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Want to be a Leader? Gen Z says you need to adopt three habits now.

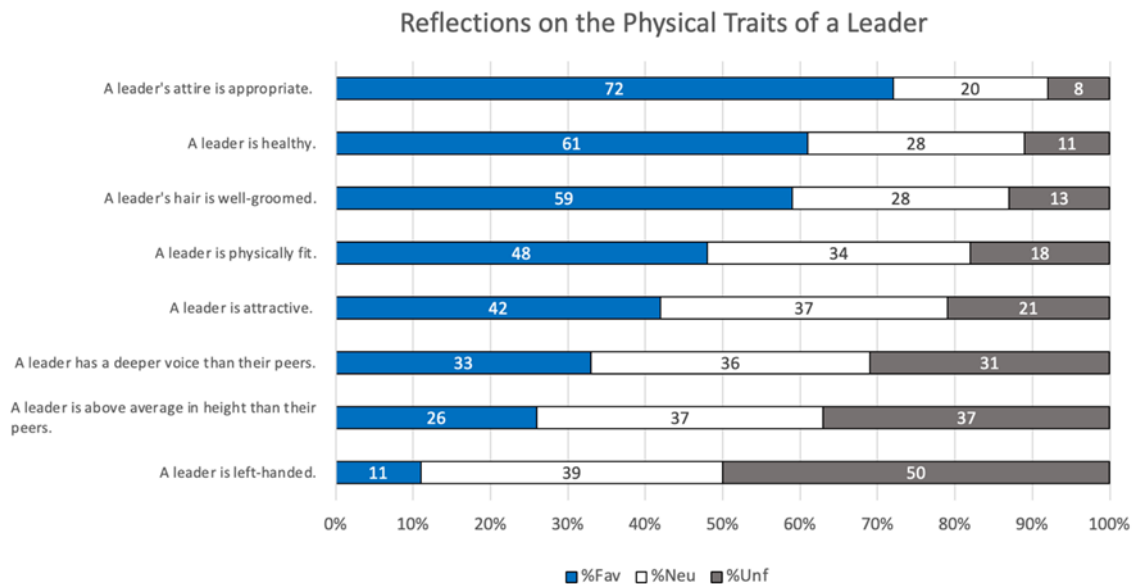
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If you aspire to lead others in the workplace, especially the newly emerging Gen Z cohort, you better:

- be properly attired,
- manage your health, and
- have well-groomed hair.

These findings come from the just-concluded Future of Leadership Research, a comprehensive study on the evolving expectations of leadership in the 21st century from the perspective of 18–30-year-olds. The research was conducted by Professors Ruchin Kansal and Karen Boroff, graduate student Bianca Johnson at Seton Hall University, and Anthony Caputo, Chief Operating Officer at Remesh, in partnership with Atheneum. 4000+ Gen Z respondents from countries around the world responded to this year’s survey, the fourth since its launch in 2021.

These findings, consistent over the last four years, affirm that the Gen Z expectations of a leader's appearance are not a passing trend but a significant aspect of their perception of leadership. Gen Z has clearly stated that the individuals they desire to see in leadership roles should dress appropriately and radiate health. Additionally, they expect these leaders to have well-groomed hair, which aligns nicely with their preference for leaders to present themselves appropriately. Gen Zers have dismissed the traditional trait-based leadership theory yet again, as they don’t consider gender, race, height, physical fitness, or a deep voice essential for someone to be a leader. Likewise, the leader need not be “attractive,” however they defined that.



*N=4203 Responses; Numbers in bars represent percentage of respondents; Responses are sorted from most to least favorable

The Gen Zers gives us something timely to consider—the role of appearance in the upcoming national elections. Presidential politics are in the news daily. Interestingly, both former President Trump and now President Biden

have posed a question in the eyes of voters: “Are these candidates healthy enough to assume the figurehead role that a US president has worldwide?” When former President Trump contracted COVID, journalists were concerned about his weight—his comorbidities that could complicate his recovery. Likewise, former special counsel Robert Hur raised concerns about President Biden’s health, namely his poor memory.

What is the practical implication for those who want to lead? Gen Zers indicate three practices that are not only crucial but also easy to adopt, empowering you to meet their expectations:

- **Dress appropriately** for one’s leadership position. This could mean wearing a suit and tie for a corporate setting, a lab coat for a scientific role, or a uniform for a service industry job. Appropriate dress can vary by industry, organization, or even culture and can be easily factored into self-improvement plans.
- **Keep oneself healthy** mentally, physically, and emotionally. Self-attention and care from professionals can help manage health.
- **Keep one’s hair well-groomed.** This could mean having a neat hairstyle, maintaining clean and healthy hair, and avoiding extreme or unconventional styles. Many resources can help one style one’s hair as appropriate for the organizational setting.

In conclusion, Gen Z expects that the people who represent them recognize their roles as symbolic leaders. Symbolic leaders are those who not only lead by example but also embody the values and aspirations of their followers. True, these may be first-impression factors and do not address the deeper competencies that make a leader truly effective. However, these fundamentals more easily place one on the path to leadership positions.

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One of the country’s leading Catholic universities, Seton Hall has been showing the world what great minds can do since 1856. Home to nearly 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students and offering more than 90 rigorous majors, Seton Hall’s academic excellence has been singled out for distinction by The Princeton Review, US News & World Report and Bloomberg Businessweek. Seton Hall, which embraces students of all religions, prepares its graduates to be exemplary servant leaders and caring global citizens. Its attractive main campus is located in suburban South Orange, New Jersey, and is only 14 miles by train, bus or car to New York City, offering a wealth of employment, internship, cultural and entertainment opportunities. A new independent economic analysis of the University found that Seton Hall provides a significant impact on New Jersey’s economy, totaling over \$1.6 billion annually and creating and sustaining nearly 10,000 jobs. The university’s nationally recognized School of Law is prominently located in downtown Newark. The University’s Interprofessional Health Sciences (IHS) campus in Clifton and Nutley, New Jersey, houses Seton Hall’s College of Nursing, its School of Health and Medical Sciences as well as Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine.