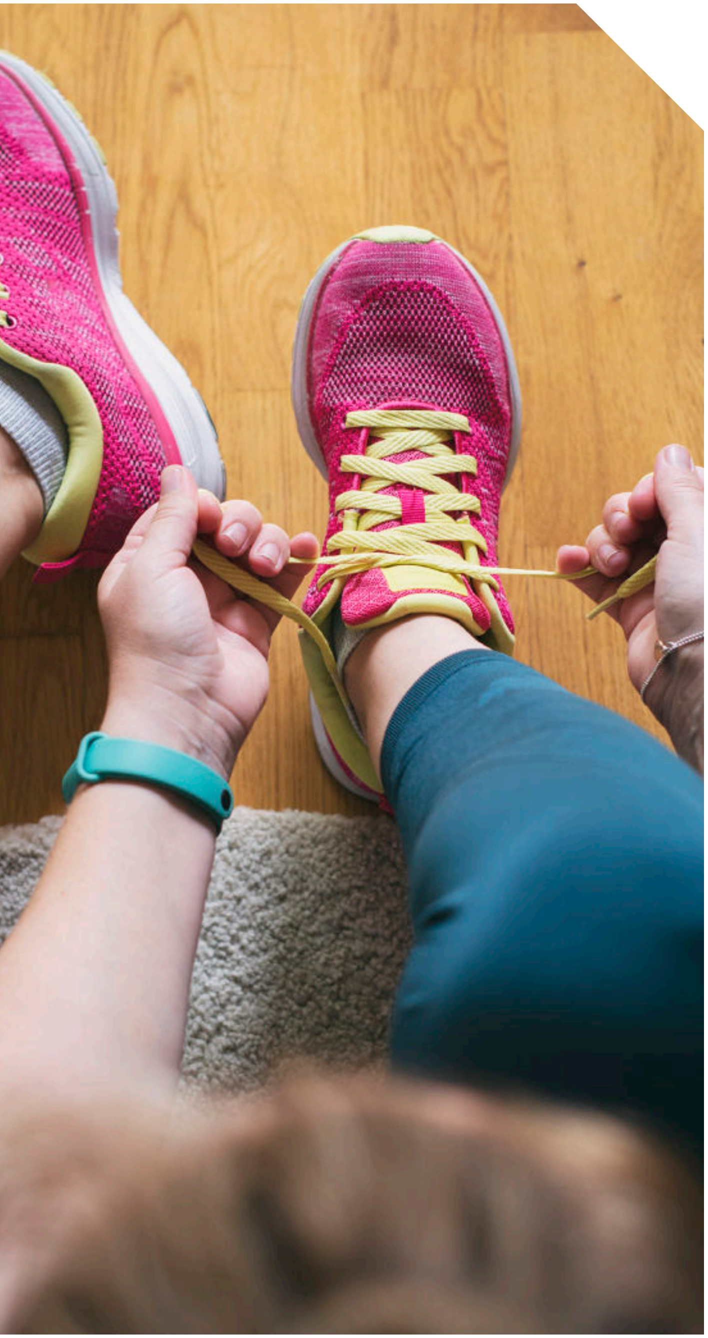
THE GEN XPERIENCE

YEAR 2 REPORT • HEALTH & WELLNESS

A FIVE-YEAR JOURNEY INTO THE LIVES OF GENERATION X

Mather institute



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THE YEAR 2 FINDINGS FROM OUR FIVE-YEAR STUDY FOCUSED ON GEN X HEALTH AND WELLNESS.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, Mather Institute launched a five-year initiative to examine key lifestyle trends, attitudes, and interests of Generation X. This second annual report focuses on their health and wellness, including perceptions of wellness trends, their use of wellness technology such as smartwatches, and experiences with workplace wellness programs.

A nationally representative sample of 2,520 members of Generation X (ages 44–59 at the time of this report) and 2,517 members of the baby boomer generation (ages 60–78 at the time of the report) participated in the online survey.

FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SURVEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

1. Approximately 69% of Gen X respondents rated their stress over the previous three months as "moderate" to "extreme" with money/finances as the greatest source of stress.

2. Many Gen Xers show limited interest in exploring the latest wellness trends; there may need to be more awareness or credibility surrounding some of these trends before they're willing to give them a try.

