will engage in the upcoming regional elections now being held in 2021.

Through quantifying responses and then voting the main themes identified through consultation were:

- Social media
- Music and culture
- Identity
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Safety
- Services for Young People

We have collated a sample of research reports on these themes in our snapshot of Young London, which will then be used to develop discussion areas for youth policy and practice. The research gathered in this review will also be presented to young Londoners in our youth board and beyond so they can support their own experiences and shape their own anecdotes with evidence. Members of the youth board have also contributed introductions to the report.

Introduction

Partnership for Young London is part of London's civil society and charity sector, it was important that this report should be made to finally bring in Gen Z's perspective and experience that is usually identified by others rather than young people like myself.

Working with Partnership for Young London has enabled us to have a direct role in what London needs to do but also highlighting what works for us as young Londoners. Making change is possible wherever there is an ability to be heard and considered and this report will highlight our concerns.

As the report will highlight, we, as Gen Z are one of the most attentive to social and political issues and being involved in this report clearly highlights that we have a voice, and we get involved in things that matter to us. As Gen Z, we are the most diverse, most willing to push boundaries and change the way society is for the better, and we the youth board hope this report will highlight us.

The report will first present the statistical findings for Gen Z in London. Then we will show what the key reports show about our question: What do we know about Gen Z living in London? Thirdly, we will provide a discussion on what these statistics reveal about Gen Z and what this means for young Londoners. What are the assumptions we gather from them and what do Gen Z believe or show that debunk certain narratives?

Thus, we hope that the aim for this report is to underscore that policy makers and researchers need to understand the diversity and differences of Gen Z and need to reflect this in their work for young people rather than homogenize them based on assumptions that are out-of-touch with the reality of Gen Z; this will hopefully pave the way for future work on more concrete change that will help young people have a better future but the voice of young Gen Z is needed actively.

Maroua Houria Baaziz, (she/her)
A member of Partnership for Young London's Youth Advisory Board.

Introduction by PYL Youth Advisory Board

This review from Partnership for Young London is an informative and coherent view of London as a city. What stood out to me was how, our experiences of social media and the pandemic had many similarities but key differences. The key take-aways for me were:

Social media can be both beneficial and detrimental for Gen-Z. The fact that Gen-Z has news readily available to them but remain keenly aware that not all news is legitimate, demonstrates a key advantage Gen-Z has compared to previous and older generations. They are automatically sceptical of the information that is being presented to them online.

Race is still an influential and dividing factor, whereas wider society assumes the universal belief that race, and racial inequality is not as big as an issue as it has been in the past. This was especially interesting when looking at the data describing which demographics prioritises social issues as more important than others. To add, Gen-Z often reflect like-minded attitudes but are also less cohesive in their opinions than previous generations.

Gen-Z do not appear to relate to millennials as much as their older counterparts, but there is a crossover in the experiences between the youngest millennial and the oldest Gen-Z. I think there should be closer attention given to any crossovers between generations.

The importance of this report is clear as it attempts to clarify large section of the London demographic that is both new and underrepresented. Gen-Z are the most technologically advanced generation and can utilise online 'cyber space' in ways other generations are unable. It is important to see how and why this generation uses digital skills to influence, explore and determine their roles as young Londoners. This should make clear their impact and contribution in shaping future policies and the future of London. It is needed so that Gen-Z are aware of their importance and visibility in London and that their voices are being heard both online and beyond.

An introduction by Ray (they/them)
A member of Partnership for Young London's Youth Advisory Board.

Part 1: Data snapshot of Generation Z in London

Population

Young people make up nearly a third of all of London's population. In 2019, there were 2,941,332 under 25-year-olds in London. (ONS, 2019) London's population is projected to increase by 10% between 2014 and 2024. (ONS, 2014)

London has a growing 16- to 18-year-old population, which is set to expand to 323,600 by 2032; more young people reside in outer London and on the eastern side of the city (London councils, 2016). Furthermore, 3.1 million people living in London were born abroad (which is 37% of the total population), with just under half having arrived in the UK in the last 10 years.

London has one of the most diverse populations of children and young people in the world, and almost a quarter of all Londoners are under 25. Around 40% of London's residents perceived themselves as Black, Asian, Mixed or another non-White ethnicity.

