



**BUSINESS
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Perceptions of hospitality as a career choice for young adults

(Aged 14-21 in the United Kingdom)



Foreword

Dear friends and colleagues,

Hospitality is one of the most important sectors in the UK economy. Not only does it contribute a considerable amount of money to the country's GDP but the role it plays in the overall well-being and happiness of people across the country cannot be undervalued.

I think it's safe to say that it's unlikely that the hospitality industry has ever been in a more challenging position when it comes to staffing.

The lingering impact of Brexit, successive lockdown policies in recent years and The Great Resignation have hit our sector particularly hard.

As an apprenticeship provider, we work with a wide range of people. Whether it's people entering the job market to those with existing roles within hospitality, we touch a lot of lives at different stages of their journey. This is why we felt it was vital for us to truly understand how opinions of our sector have changed post pandemic.

For as long as I can remember, our sector has battled with attraction and recruitment of young people.

And, whilst there are lots of anecdotal explanations offered, our aim in commissioning this research, which surveyed more than 2,000 people between the ages of 14-21 across the UK, was to try and truly understand what perceptions are of hospitality among young people.

We also wanted to understand why they might not see the sector as an employer of choice. We wanted to collect some hard evidence and data to get under the skin of what young people really think.

We wanted to know what their career aspirations are, and what they want from employers.

As a training provider, we're using these findings to inform ourselves and our business partners, but we also wanted to share the information we uncovered with the rest of the industry, because we're all going to have to work together to tackle this problem.

We're hoping that the insights we have gathered now will help shape how we as a sector behave in the future.

In pursuit of this, we have collated targeted advice for hospitality employers, schools and careers advisors, as well as young people, to support the recruitment and retention of apprentices.

By using this data and taking the recommendations forward, we hope to create a pipeline of talent coming into our industry who see opportunities in the sector and will carry it into a bright future.

Thanks for reading,



Adele C Oxberry MIOD FIH

Executive Summary

This research highlights the fact that Gen Z have very clear expectations from their current and future employers. They expect their future employers to provide clear and useful information about the job and their organisation, including the salary range, opportunities for flexible working, and career development.

They also expect to be given clear guidance on all the steps in the inclusive recruitment process. Stable and secure jobs, remote or hybrid working, and flexible working conditions are desirable too. This presents an opportunity and a challenge for hospitality: it can offer the flexibility being sought and needs to be able to demonstrate the breadth of careers, the work life balance and the dependability being sought.

The results of our survey revealed that the unprecedented circumstances of the last two years have impacted on Gen Z views of careers in the hospitality industry in both positive and negative ways.

A total of 32% of respondents agreed that their opinion about a career in hospitality has changed since the pandemic. Only 1 in 10 were willing to choose a career in hospitality.

Reasons included the perception of low pay, lack of knowledge of jobs in hospitality, insufficient skills, lack of respect, and working unsociable hours.

However, many young adults felt that the pandemic has highlighted how important this industry is to the economy and society at large. Making people feel happy, a fast-paced and fun working environment, and opportunities to travel and work abroad were reasons enticing them to this vibrant sector.

For this generation, training opportunities, skills development, and clear, consistent messages about promotion and pay rises are also very important.

Gen Z wants to feel challenged and be heard, whether in their commitment to tackling climate change or in their desire for sustainable, diverse, equitable and accessible workplaces.

Businesses offering mental health support who also encourage, and support teamwork are sought after. If these qualities can be capitalised on, then the future of the hospitality sector looks bright.

The key findings of this report can help the sector to better understand some of the major touch points when developing their people strategies in the coming years. It will also provide Umbrella Training business partners and BusinessLDN members with a deeper knowledge of how young people see both the hospitality sector, and the wider world, in a post-pandemic age.





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Acknowledgements

Come Under Our Umbrella

We wish to thank the 2,032 young adults who took their time to answer the survey questions. Without your help, this report would not come to fruition.

We would also like to thank Dr Maria Gebbels and the University of Greenwich for offering their insights, analysis, and time to help develop this research and white paper.

BusinessLDN have also played a vital role in helping to develop the survey through their generous sponsorship.



1. Introduction

This report presents the key findings of a research project established by the University of Greenwich, Umbrella Training and BusinessLDN.

It is intended to examine perceptions of hospitality as a career choice by surveying young adults in the UK, aged between 14 and 21, representing the Gen Z demographic cohort.

The research outcomes offer significant insights on the challenges and opportunities for the hospitality industry when it comes to recruiting and retaining the next generation of talent.

This research will support both large and small hospitality businesses who seek to understand what motivates young adults in the UK and what they expect when looking for jobs and future careers in hospitality.



Background

Prior to COVID-19, the hospitality sector in the UK employed 3.2 million people, representing 10% of all employment, 6% of businesses and 5% of GDP¹.

However, like many others within the service sector, the hospitality industry has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, seeing a decrease in consumer spending in comparison to pre-pandemic levels.

For customers, the increased hygiene and cleanliness routines put in place to minimise the spread of the virus have also had an impact on their perception of safety, which left some feeling hesitant about visiting restaurants and hotels post-pandemic².

Since Brexit and the pandemic, despite a sharp drop in talent especially from outside the UK, the UK sector has witnessed large increases in job vacancies; at least 14 percent of staff roles are currently still vacant³.

Brexit has also had a significant impact on this sector; it used to employ a much higher proportion of EU nationals when compared to the UK workforce. Previously, UKHospitality had estimated that EU nationals made up about 12 percent of the 3.2 million workers in the sector⁴.

On an individual level, the pandemic has forced people to re-think and re-evaluate their

work commitments and work expectations, contributing to what has been referred to as the Great Resignation – making job moves or career moves, or removing yourself from the job market completely.

While the full implications of these shifts are not yet known, there are opportunities for Gen Z in this rapidly moving employment market.

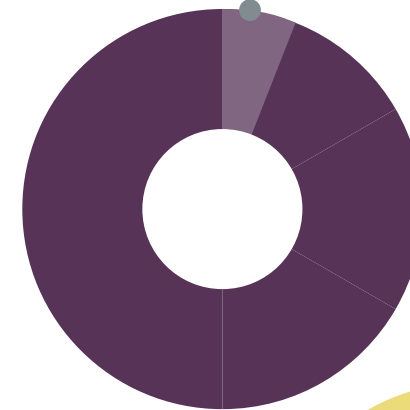
Seeing major staff shortages across the sector has meant that hospitality employers are now looking for multiple solutions to recover from chronic staff shortages such as offering more competitive rates of pay; a starting and end of probation bonuses; and non-monetary benefits like flexible working schedules.

However, many smaller businesses are not currently in a financial position to offer such incentives and are forced to operate with fewer staff. Now, more than ever before, it is crucial that the industry and business owners look to boost the image of the sector, to underline the valuable role it plays and promote it as a viable and successful career of choice to young adults who make up approximately 10 percent (6,588,393 - 67,100,000) of the entire UK population⁵.

Hospitality represents:

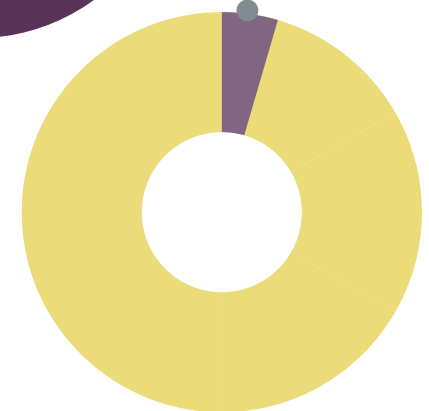
Employment

10% of all employment in the UK



Employment

6% of all business in the UK



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¹UKHospitality (2022). The UK's Hospitality Workforce Strategy: Fixing the Crisis.
²Clerk, J., Mauck, N., & Pruitt, W.S. (2021). The financial impact of COVID-19: Evidence from an event study of global hospitality firms. *Research in International Business and Finance*, 58, 1-13.
³UKHospitality (2022). Future Shock 10: Hospitality in 2022. Available at: <https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/pages/futureshock-issueten>.
⁴Whyatt, P. (2021). What do staff shortages mean for UK hospitality? Available at: <https://www.hospitalityinsights.com/content/what-do-staff-shortages-mean-for-uk-hospitality>.
⁵Statista (2021). Population of England in 2020, by age group. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/281208/population-of-the-england-by-age-group/>.

