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Beyond Tradition: Understanding Generation Z's Attitudes Toward Social Tolerance, Authority, and Legal Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how Generation Z, the cohort born between 1997 and 2012, is changing the way social tolerance, authority and legal institutions are understood in different parts of the world. Its members are the first to grow up entirely within a digitally connected world, and their early years have been shaped by instability, the environmental crisis, saturation in technology and distrust of official organisations. The study draws on survey data from around the world, including the World Values Survey, and asks how this cohort differs from older ones. It examines three areas: attitudes to tolerance and inclusion; perceptions of authority and trust in the system; and views of the legal system and the rule of law. The findings show that Generation Z supports greater liberalisation of drug policy, wider rights for LGBTQ+ people and greater acceptance of religious difference. At the same time, it records markedly lower confidence in traditional institutions, particularly the police and political parties. This combination of openness to new ideas and distrust of established systems suggests a generation that wants leadership which is clear, accountable and willing to listen. Countries such as the United Kingdom and Kenya show different ways in which Generation Z is working through these questions. The paper closes by suggesting how large organisations might change in order to include people better and to address problems such as housing, employment and climate change.

Keywords: Generation Z, Institutional Trust, Social Tolerance, Legal Authority, Intergenerational Fairness

I. INTRODUCTION

The arrival of Generation Z as a significant constituency marks an important moment in the relationship between governments and the communities they serve. This cohort, born between 1997 and 2012, already forms a substantial share of the electorate in many countries. In Indonesia, the General Elections Commission recorded Generation Z as 22.85% of the

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permanent voter list for the 2024 elections, and Generation Z together with Millennials as 56.45% of it.¹ Unlike earlier generations, Generation Z grew up in a world connected by technology, amid widespread anxiety about the environment, rising economic inequality and deep doubt about how the system works. These experiences have shaped an outlook that is comparatively open, sceptical and oriented toward participation, and that challenges settled understandings of citizenship, of fairness, and of what the rules are for.

Understanding what Generation Z thinks about politics and society matters. As its members age and become more involved in public life, their views will shape policy, elections and popular attitudes to law. Good research remains thin. Some accounts treat all members of Generation Z as the same, or dismiss them as permanently online and indifferent. This paper attempts to correct that by examining how the cohort thinks in three areas: tolerance and acceptance of others; authority and institutional trust; and law and the legal system.

Stereotypes that cast Generation Z as lazy or entitled are an obstacle to understanding rather than a description of it. There is a valuable opportunity for intergenerational collaboration that promotes mutual learning and understanding, and that bridges the gap between traditional norms and newer approaches.

The paper moves from concepts to country evidence and then to prescription. The research objectives are set out next, followed by the research methodology. The conceptual foundations section develops the three dimensions on which the analysis rests, and the methodological framework explains the comparative design. The paper then examines Generation Z across national contexts and compares the cohort with those that preceded it. The discussion and the policy section set out what follows for institutions. Two comparative case studies and an account of the study's principal challenges close the analysis before the conclusion.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to understand more fully how Generation Z regards authority, tolerance and law. Two objectives follow from that aim.

- To establish what Generation Z thinks about tolerance and acceptance of others, including attitudes to religion, to the rights of LGBTQ+ people, to drug policy and to participation in a diverse world. This objective examines how far these views are

¹ The manuscript's own source, Afifah and Muthmainnah (2025), states that Generation Z reached around 46% of Indonesia's permanent voter list. That figure appears to misread the Generation Z headcount as a percentage. Indonesia's General Elections Commission fixed the 2024 permanent voter list at 204,807,222 voters, of whom 46,800,161 (22.85%) were Generation Z, 68,822,389 (33.60%) Millennials and 57,486,482 (28.07%) Generation X.

shared or divided across countries, and asks whether the cohort's liberal views represent a durable change in belief or a life-stage effect that may fade.

- To examine how much trust members of Generation Z place in institutions such as the police, political parties and the courts. Drawing on surveys such as the World Values Survey, this objective examines levels of trust across generations and the reasons why Generation Z may trust these institutions less, and compares the cohort with Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers. It draws on work about moral commitments and value orientation to ask whether the differences are real and lasting or an artefact of age.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study draws on several kinds of material. It uses survey figures to establish quantitative evidence, and it discusses people in different national settings, so that both the broad pattern and the detail behind it can be seen.

