

THE ME-ECONOMY:

Where happiness exists in the now



Our Meaningful Brands™ study is unique

Now in its **17th year**,
it was the **1st proprietary Global study**
to connect **brands with human well-being**
This year **2,500 Irish citizens participated**

The study lets us explore people's
changing **attitudes, behaviours** and
expectations of brands

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE

'MEANINGFUL'

ATTRIBUTES:

11 Core /
6 Bespoke

10 Core /
6 Bespoke

13 Core /
3 Bespoke

FUNCTIONAL EQUITY

Rational benefits focused on product functionality, customer service, interactivity, and technology.

PERSONAL EQUITY

Messaging and behavior that connects on an individual basis and serves a specific personal need or want.

COLLECTIVE EQUITY

Company initiatives, behaviors, and actions that respond to and connect at the social and cultural level.

Meaningful Brands™
build equity across 3
specific dimensions to
create deeper insights

Happiness



in the now.

Taking back control, the journey continues.

54%

Of people are feeling in control
of their life; we are tracking
upwards collectively.

(+3 p.p. vs 2024)

After years of uncertainty, collectively
people continue to reclaim their
agency. When we focus on what's
immediately in front of us and what we
can actually control, then we create
breathing room from the chaos.



Zooming in

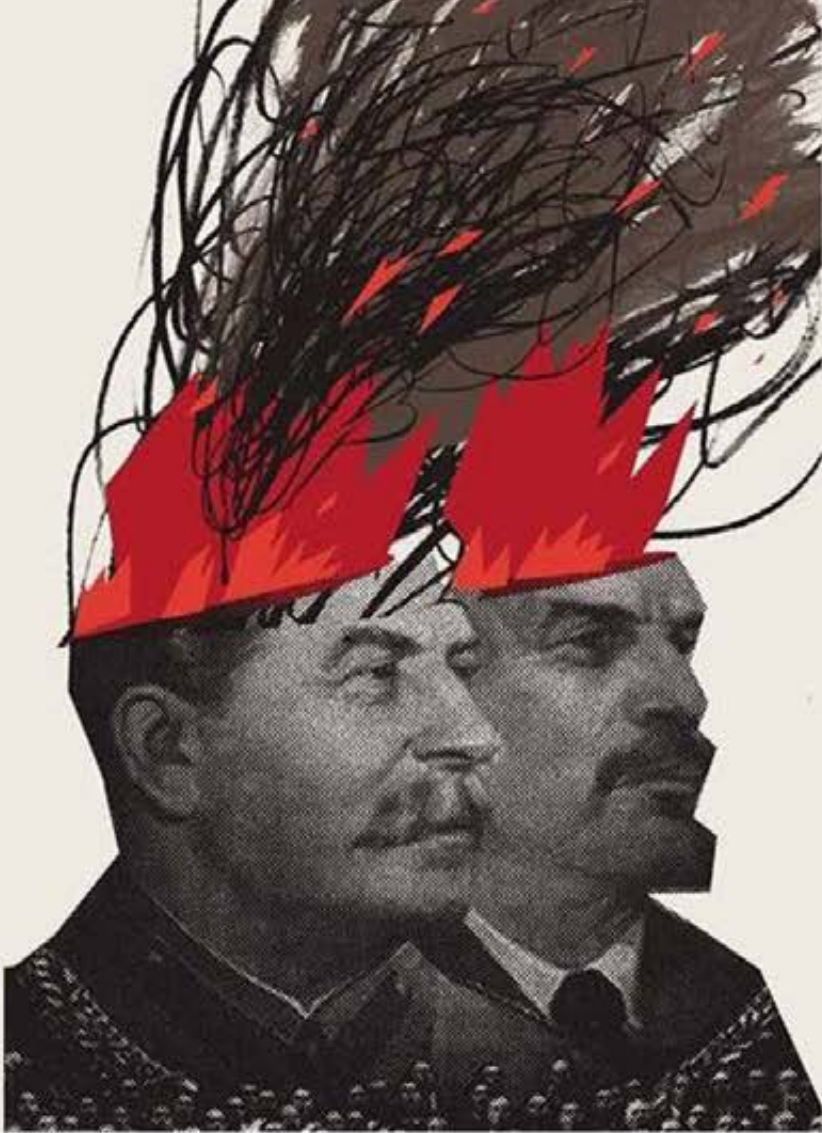
People have stopped trying to solve everything and started focusing on what touches their lives directly. It's not apathy, it's prioritisation born from necessity.



on what matters.

We are what we experience.

Our formative years aren't just memorable, they're foundational. The events we experience between ages 18-25 don't just influence us, they define us.



Events that occur during early adulthood have lasting impacts on our views...

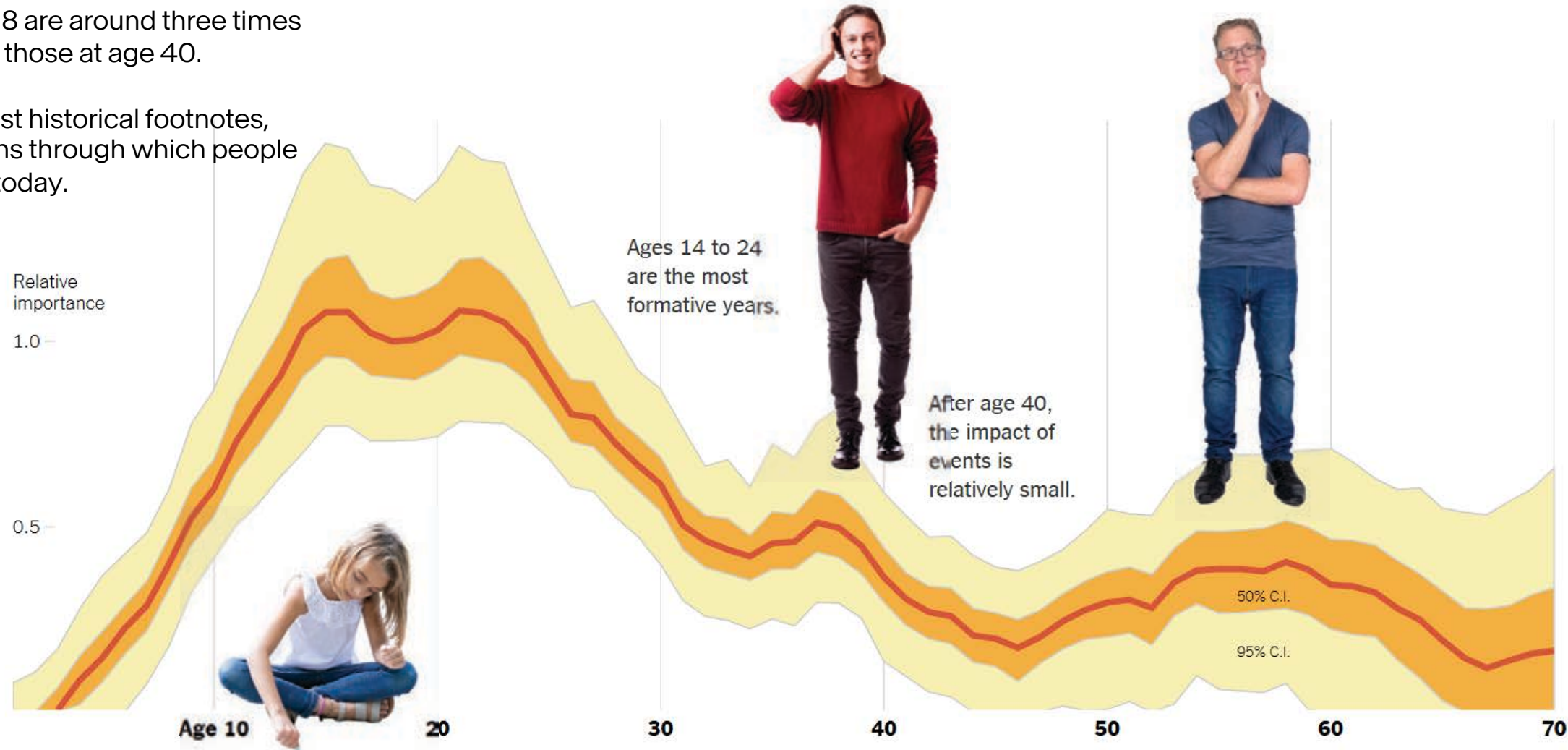
Those who came of age during the Cold War may be more wary of socialism.

