AVION CONSULTING
EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Leading a Workforce That Is Aging and Getting Younger at Once

The standard "understanding Gen Z" conversation misses the harder problem: two demographic shifts are colliding inside the same organization at the same time.

57%

Of US labor force growth this decade will come from workers 65 and older, even as Gen Z and millennials approach 74% of the global workforce

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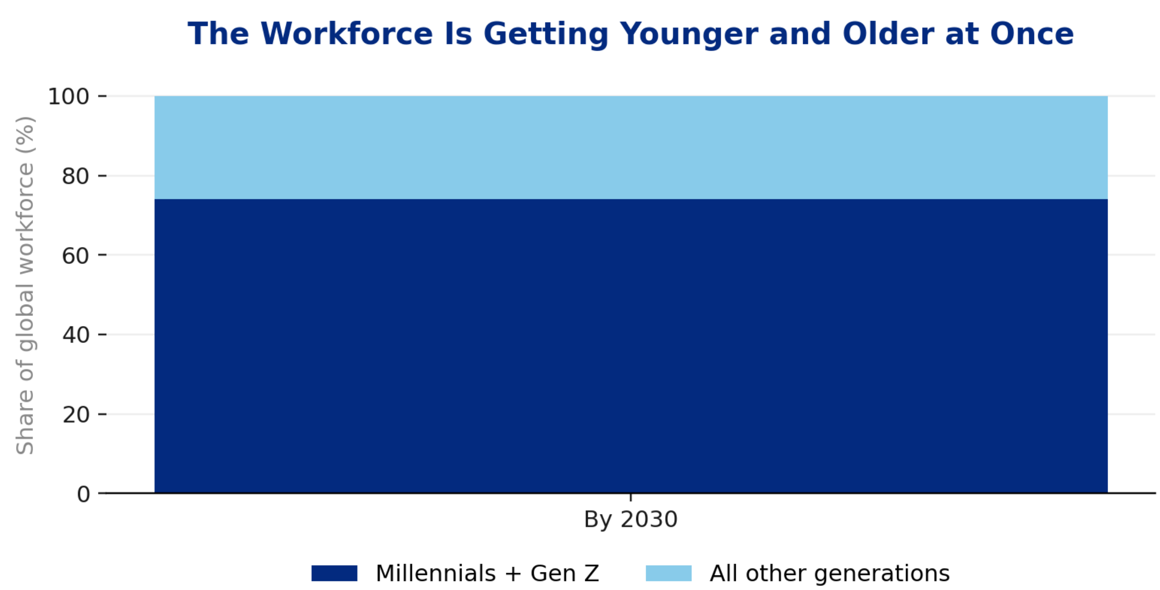
Two Trends, Same Organization, Same Decade

Most workforce planning conversations about generational change focus on a single storyline: younger workers entering the workforce with different expectations around flexibility, purpose, and technology. That storyline is accurate and incomplete. Millennials and Gen Z are projected to make up roughly 74 percent of the global workforce by 2030. At the same time, workers 65 and older are expected to account for 57 percent of US labor force growth this decade.