Education and employment

Londoners in 2020 were awarded more top A and A* grades than pupils almost anywhere else in the country (Office for students, 2020). Students in London regularly outperform students in the rest of England in GCSE English and Math (Trust for London, 2020).

Also, 35.5% of 19-year-olds in inner London did not have level 3 qualifications in 2018, which went down from 61% in 2005. (Trust for London, 2017)

Data from the Department for Education also shows that 55% of young people go into higher education in London. That means Londoners are 45% more likely to go to university than the rest of England. (office for students)

Unemployment rates for all age groups are higher in London than in the rest of England, and highest amongst those aged between 16 and 24, with 14.9% of this group being unemployed in 2019/20 (Trust for London, 2020).

There were over 320,000 young people aged 16-24 in London who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in London in October 2020.

Part 1: Data snapshot

Poverty

Poverty in London remains higher than the rest of the UK (GLA datastore, 2019), and tops the country in wealth inequality, with 50% of the capital's wealth owned by the top 10%, while the poorest 50% of the population owning only 5% (Trust for London, 2017) furthermore, over a third (37%) of children in London are living in poverty (Trust for London, 2020).

Over half of those living in poverty (56%) are in a working family, with higher risks of poverty for workers with disabilities, black and minority ethnic workers, part-time workers, those in families with children and those in single-adult families Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), 2020. Levels of poverty are significantly worse in Black-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani families. (London's poverty profile, 2020)

Housing

London is predicted to become a city of renters, with 60% renting their homes by 2025, the highest in Britain (PwC, 2019), with housing prices increasing 253% after adjusting for inflation (IFS, 2018.) Londoners now spend on average, over half their income on rent, with rental prices increasing a third between 2008 and 2019. There are more people in poverty living in rented accommodation, with 43% in the privately rented sector and a further 36% in the social rented sector (Trust for London, 2017).

More young people are living with parents, with a third (3.8 million people) aged 20-34 living with a parent or guardian, compared to a quarter (2.4 million people) 20 years ago. There was 6% increase since 1997 nationally, though in London this increased by 41% from 1997 (Civitas, 2019).

Physical health of Young London

The mortality rate for young people aged 10-24 has fallen considerably since the 1990s and is currently relatively low. However, there were slight increases in mortality for 20-24-year-olds between 2013and 2016. The most common causes of death for young people aged 10-24 are accidents, suicide, and cancer. (APYH 2019) Gen-Z teenagers are half as likely to meet the recommended levels of physical activity as Millennials were in 2008. (Ipsos mori 2018)

Young people aged 16-20 are the group most likely to be diagnosed with asthma (APYH 2019) this might be reflective in young Londoner's engagement with environmental activism in the city. Demonstrated in the protects in 2019, we also know, young people rank the environment high in their priorities of the city. (Museum of London 2020)

Mental Health of Young London

In 2020, one in ten children aged 5-16 were identified as having a probable mental disorder in London, (GLA, City intelligence, 2020) but this was not a significant increase from 2017 (5.9%). On the other hand, study of 20 countries across the world found British teenagers to have the second poorest mental health, with over half (54%) saying money was among their top three causes of anxiety (The Varkey Foundation, 2017. However, there is a shortage of CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) provision; only 18 in 1,000 will be seen by CAMHS (APYH 2019).

Girlguiding UK found half of girls aged 15–18 (51%) report that coronavirus and lockdown have had negative impact on their mental health. Since then, Girlguiding UK found that half of girls aged 15–18 (51%) report that coronavirus and lockdown have had negative impact on their mental health.

Part 2: Research Snapshot of Generation Z in London

This report reviews several city-wide reports on young people which reflect the priorities of young people. We know the number of reports to choose from are endless, and equally informative. Therefore, it is important to remember this a snapshot of a broad experience of young Londoners. We aim for this report as a first step in making the case for policy makers to do more in providing service providers with large scale, yet multi-faceted research of young Londoners.

Young Londoner's Priorities for a Sustainable City, 2019

The London Sustainable Development Commission (2019) conducted 30 interviews, focus groups, and an online survey with 2002 respondents aged 16-24 into the priorities for young Londoners. It wanted to explore the views of young Londoners, and what their priorities are. It found:

- The six priorities for young Londoners for the Greater London Authority were knife crime (47%), affordable housing (37%), homelessness (33%), air pollution (30%), radicalisation and extremism (21%), and protecting jobs (20%).