Likewise, those who came of age during the 2008 financial crisis might be more sceptical of capitalism and more open to progressive policies.

Our youth is when the world leaves its mark.

Events at age 18 are around three times as powerful as those at age 40.

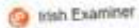
These aren't just historical footnotes, they are the lens through which people see the world today.



A photograph of four young adults, two men and two women, standing side-by-side against a light blue, slightly cloudy background. They are all wearing casual, trendy clothing. The man on the far left is wearing a blue and white patterned hoodie and white pants. The woman next to him is wearing a black vest over a white shirt and a dark skirt. The woman next to her is wearing a blue and black patterned top and a blue skirt. The man on the far right is wearing a mustard yellow jacket over a red and white patterned sweater and mustard pants. All four have their arms crossed and are looking directly at the camera with serious expressions.

Gen Z are in their formative years NOW.

While we're looking at Gen Z, they're still being formed in real time. Shaped by their country, communities and screens.



Ireland at risk of energy crisis without gas reserve, warns environment minister

Ireland at risk of energy crisis without gas reserve, warns environment minister ...
Ireland would have as little as "three days of normal energy"...

12 Apr 2025



Cost of living and housing are 'bleeding talent from Ireland'

Businesses fear the high cost of living and a shortage in housing supply are "bleeding talent" from Ireland, writes Adam Van Eekeren.

1 month ago

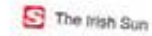


FINN MCREDMOND

It's no wonder people my age are miserable. Everyone keeps telling them they're totally screwed

Gen-Z may be the most chronicled generation in history. Yes, we hear a lot about the rapacious boomers and their wealth hoarding; ...

June 19, 2025



'Completely unsustainable' - Govt blasted for failing to tackle Ireland's deepening housing crisis as prices rise 7%

'Completely unsustainable' - Govt blasted for failing to tackle Ireland's deepening housing crisis as prices rise 7% ... THE Government has been...

7 Jul 2025



This is their Ireland, the issues they'll carry with them.



Ireland risks being fined between €8bn and €26bn if climate targets are not met

Ireland risks being hit with fines of between €8bn and €26bn for missing their climate targets. The stark warning was issued by both the Fiscal Council and...

4 Mar 2025



Education used to be the path to owning a home. Now it's all about assets

As Margaret Thatcher's funeral cortege wound its way through London on the day of her state funeral, a woman stood holding a ...

November 16, 2024



Housing crisis: 'I feel more hopeless than I ever have before about life in Ireland'

Housing crisis: 'I feel more hopeless than I ever have before about life in Ireland' ... All of Eoin Kennedy and his fiancée Aisling O'Donovan's...

9 Jun 2025



Is Gen Z the most cynically manipulated generation in history?

As I've mentioned here a few dozen times, I have quite the collection of children, some of whom were born between ...

February 23, 2025

In Ireland, they are the generation with the highest education.

65%

Of 25–34-year-olds have at least a third level education

VS

38%

Of adults 60–64
(Q2 2024 CSO)

This means they aren't just experiencing these crises, they are equipped to understand them.

They have the tools to analyse, question and articulate what's happening to them.

That is what makes them powerful.

And this is the weight of understanding

Gen Z are becoming more concerned at a national level because of the challenges faced here.

They are the generation with the capacity to both appreciate what is happening but also to see that they are going to endure this.

Please note all figures are compared to nat. rep.

+35%

Believe the nation is going in the wrong direction.

+25%

Believe we are experiencing a national political crisis

+18%

Believe we are experiencing a national economic crisis



When you can't fix everything, fix today.

That is what happens when you're highly educated, deeply aware, and facing decades of uncertainty.

You focus on today, this week, this month.

2 in 5

Don't feel in control of where their life is heading.

So, they need to find ways to ease their worries.

This isn't about avoiding what's coming, it is about adapting.





2 in 3

Say they don't let tough times keep them down, they keep moving forward.

This is not toxic positivity, it is learned resilience in action.

A close-up photograph of a human hand, with the index finger extended, breaking through a bright red surface. The surface is cracked and shattering, revealing a bright blue background behind it. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the thumb and index finger clearly visible as they pierce the red layer.

They've built frameworks for resilience.

Showing their determination, a generation that's been in crisis mode since they could form memories have created coping mechanisms for everyday pressures.