Career of choice?

Internationally, hospitality is a highly regarded sector and career choice, yet in the UK, the image of the sector is not favourable.

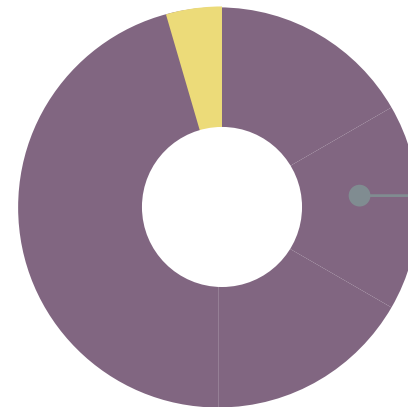
A recent report by the Caterer.com revealed that as many as 95 percent of school leavers are not considering a career in hospitality; reasons included misconceptions about the sector, hospitality jobs perceived as a stop-gap, and a lack of career progression⁶.

This is despite the Caterer.com revealing an increase in salaries with some roles in the sector offering more than £50,000 a year. Parents have the biggest influence on career choices of school leavers, which means their negative beliefs about the sector have a significant impact.

Young people feel they have little knowledge of the vast range of careers on offer due to being poorly informed at school, and 61 percent felt that a lack of food technology in school curriculum contributed to this wrong perception⁷.

Therefore, hospitality is still not perceived as a career of choice. Academic literature underlines this. Beliefs about low pay, unsociable working hours, difficulty of achieving work-life balance and a lack of clear career progression are deemed to be issues. Low status, hostile work environments including bullying, as well as influence of peers, parents, family members, and poor or no promotion of hospitality careers by career advisors in school settings remain a challenge^{8,9,10}.

The hospitality industry must tackle these misconceptions by designing effective people strategies; one way to achieve that is to understand 14-21-year-olds' perceptions of hospitality as a career of choice.



Career of choice
95% of school leavers are **not considering** a career in hospitality;

⁶Sheehan, D. (2022). Latest research shows 95% of school leavers will not Choose Hospitality. <https://www.hospitalityandcateringnews.com/2022/05/latest-research-shows-95-of-school-leavers-will-not-choose-hospitality/>

⁷Sheehan, D. (2022). Latest research shows 95% of school leavers will not Choose Hospitality. <https://www.hospitalityandcateringnews.com/2022/05/latest-research-shows-95-of-school-leavers-will-not-choose-hospitality/>

⁸Song, Z. and Chen, K. (2012). General self-efficacy's effect on career choice goals via vocational interests and person-job fit: A mediation model. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31, 798-808.

⁹Lee, C.P., Lee, M.J. and Dopson, R.L. (2019). Who influences college students' career choices? An empirical study of hospitality management students. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 31, 74-86.

¹⁰Gebbell, M., Pantelidis, I.S. and Goss-Turner, S. (2019). Conceptualising patterns of career commitment: The leaving process in hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(1), 126-147.

Characteristics of Gen Z

The respondents surveyed for this report were between 14-21 years of age. These young adults are classed as a Generation Z demographic cohort.

Generation Z, or Gen Z (as referred to in this report), iGeneration or even post-Millennials, is largely defined as people born between 1996 and 2012, which means that the older people in this generation are likely to have already entered the workplace.

The younger people in this generation are of school age and likely to be currently considering their future careers^{11 12}. The most recently available figures estimate that 20% of the UK workforce is made up of Gen Z¹⁴.

Gen Z is the first generation to have grown up with advanced technology, they are tech-savvy and use social media multiple times a day with 84% using or owning a YouTube account and accessing information by visual content^{14 15}^{16 17} In the UK, research shows Gen Z will have been exposed to at least 200,000 marketing messages before they are 15²⁸. This generation has also never known life without smart phones or social media¹⁹.

From employers, they continue to demand sustainable workplaces, including higher earnings, more flexibility such as hybrid working, better work-life balance, learning and development opportunities, mental health and wellbeing support, plus commitment to making societal impacts (Deloitte, 2022).

These strategies are being proposed as crucial in talent acquisition and

retention of Gen Z. COVID-19 has made a significant impact on the start of their careers. Many missed out on job opportunities and had to postpone getting a job or starting work experience. Many will also have experienced disruptions to their education²⁰.

More than ever before, to attract and retain these young people to this industry, **hospitality employers need to understand what motivates them** and what they expect when looking for jobs.

UKHospitality Workforce Strategy, published in May 2022, provides five key areas, integral to solving the hospitality industry workforce crisis²¹ :

1. Recruitment
2. Skills and training
3. Working lives
4. Image of the sector
5. Infrastructure

To contribute to these efforts, the results of this research seeks to inform the industry on perception of careers of 14-21 year-olds, assisting with recruitment and changing the image of the sector.



¹¹ Generate UK (2018) How to Market to Generation Z. Available at: <https://www.generateuk.co.uk/galvanize/how-to-market-to-generation-z/>.

¹² Wang, J. (2022). What employers need to know about Gen Z. HAYS, Recruiting experts worldwide. Available at: <https://www.hays.co.uk/blog/insights/what-employers-need-to-know-about-gen-z>

¹³ Indeed.com (2022). All about Gen Z. Available at: <https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/generation-z>.

¹⁴ Tabassum, S., Khwaja, M.G. and Zaman, U. (2020). Can narrative advertisement and eWOM influence generation z purchase intentions? Information, 11(12), pp. 1-16.

¹⁵ Nyam, R.S. (2019). The online shopping habits and e-loyalty of Gen Z as natives in the digital era. Journal of Indonesian Economy and Business, 34(2), pp. 165-182.

¹⁶ Kumar, M. and Mangain, P. (2021). Influences of social media in virtual paradigms for z-gen shopping and integrated marketing communication (imc). The Journal of Oriental Research Madras, pp. 275-289.

¹⁷ Mintel (2021). Social Media - UK - May 2021 - Market Research Report. Available at: <https://reports.mintel.com/display/1050289?fromSearch=%3Freetext%3DGeneration%2520Z&resultPosition=73>.

¹⁸ Generate UK (2018) How to Market to Generation Z. Available at: <https://www.generateuk.co.uk/galvanize/how-to-market-to-generation-z/>.

¹⁹ Generate UK (2018) How to Market to Generation Z. Available at: <https://www.generateuk.co.uk/galvanize/how-to-market-to-generation-z/>.

²⁰ Wang, J. (2022). What employers need to know about Gen Z. HAYS, Recruiting experts worldwide. Available at: <https://www.hays.co.uk/blog/insights/what-employers-need-to-know-about-gen-z>.

²¹ UKHospitality (2022). The UK's Hospitality Workforce Strategy: Facing the Crisis.

2. Methodology

A 12-question survey, sponsored by BusinessLDN and Umbrella Training, was designed and conducted by Survation.

The survey was sent out via an online platform to all residents aged 14-21 living in the UK.

Respondents were asked to complete the survey between 24th February 2022 and 28th March 2022. During this period of five weeks, a total of 2,032 young adults responded.

The survey questions were designed to understand the challenges and opportunities for the hospitality industry when it comes to recruiting and retaining the next generation of employees, Gen Z, post-pandemic.

A pilot study was conducted prior to sending out the survey to determine the suitability, accessibility, and readability of survey questions.

Out of 2,032 respondents, 55% identified as female and 44% as male. In total, 72% of the respondents identified as White, followed by Asian or Asian British, and Black African, Caribbean, or Black British, at 13% and 9%, respectively.

They represented all countries within the UK, with the majority living in England at 85%.

All respondents are considered part of the Gen Z demographic cohort; 45% were between 14-17 years of age, and 54% were between 18-21 years old. ²²

The key findings section below discusses the results of in-depth data analysis of both, the close-ended and open-ended survey questions.



²²Data was anonymized and weighted to the profile of all 14-21 year olds in the UK. Targets for the weighted data were derived from Office for National Statistics data. Data were analysed and weighted by Survation. Not all questions will have necessarily been asked to all respondents – this is because they may be follow-on questions from previous questions or only appropriate to certain demographic groups. Responses have been rounded up to the nearest decimal place. Not all answers add up to 100%.