- The seven most important social issues were mental and physical health (23.4%), tackling crime (21.2%), good quality education (18.3%), gender equality (11.8%), access to health foods (9%), having your voice heard (7.5%), youth and community services (7%).

- The four most important economic issues were housing affordability (32.2%), child poverty (31.6%), availability of jobs (20.8%), cost of transport (10.9%).

It also found some clear differences in young Londoner's priorities depending on their age, race, and gender. One of the clearest differences was between young black Londoners and white Londoners.

- Black Londoners are more likely to report tackling crime as their main social priority (26.8%) in comparison to their white counterparts (17.6%).

- There was also a gender divide in terms of prioritising social issues, with female respondents more likely to prioritise mental and physical health (25.1% to 21%) while male respondents more likely to prioritise good quality education (20.2% to 17%)

- Unsurprisingly, older respondents aged 22-24 prioritised housing affordability (35.9%) more than younger respondents.

Part 2:
Research snapshot

Young Londoners Survey, 2009

The Mayor's Young Londoners Survey carried out by ICM surveyed over a thousand young Londoners aged 11 to 16. They were asked about Mayoral policy areas, including 2012 Games, environment, crime and safety, transport, education, culture, citizenship, and involvement.

- Young Londoners' satisfaction with their neighbourhood and with their city as a place to live is high and rising (satisfaction levels of 85% and 84%)

- Uptake in activities such as youth clubs and other youth projects has also increased (41% now attend these very or quite often, up from 28% in 2004)

- Young people still think they can influence their friends and family, but the real change is their perceived influence on decision-making within their schools. Two in three (67%) believe they can influence what goes on within their school – a rise of 15 points from 2004.

- More than half (55%) of young Londoners have taken part in at least one activity to influence a change in their area. A less positive story is found when asking those that have not participated why. The dominant reason (51%) is that they have never been asked perhaps.

Survey of Londoners, Greater London Authority, 2019

This report from the Greater London Authority (GLA) was a deep dive into the state of social integration and inclusion in the city. The Survey of Londoners aimed to understand the drivers of three important social integration outcomes: belonging to London; social isolation; and perceptions of whether London is a fair city. Surveying over 6000 Londoners of different ages, the key findings noted that.

- Younger people are more likely to have friends from a similar age group, but also less likely to mix positively intergenerationally (23%)

- Local area belonging is less prevalent for 16-24 years olds (66%) saying they belong in their local area.

- Young people typically have a mixture of friends' income (89%)

- Young Londoners and LGBT+ Londoners are more likely to be both lonely and socially isolated.

Make your Mark 2019

Youth Parliament (2019) consulted 11-18-year-olds across the country to vote for which topics to prioritise. This was based on a shortlist of topics voted upon by Members of Youth Parliament from their manifesto. Overall, there were over 832,323 votes across the United Kingdom, with 92,932 votes in London. They were asked to vote on two sets of topics, ones pertaining to the whole of the UK and then devolved topics.

- In terms of the four UK topics, the results were protecting the environment (47.6%), tackling hate crime (16.9%), votes at 16 (15.4%), welcome refugees (11.7%), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (8.1%).

- In terms of the five devolved topics, the results were end knife crime (34.4%), mental health (23.3%), curriculum for life (16.8%), child poverty (16%), and street harassment (8.6%).

- In London, voting on the four UK topics remained largely like the national results. However, when voting on the five devolved topics there were two key differences. Firstly, Londoners prioritised child poverty (16%), over a curriculum for life (14%), and knife crime had a higher vote share compared to nationally (38.5% to 34.4%)

You do not know gen Z, Boiler Room, 2019

The Boiler Room undertook research in 201, looking at how Gen-Z differed from predecessors. The focus for the report is based on capital cities in France, Germany, the UK, and USA, it highlights the generational divide between Millennials and Generation Z (those born after 1995). It identified that:

- Young people, both millennials and Gen-Z see themselves as a global audience.

- Gen-Z reject binary labelling such as gender and ethnic background and should be seen as more fluid in comparison to millennials and generations before them.

