LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GENERATION
CREATING - NOT CHANGING - THEIR LIVES IN PANDEMIC.

RE-EMERGENCE
OBJECTIVE:
TRACK YOUTH RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AROUND THE GLOBE TO FORECAST THE FUTURE OF CULTURE

METHODOLOGY:
Online quantitative studies fielded via VICE, Refinery29, and i-D websites and social channels, combined with category and market specific insights from VICE Media Group’s proprietary insights communities, VICE Voices and Mad Chatter.

SAMPLE:
Gen Z & Millennial Focus
n=350-9,000 Respondents Per Study

GLOBAL YOUTH CULTURE TRACKING STUDIES

- MARCH-APRIL 2020: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I: CHECKING IN
- APRIL-MAY 2020: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC II: AT HOME EXPERIENCES
- MAY-JUNE 2020: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC III: HEALTH & WELLNESS
- AUG-SEPT 2020: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC IV: FUTURE OF WORK
- JUNE-JULY 2021: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE

CATEGORY & MARKET DEEP DIVES

- OCT-NOV 2020: COMPASSION IN CURRENCY
  US, UK, & CANADA
- JAN 2021: IDENTITY IN 2030
  US & UK
- JAN-FEB 2021: FUTURE OF EXPERIENCES
  US & UK
- FEB 2020 - SEP 2021: BLAZING THEIR OWN EDUCATIONAL PATH
  US (TRACKING STUDY)
- JUNE-JULY 2021: HUMOR IN MEDIA
  US & UK
WE ARE NOT GOING BACK TO NORMAL
DESPITE EFFORTS TOWARDS NORMALCY, LIFE IS FAR FROM NORMAL

Q?: How would you describe your emotions today compared to an average day before the pandemic? (High/Very High)

UNCERTAINTY:

63% of young people say:
“Things are starting to reopen in my country, or are already fully reopened.”

OVERWHELM:

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
YOUTH OPTIMISM TOWARDS THE FUTURE IS DWINDLING, BUT THEIR READINESS FOR CHANGE IS OMNIPRESENT

57% OF GEN Z
Believe the pandemic will have a negative long-term impact on society and culture.

50% GEN Y

6 in 10
OF GEN Z SAY:
“I will advocate for societal changes based on what we’ve learned from this pandemic.”

7 in 10
OF GEN Z SAY:
“New generations (Gen Z & Millennials) will take it upon themselves to solve societal issues impacted by older generations.”

6 in 10 GEN Y

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021; IDENTITY IN 2030, 2021
Q?: What do you imagine will be the most lasting societal change after this pandemic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Change from March 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Work</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>+14 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Socialize</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Take Care of Our Health</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way Our Economy Operates</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Learn</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Engage with Media</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Engage with Our Community</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Engage in Entertainment</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>+18 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Shop</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Rally Behind Causes</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We We Address Climate Change</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Engage in Romantic Relations</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way We Eat</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

92% of Gen Z: Have made changes to their lifestyle that they plan to continue.

Source: Youth in Pandemic I-V, 2020-2021
“Life wasn’t normal before covid and hopefully we can make new paths of life that are better for everyone moving forward! I am passionate about the planet, uplifting marginalized people, fighting capitalism, and changing the whole damn system!”

GEN Z, WOMAN, USA

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021
NAVIGATING THE NEXT CHAPTER OF CULTURE
**YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BECOME CHRONICALLY AWARE OF THE STRAIN ON THEIR MENTAL HEALTH**

Q?: How would you describe your emotions today compared to an average day before the pandemic? (High/Very High)

**STRESS:**
- March 2020: 56%
- June 2020: 58%
- June 2021: 61%

**DEPRESSION:**
- March 2020: 30%
- June 2020: 40%
- June 2021: 42%

*GEN Z*

- 41% of young people foresee themselves having **lasting anxiety** as a result of the pandemic.
- 43% Gen Z
- 38% Gen Y

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
THEY’VE MADE IT A PRIORITY TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR THOUGHTS

Mental/Emotional Health is the #1 thing young people value more today than they did before the pandemic.

1 in 2

OF GEN Z

Have made lifestyle changes around their mental health that they plan to continue.

2 in 5 GEN Y

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
**THEY’VE IMPLEMENTED MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES THAT THEY PLAN TO CONTINUE**

**Q?**: Since the start of COVID-19 to today, have you used any of the following to maintain your wellbeing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health App</th>
<th>March 2020</th>
<th>June 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Therapy/Coaching</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation Practice</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall % of youth taking action around mental health has DOUBLED since the start of the pandemic.

"I started doing yoga and meditation on a regular basis... Which has really changed my life... And also helped me pass through these challenging times."

**GEN Z, MAN, INDIA**

"I started sessions with a psychologist because I realized how important my mental health is and that is something that I will continue to do ❤️."

**GEN Z, WOMAN, GREECE**

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
Many of the changes I made were to take good care of my mental health. I realised that having a healthy mind is really important to keep your life moving forward and to grow as a person as well.

GEN Z, NONBINARY, MALAYSIA

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021
**THEY WILL MAINTAIN HABITS THAT PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH**

_Q_: What habits have you created that you plan to keep post-pandemic?

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

1. motivation to work out is ‘To feel good’
2. ‘To manage mental/emotional health’

**PERSONAL TIME**

76% of young people say: “I will respect my personal needs and boundaries more in the future.”

**NATURE**

63% of young people spent more meaningful time outdoors/in nature in 2020

**HOBBIES & PASSION**

59% of young people value their hobbies more than they used to

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“When I started yoga, I learned that it was important to communicate with people, which had a positive effect on my body and soul.”  

*Gen Z, Woman, Japan*

“The isolation helped me to do a lot of introspection and change my way of seeing things. I am now a much more positive person and I value each moment I step outside.”

*Gen Z, Woman, Argentina*

“I have developed a love for my environment and the outdoors so I have chosen to be more conscious of the trash I create.”

*Gen Z, Woman, USA*

“I became aware of the things that were important to me, the new things that I would like to do, like starting hobbies again, doing sports and getting involved in volunteering.”

*Gen Z, Woman, Belgium*

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*Source: Youth in Pandemic I-V, 2020-2021; Future of Experiences, 2021*
Q?: What habits do you plan to drop?

**SOCIAL SEPARATION**

"[I want to drop] dating sites! And be able to stumble into a bar and talk to strangers."

GEN Z, WOMAN, FRANCE

"Isolation - it's not a sustainable lifestyle. I should have been spending more time with friends and family before the pandemic."

GEN Z, MAN, CANADA

**TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME**

"Using too much social media platforms and the high use of my smartphone have resulted in anxiety."

GEN Z, MAN, INDIA

"Excessive use of social media and content streaming. Once I am able to, I want to use my time in a more fulfilling way."

GEN Z, NON-BINARY, GERMANY

**OVER-CONSUMPTION**

"Excessive consumption. Throughout the pandemic, I've spent more money than ever."

GEN Z, WOMAN, INDONESIA

"Social media addiction, late bedtimes, online shopping or unethical consumerism."

GEN Z, NON-BINARY, UK

**TIME AT HOME/INDOORS**

"Staying in one place for a long period of time, because it affects my mental well-being."

GEN Z, MAN, FRANCE

"Staying indoors for too long continuously, because I want more fresh air."

GEN Z, MAN, USA

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021
#2 RELATIONSHIPS

CASUAL

CRITICAL
**YOUTH’S SENSE OF CONNECTION HAS DETERIORATED**

**Q?:** How would you describe your emotions today compared to an average day before the pandemic?

**CONNECTION:**  
(Low/Very Low)

- **MARCH 2020:** 28%  
- **JUNE 2020:** 39%  
- **JUNE 2021:** 56%

**LONELINESS:**  
(High/Very High)

- **MARCH 2020:** 33%  
- **JUNE 2020:** 39%  
- **JUNE 2021:** 60%

*GEN Z*

**SOURCE:** YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
THEY ARE EAGER TO REUNITE

94%  Of young people plan to return to in-person experiences (festivals, concerts, national/world tours, plays, museums, etc.)