3. Key Findings

Changing perceptions

The pandemic has had a major impact on the hospitality sector, with job losses, business closures, loss of talent, recruitment challenges, significant cost increases, and low consumer trust. It has also highlighted the ability of this sector to work together to support the needs of others.

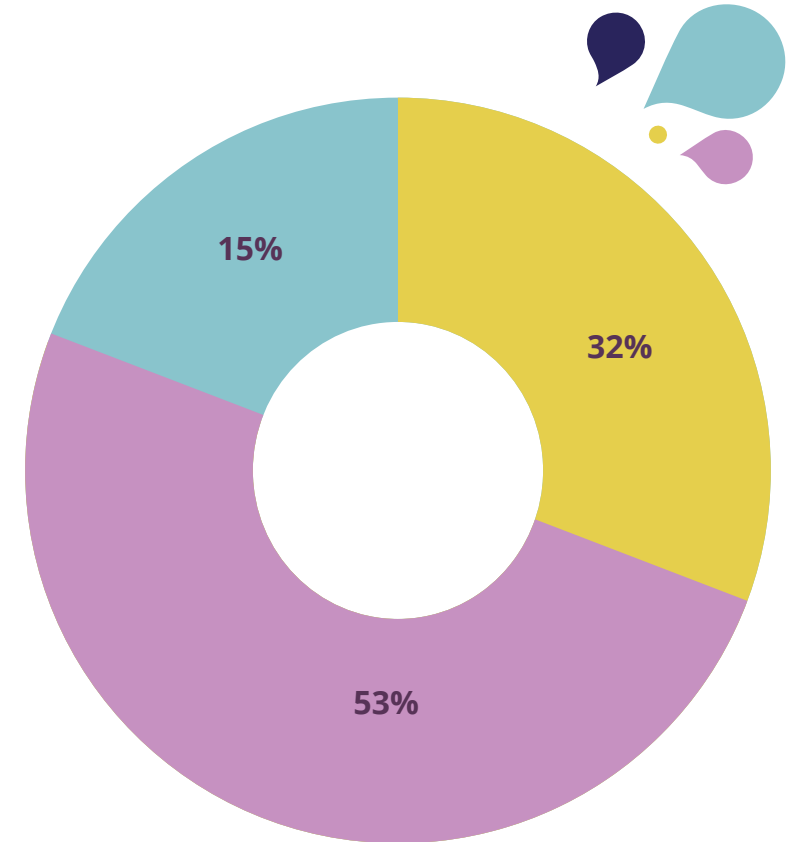
At the same time, it has impacted on how young people view the world of work, employers, and their future employment in general.

The pandemic has influenced the perception of the hospitality industry as a whole and hospitality careers, more specifically.

This is mainly due to the fact that this sector has seen the biggest economic impact and a sharp increase in the total number of business closures in the UK despite making the most use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme also known as the furlough scheme²³.

The sector has received both positive and negative coverage during the pandemic, highlighting its role in supporting communities on the one hand, but also showing that many businesses have been put at risk.

This context frames why people's perceptions have changed in different ways during the pandemic (Figure 1). Only 1 in 10 said hospitality was their career of choice, showing the challenge ahead in getting to a place where it can be on a level footing with more tech/arts focused careers which came out top e.g., 3 in 10 for a career in social media (Figure 2).



- My opinion about a career in hospitality **has changed** since the pandemic
- My opinion about a career in hospitality **has not changed** since the pandemic
- Don't know

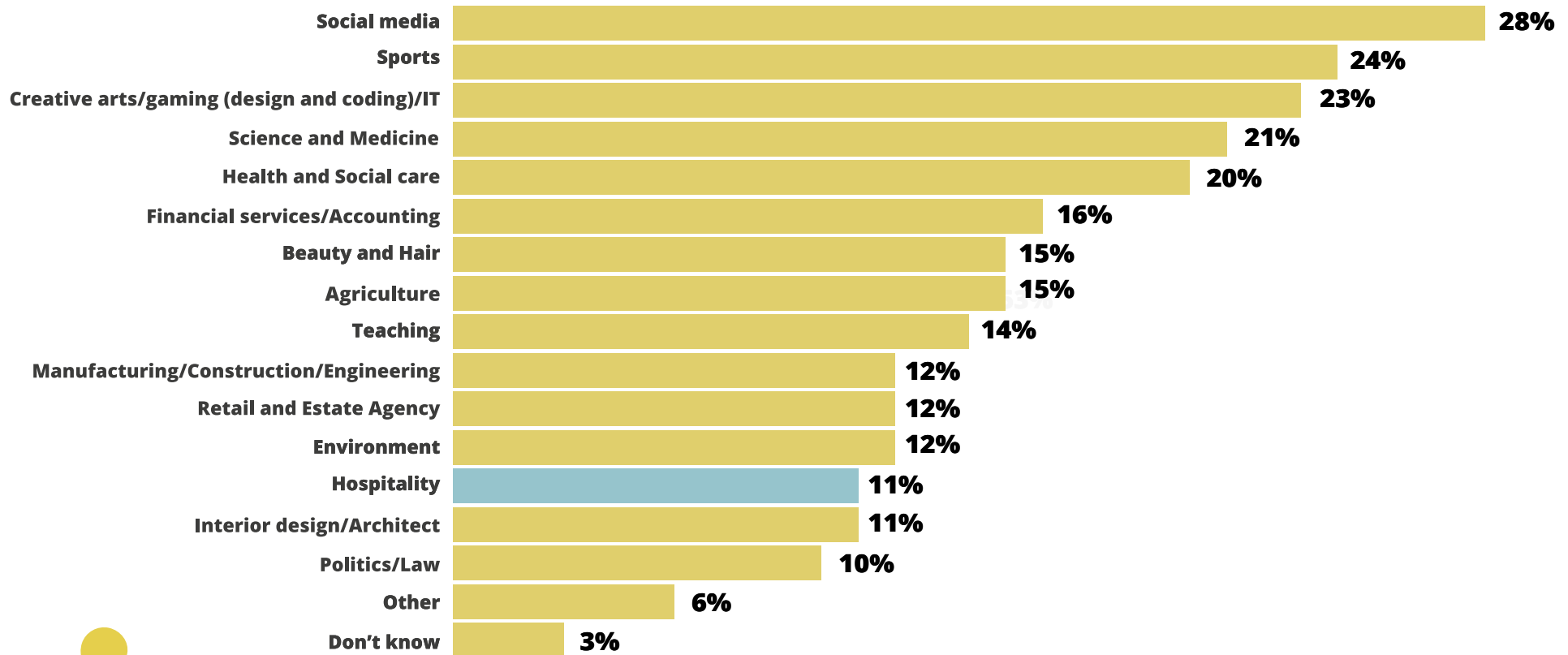


Figure 1. Opinion about a hospitality career post-pandemic.

²³Hutton, G. (2022). Hospitality Industry and Covid-19. Research Briefing. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9111/CBP-9111.pdf>

List of careers of interest.

Figure 2. List of careers of interest.



Changing perceptions

Our survey shows 32% of respondents shared very specific reasons for and against considering a career in hospitality post-pandemic, as illustrated below using direct quotes.

Overall, the coverage of the hospitality industry during the pandemic highlighted the range of career opportunities available, an increase in health and safety, and hygiene standards, and elevated the status of hospitality careers as they have become more valued by the public.

However, volatility and a lack of job security and poor conditions for staff are playing on the minds of our respondents who are concerned about the overall longevity of hospitality careers.



"It appears a more risky career path."

"Would no longer consider working within the hospitality sector."

"I feel like a career in hospitality is even more stressful now as things have gotten busier after the transition of lockdown."

"Hospitality was shut down, too risky to pursue a career in the field."

"I'm not sure if I want to work a career in hospitality anymore."

Qualitative commentary on the sector post-pandemic (negative)

"The hospitality industry is slowly sinking, it's made me less inclined to pursue a career in the hospitality industry."

"Careers in hospitality are more risky now as lockdowns could cause people to lose jobs."

"I would hate to have a career in hospitality as it is very hard and there is no job security."

