

NOVEMBER 2022

The Intergenerational Workplace: Impacts of Remote Work on Location and Commuting Preferences

By Savills Workplace Practice Group

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How has remote work impacted where workers across generations prefer to live?

The pandemic normalized widespread remote working, calling into question the importance of a fixed, physical location for work. Our recently published [Intergenerational Office survey](#) looks at generational preferences within working environments, giving employers insight on what people at different stages of life expect from their workplace right now.

But as we continue to see increasing population shifts across states in the U.S., we also wanted to understand how people feel about their circumstances outside the office. In this supplement, Savills asked the same respondents across four generations to share their thoughts on commute and location given more flexibility to work remotely.

Here, we reveal data on which generations are the most willing to make location or commute changes to benefit from remote work policies – and what this means for companies and the war for talent.



Methodology

Respondents

943

Generation Categories

Baby Boomer: 1946-1964

Gen X: 1965-1980

Millennial: 1981-1996

Gen Z: 1997-2012

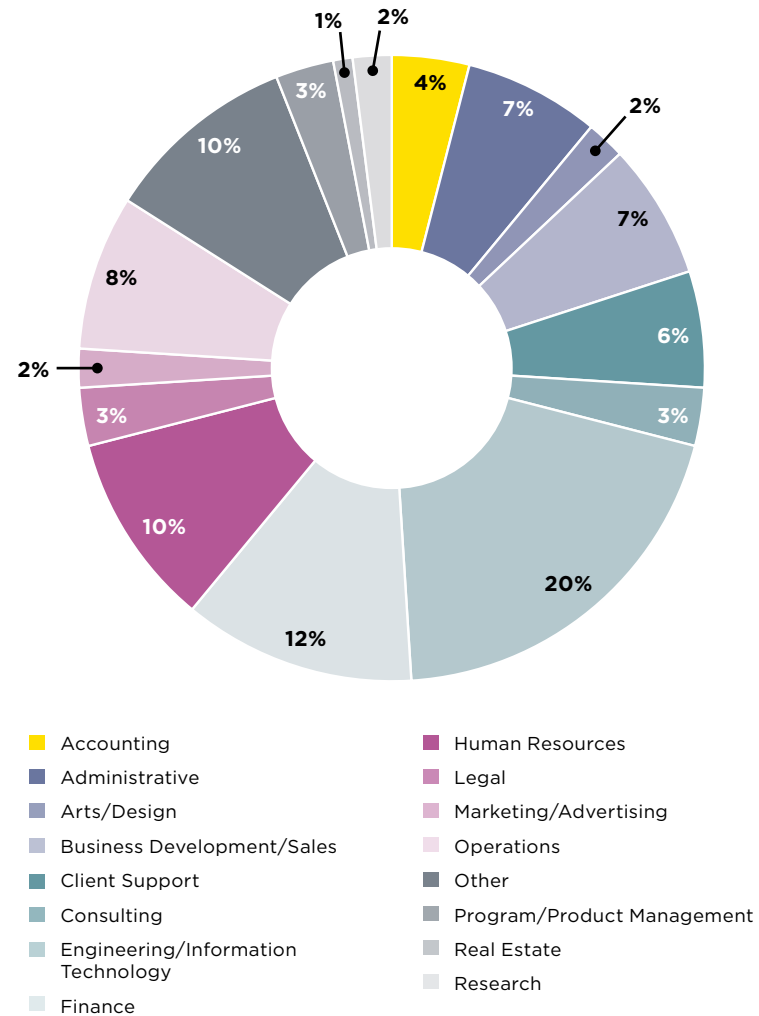
Survey Questions

22

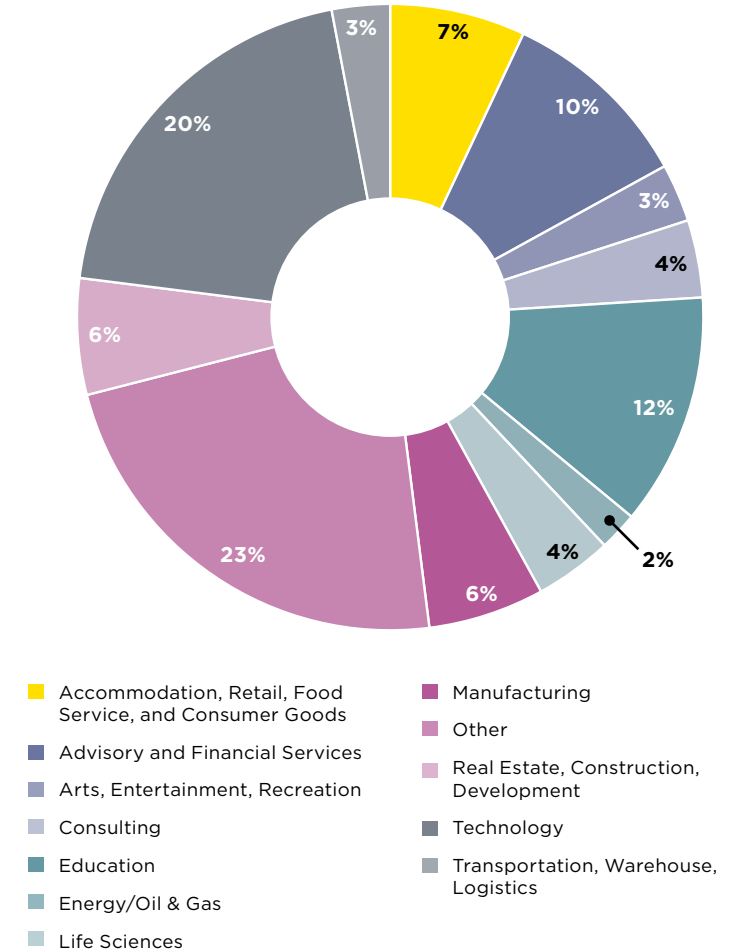
Geographical Coverage

49 States

Respondent Job Function



Respondent Industry



Researchers' Note: Data was gathered and results organized by four generation categories. Neither takes into account possible variables such as stage of career. We acknowledge that age does not predict career position and that specific work roles will also affect workplace preferences.

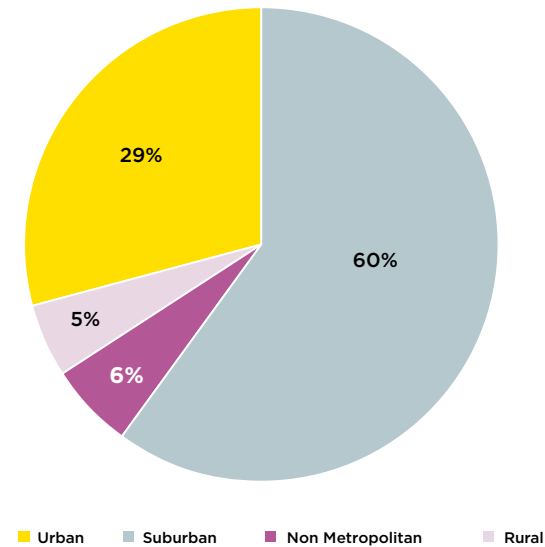


Respondent Location

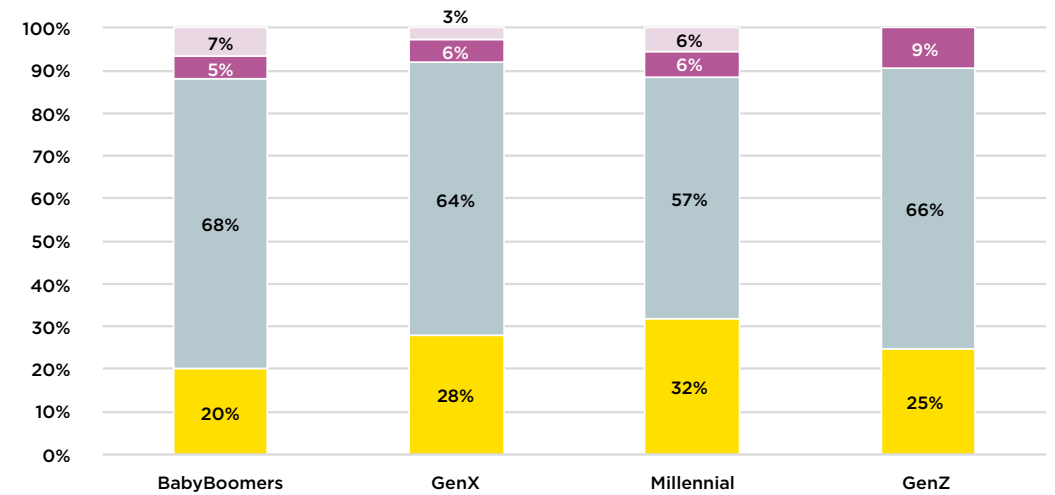


- **Urban** is defined as being located within the city limits of the primary city in the Metropolitan Area (Or the secondary city in some regions like Ft Worth, St Paul, Long Beach, Oakland, etc)
- **Suburban** is defined as being in any of the other cities in a Metropolitan Area.
- **Non-Metropolitan** means it is not in a metropolitan area
- **Rural** means it is not in any metro or micropolitan area

Overall Respondent Location



By Generation





In general, older generations are less willing to relocate for a new job.



