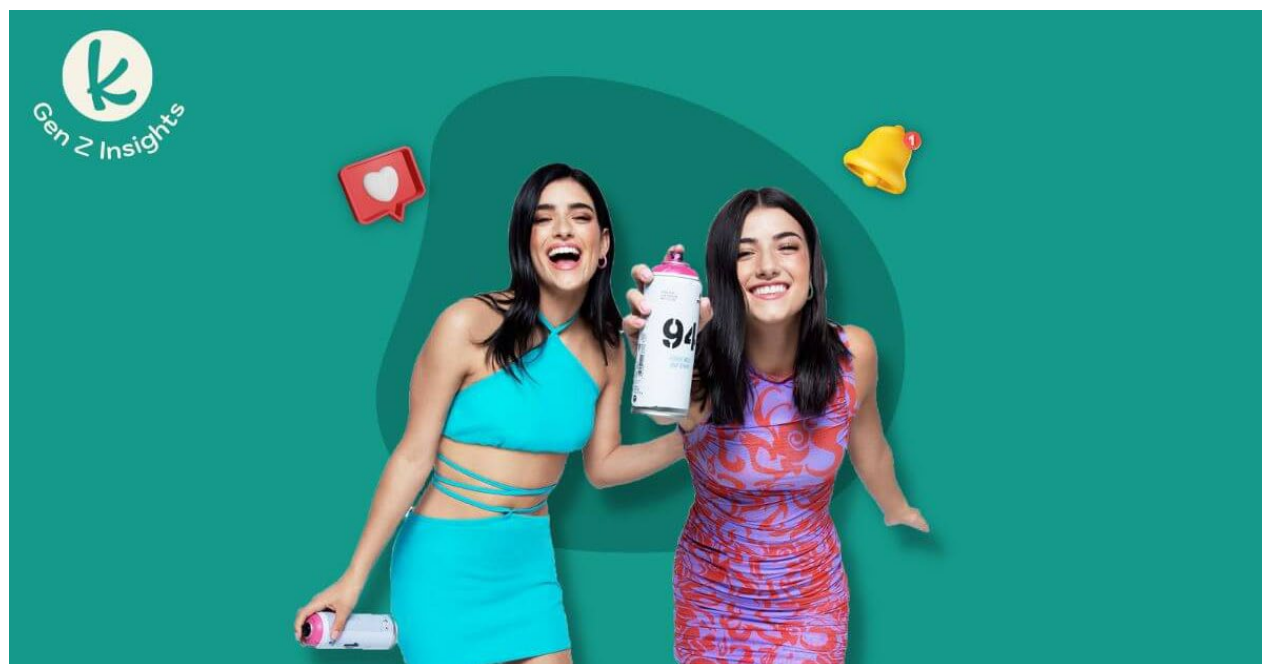


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**Gen Z Celebrities:**

# What's With All These Famous TikTokers Going Mainstream?

Gen Z knows exactly what they want and need from both social platforms and big brands, and in case you somehow haven't heard, apps like TikTok hold the key to dialing into those requirements. The authenticity, diversity and personal connection its content

offers have made it the fastest climbing social media platform, with expectations that it will achieve a **25% market share by 2024**.

Brands that are able to learn the lessons that TikTok is teaching could be richly rewarded as it continues to gain popularity with the next generation.

## Is TikTok the next star-making machine?

As social media becomes increasingly diversified, so too are crossover opportunities to market to the online generation. Zoomers are spending more and more time on the short video platform of TikTok. We found that 24.7% of Gen Z say TikTok is the platform they spend the most time on (second only to YouTube at 30%).



# 25.9%

**of Gen Z TikTok users log on to see what their favorite content creator is up to**

Despite disparate reasons for logging on to TikTok, many members of Gen Z are looking for the same features no matter the subject. They **tend to prioritize authenticity** in their scrolling; even if the creator is giving them sponsored content, zoomers still want truthful, organic product reviews. Another thing that TikTok brings to the table is personal connection.

Because the format of TikTok is so egalitarian, with creators speaking directly to their audience in a raw format, there's a sense of personal connection, and Gen Z values that. It also curates a feed that can showcase a diverse range of posters according to the preference of the consumer. **TikTok's algorithm** feeds content from the people and causes that are important to them based on likes and time spent per video.