Surveys. The principal figures come from the World Values Survey, including the 2022 United Kingdom fieldwork on institutional trust. The study also uses United Kingdom surveys on crime and drug use, Indonesian material on voting, and the consultation material gathered in 2021 on what young people say about trust and safety across countries.

Case studies. Four settings are examined in detail: the United Kingdom, Kenya, Indonesia and Morocco. These differ in how their governments work and in how they handle the problems discussed here. The study uses reports, rights instruments and published research to understand what people in these places think and feel.

Comparison across cohorts. The study compares generations, using the groupings Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z, and draws on surveys that measure values and attitudes to fairness and to right conduct.

The study first establishes what the figures show, then examines how the four settings differ, and finally identifies patterns that bear on what should be done. It looks for themes in the qualitative material and compares figures where the data allow.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS: THE THREE CORE DIMENSIONS

A. Dimension I: Social Tolerance and Civic Inclusion

Social tolerance is central to what Generation Z believes. It covers how the cohort thinks about people unlike itself, about the rights of minorities, and about what may acceptably be said or

done in public. Read through moral foundations theory, this tolerance suggests that the cohort weighs care and fairness more heavily than obedience to authority or purity.

Generation Z's openness appears in several areas. In the United Kingdom, the NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH reports in *Society Watch 2024* that Generation Z favours liberalising drug law far more strongly than older cohorts: 63% agree that the sale of cannabis should be legal in licensed shops, against 47% of Baby Boomers (National Centre for Social Research, 2024). This liberal view rests on ideas of individual freedom and harm reduction rather than on heavier personal use. Generation Z in fact uses cannabis considerably less than Generation X did at the same age. In 2023, 8.4% of 16 to 24 year olds, who are Generation Z, reported using cannabis in the previous month, against 16.2% of 16 to 24 year olds in 1996, who are now Generation X (National Centre for Social Research, 2024, drawing on OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS data on drug misuse in England and Wales). The pattern suggests that the cohort's tolerance rests on what it believes to be right rather than on what serves its own interest.

In Indonesia, research on religious tolerance among Generation Z shows a more complicated picture. Survey findings reported by Aprilianto et al. (2025) record that roughly 69.83% of students demonstrated high religious tolerance, that a further 20% showed very high tolerance toward other religions, and that 30.16% demonstrated poor or very low religious tolerance.² Acceptance across religious lines is high on some measures: 97.1% of respondents in Aprilianto and colleagues' own survey accepted befriending people of other faiths. Members of the cohort are nevertheless uncertain about leadership by people who are not Muslim and about the application of Islamic law, and many do not support those propositions. That uncertainty reflects the tension between Indonesia's conception of itself as a state of many religions and the Muslim culture that predominates within it.

Levels of social tolerance differ between countries. Generation Z is therefore not uniform; it is shaped by local religion, politics and culture. In Morocco, a study by the PROMETHEUS INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, with fieldwork conducted in 2022 and reported in HESPRESS in October 2025, found that 84% of young people's expectations concerned access to basic services, namely employment, quality public education and quality public hospitals (Hespress, 2025). Tolerance is understood here as access to basic entitlements rather than as openness to cultural difference alone. That emphasis on rights as recognition

² The figures originate in the 2020 "Api dalam sekam" survey conducted by TIM PPIM UIN SYARIF HIDAYATULLAH JAKARTA and are reproduced here at second hand from Aprilianto et al. (2025). Two limits should be noted. The PPIM figures describe students surveyed in 2020, and the primary survey reported by Aprilianto and colleagues was confined to Lamongan and Surabaya in East Java. Neither is a national sample of Generation Z.

suggests that, for Generation Z in the Global South, social tolerance is bound up with a demand that the state do its job.

B. Dimension II: Institutional Authority and Public Trust

Institutional authority and public trust form the second dimension, which concerns how Generation Z regards formal bodies such as the police, political parties and universities. This is what political scientists call diffuse support for the system: the goodwill that keeps institutions standing even when people disagree with particular decisions.