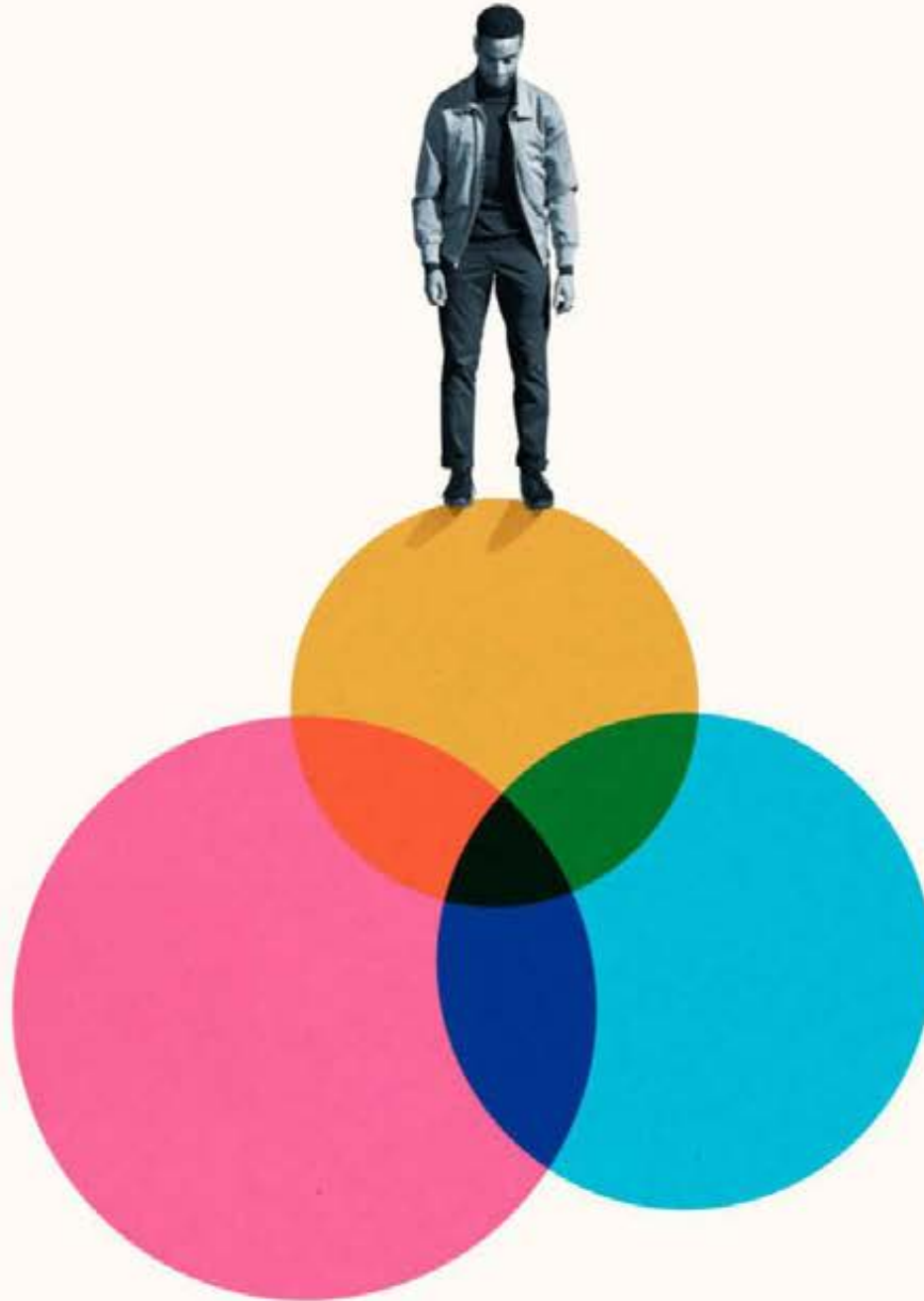
73%

Look to humour as a way to lighten the load when times are tough,
building resilience through distraction.



33%

Are setting better
boundaries for work
life balance, compared
to a year ago.



In contrast, we have Boomers.

-18%

Believe the nation is in an economic crisis, this is due to their frames of reference.

They were adults in the 80s and lived through that economic reality.

To them, what we are seeing today does not compare.

Please note figures are compared to nat. rep.

They have a bank of lived experiences knowing that at some point, global events hit home.

+12%

Believe the world is going in the wrong direction.



Please note figures are compared to nat. rep.

**The long view
changes
everything.
Boomers have
lived through
enough cycles
to know...**



**crises come, and
crises go.**

And with that long view comes wisdom. They are invested in longevity, knowing that health is wealth.

73%

Of Boomers report making a real effort to be physically and mentally healthy.



+6%

Believe the nation is experiencing a health crisis.

A hand in a blue and white patterned sweater is shown dropping a coin into the palm of a hand in a green and white patterned sweater. The background is a solid pink color with a large blue circle in the center. The text "But when it comes to financial wealth, things are not so straightforward." is overlaid on the blue circle.

**But when it comes to financial wealth,
things are not so straightforward.**

only

45%

Believe their financial future is positive. That is despite being the wealthiest generation on paper and lower concerns for the local economy.

(-5 p.p. vs All Adults)

This is Prosperity's paradox.

Perhaps they are worried about healthcare costs, leaving legacies, or about outliving their savings.

Perhaps wealth doesn't guarantee peace of mind after all.



MEANINGFUL
BRANDS™

**Despite all of this, they are the
happiest of the generations.**



Four generations and four realities.

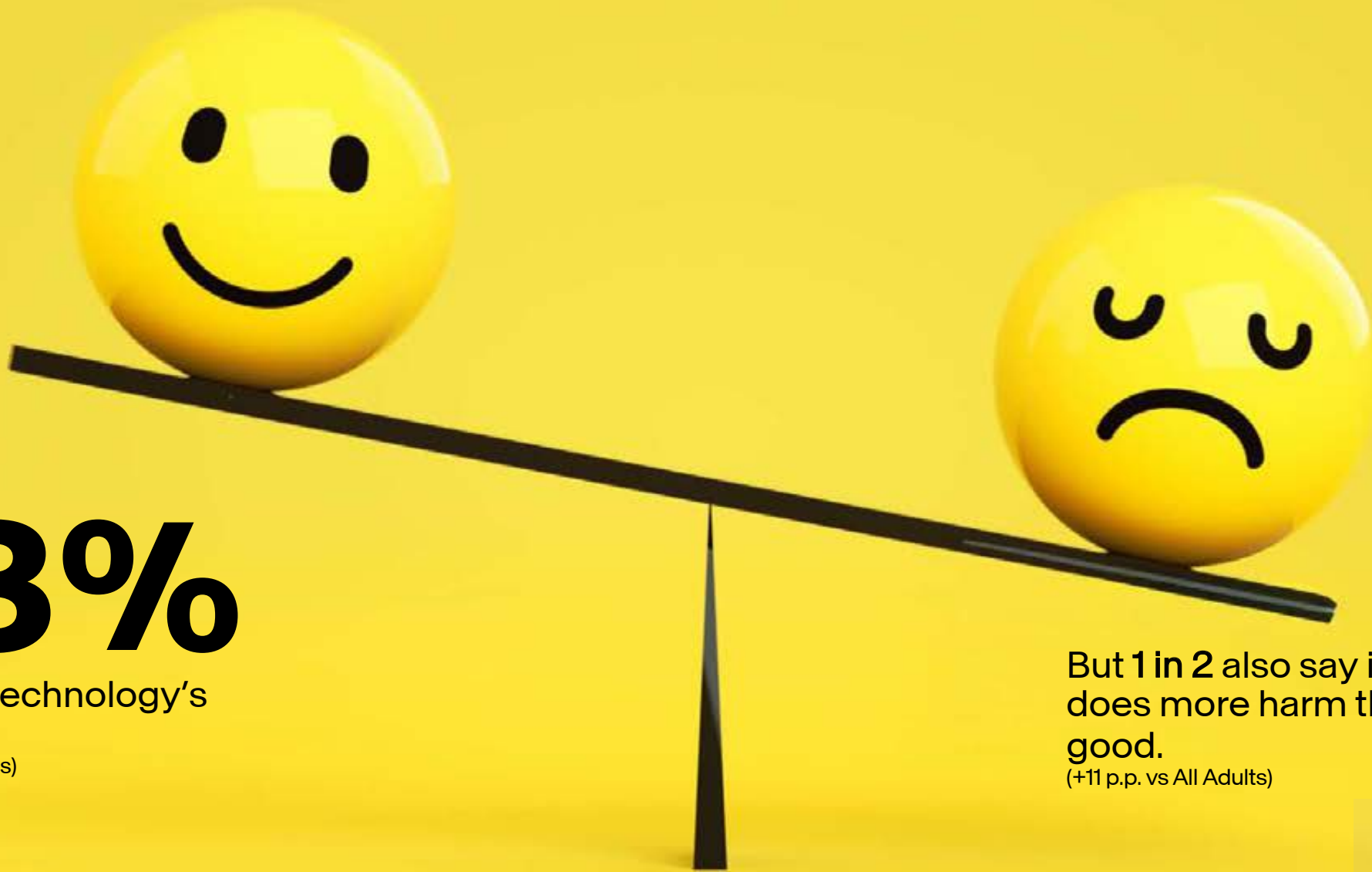
All navigating the same moment, but experiencing it completely differently.