- It debunks myths that Gen-Z are 'old souls in young bodies" like the generations before them, they still go out to drink and attend live music events and consider family as far less important than other demographics before them, (40% of the millennial control group).

- The top three words mentioned were the following: 77% curious (vs 56% of the control), 69% creative, (vs 50% of the control) and 60% ambitious.

'We are the Youth of Today Life in London for Generation Z,' Museum of London & Partnership for Young London, 2020

This report of over 3000 young people aged 16-24 highlights that this generation of Londoners overwhelmingly identify as Londoners, and the city is more important to them than their nationality. Unsurprisingly, we found inequality between diverse groups, and how diverse groups of young people experience their city, from the issues they face, and how they interact with space. Young Londoners are divided in how they see the development of their city, with many feeling pushed out of the local areas they grew up in, and many not feeling like they can live in London in the future with the cost of living and housing.

- We know young people living in London confidently identify as Londoners, and regional identity is more important to them than local, or national identities. Young people that take ownership over their area are more likely to find their local area important to their identity and oppose gentrification.

- Use of cultural spaces differs based on geographical location, such as whether a young person lives in Inner or Outer-London, or boroughs with higher rates of poverty. Over 30% of young Londoners rarely or never visit arts and cultural spaces, this also differs on ethnicity and gender.

'Young People's Capital of the World,' Centre for London and London Youth 2017

This report talked to 36 young people and 33 youth work practitioners in five London boroughs (Barking & Dagenham, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, and Waltham Forest) and the key findings include:

- London's youth population is growing at an almost unprecedented rate and the geography of households with children is changing. There is increased ethnic diversity amongst the youth population.

- Young people did not always see themselves as living in London and practitioners reported that young people in some areas tended to stay within their ward or borough, affecting their ability to engage in all that London has to offer.

- London is an extraordinary, but expensive city. Young people in London are the poorest in the country, with child poverty levels a third higher than in England overall.

'London's Lost Youth Services' Sian Berry 2020

Assembly member Sian Berry asked each council in London to provide data on youth service budgets, youth worker's employment, youth centre provision, any external grants being received by councils. This survey has been repeated over several years and in 2020, they asked specifically about LGBTIQA+ projects for young people are currently run by or supported by the councils. Overall, council youth service budgets in London have been cut by a total of 44 per cent, comparing the earliest and most recent data from councils. 27 councils provided enough data for analysis which shows a net loss of 101 youth centres since 2011-2012, going from 254 in 2011-12 to 153 in 2019-2020.

Key findings included:

- Since 2011-12, at least £35.5 million has been removed from council youth services budgets.

- Another £600,000 is currently planned to be removed in the 2020-21 budget year.

- Comparing the earliest data to the most recent data from all councils shows a net loss of 733 youth worker jobs.

- The largest cut in youth worker jobs was in 2016-17, with the loss of 133 youth worker jobs from the previous year.

- Across these 16 councils, there has been a net loss of 452 youth worker posts from council services since 2011-12.

- Only 12 told councils that they ran or supported a project to support LGBTIQA+ young people in their borough.

Diversity of young Londoners

London is one of the most diverse cities in the world, and the youth population is no exception with schools in London the most ethnically diverse in the UK. Youth policy must acknowledge this diversity. However, not only are Gen-Z (Generation Z) the most diverse generation but are also more likely to be more socially integrated than other age groups (Greater London Authority, 2017). Firstly, London is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the UK, and Gen-Z are the most diverse generation of Londoners yet. Around 40% of its residents perceived themselves as Black, Asian, Mixed or another non-White ethnicity in 2020. The number of languages spoken by children in each borough's schools varies is around 100 for each borough (McPike 2006). London's youth population is growing at an almost unprecedented rate, with an increased ethnic diversity (Centre for London, 2017).

Secondly, Gen-Z are far more fluid in comparison to millennials and generations before them, more likely to reject binary labelling such as gender or ethnic background and consider family as far less important (Boiler Room, 2019). Compared to millennials, Gen-Z are much less likely to identify as solely heterosexual and be in much more contact with people who don't identify as just one gender (Ipsos Mori 2018). Young people aged 16-24 were the most likely to identify as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual, in comparison to older generations (ONS, 2019).