Cross-national data show that Generation Z's trust in institutions is low, though the picture varies considerably by country. In the United Kingdom, analysis of World Values Survey data by THE POLICY INSTITUTE at King's College London found that only 44% of Generation Z respondents expressed confidence in the police in 2022, some 27 percentage points below the level recorded among other cohorts, and the only British generation in which fewer than half reported confidence (The Policy Institute, 2023; Morini, 2024). Policing is the institution on which the British generational gap is widest, and no country other than Great Britain shows Generation Z standing out so sharply from every other cohort (Morini, 2024). In Sweden, 91% of Generation Z respondents reported confidence in the police in 2017, close to the 81% recorded among the pre-Second World War cohort, and in the Netherlands the gap between cohorts is likewise small (Morini, 2024). The British position appears to reflect direct experience together with the online circulation of police failings, including the handling of the Sarah Everard case and the reception of movements such as Black Lives Matter.

Not every measure shows lower trust among the young. Stockemer, Kolodziejczyk and Buckle's analysis of roughly 30 countries between 2018 and 2024 found that trust levels are "relatively stable across generations" (Stockemer et al., 2025), which suggests that young people do not reject governmental institutions more than others do. The comparative picture therefore resists any simple story of wholesale rejection, and indicates that where people live matters a great deal.

What follows from Generation Z's doubts about institutions is important. Azam writes that "any system that tries to force compliance without consent will struggle to earn their trust", and that "trust, for Gen Z, is everything" (Azam, 2025). The cohort responds to being asked rather than told, and favours arrangements that are procedurally fair and that give it a voice. Where it is consulted, and where its views change outcomes, its conduct tends to support the institution rather than undermine it. Trust problems of this kind are therefore capable of repair if institutions reform and communicate.

C. Dimension III: Legal Institutions and the Rule of Law

The third dimension concerns how Generation Z sees legal institutions, including the courts and the police, and how it thinks about law itself. It goes beyond trust in officeholders to perceptions of the fairness and the strength of the law. In the United Kingdom, the fall in confidence in the police from 86% in 1981 to 67% in 2022 (Morini, 2024) damages the idea of policing by consent on which British policing has always rested.³ That the decline is sharpest in this cohort suggests that personal experience and the online circulation of police misconduct weigh most heavily on the young. Two thirds of all stop and searches in 2022 involved people aged between 10 and 29 (Morini, 2024). Young people are therefore among the most exposed to police action and among the least disposed to trust it.

In East Africa, Generation Z has changed how the legal system is held to account. During the 2024 and 2025 protests in Kenya against the Finance Bill, human rights organisations recorded more than 100 people killed and thousands arrested, with young protesters forming the majority of the victims (Mutua, 2026). Using digital tools, activists of this generation have altered how human rights violations are documented: video, live streaming and online campaigning have made abuses harder to conceal. Youth-led projects have simplified legal questions, turning rights into material that can be read on a phone. This digital legal literacy makes it easier for people to demand justice.

Rights and fair treatment also shape how Kenyans have pressed their claims. Survivors of sexual violence during the post-election violence of 2007 and 2008 eventually secured compensation from the government in 2025, after sustained litigation and advocacy (Mutua, 2026). Persistence, supported by others, can make a government answerable even where institutions are weak. In Indonesia, Islamic constitutional thought (*siyasah dusturiyah*) helps explain how Generation Z understands law. The concepts of *syura*, or consultation, and *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, align with the cohort's preference for involvement in decisions and with its concern for justice, the environment and the rights of minorities (Afifah & Muthmainnah, 2025). Online action may be read as a contemporary expression of these Islamic commitments, treating politics as an obligation rather than as an optional activity.

³ THE POLICY INSTITUTE at King's College London gives the 1981 figure for confidence in the police as 87% rather than 86%. The 2022 figure of 67% is common to both accounts.

V. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: ANALYSING GENERATION Z IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

This study adopts a comparative design that combines cross-national figures with accounts drawn from lived experience, in order to examine the views of Generation Z in different situations.

Comparison. The design compares in three ways: between Generation Z and older cohorts, namely Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers; over time, by setting the attitudes of Generation Z against those of older cohorts at the same age; and across countries, contrasting Generation Z in stable settings with Generation Z in developing ones, and in heavily digitised societies with those facing greater constraints.