"I question whether there will be a long lasting future in the career."

"I have seen how poorly workers in hospitality are treated and this has dissuaded me from pursuing a career in this sector."

"I want to work in hospitality even less since the pandemic after seeing stories of how badly workers are treated by managers and customers."

"Harder career than I thought. I don't want to follow that career."

Three major themes

The following sections are structured under three major themes to offer further insights and recommendations on attracting and retaining talent in hospitality post-pandemic.

First impressions

A staggering 21% of respondents had no work experience at the time of completing the survey, implying that the world of work, including the work environment, day-to-day duties, organisational culture, and workplace challenges such as working with people from diverse backgrounds to name but a few, is an unknown territory to them.

Since nearly a quarter of young adults surveyed do not know what to expect from their first employment, employers need to pay particular attention to these new starters to ensure a positive first experience in the hospitality industry, which our data reveals can have a long lasting impact on their future commitment and career in the sector.

When asked which job roles the respondents associated with hospitality (Figure 3), perhaps unsurprisingly the most frequently chosen were waiter/waitress at **63%**, followed by barista, chef, receptionist, housekeeper, and concierge/porter at **50%, 47%, 45%, 43%** and **32%** respectively. These results suggest that our respondents have some but limited understanding about the different types of hospitality jobs available.

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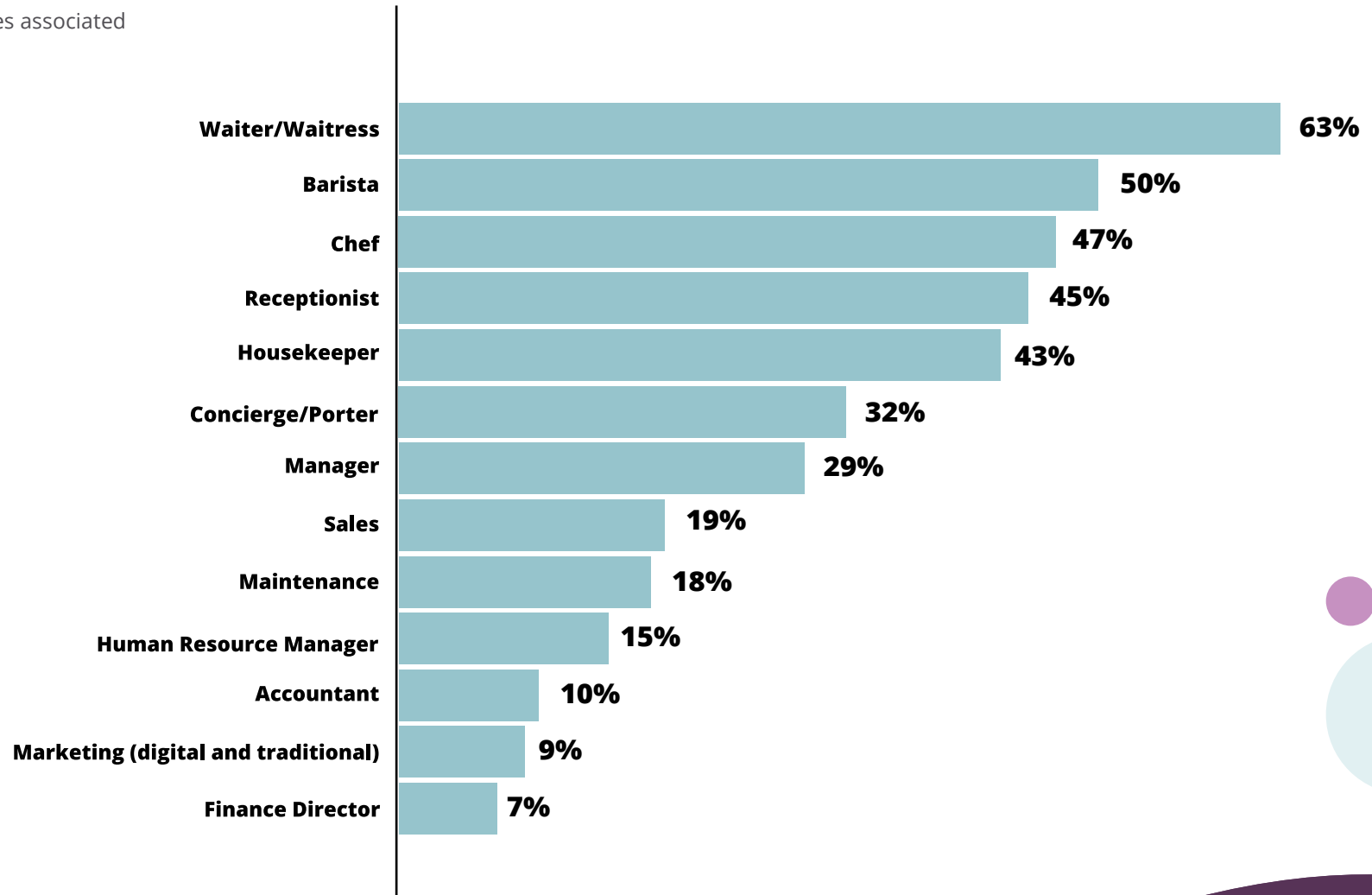
Marketing and finance director were the least frequently chosen roles, at 9% and 7%, respectively, whilst roles in sales, maintenance, human resource management, and accountancy were favoured at 19%, 18%, 15% and 10%, respectively.

”



First impressions continued...

Figure 3. Job roles associated with hospitality.



First impressions continued...

These results highlight that the hospitality industry continues to be perceived as offering limited careers and mainly in operational roles or those which are customer facing.

There is a clear opportunity to ensure the breadth of roles available is sufficiently promoted to young people by the industry and employers themselves, as well as by careers advisors at schools, to ensure that young adults are fully aware of career opportunities.

All non-traditional roles that were listed above can be performed in the hospitality industry and it is critical that young people are aware of these since many are likely to not be choosing this industry because of misconceptions or insufficient knowledge.

The quote below illustrates that point well:

”

I used to think you had to interact with customers until I applied, and I realised I can do other things like work in the stockrooms.

”

Some respondents did hold a part-time job in the past, including in the hospitality industry and that answer was the most frequently chosen type of work experience at 35%, followed by volunteering at 23%, a placement through school, college or university at 22%, a weekend job at 21%, and full-time work at 20%.

Working on a zero hour contract was also indicated at 10%, whereas internship at school or college at 7%. Doing paper rounds as well as

other temporary work experiences such as dog walking and babysitting and working with a parent were also chosen by the respondents.

”

I was happily working in hospitality but then I realised how they are disrespected by people.

I have worked in hospitality before and did during the pandemic. I was not looked after and they had no care for safety. It was unsafe and disgusting.

I worked in hospitality before and wouldn't want to go back.

I had a job briefly in hospitality and the management was awful, they kept changing rotas and expected me to do more than I could.

I had a job briefly in hospitality where I learned it's a terrible industry.

”



First impressions continued...

For many, the temporary or permanent closures of hospitality businesses during the pandemic have highlighted how important the hospitality industry and its employees are to the national economy, which contributed towards positive perceptions of having a career in this industry:

”

Most jobs are in the hospitality sector and as society we use this daily. It's a shame this has affected them during the pandemic.

They are key to our economy.

I more clearly realise the need for hospitality workers in our economy.

They need to be paid more. They are extremely important in our society and economy in general; they need to be compensated for their hard work as well.

It's a lot harder than people think and they provide a back bone for essential services; we need hospitality and retail.

”

Respondents who chose hospitality as a career that interests them, cited reasons such as *'making people feel happy'*, followed by *'liking to cook'*, at 36%, and 29%, respectively.

A fast-paced and fun working environment, opportunities to travel and work abroad, and flexible working were also important to the respondents, at 26%.

Respondents also felt strongly about wanting to work in a job where teamwork is important, and where there are opportunities to learn, progress and earn more quickly, at 25%.

What also attracts respondents to a career in hospitality are a good pay, 21%, the types of jobs popularised by the media such as chef, hotel worker or working at a leisure attraction, 19%, and the desire to work in a customer facing role, 16%.