GEN Z

A generation of duality and complexity.

Many are living in contradiction



63%

Believe in technology's
potential.

(+7 p.p. vs All Adults)

But 1 in 2 also say it
does more harm than
good.

(+11 p.p. vs All Adults)

They are both splurging and saving.

1 in 5

Admit they've increased their impulse buys since last year.

While

29%

say that compared to last year they're purchasing after saving to be cautious with expenses.



They need to hold multiple truths at once because that is what their day-to-day demands consist of.

MILLENNIALS

The eternal optimists.

They feel positive about the future. Believers who think they can change things.

Millennials feel the most in control of where their life is heading at

61%



Feel their financial future is generally positive.

60%

**They are motivated
and able to make
change.**



68%

Say they take a stand on key
issues important to them.
(highest of all generations)

56%

Say they actively contribute to
charities or causes that address
issues that are important to
them.

55%

Have stopped buying from
brands that don't respect
people or the planet.
(+10 p.p. vs All Adults)

A close-up photograph of a hand squeezing a thick slice of orange. The orange is bright yellow and glistening with juice. A stream of orange juice is dripping from the bottom of the slice, falling towards the bottom of the frame. The background is dark and out of focus.

GEN X

The squeezed generation.

Underperforming across every measure of wellbeing

Optimism

Happiness

Control

Financial wellbeing

They are pessimistic & a little panicked

They're more considered with their purchases.

They are the most price conscious (60%) & appreciate loyalty programs the most (41%).



And report the lowest percent of impulse purchasing (9%).

BOOMERS

Breaking old habits
and rewriting the script.

**They're determined and
actively trying to improve
themselves**

**Compared to a
year ago...**

63%

**Are trying to be more
physically active.**
(Vs 53% all adults)

55%

**Are trying to make more mindful
nutritional choices.**
(Vs 49% all adults)

51%

**Are trying to be better at
tracking their health.**
(Vs 44% all adults)

**They're not set in their ways,
they're evolving and that's
powerful.**

69%

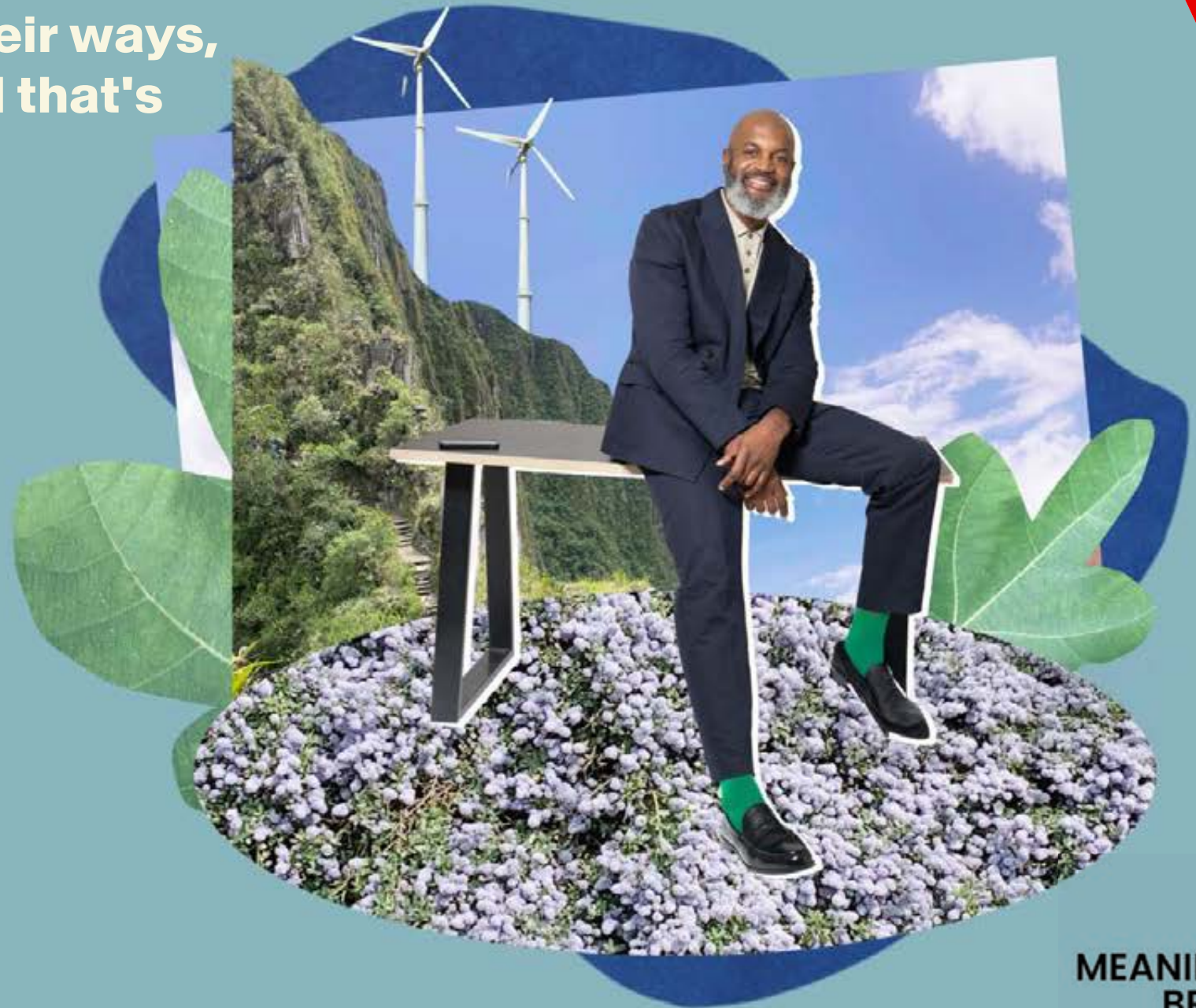
Are trying to be better at
wasting less products/
food/ clothes compared
to a year ago.

(Vs 57% all adults)

63%

Say they put a lot of effort
into being environmentally
responsible and protecting
nature.

(+6 p.p. as All Adults)



What this means. How do these different perspectives impact their relationships with brands?

Expectations for brands remain high.

People haven't lowered their expectations. The bar is high and it isn't dropping.

These points aren't wishes anymore, they're requirements.

They want actions as well as communications.



68%

Believe brands should be doing much more for the good of society and the future of our planet.

(on par vs 2024)

70%

Believe companies/brands should show more humanity and generosity when times are tough.

(on par vs 2024)

68%

Believe companies/brands should help them save money.

(+1 p.p. vs 2024)

Brands need to demonstrate strategic thinking, not just react to crises.

67%

Believe companies should have a long-term plan in place given all the uncertainty we are living in.