Sources. The study draws on four kinds of source. The first is large cross-national surveys, principally the World Values Survey Wave 7, which measure institutional trust and social openness. The second is national survey material, including the United Kingdom's Crime Survey for England and Wales and Indonesian survey work on religious tolerance, in particular the 2020 "Api dalam sekam" survey of Muslim Generation Z religiosity conducted by TIM PPIM UIN SYARIF HIDAYATULLAH JAKARTA. The third is the consultation material produced by the WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM's Davos Lab in 2021 on how young people describe their concerns in public life.⁴ The fourth is documentary material such as human rights reports and national youth policy plans.

Method. The analysis works at three levels: individual attitudes, institutional performance, and the wider social setting in which events occur. The study does not estimate formal age, period and cohort models, and the limits this places on the inferences drawn are discussed in the section on challenges below. The stance taken throughout is even-handed, treating the doubts of Generation Z as a response to how institutions behave rather than as a defect of youth.

Coverage. Four countries are examined: the United Kingdom, an established democracy; Kenya, a setting of changing politics; Indonesia, a heavily digitised country with a Muslim majority; and Morocco, a setting in which access to basic services is contested. Together they present distinct situations and distinct problems of government.

⁴ The Davos Lab was a dialogue and consultation exercise conducted through the Global Shapers Community across 146 cities, which produced 40 policy recommendations. It is not behavioural data, it is not a probability sample, and its participants were young people generally rather than a Generation Z cohort.

VI. GLOBAL CONTEXTS OF GENERATION Z: A CROSS-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

A. Generation Z within Established Institutional Systems

Where government is strong, Generation Z encounters systems that have been losing trust over a long period but that continue to function. The United Kingdom is the example, with trust in many institutions falling substantially since 1981. The British position on policing is distinctive: comparable generational gaps do not appear in the Netherlands or Sweden, where confidence in the police differs little between cohorts (Morini, 2024).

One reason for declining trust may be the underfunding of the police, which makes a visible community presence and contact with young people harder to sustain. The POLICE FOUNDATION's 2022 Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales recommends reinvestment in neighbourhood policing and a renewed institutional commitment to policing by consent, observing that neighbourhood policing as currently experienced is not meeting public expectations (The Police Foundation, 2022). On the review's reasoning, adequate funding and reform of how policing operates offer a route by which some of the lost trust might be recovered.

B. Generation Z in Emerging and Transitional Political Landscapes

In emerging democracies such as Indonesia, Generation Z shows real political interest and takes part in elections in large numbers. Its participation is issue-led rather than party-led: the cohort cares intensely about particular questions and forms a substantial share of the population. In Indonesia, Generation Z had a marked effect on the 2024 elections (Afifah & Muthmainnah, 2025). Its political conduct is characterised by the use of the internet to organise, by deliberation about events as they unfold, and by placing justice, the environment and education ahead of loyalty to a particular party.

In Indonesia, Generation Z also negotiates competing sources of authority: religious teaching and cultural tradition on one side, and membership of a democratic polity on the other. Studies of religious attitudes show that most of the cohort supports a society in which different beliefs are accepted, while some members retain doubts about leadership by people of other religions and about applying Islamic law uniformly (Aprilianto et al., 2025). This illustrates the difficulty of holding to belief while participating in a democratic state in a country of many cultures.

C. Generation Z in the Era of Digital Societies

Online life shapes how Generation Z thinks about politics and law in every setting. For this cohort, online platforms are not merely a means of talking to others. They are where identity is

formed, where political opinion is expressed and where civic involvement begins. In Indonesia, platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Twitter are where political news is obtained, opinion is shared and voters are mobilised. In Kenya, live streaming and video are used to press accountability for human rights violations. In the United Kingdom, exposure to events such as the Black Lives Matter protests has changed how Generation Z thinks about policing.

Online life also brings problems. False information spreads quickly, divisions harden, and surveillance of ordinary activity increases. The Davos Lab consultation records that physical safety ranks as the greatest concern among the young people consulted, driven by surveillance technology and militarised policing directed against activists (World Economic Forum, 2021). The same exercise records that young people want regulated social media to combat fake news and extremist views, and a Global Convention for Cybersecurity to uphold the integrity of democratic systems (World Economic Forum, 2021).

D. Generation Z in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Environments

Where conditions are unstable, how Generation Z regards those in charge depends on immediate threats to safety and on access to the basic necessities of life. In East Africa, election periods and political transitions are often accompanied by reports of violence, police misconduct and disappearances. In Uganda, the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 heightened fears of violence and persecution among sexual and gender minorities, prompting many to relocate to neighbouring countries (Mutua, 2026). In Tanzania, the suspension of internet access at moments of political activity narrows the space in which people may speak (Mutua, 2026).