Discussion point – All services and youth sector practitioners must be up to date with inclusive strategies that provide safer spaces for young people to able to express sexuality and gender.

Thirdly, there is also a huge diverse of backgrounds and experiences in London, who can be often overlooked. For example, there are an estimated 128,000 undocumented minors under the age of 25 in London (Coram, 2020). Given only one in ten applying to secure their status, the vast majority have little to no access to education, healthcare, or other services.

Part 3: Discussion

The similarities of Gen-Z

Identity and issues

Given the huge diversity of young London, it is important to look at the ways in which Generation Z share some similarities. To begin with, young Londoners, feel like Londoners – with the vast majority more identifying as Londoners (93.1%), and are more likely to feel like a Londoners, then with a national identity (PYL & MoL, 2020). However, Gen-Z are also more international in outlook than previous generations, being the least likely to be concerned about immigration or immigrants (Ipsos Mori, 2019), and believing in free movement in Europe. Gen-Z share the belief that music allows people to connect with one another and with diverse cultures, and they listen to more international music than any other demographic. (Spotify, 2020)

Ipsos MORI's Veracity Index shows Gen-Z in the UK are more likely than millennials to trust other people. (61% in 2017 compared to 36% in 2002). Gen-Z are more likely to resonate with certain issues such as protecting the environment. Gen-Z were far more likely to value the environment as a top priority compared to other generations (Britain Thinks, 2019), and the environment regularly comes up as a priority, such as with Make Your Mark 2019 where it came top across the country. As such they are more likely to vote for the Green Party, or Labour Party than average (YouGov, 2019), and think it is important to address inequality (Ipsos Mori, 2017). This also crosses over to their eating habits with Gen-Z, with Millennials, more likely to be vegan, vegetarian, and 'flexitarian' (Waitrose, 2019).

> *'Like the BLM protests. I think it's probably been the most you've seen people other than just people protesting yet advocacy from everyone, all different colours or different backgrounds.'*

Recent protests for the Black Lives Matter and Extinction rebellion were an example of Gen-Z's support for issues mobilized. In America, it was found that over 90% of Gen-Z supported the Black Lives Matter movement (Business Inside, 2020).

Discussion point: Services need to be designed in a way that deters from a 'one-size fits all' youth service. Young people understand the nuances of their generation, they can empathise with identity-based services/initiatives, and in some cases, call for more in their everyday lives.

**Case Study: Generation Z in London
Harnessing Young London's International Outlook by KORI youth Charity**

Who are KORI youth Charity?

KORI is a Youth Focussed Charity founded in 2002based in North London. It works to develop and support young people so that they can really thrive in their lives. KORI Youth Charity has supported and developed confidence and skills of hundreds of young people from primary school through to adulthood. They work with young minoritised young people aged 14-30 years old, providing bespoke mentoring, training programmes and exceptional social, educational and work opportunities.

How they formed an international virtual community during the pandemic:

Despite fundraising constraints outlined in their seasonal newsletter on their website, KORI were able to harness international conversations within Generation Z in London and Beyond. KORI created Crafted Conversations, recruiting and working with 30 young BAME women As part of the Collage Arts Creative Futures projects; The projects enabled the women to share their Covid-19 experiences, access training and network.

In addition to this, through their partners MeAP, led by Dr Ornette Clennon, they were invited young people involved with KORI to virtually meet with students from Brazil. After a period of preparation, they hosted an on-line meeting bringing together 16 young people for two hours of intense on-line interaction. They also placed value in the skill of young people in attendance, for example 'the skilful translation' of one of the Brazilian students Samuel Sampaio Fernandes da Costa. The meeting held space for young people to share youth experiences of the COVID-19 Pandemic in both countries, allowing them to speak about their individual challenges in education at this time. The sessions will are expected grow, change and adapt as the pandemic continues, providing global exchange at a 'time when countries are finding it necessary to isolate their populations'.

Habits and consumption

In terms of habits, Gen-Z has been described as "Generation Sensible" as they have been seen, as a generation, to display less 'risky' behaviours and attitudes compared to previous generations. Less likely to smoke, drink, or take drugs, with teen pregnancy rates in decline, and studies suggesting they are particularly cautious with money (Britain Thinks, 2019).