When we asked all four generations whether, and how far, they were willing to relocate for a new job, Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials expressed the most attachment to where they currently live and were the least likely to want to move within their city or nearby.



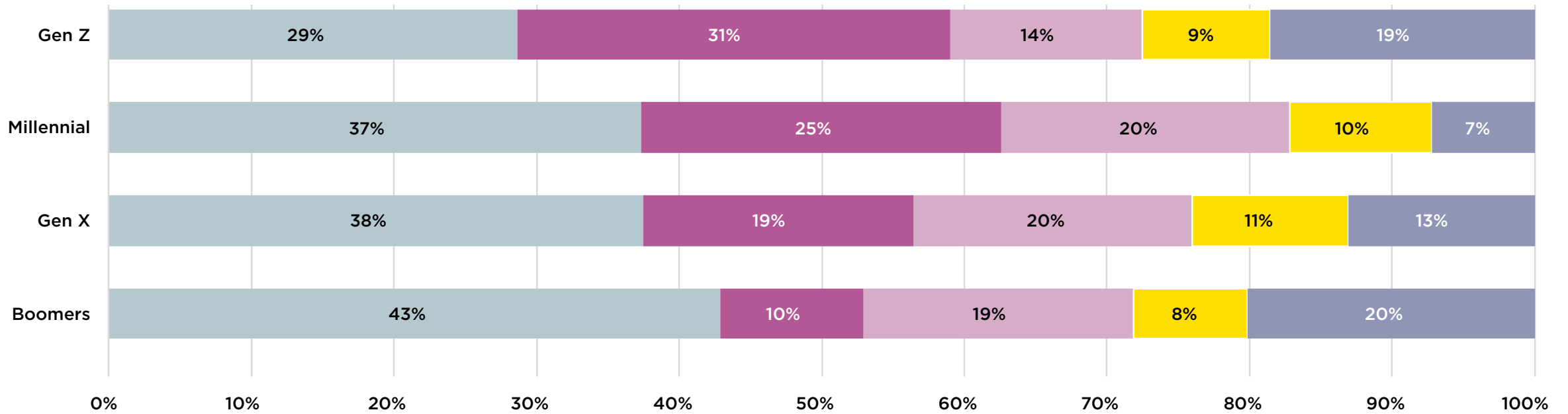
Baby Boomers, however, were more stratified toward the two extremes in their answers. Forty-three percent of respondents wanted to stay where they are – the highest of all generations – but a further 20% would consider starting over in an entirely new metropolitan area, the highest number of all generations and nearly on par with Gen Z at 19%.



In addition to this higher preference for relocating to new metro areas, **Gen Z also expressed the most willingness of all generations** – 31% – to move to a nearby market for a job.

Survey question:

For your next job, how willing are you to consider a new location entirely?



- I love where I am, not changing geography even within my city
- I would be willing to move to a proximate submarket, but not far
- I would be open to other submarkets within my city, but depends on commute
- I would be open to anywhere within my metro area
- I would be open to a new metro entirely



Willingness to Commute

Gen Z is the generation least willing to commute to work – for a job that requires at least four days per week in the office.