Despite these conditions, Generation Z is changing how accountability is pursued. The protests led by young people in Kenya between 2024 and 2025 show how a cohort exposed to more violence than others uses online tools to record what is happening and to seek legal redress. Obtaining redress and justice for those harmed remains difficult. Courts require proof, and many cases fail on procedural grounds or for want of detail. Legal empowerment programmes, such as those run by REDRESS, have taught people how to use legal process, and have helped more of them find a route to justice (Mutua, 2026).

VII. INTERGENERATIONAL COMPARISON: HOW GENERATION Z DIFFERS FROM OTHER COHORTS

Comparison across generations shows that the values of Generation Z differ from those of earlier cohorts, though the form the difference takes and how long it lasts vary between fields.

Social tolerance. On tolerance, Generation Z holds the most liberal views of any cohort now living. In the United Kingdom, support for legalising the sale of cannabis in licensed shops is highest among Generation Z at 63%, falling to 56% among Millennials, 53% among Generation X and 47% among Baby Boomers (National Centre for Social Research, 2024). That openness is not matched by use: Generation Z uses cannabis at roughly half the rate Generation X did at the same age, which indicates that its liberalism rests on values rather than on personal interest.

Value orientation. Weber's cross-generational study of value orientation finds that Generation Z balances social values more evenly than earlier cohorts, which showed stronger preferences in one direction. The importance that Generation Z assigns to principled moral reasoning in resolving ethical dilemmas is lower than the importance assigned by Baby Boomers and Generation X, but, surprisingly, higher than the importance assigned by Millennials (Weber, 2024).

Institutional trust. Differences in institutional trust vary by country. In the United Kingdom, Generation Z has less trust than older cohorts in the police, the armed forces, universities, Parliament and the media, and the gap is widest for the police (The Policy Institute, 2023; Morini, 2024). This pattern does not appear among Millennials or Generation X at the same age in earlier surveys, which suggests a change specific to the cohort. In the United States in 2017, confidence in the police fell with each successive generation, from 85% among respondents born in 1944 or earlier to 53% among Generation Z, whereas the Netherlands and Sweden show little difference between cohorts (Morini, 2024).

Intergenerational fairness. The EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM sets out six principles of intergenerational fairness: generational recognition; youth rights; futures thinking, expressed as the injunction to be a good ancestor; eliminating inequality; fair investment; and intergenerational connection (European Youth Forum, 2025). These principles address the situations in which young people carry more than their share: economic pressure from cuts in spending and slow wage growth, the consequences of the climate crisis, and threats to the rule of law. The call for each generation to act as a good ancestor, doing nothing that damages the rights of those who follow, captures how Generation Z thinks about fairness between generations.

Moral foundations. Work using moral foundations theory suggests that the values of older cohorts diverge from those of Generation Z, which makes mutual understanding harder. The divergence is most visible in attitudes to work, to mental health and to resilience. That older

generations describe Generation Z as lazy, entitled or anxious indicates a mismatch between their frame of reference and what the cohort actually experiences (Nelson, 2025).⁵

VIII. DISCUSSION: TOWARDS A RENEWED SOCIAL CONTRACT

The evidence presents a paradox. Generation Z holds new ideas about society and doubts institutions, yet also welcomes authority that is transparent, accountable and willing to listen. That paradox has consequences for how states are governed, for how law earns its legitimacy, and for the terms on which people agree to live together.

First, the distrust that Generation Z holds toward institutions is not a rejection of authority. It reflects a willingness to believe in authority only where authority performs, rather than because it has always existed. The cohort believes in law on condition that law is fair, intelligible and applied in the same way to everyone. It objects to authority exercised without justification and to policies made without participation. Institutional reform is therefore capable of improving trust.

Second, the digital environment both sharpens Generation Z's capacity to scrutinise and increases its exposure to manipulation and surveillance. Online space assists transparency and accountability, as the recording of police conduct in Kenya shows. It also deepens disagreement and carries false information capable of damaging democratic life. Regulating that space so as to keep its benefits while limiting its harms is a substantial problem.