The hospitality industry should utilise those positive outcomes in their promotional material, recruitment days and on job adverts. The school/ careers advisors are encouraged to quote these results when presenting the benefits of a career in this industry to children and students.



First impressions continued...

Our data also revealed that the pandemic has heightened Gen Z's career expectations and brought to the surface the challenges the industry has been struggling with over the years.

In particular, respondents who had worked in the hospitality industry shared examples of being mistreated by the management as well as disrespected by customers, neither of which are acceptable.

Some also found that their one and only job experience in hospitality has left them feeling discouraged.

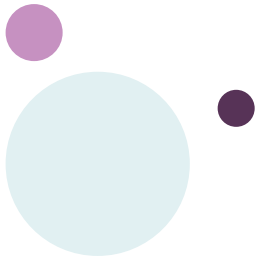
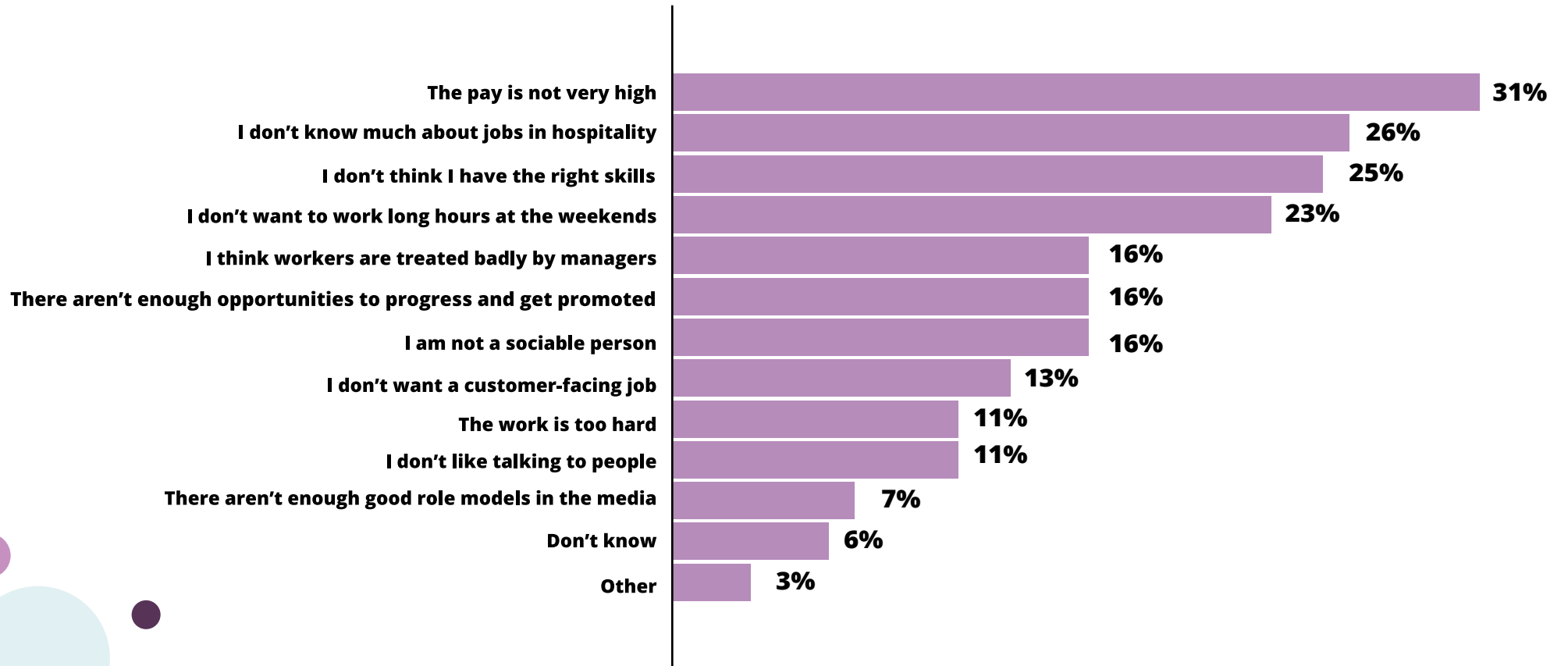
The main reasons our respondents would not choose a career in hospitality (Figure 4) were perceptions of low pay at 31%, lack of knowledge of jobs in hospitality at 26%, insufficient skills at 25%, and working long hours often during weekends at 23%.

This underlines the need for first impressions to be good ones. Young adults are more likely to feel loyal to the business if they feel they were treated well from the start. That necessitates a real commitment across the industry, large and small, to get all the basics in place.



First impressions continued...

Figure 4. Reasons against a career in hospitality.



First impressions continued...

The above answers are not surprising given the persistent limited perception of the hospitality industry as a stop-gap, offering mainly seasonal work, with low barriers to entry and paying a minimum wage.

Employers can tackle this by being explicit about the salary ranges or rate per hour when recruiting new staff, adding details about other non-financial benefits such as rigorous training on the job, skills development and additional training opportunities, or mental health and wellbeing support - important to Gen Z surveyed for this report.

Sharing the company vision in the job advert will also help to attract candidates whose personal values align with those of the business, ensuring a better employee-employer match from the start.

Besides that, young adults expect to be treated with respect by managers, they want ample opportunities to progress and develop their careers, and some may not feel comfortable in a role that requires social interactions with customers.

One way to mitigate this and improve the overall image of the sector is by seeking a diverse pool of role models or influencers from within the industry. These people can share their own experiences to help attract young people to hospitality.

Apprenticeships and placements or shorter work experience opportunities during university or college can aid in changing negative perceptions about the hospitality industry, and ensure young adults are supported and nurtured in their endeavours to find the most suitable career.



Clear expectations

Gen Z have very clear expectations from their current and future employers. They equally value a good starting salary and flexible working hours (Figure 5).

Their salary expectations at the start of their careers start from up to £300 a week and increase up to £600 per week, within the first five years.

However, our data also revealed that many young adults have little or no understanding of what they can expect to be paid at the start of their careers, or within 5 years of their careers.

This generation is known as the first one who works to live and looks for purposeful and meaningful work that does not only 'pay the bills' but contributes to their personal values.

This further emphasises the importance of work life balance.

Flexible working models such as compressed hours or job-sharing need to be offered more frequently, explicitly, and openly to allow people time for personal responsibilities and other commitments.

This also includes options for remote and hybrid working which is the preferred mode of working by Gen Z.

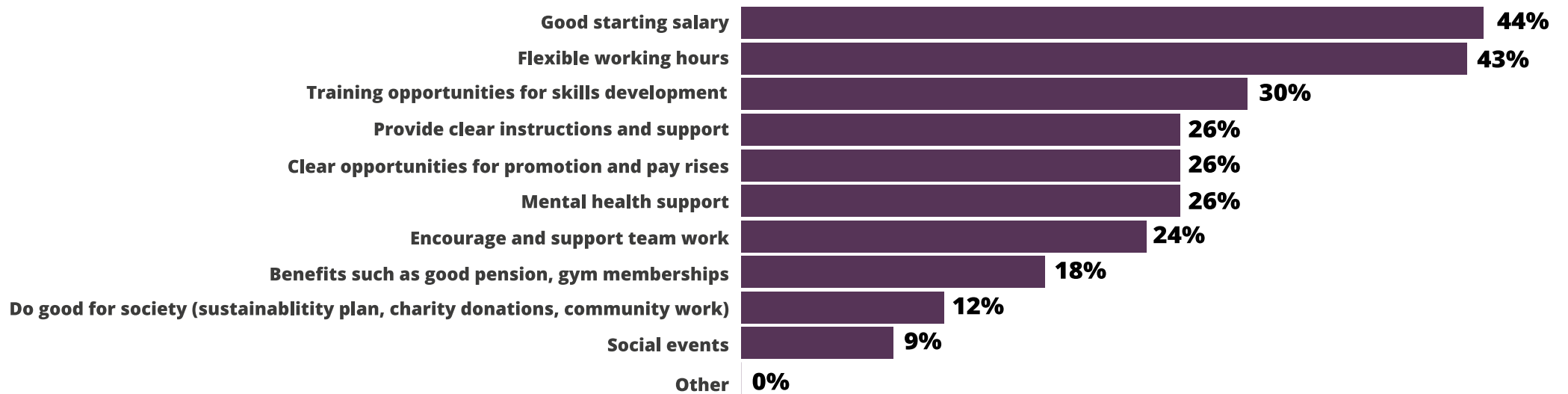
For this generation, training opportunities for skills development, as well as clear opportunities for promotion and pay rises are also very important.