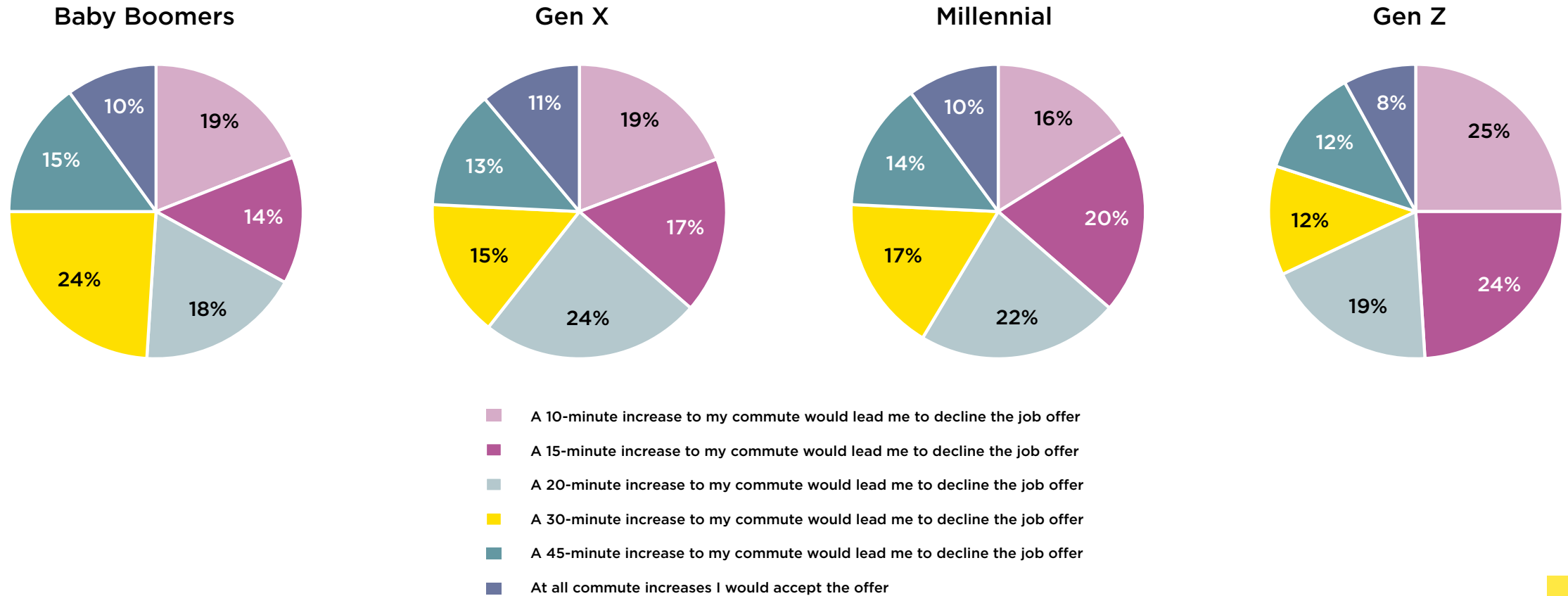
Gen Z emerged as the most sensitive to commute times, with 50% responding that just a 10 to 15-minute increase would lead them to turn down a new job offer that requires four days per week in the office.



Millennials and Gen X chose a 20-minute increase the most, while Baby Boomers chose 30 minutes as their threshold for declining a new job offer.

Survey question:

You are offered a new job that pays 10% more than your current position and requires four days per week in the office. At what increase in commute time would you not accept the new role?



The option to work remotely will encourage younger workers to consider relocation.



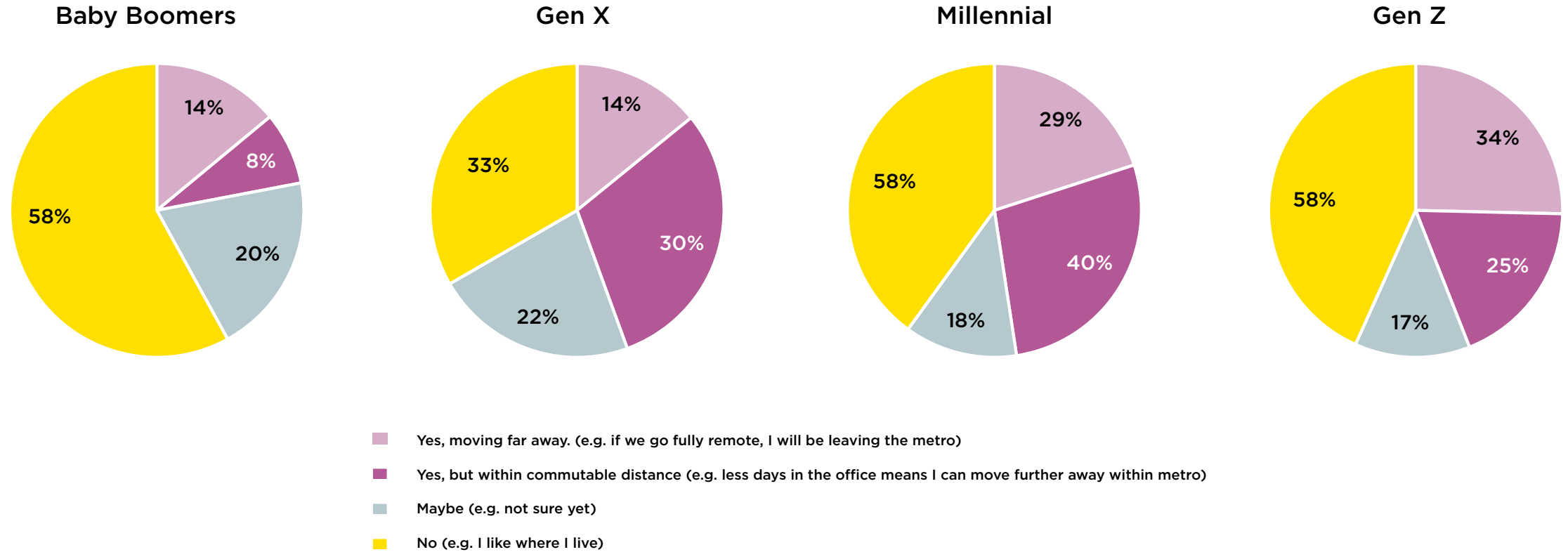
Baby Boomers showed the most indifference to flexible in-office requirements (e.g. the ability to work remotely) - 58% said the option would not encourage them to relocate farther away from their current location.