(+6 p.p. vs 2024)



**Four generations and four
realities all in one market.**

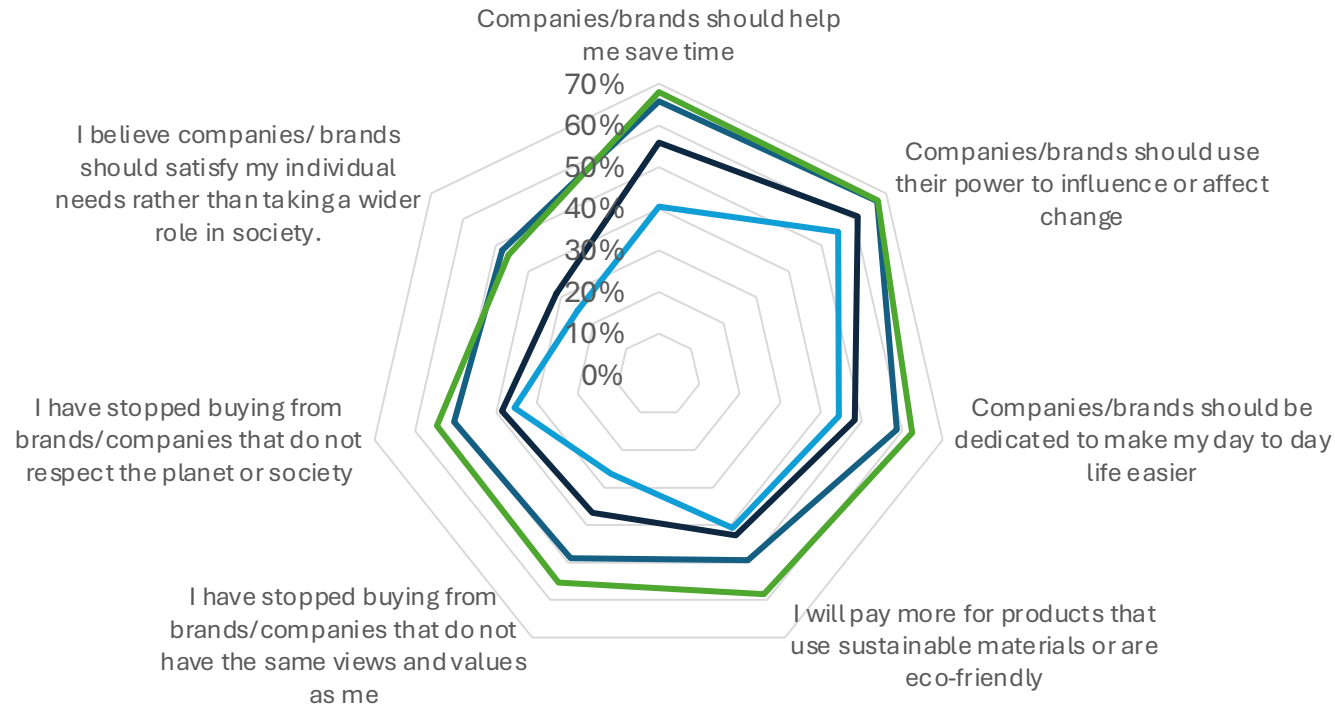
Millennials & Gen Z have the highest expectations for brands.

— Gen Z — Millennials — Gen X — Boomers

They want brands to help them save time, help them make their day to day easier.

They also want brands to use their power to affect change.

But they want brands to meet their needs before they do that. For Gen Z we've seen this increase 10 p.p. since 2023.



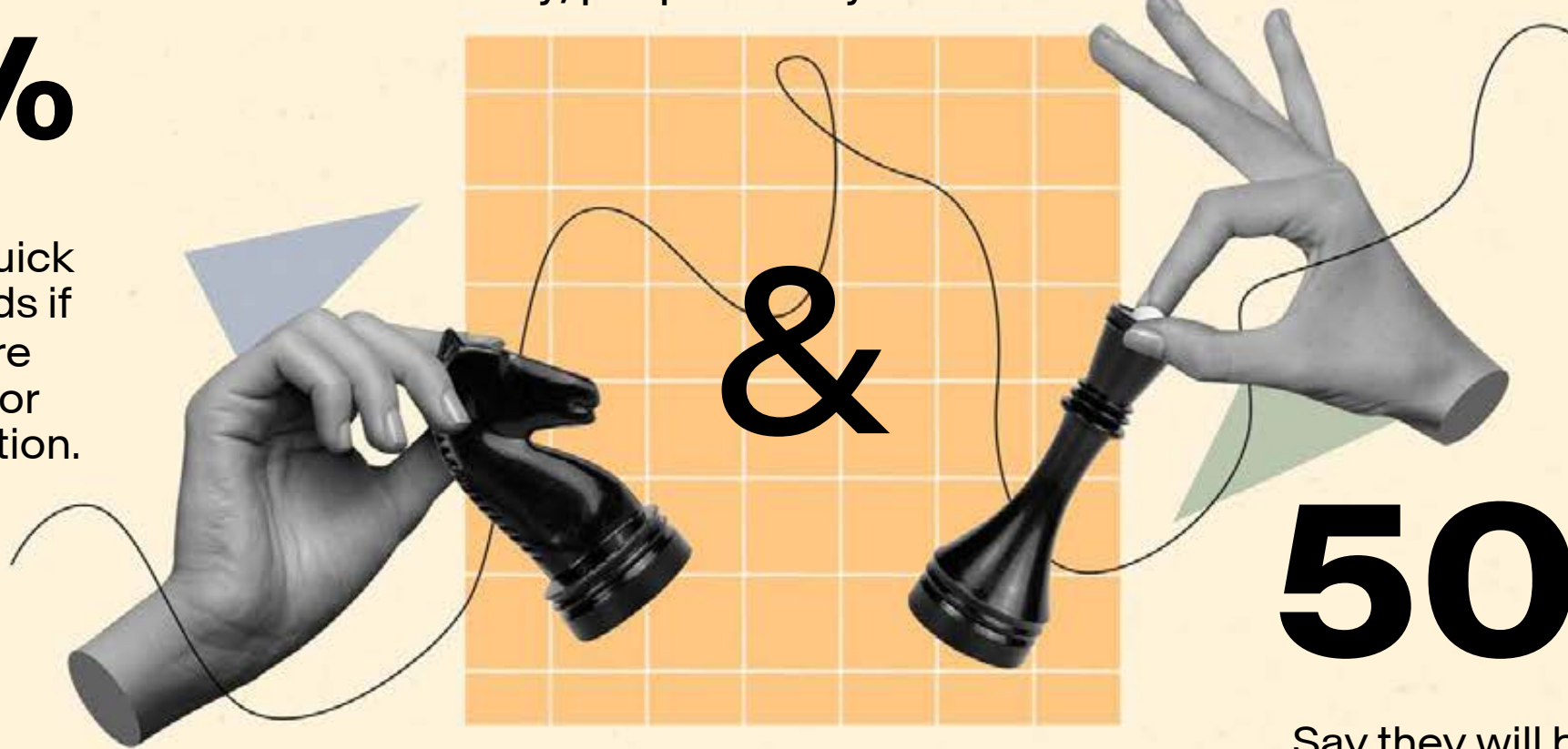
But loyalty has limits.

High expectations exist alongside pragmatic necessities. This is a tightrope brands must walk and walk carefully. However, At the end of the day, people are loyal to THEIR needs.

71%

Say they are quick to switch brands if they find a more cost-effective or convenient option.

(+2 p.p. vs 2024)



50%

Say they will buy a product if it best suits their needs, even if they disagree with the company's views.

(+4 p.p. vs 2024)

WHY IS ALL OF THIS IMPORTANT?

Brand value is under scrutiny.

We are in a caution economy.

73%

Say they are more cautious today about how they spend their money.

Every promise, purchase and interaction is scrutinised.

This has increased 1 p.p. vs last year and up 5 vs 2023.



This isn't temporary belt-tightening, it's a fundamental shift in consumer psychology.