Gen Z wants to feel challenged and be heard, whether in their commitment to tackling climate change or in their desire for sustainable, diverse, equitable and accessible workplaces, which is also evident in their expectations for mental health support, and businesses encouraging and supporting teamwork.



Clear expectations continued...

Figure 5. Expectations from employers.



Clear expectations continued...

Our Gen Z respondents had also very clear expectations regarding the selection, recruitment, and interview processes.

Since Gen Z is the first generation to have grown up with advanced technology, and use social media multiple times a day, it is no surprise that when job hunting, 73% of our respondents would use online channels when looking for jobs - including online job sites, online recruitment agencies, and social media/influencer pages.

Clear job adverts posted on social media sites and an inclusive process respecting diversity are also valued by our respondents.

The influence of parents on the employment decision-making process is limited with the support and advice from parents only chosen by 13% of respondents, followed by advice from school at 10%.

Gen Z have very clear ideas about the recruitment and interview processes.

Based on their responses, the key recommendations are:

During the recruitment process:

- Employers providing clear and useful information about the job and their organisation, including the salary range, opportunities for flexible working, and career development.
- Employers being clear on all the steps in the recruitment process, which needs to be inclusive, including regular updates.

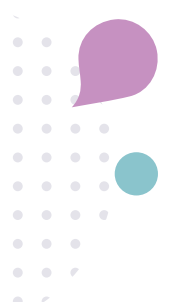
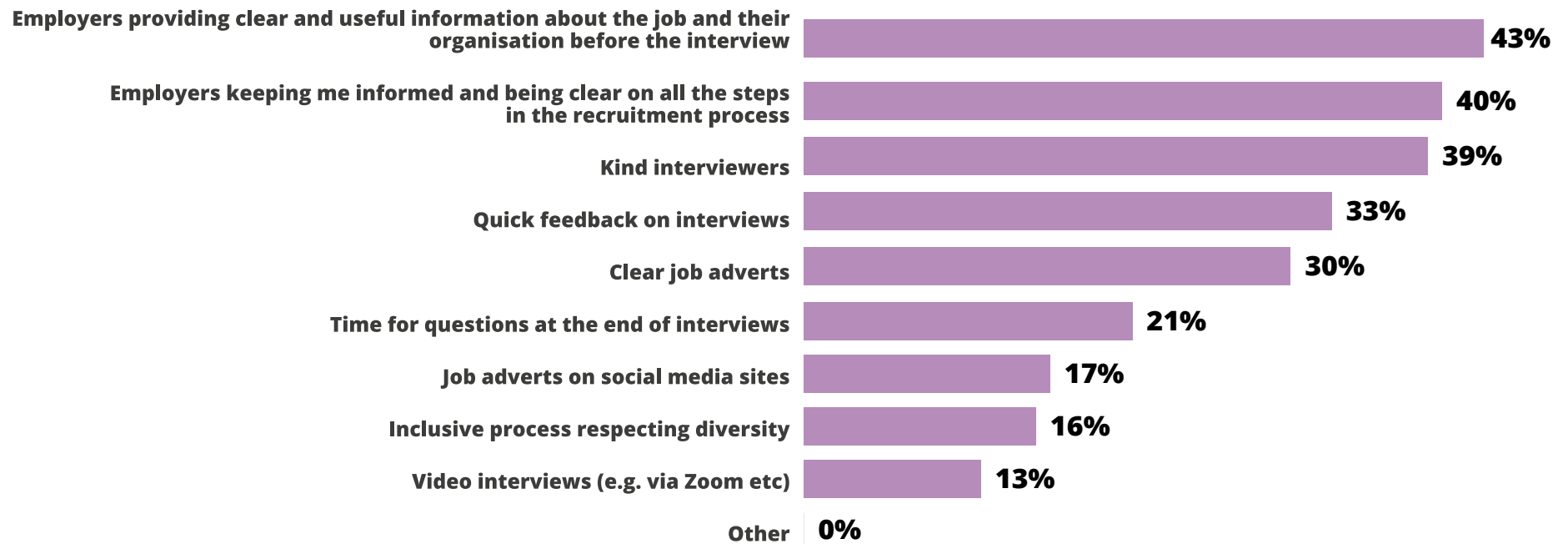
During the interview process:

- Kind interviewers
- Time for questions at the end of interviews



Clear expectations continued...

Figure 6. Applying for a job.



Security and safety

For our Gen Z respondents, job stability, security and safety are critical components when considering their future careers, as illustrated in the quotes below.

"Most people in hospitality lost their job or were furloughed in the pandemic so it wouldn't appeal to me to look for job which can be lost so easily."

"Realised the job isn't as secure as I thought."

"A much riskier job (i.e. less job security) in case of global events like the pandemic."

"It's less secure than other jobs."

"Jobs in this sector seem less reliable than they were."

"I think that work in hospitality is unstable."

"Unstable prospects as the industry is struggling."

"I could lose the job at any second."

"They have very vulnerable jobs that may be lost easily."

"It is scary how fast your job could come to an end and job security is a massive thing for me."

"Your job isn't set in stone, a pandemic can wipe out hospitality, even if it was safe before."

"I think job uncertainty in the hospitality sector has increased which would make me less likely to work there."

Security and safety continued

A possibility of losing a job, suddenly, is very daunting to young adults. Stable jobs, secure against major global events are sought after, as you would expect after the pandemic and the impact it has had on this generation.

Therefore, the sector needs to be aware of behaviours and responses to potential external factors. In particular, employers in the industry need to be sensitive to their positioning and messaging when major world events could have a direct impact on employee wellbeing.

Over half of our respondents, 59%, would consider working between 1 and 3 years before applying for a new job; 25% of respondents would make that choice between 1 and 18 months, and 17% after more than 3 years. However, 13% of our respondents did not know how long they should stay in a job, or indeed when to look for a new one.

There has been a newfound appreciation for hospitality staff, who went above and beyond serving and helping others during the pandemic.

The following personal accounts need to be used to promote hospitality jobs and to change the negative image of the hospitality industry post-pandemic:

||

I think hospitality is a good career and there are certain good qualities that I can learn.

I think very highly of people working in hospitality now because it is very tough and it takes a lot of willpower to pull through.

It is an important profession, offering credible service.

I was impressed to see how hard they worked during Covid to keep the guests safe.

I think after the pandemic, working in hospitality is more needed than ever. People are excited to go out and want good experiences.

||



4. Key takeaways

#1 Employers

- **Clear job adverts** promoting flexible working and a clear indication of starting salary range, as well training opportunities for skills development
- **During recruitment process:**
 - Provide clear and useful information about the job and the organisation
 - Keep candidates informed of all the steps in the recruitment process
- **During the interview process:**
 - Kind interviewers
 - Time for questions at the end of interviews
 - Video interviews, e.g. via Zoom
- **Technology needs to become the key ingredient to attract and retain Gen Z:**
 - Utilise online sites for posting job adverts and add job adverts onto social media such as Instagram, and TikTok.
 - Make applying easy by using application tools that link their LinkedIn profile with little additional details necessary.
 - Use mobiles in your business, for staying in touch with Gen Z or for operational reasons.
 - Utilise video format and immersive virtual reality for training and development purposes, for internal communication, or even to explain the new products/menu.
 - Remember to offer support for your managers on technology and latest apps.
 - Be ready for Gen Z to progress faster than other, older generational cohorts.
- Offer development programmes that have promotions and further opportunities soon after they join your business
- **Partner with local colleges, apprenticeship providers, and universities** to attract talent, particularly in roles not usually associated to hospitality such as finance directors or general managers.
- **Engage with local schools** regularly to showcase the roles in hospitality and variety of career paths. Widening understanding about the hospitaity sector early on is proven to pique their interest and desire for a career.
- **Engage influencers and hospitality role models** to promote the exciting careers in the industry.

