



Generation Y is the UK name for millennials, those born between 1980 and the mid-90s. [A recent poll conducted by Ipsos Mori](#) suggests that over half (54%) of the country believe young people's lives will be worse than their own - the highest percentage ever recorded. Over-50s were overwhelmingly positive about their own life course – but nearly half of Generation Y believe they will be worse off.

Young people entering the labour market today face far less favourable mobility prospects than their parents or grandparent did. Alan Milburn, the previous chair of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission has consequently warned that Britain could soon become “permanently divided” as a result of this intergenerational inequality. [“Unfortunately,” Milburn says, “there is a growing sense that Britain’s best days are behind us rather than ahead. That is so corrosive... The wind of change does have to sweep through the country.”](#)

The profound question underlying Milburn’s comments is whether the familiar narrative of generational progress has now been upended. The concern is that all the old paths that allowed their parents to get ahead – careers with prospects, home ownership and decent pensions – are one by one being blocked off for Generation Y. Today’s young adults enjoy greater social, sexual and cultural freedom than any before them. But they are also in hock to debts, to landlords and often unstructured work.

Generation Z is the demographic cohort that were broadly born after 2000. [By 2020, over 50% of the workforce are expected to be Generation Y members who have grown up connected, collaborative and mobile.](#) In many respects they are the most diverse, entrepreneurial and innovative of generations.

However, a report by the OECD suggests that [British teenagers are among the most troubled in the world.](#) They feel pressured by schoolwork and worried about the way they look. The life satisfaction of those aged 11-15 has gone down everywhere. They too worry about future economic opportunity and wellbeing and are profoundly anxious.

[In England, there has been a threefold increase during the past 10 years in the number of teenagers who self-harm.](#) They are deeply distrustful of establishment institutions and, if anything, see them as another source of anxiety. [There is growing evidence of a link between social media use within children and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.](#) They will also present physical health issues, [with recent research predicting that they will be the most overweight generation since records again, with 7 in 10 classified as obese.](#)

However, they are also optimists too. The majority of Generation Z believes that helping others in need is important, 70% cite inequality as one of the issues that worry them greatly and 70% worry about terrorism. They are bright and talented. They are a generation of digital creators and inventors who want to consume as much as the generations behind them, but who also want to create. They just need a little more care and support than their older brothers and sisters; and, perhaps, for the older generation to recognise that it probably understands Generation Z rather less well than Generation Z understands themselves.

Implications for Gwent

Generation Y & Z, as the generations before them, will present their own problems and opportunities. Despite being more digitally connected than any previous generation, UK teenagers