We're seeing that over half of people believe are finding value in private and generic labels

54%

Believe private/generic labels offer better value for money than branded products.



The convenience VS experience paradox

46%

Find online shopping more convenient than in-store shopping for most of their needs.

Different needs require different solutions and there is a clear trade off for people between convenience and experience. Brands need to excel at both.



60%

Say they prefer shopping in physical stores because they enjoy experiencing products firsthand and receiving in-person assistance when needed.

BRAND IMPACT

Brand impact is measured across 3 pillars.

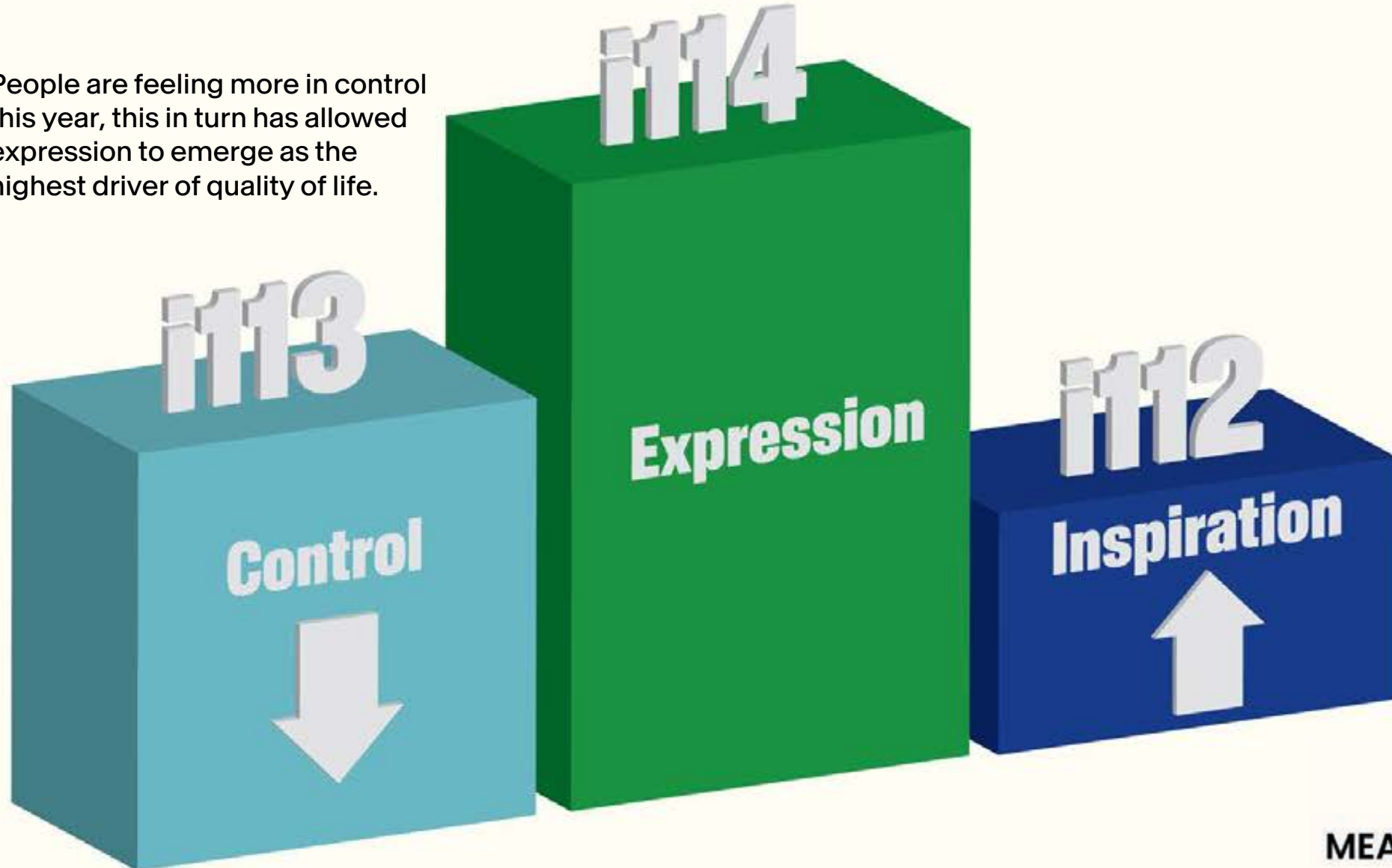
What you do as a business
What you do for society
What you do for ME

And we see that
out of the three,
the personal pillar
takes a larger
piece of the pie
than the others.



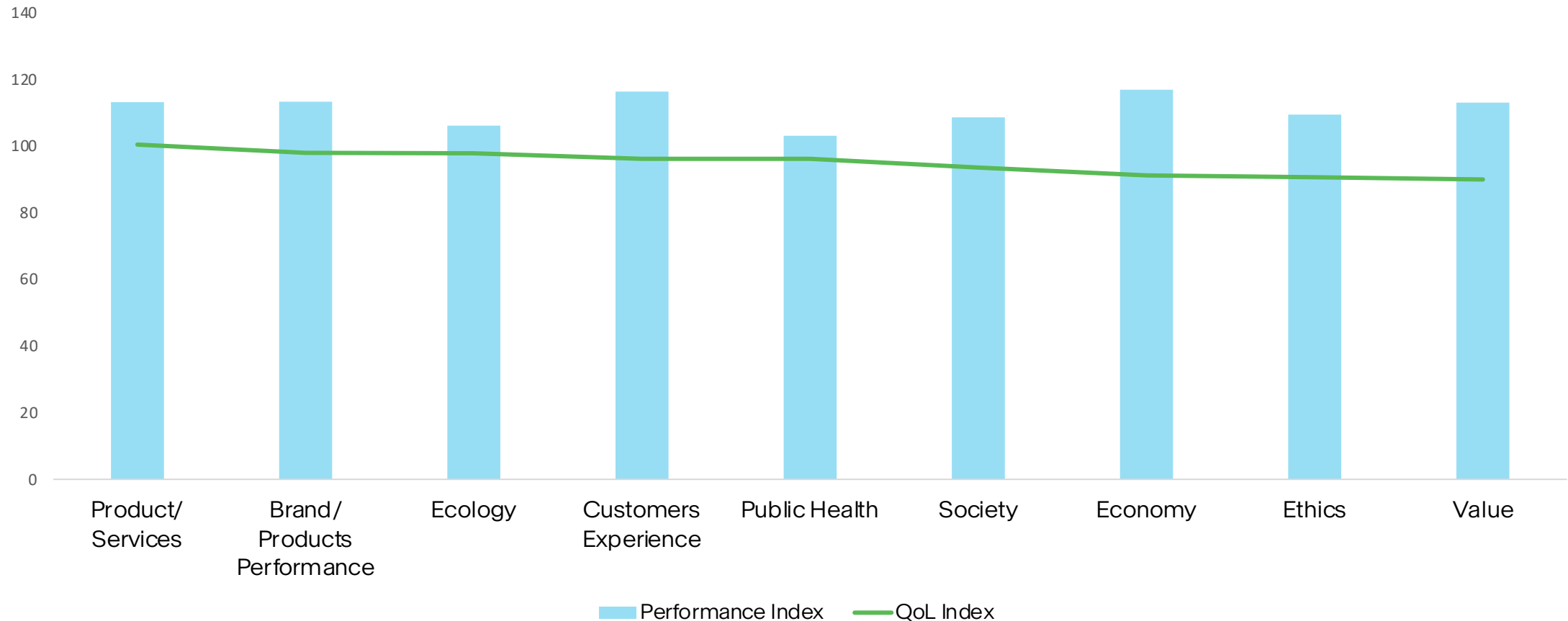
Control unlocks expression.