4. Key takeaways

#1 Employers continued...

- Expect Gen Z employees to make a job move within the first 18 months
- Be prepared that a **quarter of your applicants may have never had a job or done any work experience** in the past.
- **Embrace and access funding opportunities** to support your people strategies and organisation development needs.

The Savoy Educational Trust offers scholarships to young people to help with their training or gives smaller grants to purchase items such as books, uniform and kitchen equipment.

Hospitality Action provides grants for young people already working in the industry to help with, for instance, low household income, or debt solutions.

Umbrella Training provides grants and funding opportunities in Greater London and beyond, aiming to help hospitality SMEs to boost their recovery post-pandemic.

- **Consider the apprenticeship levy**, which can support businesses of all sizes with talent acquisition and retention.

It can be used for the first-time entrants to upskilling a current workforce; it offers training at all levels of Higher Education (levels 2 to levels 7- Masters) and can include valuable professional qualifications.

Fast-track progression routes such as leadership programmes should also be considered.

- Gen Z applicants are known for being very well prepared for an interview. **Be ready for tough questions about your environmental stance, sustainability policy, and company views on LGBTQ+, and other current topics including job security.**

- **Stay on top of current debates** by regularly engaging with resources from charities such as Be Inclusive Hospitality, Blue Badge Style, Institute of Hospitality, and Checking-In who champion various topics of race, disability, gender, LGBTQ+, and more broadly equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) in the hospitality industry.

- **Gen Z are expecting to receive career development**, the implementation of designed 'latticed career paths' should be individualised and bespoke for each employee.

The organisation should offer career progression and development outside of the traditional linear career growth. Vertical, horizontal and diagonal movement will enable your employees to grow without having to stick to the same team or department.

- **Remember, Gen Z have clear expectations regarding work-life balance, flexible working arrangements, and remote and hybrid working.**

4. Key takeaways

#1 Employers continued...

- Consider implementing a change in your organisational culture to attract, retain and engage the Gen Z generation:
 - **'Disruptive culture': give voice to Gen Z by having their voices heard by senior management**, including seeking their opinions and feedback. Encourage them to become the spokesperson and an ambassador for your business. Also, offer meaningful work by allowing them to apply all of their skills to other outreach projects, for instance.
 - **'Radical inclusivity' implemented initially in the recruitment process**, includes anonymised applications, assessing each interview answer for all candidates, rather than assessing all answers for each individual applicant, and including inclusive job adverts.
- **'Great employee profile'**: profile out the characteristics and personality traits of a great employee. Employ them first then decide on the best role for them in your business.
- **'Reverse mentoring'**, or mentoring across generations, has been proven to improve the health of organisations and overall staff retention by asking Gen Z to mentor senior colleagues, typically on subjects related to technology and digital media.
- **'360 degree feedback'**, also referred to as the '360 degree performance review', is all-round feedback gathered from immediate colleagues such as the senior team, and even customers, as well as third parties.
- **Internal apprenticeship programmes** are another way to attract Gen Z who seek development in their jobs.



4. Key takeaways

#2 Schools/Careers Advisors

- **Discuss the breadth of career opportunities in hospitality**, ranging from the well-known ones such as chef, general manager, and receptionist, to a finance director or social media executive.
- **Suggest varying work experience opportunities**, internships, and placements, to include those in different sectors of the industry, by partnering with professional industry organisations such as Umbrella Training, Springboard, or the Institute of Hospitality.
- **Discuss wider societal considerations and misconceptions**, such as those related to poor pay or unsociable hours.
- **Promote university degrees in hospitality**, tourism, and leisure management, as well as apprenticeships.
- Help young people to become exposed to the world of work by partnering with local hospitality businesses.
- **Organise career events** to include hospitality businesses, especially those from the lesser known sectors such as welfare catering or contract catering.
- **Promote young people as more independent learners and problem solvers.**
- **Utilise digital technologies** to learn by accessing online educational content on YouTube, or through the use of immersive virtual reality.
- **Include food related subjects into the core curriculum** such as nutrition and basic food skills to widen understanding of all food categories and how they benefit the body and environment (farm to fork strategies and localism).
- **Embrace the recommendations outlined in the National Food Strategy**, in particular the five measures “Eat and Learn” initiative designed to better embed food education through school curriculum. Start with curriculum changes to include learning about food and its provenance from as early as possible, and by reinstating a revised and updated Food A level.



4. Key takeaways

#3 Young People

- **Hospitality offers a huge range of careers**, beyond being a chef or a hotel receptionist; use sites such as Prospects.com and Caterer.com to find guidance on the range of hospitality careers, and relevant job descriptions.
- **Stay up to date about industry news** by reading The Caterer and Big Hospitality.
- **Follow charities** such as Springboard, the Institute of Hospitality, and other **educational organisations** like Umbrella Training on social media; sign up to their newsletters, and visit their websites regularly to get latest updates on tailored career support for young adults, job opportunities, scholarship and funding, and skills development training.
- **Be realistic about the starting salaries** by doing your own research to know what the starting and continuing salaries are likely to be.
- **Consider undertaking work experience in the hospitality industry** during college. Stay positive even if the first one is not what you were expecting.
- **Be proud of all the skills you have**, including your knowledge and experience of digital technologies.
- **Share your hobbies and other activities and awards**. They will help you stand out in a job interview.
- Even if you have never worked before, **do not forget about the value of extracurricular activities** you engaged in during school, or the volunteering you have done during the summer. They are all examples of work experiences.
- If you **love where you work**, suggest to your employer about becoming a brand ambassador!



5. Conclusion

This report presented the key findings of the research project which examined perceptions of young adults aged 14 - 21 living in the UK. This cohort is typically known as Gen Z and we spoke to them about hospitality as a career choice, post-pandemic. The young adults were asked to complete a 12-question survey in the spring of 2022, and 2,032 responded.

The results of our survey revealed that the unprecedented circumstances of the last two years have impacted on Gen Z's views on careers in the hospitality industry both positively and negatively.

A total of 32% of respondents agreed that their opinion about a career in hospitality has changed since the pandemic, leaving only 1 in 10 of our respondents willing to choose a career in hospitality, in contrast to a career in social media at 3 in 10.

Reasons included the perception of low pay, lack of knowledge of jobs in hospitality, insufficient skills, lack of respect, and working unsociable hours.

However, young adults felt that the pandemic has highlighted how important this industry is to the economy and society at large, making some reconsider their career options. Making people feel happy; a fast-paced and fun working environment, and opportunities to travel and work abroad were reasons enticing them to this vibrant sector.

For this generation, training opportunities, skills development, and clear, consistent messages about promotion and pay rises are also very important. Gen Z wants to feel challenged and be heard, whether in their commitment to tackling climate change or in their desire for sustainable, diverse, equitable and accessible workplaces.

Businesses offering mental health support who also encourage, and support teamwork are sought after. If these qualities can be capitalised on, then the future of the hospitality sector looks bright.



5. Conclusion continued

As discussed throughout the report, Gen Z have very clear expectations from their current and future employers. They expect their future employers to provide clear and useful information about the job and their organisation, including the salary range, opportunities for flexible working, and career development.

They also expect to be given clear guidance on all the steps in the inclusive recruitment process.

Stable jobs, security against major global events are sought after by this generation, and remote or hybrid working plus flexible working conditions are desirable too. This presents an opportunity and a challenge for hospitality: it can offer the flexibility being sought but needs to be able to demonstrate the breadth of careers, the work life balance and the dependability being sought.

To conclude, the key findings can be used to help to inform young adults of the breadth of career opportunities available in hospitality; to help the sector to better understand some of the major touch points when developing their people strategies in the coming years.

It will also provide Umbrella Training business partners and BusinessLDN members with a deeper knowledge of how young people see both the hospitality industry, and the wider world, in a post-pandemic age.



Contributors' biographies

Dr Maria Gebbels

Dr Maria Gebbels is a senior lecturer at the University of Greenwich where she also leads the MA International Tourism and Hospitality Management programme.

She was awarded a PhD for a study entitled, "Career Paths in Hospitality: A Life History Approach" at the University of Brighton. Her areas of expertise and research interests are critical hospitality, female career development, gender, life history methodology, food authenticity and prosumption, and hospitality professionalism.