72%  Of young people say what makes an experience fun is the opportunity to share moments with others

75%  Of those who plan to go out more say it will be good for their mental health to be around people again

81% GEN Z

78% GEN Z

SOURCE: FUTURE OF EXPERIENCES, 2021
BUT RE-ACCLIMATING TO IN-PERSON EXPERIENCES WILL TAKE TIME AND ADJUSTING

44% Excited

31% Hesitant

25% Nervous

Q: How do you feel about returning to social experiences?

46% GEN Z
42% GEN Y

27% GEN Z
34% GEN Y

27% GEN Z
24% GEN Y

But 23% of those who are excited don’t feel ready, mentally & emotionally, to return

72% of those who are nervous/hesitant don’t feel ready, mentally & emotionally, to return

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021
THEY HAVE BECOME MORE DELIBERATE ABOUT WHO THEY SPEND THEIR TIME WITH

INVESTED RELATIONSHIPS

“I got closer to my friends because we went through a lot during this time and talked and trusted each other more than before.”

GEN Z, WOMAN, GERMANY

“The emotional distance between my family members became closer. Before the pandemic, I didn’t like any family member. But now, I love them.”

GEN Z, NONBINARY, JAPAN

“I made close ties with my family and friends and plan to keep these strong.”

GEN Z, MAN, UK

DIVESTED RELATIONSHIPS

“I realized that those who must be there, are there, and those who do not want to be there are useless to try keeping in my life.”

GEN Z, NONBINARY, ITALY

“The time off from the start of the pandemic allowed me to take a very in-depth analysis of the romantic relationship and friendships that I have. Since then I have become rather picky with my associates.”

GEN Z, MAN, USA

“I have given a clean break to all futile and circumstantial friendships.”

GEN Z, WOMAN, GERMANY

1 in 2

OF GEN Z

Made changes in their friendships that they plan to continue

1 in 3 GEN Y

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021
The #1 aspect of their lives young people plan to indulge in more moving forward is their relationships & loved ones.

59% GEN Z
54% GEN Y

Value ‘Maintaining close relationships’ just as much or even more than they did before the pandemic.

87%

“I now deal with friendships much more consciously, think more carefully about who is important to me and cultivate these friendships very consciously. I would like to maintain this mindset that friendships cannot be taken for granted.”

GEN Z, NONBINARY, SWITZERLAND

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021
THEY’LL MEET NEW PEOPLE, BUT WILL DO SO MINDFULLY

73%
Of young people value ‘Meeting new people’ just as much or even more now than they did before the pandemic

55%
Of young people say what makes an experience fun is the opportunity to meet new people

72% GEN Z

“I don’t plan to keep staying away from people. What I plan to keep is the importance that I give to my friends, and I’ll try to make real friends from now on.”

GEN Z, MAN, ARGENTINA

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021; FUTURE OF EXPERIENCES 2021
#3 CAREER

PATHS

PASSIONS
YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR PURPOSE

Q?: How would you describe your emotions today compared to an average day before the pandemic?

PURPOSEFULNESS (Low/Very Low)

- March 2020: 36%
- June 2020: 40%
- June 2021: 43%

- March 2020: 43%
- June 2020: 47%
- June 2021: 50%

BOREDOM (High/Very High)

- 41%
- 45%

*GEN Z

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
For the longest time I thought I was lazy for passing out right after work. Now I realize I was just exhausted and not giving enough time to things that fuel me. Now, letting myself be bored has created the space to think more deeply/creatively about all kinds of topics. My inner world is richer now.

"GEN Z, WOMAN, USA"

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021
TAPPING CREATIVITY HELPED UNCOVER WHAT MOVES THEM

Q?: Since the start of COVID-19 to today, have you done any of the following to maintain your wellbeing?