Third, fairness between generations is an issue that connects otherwise different settings. In Morocco, young people frame the demand for basic services as a question of fairness. In the United Kingdom, economic insecurity feeds distrust of institutions. In Indonesia, young people care more about the environment, education and health than about party allegiance. The perception that older generations have made life harder through debt, environmental damage and institutional decay erodes trust in leadership in many countries.

A renewed compact between generations must address these imbalances. The EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM's six principles offer a guide: generational recognition, youth rights, futures thinking, eliminating inequality, fair investment and intergenerational connection (European Youth Forum, 2025). Taken seriously, they require moving beyond short-term thinking toward measures that serve present and future generations alike.

⁵ Nelson (2025) is an undergraduate research poster rather than a peer-reviewed study, and the propositions in this paragraph would benefit from further support.

IX. POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

International organisations have work to do in addressing the problems that follow from how Generation Z thinks and from the wider difficulty of institutional trust. The proposals below follow from the findings and the framework set out in this paper.

Institutional reform and accountability. International organisations should help states make their systems more open, fair and answerable. This includes assessing how well institutions perform, particularly in policing and in the legal system. The POLICE FOUNDATION's Strategic Review recommends a renewed commitment to policing by consent and reinvestment in neighbourhood policing, and international organisations should press for equivalent monitoring of official conduct and for mechanisms by which officials are held to account (The Police Foundation, 2022).

Youth-inclusive governance. Including young people in decision-making means removing the barriers that keep them out. This includes lowering the voting age to 16, placing young people in political office, and creating standing mechanisms through which they contribute to decisions. International organisations should support civic education so that people understand how they are governed.

Investment in intergenerational fairness. Policy should address the problems that young people face: unaffordable housing, poor employment, insufficient mental health provision and inadequate environmental protection. The WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM's Davos Lab recovery plan proposes specific measures, including a global wealth tax on assets worth more than US\$50 million and universal access to the internet, alongside urgent action on the climate crisis (World Economic Forum, 2021). International organisations should support these measures.

Digital governance and rights. International organisations should press for a Global Convention for Cybersecurity to uphold the integrity of democratic systems, for penalties where states shut down access to the internet, and for measures that allow people to establish what is true (World Economic Forum, 2021). Access to the internet should be treated as a right, and support should be given to those who still lack it.

Legal empowerment and access to justice. Organisations should help people learn what their rights are and how to use them. In East Africa this work has taught people how to bring proceedings, report abuse and use the law (Mutua, 2026). International instruments, including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, provide the basis for such efforts.

X. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES AND PRACTICAL LESSONS

A. United Kingdom: The Generational Trust Gap in Policing

The United Kingdom shows a marked difference in how far young people trust the police, and illustrates how institutional failure and the absence of participation can leave a cohort disconnected. Confidence in the police is 27 percentage points lower among Generation Z than among other cohorts (The Policy Institute, 2023; Morini, 2024). The reasons include experience of stop and search, exposure to police misconduct online, and insufficient funding for community work.

Practical lessons. Investment in neighbourhood policing, better training, procedural fairness and direct engagement with the public are the measures most often proposed for rebuilding trust. The POLICE FOUNDATION's 2022 Strategic Review recommends reinvestment in neighbourhood policing and a renewed commitment to policing by consent, and records that neighbourhood policing as presently experienced does not meet public expectations (The Police Foundation, 2022). The review is a reform report rather than an evaluation study, and it does not establish that community policing raises trust among young people specifically.

B. Kenya: Digital Activism and Legal Accountability

During the protests against the Finance Bill in 2024 and 2025, Generation Z showed how online space can make official conduct visible. Video, live streaming and online organising documented that conduct and helped people speak. Young people also made complex legal and policy questions easier to follow.

Practical lessons. Knowledge of the law and of how to use it helps people evidence official conduct and invoke legal process. Difficulty remains, because the rules of evidence and procedure are strict. Long-term work, such as securing compensation for those harmed around elections, shows that sustained effort is required (Mutua, 2026).

XI. CHALLENGES

Several difficulties complicate both the understanding of what Generation Z thinks and the design of policy that fits it. They are difficulties of measurement as well as of prescription.