Multiple studies have found that the amount of time Gen-Z spends digitally connected surpasses all other generations and are more connected than Millennials were at the same age (Britain Thinks, 2019). Furthermore, they also spend time differently, being more likely to communicating online, compared to older generations who are more likely to be watching or listening (Ipsos Mori, 2018). Using social media and social messaging have become key parts of social integration in London, with 64% of young Londoners using social media to connect with friends' multiple times a day. (GLA, 2019).

'Social media is the news for us. Social media is quicker than the news.'

There are also clear purchasing trends for Gen-Z, being more likely to spend their money on experiences than products (Nokes, 2019), and far more likely to buy items online, buying more than half of their clothing and consumer electronic items online (Accenture, 2017).

This use of digital also extends to how Gen-Z participate in decision making, and campaign on political issues. As we saw with our report, Free Transport Means Everything to Me (PYL, 2020), young Londoners cared deeply about keeping the free travelcard, which did convert to a prominent level of engagement of campaigning online, from surveys, to exercising their voice on social media. The plans to scrap free transport were withdrawn, and the digital campaigning of Gen-Z must be recognised as a key factor in this.

'[The mayor] shouldn't go into these traditional news outlets to try and communicate to young people. There is a disconnect.'

Furthermore, when it comes to the issue of 'fake news,' Gen-Z are more sceptical of the news they see on social media and online and are rejecting some of its influence. For example, over 50% of the group house to present their 'honest' lies on a private, "Insta" with less followers. (we are social, 2020).

'Its 50/50 some is good, and some is bad, people become outlandish fast when you do not agree. Social media is great. But also, can be dangerous depending on how you use it. Arguments might not be the same in real life.'

Discussion point: society should put more trust in young people to make informed decisions on social media. They should not underestimate the power it has to connect young people to each other, and the causes they care about. Policy makers and practitioners should be doing more to consult with and gather evidence from young people on non-traditional, non-mainstream news outlets.

Similar economic context

Gen-Z have also, as a generation, experienced similar employment trends and changes. There has been a rise of insecure work, such as zero-hours contracts (TUC, 2018), and the gig-economy. Around one in four said they felt trapped in a cycle of jobs they do not want, and two thirds of those working thought they could do more with their career (Prince's Trust, 2018). Similarly, Gen-Z have also had to experience rising house prices, and lower wages against inflation, and are predicted to do worse economically compared to previous generations (Resolution Foundation, 2020).

'I haven't really gotten any of the opportunities in London'.

For London, Young Londoners have also had to experience an, extraordinary, cut to council youth services since 2011-12, with at least £35.5 million removed from council youth service budgets, and a net loss of 101 youth centres in less than 10 years (Sian Berry, 2020). Young people in London are also the poorest in the country, with child poverty levels being a third higher than the England average (Centre for London, 2017).

'I wonder if data shows a correlation - the less youth clubs there are, the higher knife crime or crime of youth would be.'

This means that issues like the economy, employment, and housing are similarly resonant across Gen-Z. Young Londoners recognise this; with a majority saying they thought young Londoners face a lot of the same issues.

'Gang culture is a big issue; this is because it is so financially focused [in London] to survive. It might not be just because of an individual, for example, a mum could be struggling, and that child is angry, or having to participate in crime'.

The differences in Gen-Z

Gen-Z have been described as 'hyper-individualised,' with a lack of cohesion and similarities being a defining factor. They are found to value having a unique point of view, or having unusual hobbies or interests, more than any other generation (Nokes, 2019). As such, one of the characteristics of Gen-Z is their lack of homogeneity and similarities, with the internet and creation of sub-cultures being a potential contributor to this.

One study has found that Generation Z are far less like-minded as a generation than millennials, or baby boomers. BBH Labs (2020) tested different generations on a range of questions, to calculate a 'Group Cohesion Score', and found Gen-Z scored exceptionally low, meaning that have no stronger connection to each other than to the rest of the country. While millennials and baby boomers were far more similar as a generation compared to Gen-Z, the study found that generational groupings were less cohesive than most other groupings, like profession, or interests.

'[Gen-Z] are open to talk about things in a way that no other generation is.'