She has a strong interest in international collaborations and knowledge exchange and has worked on research projects with colleagues from the UK, Malaysia, and New Zealand, including the project on training restaurants in UK prisons.

She is also the co-author of *"The Adventure Tourist: Being, Knowing, Becoming"*.



Contributors' biographies

Adele C Oxberry MIOd FIH

Adele has worked in the hospitality sector since she was 14 years old, starting as a room attendant working part time during school holidays to now being the founder and CEO of the UK's leading apprenticeship and training provider - Umbrella Training.

Umbrella Training has worked with over 4,500 apprentices since its inception and is one of the leading ESFA apprenticeship providers in England with an Ofsted grade 2 – GOOD including an outstanding features grade.

Umbrella has won many accolades, including the prestigious Princess Royal Training Award and is currently a finalist for the Multi-Cultural Awards as Learning Provider of the year. Umbrella's industry leading annual apprenticeship awards (The Purple Umbrella Awards) were included this year on prime time television as part of ITV television series - The Savoy.

Adele is a champion of new technologies that inspire the next generation of talent into hospitality and has recently invested into new web3 Immersive learning platforms not seen before in the hospitality sector.



About



Umbrella Training is a leading nationwide training and apprenticeship provider. Founded in 2012 by Adele Oxberry FIH, the company works with hotels, restaurants, foodservice businesses and many corporate services organisations across the UK.

Since its inception, Umbrella Training has supported the recruitment, development and progression of more than 4,500 apprentices. The company understands how important it is for employers to maximise return on investment while implementing meaningful apprenticeship programmes.

Umbrella Training works collaboratively with learner and employer partners to deliver quality, and consistent training to apprentices. In 2020, Umbrella Training was named the winner of the Princess Royal Training Award for its commitment to continued development of its team.

The company is also recognised as a 'Good' provider by Ofsted with 'outstanding features'. It is also one of the leading providers for the ESFA* in the UK.

<https://www.umbrellatraining.co.uk/>

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At BusinessLDN (spoken as Business London), our mission is to make London the best city in the world in which to do business, working with and for the whole UK.

We work to deliver the bigger picture, campaigning to tackle today's challenges and to secure the future promise of London.

We harness the power of our members, from sectors that span the economy, to shape the future of the capital so Londoners thrive and businesses prosper. We support business to succeed — locally, nationally, globally. We link up with other cities around the UK, to ensure the capital supports a thriving country.

We campaigned for the creation of the office of London Mayor and Transport for London, for the Elizabeth Line, for congestion charging, we incubated Teach First and run the UK's largest annual jobs and careers fair, Skills London.

We create opportunities for our members, from sharing insights to providing platforms, from making introductions to finding new talent. We facilitate collective, organisational, and individual ambition.

Becoming a member of BusinessLDN helps to keep London and the UK working — for business, for Londoners, for the whole country.

<https://www.businessldn.co.uk/>

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What the industry says



Bill Toner, CEO, CH&CO

"This report makes for very interesting reading. What stood out to me was that what could be our potential future hospitality professionals and leaders are not aware of the vast opportunities available in our industry. I've often talked about the need for our industry to shout louder and tell our great story so that those embarking on their careers or looking for a change of direction know about the great development and progression opportunities available to them.

Collectively the industry needs to come together to do our own PR so that young people are aware of the many varied roles from chefs to front of house teams, lawyers, marketing, communications, social media and so on, as well as the ongoing development opportunities and the flexibility ways of working that suit different lifestyles.

As an industry we excel at changing to the social landscape and with this kind of insight we can adapt the way we engage, attract and recruit people for future mutual benefit."



Sandra Kelly, UK Hospitality, Skills Director

"Everyone in the industry knows the fantastic career options that hospitality can offer to young people but there is a huge amount of work underway to get the talented next generation into the sector.

The takeaways from this report are invaluable and the guidance for employers to have clear adverts, kind interviewers and enough time for questions in interviews are simple steps that can be taken to make sure we're offering what young people expect. Partnering with local schools, colleges, universities and training providers is also a hugely beneficial way to keep our education partners up to speed with industry needs and innovations, and also can help dispel any myths about working in hospitality.

One recommendation in particular stands out, and that is giving young people a voice in the workplace to address the key issues that matter to a diverse and inclusive workforce. This 'reverse mentoring', and mentoring in general, can aid retention and support job enrichment, driving stability and progression for all."





Simon Drake, GM, The Other House

"One of the most worthwhile studies I have seen pertaining to getting an understanding into what young people think about the possibility of working in our industry."

Seeing that young people aspire to work in the social media and gaming industries well before any kind of service industry, we must fight to ensure that we are up to date and using the latest technology at every level including via our recruitment, onboarding and retention platforms. With over a third of those surveyed stating that they do not know enough about hospitality to consider it and a third stating that it would not be an industry for them due to perceived low pay, there is clearly a significant amount of educational work to be done by local government in synergy with our industry.

What continues to amaze me is the perception that the hospitality industry is low paid and yet in many cases the hourly pay is more than a young person would achieve in high street retailers and supermarkets, the sectors most people in the selected age group are known to choose for a part time job or indeed as their first job.

Until dedicated funding is set aside to further drive the initiatives and platforms such as those that Umbrella Training champions, we will never be able to present a quality, genuine option for young people in the UK."



Jane Sunley, Founder & CEO, Purple Cubed

"This hard-hitting report is a must read for every hospitality employer and leader at every level. It's vital that the hospitality industry sits up, listens and takes action. Clearly highlighted is the importance to Gen Z of having a clear and compelling business purpose with authentic values that are delivered on every day. The proof is here that those businesses who achieve this vital foundation, adding in essential elements such as kindness, respect, digitisation and fast career progression, will win the war for talent currently raging across our industry. Do not miss the essential 'Key take aways' section."



Harry Murray MBE MI FIH

"Congratulations, this is the most comprehensive survey I have seen on perceptions of hospitality by young people, and I compliment you, your team and BusinessLDN. I have a grandson who has experienced poor management in hospitality and he and a few university friends have set up a company and will launch an App shortly to help future students."

The hospitality industry is the best industry in the world, it is the one industry where you can start on the bottom rung and rise to the top. As you know I started my career as an apprentice, and I strongly recommend this route. Global tourism is growing at an enormous pace but if we are to capitalise on this growth, we need a highly motivated workforce to ensure we deliver the highest possible standards."

Brexit was a wake-up call for the UK Hospitality industry - exacerbated by the pandemic and Ukrainian war - which have caused a serious staffing crisis. I am saddened by the number of hotels and restaurants who must close Monday and Tuesday and /or reduce opening times. Many pubs have closed permanently. Businesses that are run well with the right culture and values are suffering because of the badly run ones. The economy also seriously suffers due to this loss of revenue. We can complain to government to relax the immigration rules but if we are realistic, we must resolve this crisis ourselves and this is a good start. We must change the image of the industry, listen to young people and convince parents, teachers, career advisors that hospitality is a good choice of career. This can be achieved, and this survey is an excellent start- Well done."

Steve Rockey, People Director, Home Grown Hotels Limited

"Based on the feedback from this survey, the current apprentice rate will do little to attract or retain the talent we need for the future of our industry. £4.81 an hour, equating to an annual salary of £10,000, falls well short of expectations and employers should take this into account when planning their apprentice programmes"

More broadly, 31% of respondents believed sector pay was low and yet more than a quarter didn't really know much about the hospitality industry, showing that this perception isn't based on knowledge or facts. It's our job to educate how incredibly lucrative hospitality careers can be and that, like all professions, the salary will increase over time. The expectation of earning over £600 per week or £31,000 per annum within five years seems achievable when you look at the full benefits packages available across the industry with more employers committing to the Living Wage."

We need to communicate how hospitality is a meritocratic industry with deep entrepreneurial roots, in which you can grow throughout your career, directly support the development of businesses with your professional knowledge and get paid in step with this. Reading this report, I feel reassured that the hospitality industry remains well placed to develop its people, give them skills for the future, pay them well, and provide opportunities and a lifestyle that very few industries can match."