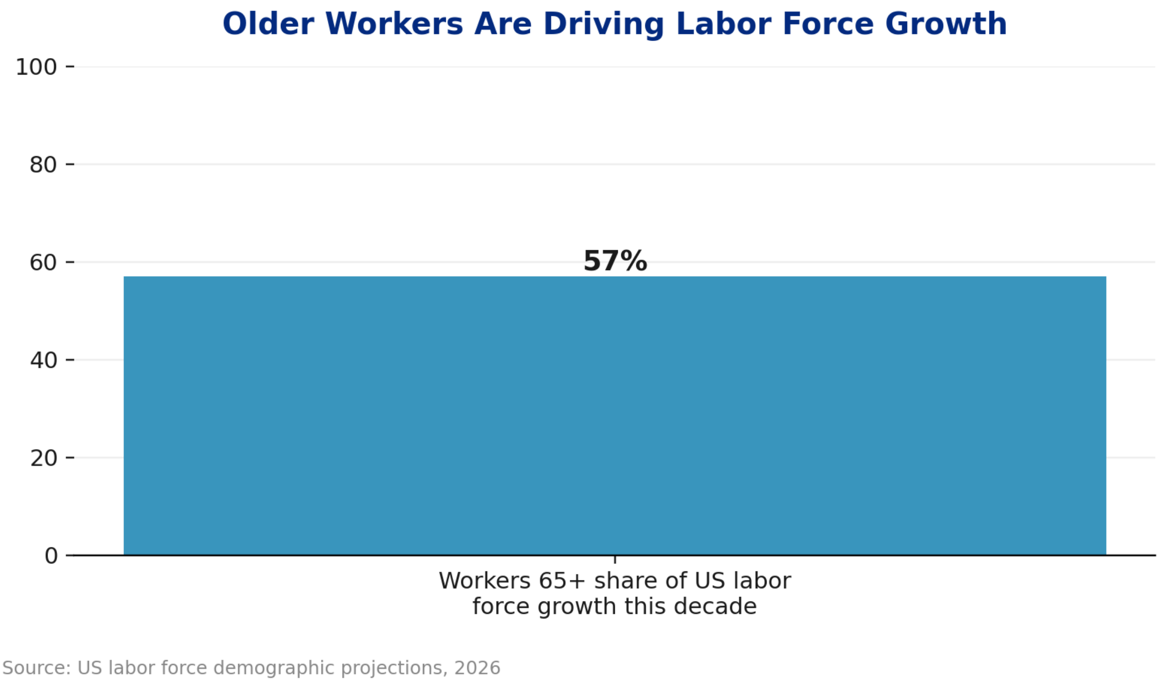


Source: Workforce demographic projections, 2026

The workforce is shifting sharply younger even as older workers stay in longer.

Why the Overlap Is the Actual Challenge

Neither trend alone is unusual. Workforces have absorbed generational turnover before. What is different this time is the overlap: an organization simultaneously managing a rapidly growing share of early-career workers and a growing share of workers well past traditional retirement age choosing to stay, often in the same functions, sometimes on the same teams. That combination puts pressure on management practices built around a single dominant generational cohort, from how feedback is delivered to how career paths are structured to what benefits actually get used.



Older workers are a larger share of labor force growth than most workforce plans assume.

The Numbers at a Glance

Metric	Figure	Source
Millennials + Gen Z share of global workforce by 2030	~74%	Workforce demographic projections, 2026
Workers 65+ share of US labor force growth this decade	57%	US labor force demographic projections, 2026

Why the Standard Playbook Falls Short

Most generational strategy work optimizes for one cohort at a time, a Gen Z recruiting campaign here, a retiree phased-transition program there. Treated as separate initiatives, they miss the actual management challenge, which is designing a single set of practices, career paths, and management norms flexible enough to work for a 24 year old and a 68 year old on the same team, often reporting to the same manager.

Two Different Jobs to Do

For the CEO

Ask whether your workforce strategy has actually modeled this overlap, or whether it has quietly defaulted to planning around whichever generation is loudest in the current cultural conversation. The demographic reality is more complicated than either extreme.

For the CHRO

Build manager training and career architecture around flexibility across a wider age range than most current programs assume, rather than a program tailored narrowly to the incoming generation. The retention risk on both ends of the age spectrum is real and is being managed by very few organizations with intention.

The Opportunity in Getting This Right

Organizations that design deliberately for this overlap, rather than treating it as a temporary transition to manage through, gain a genuine advantage: institutional knowledge retained longer, paired with the energy and technological fluency of a much younger incoming cohort, inside the same team rather than in separate silos.

References

1. Workforce demographic projection research, citing multiple 2025-2026 labor force studies on generational composition.
2. US labor force demographic projection research, 2026.