Ethnic diversity and diversity of experience

While there are some experiences and trends that Gen-Z share, the diversity of young Londoners reflects a diversity in experiences, and thoughts. Diverse groups create just as many different perceptions towards the city, and how young people see themselves. Given that Gen-Z are the most ethnically diverse generation yet, it is important to highlight that this creates a wider diversity of experience, and outcomes across Gen-Z.

Ethnicity is still one of the ways, alongside gender, which creates a huge diversity in the views of Gen-Z. 'We are the Youth of Today' report last year, demonstrated the role ethnicity played a role in how young Londoners ranked certain issues, with BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) young people significantly more likely to see education and having their voice heard as more important, while White young people ranked air pollution and the environment higher. Ethnicity also changed how young people used different spaces, for example, White young people were more likely than BAME young people to go to arts spaces, cultural space, and parks and green spaces (PYL and MoL, 2020).

If we look at the experiences of young Londoners in a few areas, education, employment, and safety, we can see a huge divide within Gen-Z. In their educational experience, for example, 77.1% of Asian students in London achieved grades 9-4 in GCSE Maths and English, higher than students from White backgrounds (66.9%), Mixed backgrounds (66.6%) or Black backgrounds (62%) (Poverty Profile, Trust for London, 2020).

'In schools, if someone is black[teachers] will have in their minds that someone would be a bad person. – 16-year-old focus group participant.'

Similarly, with employment, for young black men unemployment rates are rising sharply and far faster than the average (Annual Population Survey, 2019), and as a group, they are up to three times more likely to be unemployed as young White men, and four times more likely to be unemployed than young White men at graduate level (Trust for London, 2020).

For safety, and the police, when reporting crime Black Londoners are more likely to report tackling crime as their main social priority (26.8%) in comparison to their White counterparts (17.6%) (MOPAC 2019). Attitudes toward the police is another area which amplifies how young people's experiences and perceptions vary immensely. In the report from MOPAC, the findings that suggest young people are not too sceptical of the police, the majority (Over 50%) who have been stopped and search felt as though it had been handled well. Whilst its true for the general population for attitudes towards the police are relatively positive (74% consistently agreeing they deal with issues fairly. We already know relationship with the police varies in different communities. Having said this, data around attitudes toward the police should be intensely scrutinised, consistently, and regularly. One might infer from the number of protests attended by young people over the summer of 2020, and in March 2021 attitudes toward police, might grow in number. Several reports have questioned relaxed police powers granted in the coronavirus act in 2020. The National Police Chiefs' Council (2020) reported Young Black, Asian and Minoritized ethnic groups, aged between 18 and 34, who make up only 14 per cent of the population, accounted for 57 per cent of fines in the first lockdown of 2020.

> **Discussion point: In order to address historical distrust of the police, there must be better analysis on attitudes toward them, and evidence led strategies tailor made to different demographics and geographic locations in London.**

Experience of Covid-19

The recent experience of Covid-19 and lockdown has also highlighted the range of issues faced by young Londoners, and how differently they experienced it. While mental health has been an issue for most young people during this pandemic (PYL and HLP, 2020), this can vary based on employment, current housing status, and access to local green spaces or services.

> *"For students, or even apprentices, I think a lot of extra stress is coming from universities, because it's expected that students should act like nothing has changed. First, they mention mental health then, they do things like monitor your eyes in virtual exams. They also make you pay for places you can't live, or for access to a library or office space you can't use. Several institutions, including the government have made no effort to make things easier for us now, or for us to be able to graduate."*

Discussion point: Although we cannot predict all the outcomes of Covid-19 pandemic, we know young people have been increasingly isolated during this time. The government and local councils need to gain young people's trust and show how they are planning for their recovery from it.

Certain groups within Gen-Z have faced additional challenges during lockdown, such as children in care. Through the work with the Children in Care Council, we have been able to capture some elements of the impact of COVID-19 on care experienced young Londoners. There is a clear message that digital poverty is resulting in social exclusion of young people. In our report, 'The Digital Divide: internet access for young care leavers' (2020), 73% of those surveyed strongly agreed the internet was essential to their mental health. This need for internet, to socialise and message, has only increased during lockdown. It can naturally be inferred that as the pandemic and lockdown(s) continue, young people will continue to form communities on social media. The virtual shift youth services took from face-to-face engagement to the virtual, can only be sustained if all young people, have access to the internet via a stable WI-FI connection and electronic devices.