People are feeling more in control this year, this in turn has allowed expression to emerge as the highest driver of quality of life.



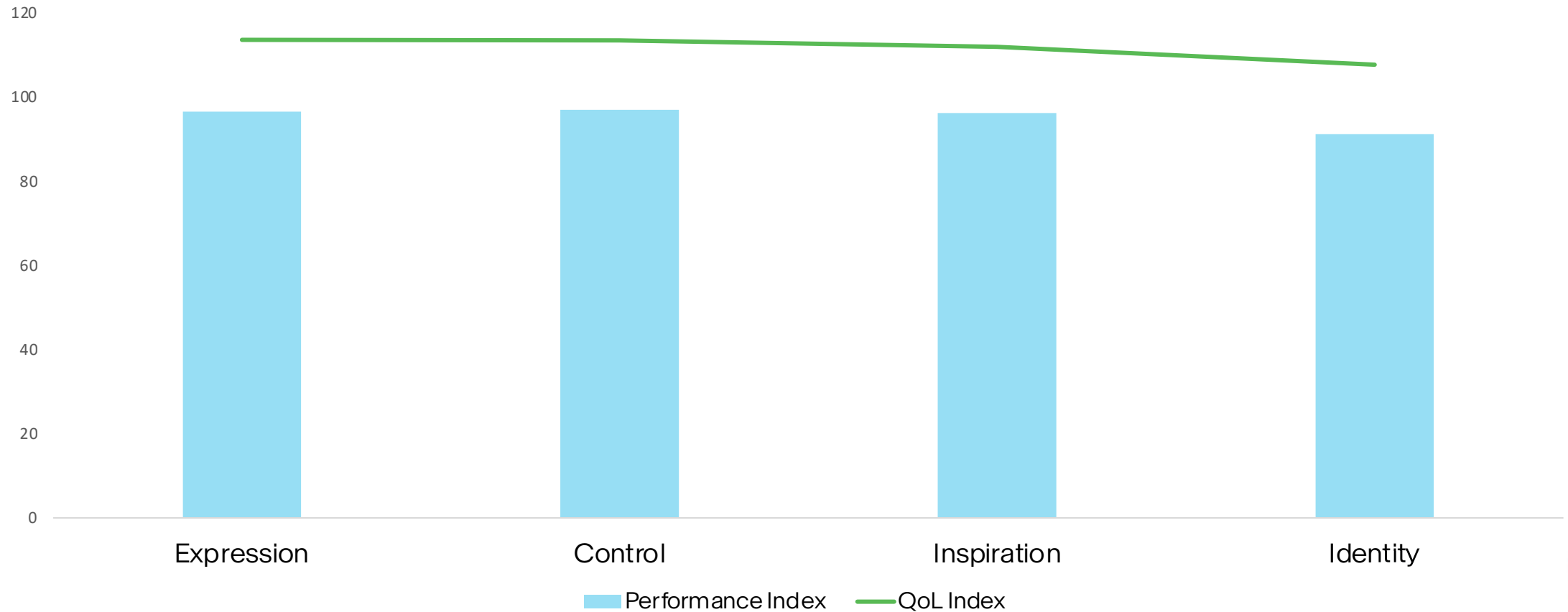
The Irish brand strength:

Functionally and collectively, Irish brands are meeting the needs of consumers.



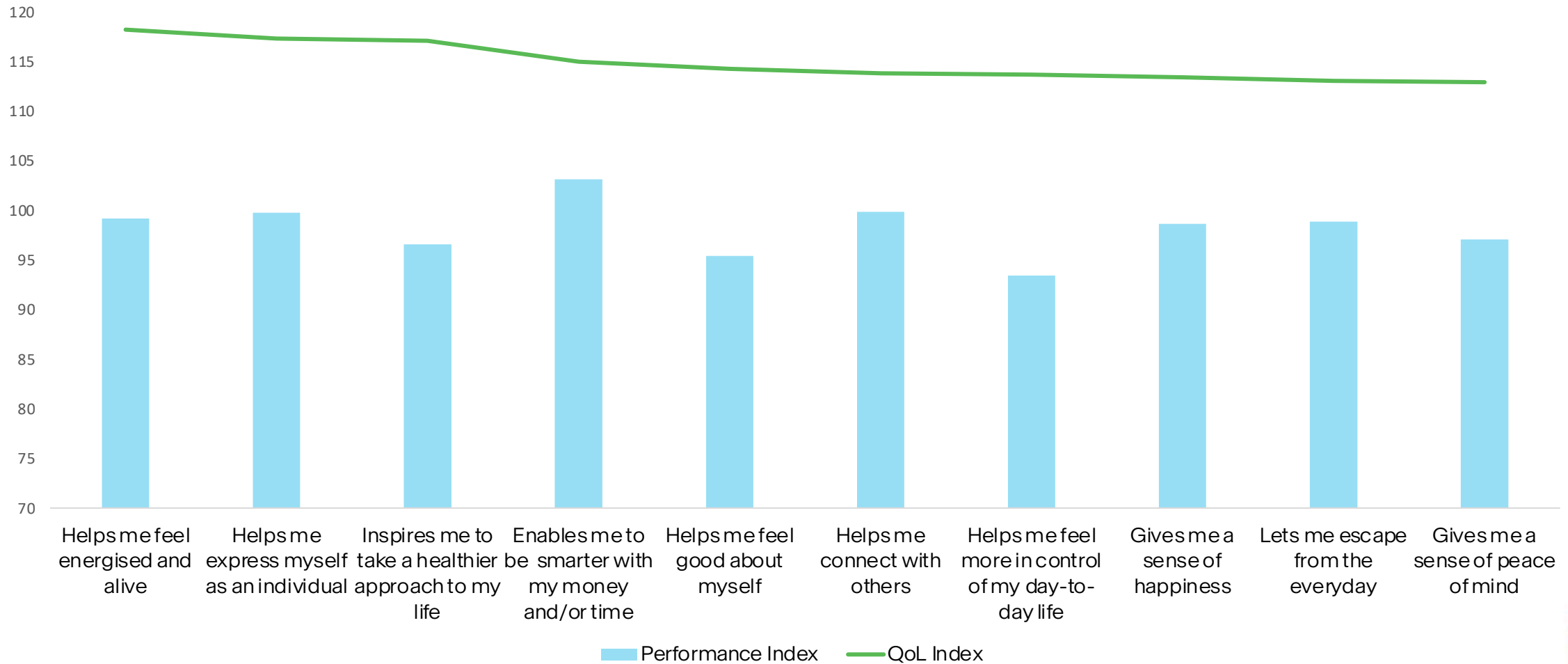
The gap that matters most: Personal

There is still a considerable personal benefits gap that needs to be closed. As we saw earlier, it's the most important pillar for driving quality of life.



What actually drives connection?