Gen Z expressed the most willingness to move to a completely different metropolitan area if their current employer offers more in-office flexibility, with Millennials close behind. Millennials' most popular response, however, was to change where they live, but within commutable distance to the office, with Gen X not far behind.

Survey question:

If your company embraces more in-office flexibility, will you consider changing where you live?





Gen Z will tolerate a longer commute if offered greater flexibility to work remotely.



More than 50% of Gen Z are willing to **take on a longer commute if they come into the office less regularly**, with Millennial results close behind at 40%.



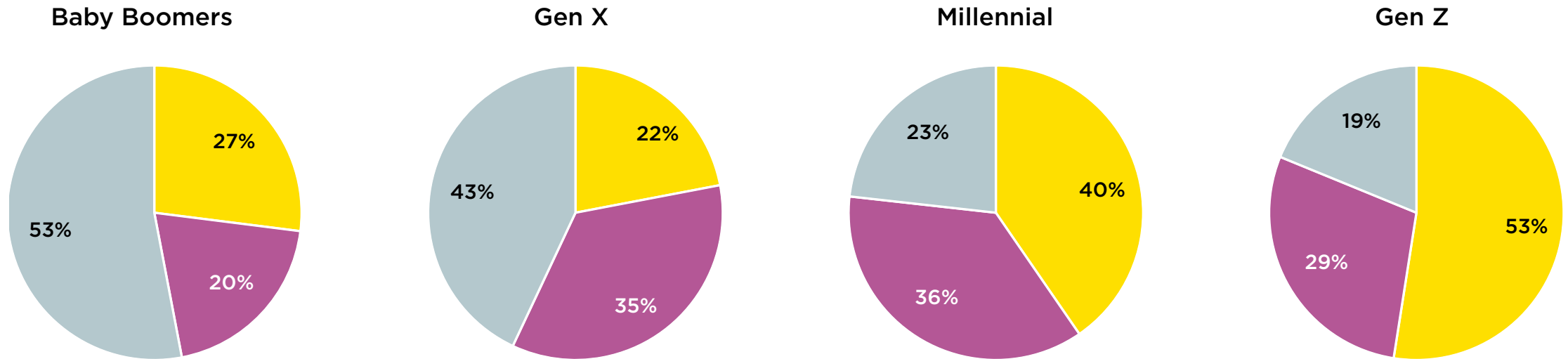
Only 27% of Baby Boomers and 22% of Gen X were willing to accept a longer commute.



Fifty-three percent of Baby Boomers and 43% of Gen X said a **job that offers in-office flexibility would have no impact on their feelings about commute time.**

Survey question:

Does a company's flexible in-office policy change the way you consider commute and where you work?



- If I need to be in the office less, commute time matters less so I am willing to travel further
- If I need to be in the office less, commute time matters more and I want to commute less in general
- It does not change how I feel about commute time (e.g. whether I come in 2 or 4 days per week I do not want an hour commute)

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the race for talent, companies should not let geography limit recruitment.

With greater flexibility to work from home, Gen Z and Millennial workers are less concerned with commute and more willing to live a distance from the office. **Companies might use this as a green light to expand geographic boundaries for recruitment of entry- or mid-level workers in tandem with flexible remote-work policies.**

But with older generations more attached to their current locations, local talent pools still have a significant presence.

Baby Boomers showed both the most attachment to where they currently live as well as the most willingness to relocate for a new job. Gen X and to some extent, Millennials are similarly attached to their current locations. This means that while companies may benefit from expanding their recruitment efforts geographically by offering remote work policies, **this should not cause them to overlook the local market, especially for more experienced talent.**





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