Case study: Maintaining engagement and outreach during the pandemic
Peer Outreach Workers (POWS) at Greater London authority

The Peer Outreach Workers (POWs) are a group of young people from across the capital that helps influence the Mayor's policies. The POWs, which were set up in 2006 are made up of 30 young Londoners aged 15-25yrs old from diverse backgrounds and life experiences. They are commissioned by the GLA to engage with and gather the opinions of other young people in the capital.

How they adapted to the pandemic:

From March 2020, the peer outreach team moved to operating virtually. During this time, project officers supported the 30 young team members, by quickly implementing a hardship fund as the team were unable to gather or work during the first lockdown. They moved monthly in person meetings to a weekly meeting and check in on Microsoft teams. They also supported POWS by offering 1-1- check ins and group meetings to hold conversations about the experience during lockdown, which were immediately put across to other teams at the GLA. This meant that qualitative evidence and responses to rapidly changing lockdown strategy was readily available Education and Youth Policy unit at the GLA.

A Response from Kismet Meyon, a Peer Outreach Worker

During lockdown having consistency and support meant that I could feel like I had a purpose. Having the Peer Outreach Team to support me meant that I had a network of information, guidance and support throughout the pandemic. We had a safe place to discuss our worries and concerns regarding government policies and current affairs. This meant that we were in the loop with what was being discussed and arranged and also a place to truly voice our opinions. We also had the opportunity to help our younger ones do the same through our Lynk Up Crew sessions. Whilst everyone had no clue what was going on, nor were we all in the same mental state to keep doing what we did, we still managed to achieve a lot of great virtual meetings and events with our wider partners. I believe this was due to the commitment that the team has to the bigger mission of truly hearing the voices of children and young people and also the determination, empathy and up most love that Rebecca and Mark have towards our team, ambitions and goals.

Young Londoners are not a homogenous group

The above examples help us draw map of how Gen-Z is a paradoxical generation. They are seeking influence and community from smaller more niche groups than their predecessors would. The hybridisation of trends and interests gains their attention and excites them. Many young accept they have contradictive opinions and identities, with competing ideas of social inclusion and individualistic consumption, for example, choosing to still buy from a brand they know is morally wrong (We Are Social, 2020).

> *'I think there's a lot of different sentiments are part of this generation, different viewpoints. And people are very vocal about what they think, which we haven't really seen in as much from either generation.'*

There is an irony with Gen-Z, as one way in which they are similar as a generation, is their fluidity and diversity. They are far less likely to identify as heterosexual, less likely to have binary identities, and more likely to have 'hybrid' identities made of distinct parts, not defining themselves in one way (Britain Thinks, 2019).

From our research, we know that demographical and geographical data is there, yet nuances among youth voice and perceptions of the city are sparse. Although the youth sector is seen as one, consultative exercises with young people tend to be identity or geographically based. We believe this style of research, neglects the fluid yet knowledgeable nature of young London. As Gen Z in London is becoming increasingly, polarised yet fluid in their identity, we will continue to miss out on the innovative nature of young people that seeks to advocate for integration and inclusion not only in their own, but neighbouring communities.

Too often in our work, we hear phrases like "young people need a voice" and "policy makers must listen" which is true, but we know that young people are speaking not only for themselves, but for other communities in their city. And so, as Gen-Z Londoners will build the changing face of London, the experience of the pandemic will also impact the ways in which communities are forming amongst young people.

> **Discussion point: As part of city-wide recovery from the pandemic, London, must show how it cares for, and responds to the need and views of young people. This includes, employers, funders, policy makers, practitioners, and elected members.**

Young people in our focus groups argue that this accepted difference is what make Gen-Z unique over their predecessors. While they are not a homogenous group, in terms of the issues they face or their experiences of London, there is solidarity and a focus on equality across this generation.

> **Discussion Point: Despite the need for policy to reflect the diversity of young Londoners, they also need to consider the aspects of shared youth culture, that bring young people together and build opportunities for communities to interact and intersect within that age group.**

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