## **Authenticity is the path to mainstream stardom**

When polled, a concept that Gen Z continues to bang the drum for is authenticity. 67% of Zoomers agreed that **showcasing one's authentic beliefs and values was the ticket to coolness**. This is true of their personal lives, but it also carries over into their purchasing lives.

Gen Z wants and expects to see authentic enthusiasm for the products being hawked to them. This trend began in their childhoods with YouTube, which has found a natural successor in

TikTok. The intimacy of the platform comes from creators appearing as they are, feeling real emotions, and interacting with viewers and other content creators.

TikToker **Hannah Schlenker** didn't expect to go viral for her video about Arie brand leggings; she just wanted to make a haul video about the waist snatching leggings she'd just picked up for an upcoming trip. Her frankness about the changes the crossover waist made to her appearance resonated with viewers in a huge way. It was an authentic and enthusiastic endorsement that led to the Arie leggings flying off every shelf that stocked them. Hannah is now a brand ambassador who is using her platform to champion body positivity, with the full support of the inclusive messaging of Arie behind her.

## Connections that translate from smartphone to small screen

Instead of shiny, impersonal news feeds, TikTok runs on personal stories and connection — creators speak from the heart and lay their emotions bare. Not for them the Selena Gomezes of the world with a team hired to keep her image gleaming, rather, **creators like Khaby Lame** poke sly fun at try-hard accounts. TikTok also runs on digital neighborhoods, with every little micro identity having its own place. Having infinite choices that cater to niche interests fosters a sense of personal connection that they value.

Beyond highlighting niche identities, TikTok has served as a staging area for Zoomers to get personally involved in causes they believe in. Petitions, calls to arms, and the championing of individual fights for rights have paired causes with the faces of people directly affected by them. Creators like Charli D'Amelio have been able to do just that. While her main content — popular lip syncing and dancing videos that she has managed to parlay into a show on Hulu — is pure entertainment, she was able to switch gears in the wake of the racial upheaval of 2020, calling for allyship and anti-racism from her many followers.

Zoomers expect creators with platforms to use their power responsibly, not just amusingly. This diverse range of identities and ideas is something that Zoomers want to see in their brands, as well. **76% of Gen Z** say they want brands to make representation a priority. Brands like Target understood the assignment.

They have won Gen Z over with a genuine commitment to things like their vocal support of the LGBTQIA community outside of pride month and implementing genderless toy aisles. Again, authenticity and personal connection are valued, so companies that walk that line successfully are rewarded with Zoomer loyalty and dollars.

## Sound is key to the crossover appeal of TikTok

One of the unique things about TikTok as compared to other social

media platforms is its sounds. Music and vocal clips are shared and reused across the different neighborhoods and back again. Those sounds have become the Gen Z soundtrack that often jumps from TikTok into the “real” world. Ten-year-old songs shoot up the iTunes charts.

Previously unknown creators can attain fame on the strength of a viral original song or a beautiful rendition of an old classic made new. Creators like Addison Rae have been able to **parlay this virality into outside success**, with **starring roles in Netflix movies** and a single that made it all the way to the .

And mainstream celebrities have been able to **harness the power of TikTok** in the other direction, as well. Will Smith, while not forgotten, had mostly nostalgic appeal until he started using TikTok to connect to fans and gain new ones. Now? He is **the most followed mainstream celebrity** on the platform, with over 52 Million followers. Being able to adjust to the media landscape of today has proven wildly successful, netting him new fans and opportunities.

## **Video #foryou: Gen Z weighs in on mainstream TikTokers**

No need to take our word for it, of course, since **bringing brands Voice of Consumer video insights** from the largest Gen Z consumer panel in the nation is sort of our whole thing. We'll let you get back to scrolling through today's dance challenges and cat video duets right after this takeaway:

When we asked our panelists, “what’s with all these TikTokers going mainstream, anyway?” We couldn’t help but notice how many emphasized that their interest in crossover creators was rooted in — you guessed it — authenticity.

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Ready to learn more about Gen Z’s favorite social media channels and content? See why TikTok has grabbed so much of Gen Z’s attention when you read *TikTok Continues To Win Over Gen Z*, or let’s duet: get in touch with the experts at Knit to start understanding your Gen Z audience today.

Ask Gen Z A Question