**LEARNED NEW SKILLS**

- March 2020: 18%
- June 2021: 33%
- 36% Gen Z
- 30% Gen Y

**EXPERIMENTED WITH NEW RECIPES**

- March 2020: 28%
- June 2021: 40%

**TOOK UP OLD OR NEW HOBBIES**

- March 2020: 31%
- June 2021: 41%

6 in 10
Young people value their **hobbies** more than they used to

7 in 10
Young people are more focused on how much time they spend engaged in what they love

Source: Youth in Pandemic I-V, 2020-2021
THEY’RE NOW TURNING THEIR PASSIONS INTO PAYCHECKS

“I discovered my passion for music and would love to bring it back and maybe one day make it a profession.”

GEN Z, MAN, ITALY

“I got up with my old hobbies like painting, singing and cutting hair. Read around 50 books. I plan to continue to read and have already started online classes for singing.”

GEN Z, MAN, INDIA

“I found hobbies that I enjoy and they make some money so I must continue.”

GEN Z, WOMAN, USA

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
MONEY STILL MATTERS, BUT ENJOYING HOW THEY MAKE IT MATTERS MORE

84%  
Of young people value **MONEY** just as much or even more now than they did before the pandemic  
(53% value it *MORE*)

85%  
Of young people value **WORK-LIFE BALANCE** just as much or even more now than they did before the pandemic  
(57% value it *MORE*)

82%  
Of young people want to **DO SOMETHING THAT REALLY MATTERS TO THEM**

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
**THEIR PASSIONS WILL LEAD THEM TO UNCHARTED FIELDS OF WORK**

Of young people value **SIDE HUSTLES** just as much or even more now than they did before the pandemic.

72%

Of young people value **ENTREPRENEURSHIP** just as much or even more now than they did before the pandemic.

71%

"I started a new company, partly to make money, partly to make a difference, partly to have something to do, partly to give people jobs."

GEN Z, MAN, USA

**TOP GEN Z SIDE HUSTLES**

#1: Buying & re-selling goods

2x more than GEN Y

#2: Freelancing

#3: Crafting/artistry

1.5x more than GEN Y

#4: Investing

#5: Driver (Uber, Lyft, etc.)

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021; COMPASSION IN CURRENCY, 2021
Of High Schoolers say, “I want to follow my own educational path.”

Of High Schoolers believe that education beyond High School is necessary

-12 percentage point decline from Feb 2020 to Sep 2021

Of High Schoolers believe a skill-based education (e.g. trade skills, nursing, STEM, etc.) makes sense in today’s world

SOURCES: BLAZING THEIR OWN EDUCATIONAL PATH, VICE + ECMC, 2020-2021
#4 MEDIA

TAPPING THROUGH

TAKING AWAY
Young people have been overwhelmed with news & information.

“I limit the amount of news I take in a day. The news in general is usually not that upbeat, I already have severe anxiety and depression. I’m a very sensitive person and consuming too much can send me spiraling.”

Gen Z, Woman, USA

Source: Youth in Pandemic V: Re-emergence & Indulgence, 2021
THERE’RE NOW CUTTING THROUGH CONTENT TO FIND THE TRUTH, BUILD RESILIENCE, AND IMMERSE IN MOMENTS OF RESPITE

TOP 3 CONTENT TYPES THEY’LL SEEK MOVING FORWARD:

#1 TRUTH
75% OF YOUNG PEOPLE will seek content that:
- Provides info based on fact/science
- Uncovers stories others aren’t telling
- Keeps them in-the-know

#2 RESILIENCE
69% OF YOUNG PEOPLE will seek content that:
- Inspires self-growth
- Gives them hope
- Helps them contribute to the world

#3 RESPITE
68% OF YOUNG PEOPLE will seek content that:
- Makes them laugh
- Entertains them
- Helps them escape

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC V: RE-EMERGENCE & INDULGENCE, 2021
TRUTH: THEY’LL CONSULT MORE SOURCES & EXPERTS TO VERIFY INFORMATION

#1

The #1 change young people will make when seeking news in the future is to pay more attention to the opinions of experts (academics, scientists, activists, authors, etc.)

1 in 4

Young people will engage with more alternative news outlets that uncover stories others aren’t telling.