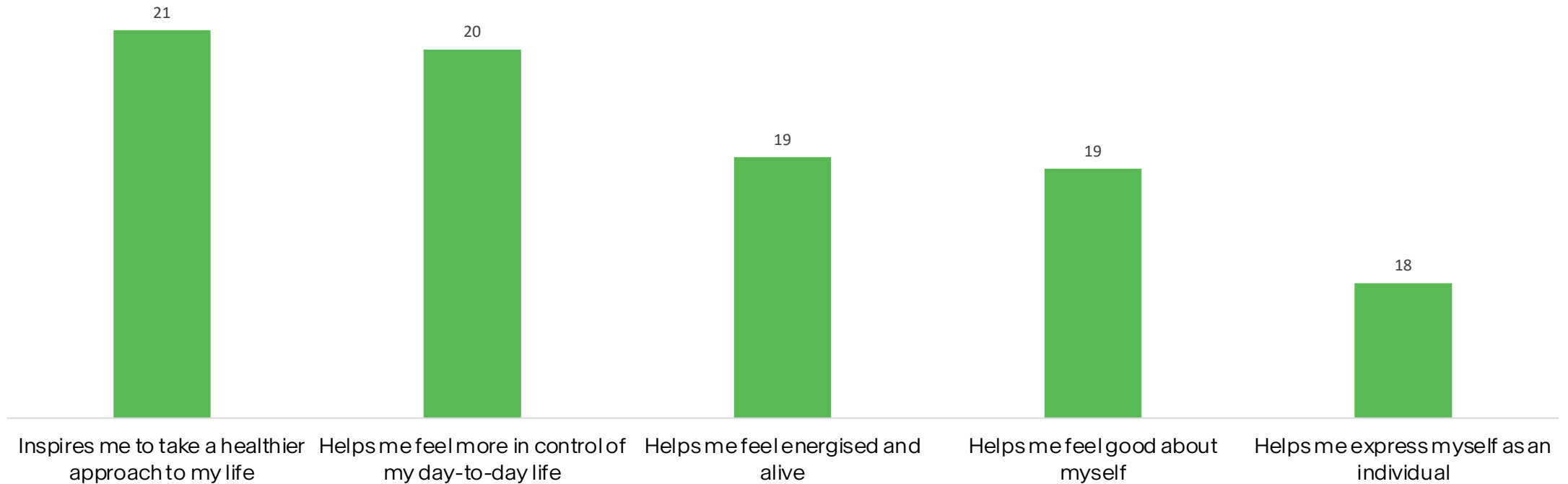
Across the top 10 most important attributes, Irish brands are not meeting the emotional needs of consumers.



HOW DO WE START TO CLOSE THE GAP?

Where to win:

Prioritise the largest performance gaps. These are gaps that are important cross generationally.



But if your target audience is Boomers, you could lean more into helping inspire them to live a healthier life.

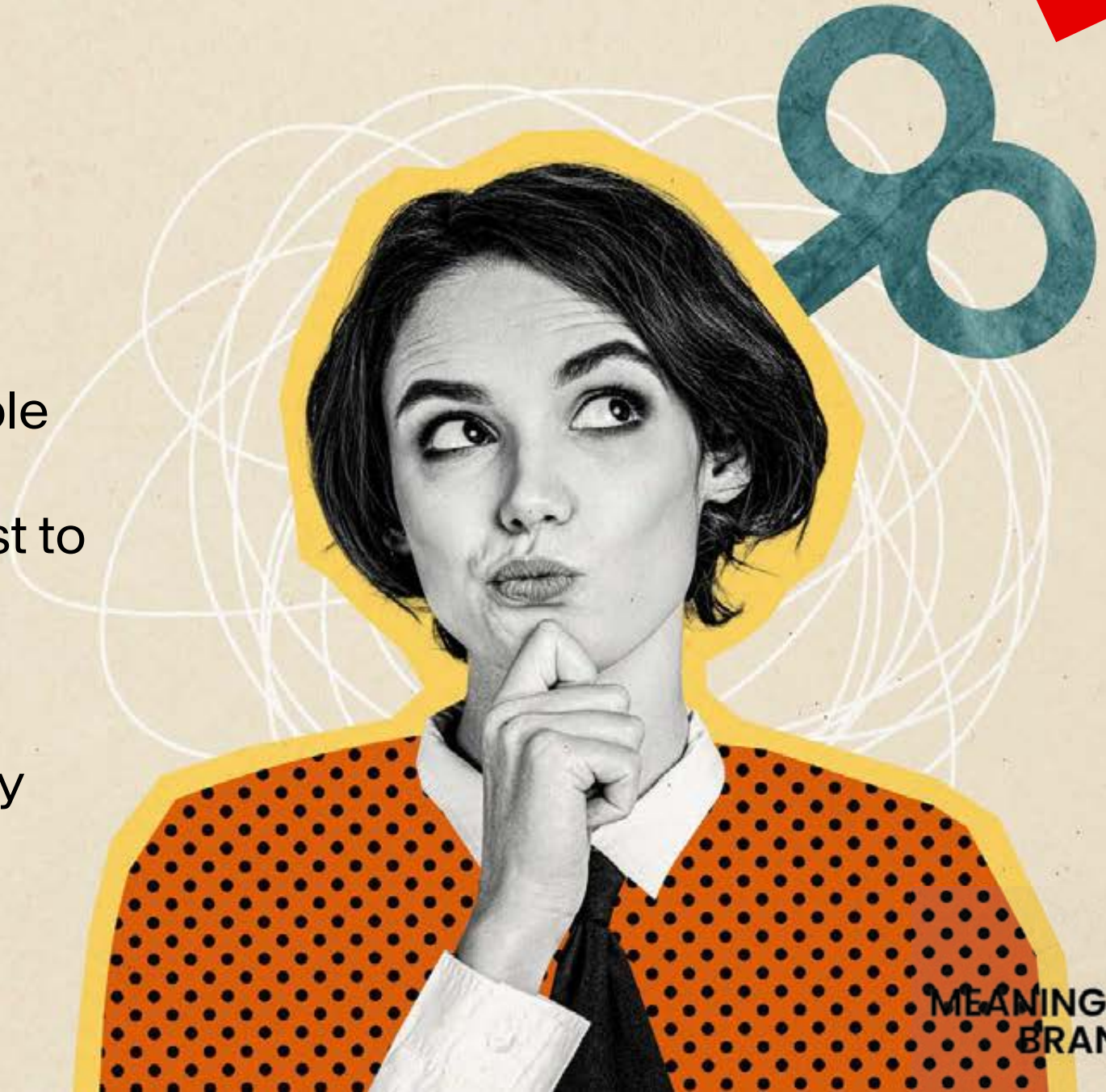
If your communicating messaging around control, that might be most relevant to Gen Z or Gen X that are lacking that.

If you're going out with positive and energised messaging, that might resonate strongly with Millennials.

Summary & key take outs

In a world of uncertainty, people are reclaiming control by focusing on what matters most to them in the here and now.

Brands that help them do that, while proving their worth every single day, will win.



Help build those resilience frameworks.

Brands can help deliver happiness in the now through building resilience frameworks that deliver immediate gratification.



The components of resilience are Expression. Control. Health & Wellbeing. Happiness.

These different elements act as micro doses of dopamine.



Prove you have a plan beyond the immediate.

People still want and expect businesses to continue to do the right thing for society and the planet. They want to see a plan for this.

But similarly to when flying and flight safety instructions, put your own mask on first, then look after others. Their first concern is one of self-interest.

However, while they're putting on their oxygen mask, they're looking for brands to have a plan to 'land the plane'.



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