waterwise

Environment Agency

GENERATION Z AND WATER EFFICIENCY

MARTHA MAKIN

SEPTEMBER 2019

GENERATION Z

- Generation Z is the group of people who are born after the so-called 'millennials'.
- Definitions differ, but it's generally agreed that people born between the years 1996 and 2006 are classified as Generation Z.
- At the time of publication, these people range from in school undertaking their GCSEs to graduating and entering the work force.

OUR METHOD

We surveyed 100 people born between the years 1996 and 2006, over 2 days in September 2019. We used a simple online questionaire and non environmental networks to gather a general view of people of this age without specific knowledge or experience in the water or environmental sector. Although the sample wasn't scientifically selected, it gives a useful snapshot of the views and values of the average Gen Z person.

RESEARCH QUESTION

We wanted to discover whether in a world of increasing environmental awareness, media attention and political unrest around climate change, Generation Z have a good understanding of water efficiency - or a better understanding than others. We wanted to see if issues around water efficiency were understood and acted upon.

QUESTIONS

We asked 10 questions around awareness of water efficiency and water use, and water-using behaviours. The results serve as an introduction and opening discussion to the topic.
Of the 100 participants, the average time spent on answering the 10 questions was 1 minute.

HIGHLIGHTS

A SUSTAINABLE GENERATION

97% of Gen Z thought that they were equally, if not more, environmentally-friendly than their parents.

EMBEDDED WATER

82% of respondents knew that there was embedded water in their clothes and food, contributing to their carbon footprint.

WATER EFFICIENCY EDUCATION

64% said they had not received any information on water efficiency at school or university.

DISCUSSION

- These first three results indicate that Gen Z could be the most environmentally-aware generation.
- They appear to have a high understanding of embedded water and have made the link between their water/carbon footprint and food and clothes.
- However, it doesn't appear that this education has come via formal routes. Could the rise in media/social media attention and recent breakthrough environmental campaigns have made this effect alone?

WATER SAVING BEHAVIOURS

69% of Gen Z said they take action to reduce their water usage.

WASHING THEIR CLOTHES

75% of participants said that they only wash their clothes when absolutely necessary.

BATH TIME

87% said they have fewer than one bath per week.

THE SHOWER GENERATION

We know that Gen Z are not big users of baths, but how often and for how long do they shower?

42% have 3-5 showers a week
41% have 3-8 showers a week
15% have 8-12 showers a week
2% have 12 + showers a week

13% take 1-4 minute showers
54% take 4-8 minute showers
21% take 8-12 minute showers
12% take 12+ minute showers

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

- This research snapshot suggests that water efficiency campaigns targeting Gen Z could helpfully focus on showering not having a bath.
- The majority of respondents have fewer than 8 showers per week - perhaps one per day is the norm? Anecdotal evidence suggests this is because sport and the gym are very important to this age group.
- The average Gen Z is taking between 4 and 8 minutes in the shower. A behaviour change campaign targeted at Gen Z could concentrate on reducing this to 4 minutes.

ROUND UP

- The results are very positive. Drawing on this snapshot, as Gen Z start buying homes and becoming leaders, we can be hopeful that they will make the right choices for our water resources and planet.
- It would be interesting to see further and more detailed research directly comparing water-using behaviours of Generation Z with other generations, their parents and grandparents.

waterwise

SEPTEMBER
2019

WWW.WATERWISE.ORG.UK
@WATERWISE