The Internet Is Mad About a Hunter Biden Art Show That Doesn’t Exist

“I will be suspicious of most newspapers (TV news in particular) and will verify the sources.”

GEN Z, WOMAN, ITALY

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC II: AT-HOME EXPERIENCES, 2020
RESILIENCE: THEY’LL SEEK CONTENT THAT OFFERS TOOLS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

“[Stoicism] can serve as an accessible entry to philosophy, offer genuinely helpful coping mechanisms, and a way to approach difficult circumstances, or, it can be adapted to justify one's pre-existing lot in life, forgo larger social change, and regulate away messy emotions.”

The Revival of Stoicism

1,084% above page views benchmark

43% OF YOUNG PEOPLE
Have been watching/wanting more documentaries (the second most popular genre after comedy)

43%

1 in 2

YOUNG PEOPLE
Foresee themselves indulging more in self-growth experiences

52% GEN Z
46% GEN Y

Traffic to general health content increased 112% YoY at the start of the pandemic

Exactly How To Start Running, According To An Expert

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
**RESPITE: THEY’LL ACTIVELY PURSUE A GOOD LAUGH**

89%

Of young people use humor to cope with serious things

92% GEN Z

87%

Of young people believe memes about world crises in the moment can be funny

LOLing Is Good Medicine: How Indigenous People Use Humour For Survival

#1

Comedy is #1 genre young people have been watching/wanting more of

SOURCE: HUMOR IN MEDIA, 2021
YOUTH WON’T JUST CONSUME CONTENT, THEY’LL INTERACT WITHIN IT

Q?: Since the start of COVID-19 to today, have you used any of the following to maintain your wellbeing?

VIRTUAL HANGOUTS
- March 2020: 22%
- June 2021: 28%

ONLINE GAMING
- March 2020: 28%
- June 2021: 33%

SOCIAL MEDIA
- March 2020: 38% Gen Z
- June 2021: 47%
- 60% Gen Z

64% of Gen Z say:
“Social media’s role in experiences will be to serve as a place for event-goers to engage with others before/during/after the event.”

58% Gen Y

1 in 4 Gen Z increased the amount they play video games because more of their friends & family were playing.

SOURCE: YOUTH IN PANDEMIC I-V, 2020-2021
THE WALLS BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL EXPERIENCES WILL DISSIPATE

93% of Gen Z
Are interested in 3-D AUDIO.
86% Gen Y

2 in 5 of Gen Z
Have created or designated physical space inside their homes for playing video games.
1 in 4 Gen Y

54% of Gen Z
Purchased new tech (speakers, game consoles, etc.) to enhance their experience of entertainment at home throughout the pandemic.
47% Gen Y

Sources: Future of Audio, 2021, Youth in Pandemic II: At-Home Experiences, 2020; Future of Experiences, 2021
THE NEXT CHAPTER: FOOTNOTES FOR THE FUTURE

#1 MENTAL HEALTH TABOO TABLE TALK

Every decision that young people make will be rooted in their quest for emotional and mental stability. Brands must understand the importance of mental health within the consumer decision-making process, and deliver products, services, and messages that support the consumer journey of self-exploration, acceptance, and growth.

#2 RELATIONSHIPS CASUAL CRITICAL

Young people will continue to invest in their closest relationships. They view quality time as something to be indulged in, and they seek ways to enhance it. Brands can play a pivotal role in social experiences - offering ways to free up time and space for people to be present with one another, or facilitating experiences that gift consumers more meaningful moments and memories.

#3 CAREER PATHS PASSIONS

Young people are pioneering new ways to work, with their passion as their guiding light. Brands must consider this new mindset and motivation, and find ways to fuel nontraditional education and the entrepreneurial spirit.

#4 MEDIA TAPPING THROUGH TAKING AWAY

As the media landscape continues to expand and evolve, young people will cut to the content that enhances their lives through truth, resilience, and respite. Brands can play a pivotal role by leaning into these pillars, designing messages for mindful consumption, and giving consumers something to apply in their own lives.
THANK YOU

THANK YOU