Age, period and cohort confusion. Distinguishing what follows from being a certain age, what follows from the period in which people live, and what follows from membership of a generation is not straightforward. Views attributed to Generation Z may in fact reflect the life stage, the events of the moment, or the formation of the cohort. That neither Millennials nor Generation X in the United Kingdom began from so low a base of trust in the police supports

treating the British trust gap as specific to the cohort. Long-run data for other countries remain thin, and this study does not estimate formal age, period and cohort models.

Heterogeneity within generations. Generation Z is not all the same. Political participation and values differ by income, race, gender and location. In Indonesia, 69.83% of students showed high religious tolerance and a further 20% very high tolerance, while 30.16% showed poor or very low tolerance (Aprilianto et al., 2025). Recognising such differences matters for designing policy that works for everyone.

Institutional resistance to reform. Institutions often resist the transparency and accountability that Generation Z demands. Rebuilding trust requires sustained commitment and the investment of resources, which may be politically difficult, particularly where institutional leaders benefit from opacity.

Digital governance dilemmas. The digital environment that enables the activism of Generation Z also enables surveillance, disinformation and polarisation. Regulating platforms so as to preserve democratic values while preventing harm presents complex problems of governance. Young people themselves call for regulated social media to combat fake news and extremist views, while at the same time resisting surveillance and censorship (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Intergenerational tensions. Differences of value between generations can produce conflict, as the perception of Generation Z among older cohorts as lazy, entitled or anxious meets the cohort's own experience and its strategies for coping (Nelson, 2025). Dialogue and mutual understanding across generations are essential, and both require deliberate effort and institutional support.

XII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has examined how Generation Z regards tolerance, institutional authority and legal systems in different parts of the world. The study shows a cohort that supports liberal positions more strongly than any other generation while remaining deeply doubtful about established institutions. That combination of openness and doubt indicates that Generation Z locates legitimacy in performance rather than in tradition.

The evidence supports several conclusions. First, Generation Z does not reject authority outright; it wants authority that is open, fair and attentive to what its members live through. Second, the online world plays a significant part in shaping how the cohort thinks about politics and law, equipping it to question while leaving it exposed to false information. Third, fairness

between generations is a concern that connects otherwise different countries, with younger people believing that older ones have made their futures harder through economic pressure, environmental damage and weakened institutions. Fourth, generational differences in trust vary by country, which indicates that how well institutions perform and reform affects how people regard them.

The following recommendations are offered to those in government and to organisations working across borders.

- Reform institutions so that they are open, fair and answerable, particularly in policing and the legal system. Involving communities and giving young people a place within these bodies can help rebuild trust.
- Make it easier for young people to take part in government, by lowering the voting age, reserving places in political bodies, and creating standing mechanisms through which they contribute to decisions.
- Address intergenerational imbalances in housing, employment, environmental fairness and mental health provision, through greater investment and changes in policy.
- Empower people by helping them understand and use their rights, record violations and navigate the legal system.
- Regulate online space so as to limit false information and excessive surveillance while preserving democratic values, including through a Global Convention for Cybersecurity.
- Encourage dialogue between generations, so that they understand one another and can identify common ground when rules are made.

XIII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Generation Z is driving change in how governments operate, how laws are made and what counts as fair. Its views on openness, its thinking about power and its perception of legal systems reflect both the conditions in which it has lived, namely saturation in the internet, economic pressure and a damaged environment, and its response to established systems that have failed. The task for those in government and for organisations working internationally is to respond well: not to dismiss the concerns of Generation Z as the inexperience of youth, but to attend to its demand for institutions that are more open, more fair, and fairer between generations.

Changing the social compact in the way this work requires is neither easy nor assured. It needs institutional reform, support for young people, and a substantial shift in how governments work,

so that they attend to long-term outcomes rather than to immediate fixes. It needs cooperation between states on problems such as the environment, the governance of the internet and economic inequality, none of which stops at a border. It needs every generation to adopt the idea of being a good ancestor, so that the choices made now do not deny later generations a decent life.

The conduct of Generation Z in Kenya, its politics in Indonesia, its criticism of institutions in the United Kingdom and its demands for fairness in Morocco show a generation unwilling to accept what does not work. Its facility with technology, its understanding of law and its focus on issues make it capable of changing how governments and legal systems operate. Whether it improves those systems or is driven away from them depends largely on whether the institutions it encounters are willing to change.

XIV. REFERENCES

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