3. Although over two-thirds of Gen Xers have used wellness technologies to monitor their health, barriers exist for others, such as cost, lack of interest, and concerns about data privacy.

4. Work-life balance and job security are important to employed Gen Xers, with nearly 60% noting that these workplace factors impact their wellness a great deal.

5. Just 45% of Gen Xers have reported having "very good" or "excellent" mental health, compared to 57% of baby boomers.

STUDY OVERVIEW

Born between 1965 and 1980, Gen Xers grew up among social changes, including an increase of women in the workplace; the subsequent rise of two-income families; and technological advancements, including personal computers and cable television. In terms of health and wellness, popular forms of exercise when Gen Xers were children or young adults included aerobic workout videos, jogging, stationary bikes, and racquetball. Brand-name diet foods and beverages, such as Diet Coke (launched 1982), Lean Cuisine (1981), and Crystal Light (1984), became increasingly common. Young Gen Xers were also exposed to widespread public health messages on topics such as the AIDS epidemic, drug prevention (e.g., "Just Say No"), crime prevention (e.g., "Take a Bite Out of Crime"), pollution (e.g., "Give a Hoot, Don't Pollute"), and restrictions on environmental hazards such as asbestos and lead paint.

The health and wellness sector has evolved rapidly since then, with Gen Xers now witnessing new health innovations such as generative artificial intelligence (AI), wearable health trackers, and personalized wellness services such as wellness coaching and DNA nutrition testing. Gen Xers experienced simple pedometers becoming Fitbits and Apple watches, and Jane Fonda aerobics

FIGURE 1. WELLNESS TECHNOLOGIES FROM PRE-2000s TO 2025

Pedometers	▶	Smartwatches
Treadmills and ellipticals	▶	Pelotons and smart exercise equipment
Aerobic workout tapes	▶	Augmented and virtual reality exercise games
WebMD	▶	ChatGPT and AI-based health platforms
In-person mindfulness and meditation practices	▶	Apps like Calm and Headspace
Early genetic testing	▶	Advanced or at-home genetic health testing
Food journals and calorie counting	▶	App and online nutrition trackers like MyFitnessPal and Noom

VHS tapes becoming live-streamed exercise classes (see Figure 1 for examples of changes in wellness technologies). Even wellness in the workplace has been evolving, with an increased importance placed on work-life balance and wellness programs that support the holistic wellness of employees (Brassey et al., 2023; HR.com, 2019). With Gen Xers navigating all these changes while oftentimes also balancing their careers, children, and aging parents, Mather Institute set out to conduct an assessment of Gen Xers' current health and wellness, as well as their perspectives on the ever-changing landscapes of wellness trends, technologies, and wellness in the workplace.

In 2023, Mather Institute launched a five-year initiative to examine key lifestyle trends, attitudes, and interests of Generation X (born 1965–1980). Year 1 identified and explored the three highest priority areas in life for Gen X: family, career, and health.

In Year 2, Mather Institute conducted an in-depth look at the health and wellness of members of Generation X, focusing on wellness trends, wellness technology, and wellness in the workplace.

A sample of 2,520 Gen Xers participated in this Year 2 study (ages 44–59 at the time of this report). For additional context and a point of comparison, this study also included responses from a sample of 2,517 baby boomers (born 1946–1964, ages 60–78 at the time of this report). The survey was administered via a third-party online research panel in June 2024. Data weighting was used to adjust the sample to be nationally representative for each generation on gender, race/ethnicity, age, and income, resulting in a final sample of 2,514 Gen Xers and 2,516 boomers. In other words, a statistical technique was used to apply weights (or multipliers) to the data so that it matches the broader population on distributions of those demographics. Respondent characteristics are available in Appendix A.

THE REPORT

The next section provides an overview of the health and wellness of members of Generation X. The remainder of the report is organized around three key topics:

1. Interest and participation in wellness trends
2. Use and impact of wellness technology
3. Experiences with workplace wellness initiatives

Throughout the report, callout points highlight notable comparisons between Gen X and boomer respondents.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Life expectancy has increased over time, from 68 years in 1950 to 77.5 years in 2022. These additional years of life have prompted greater emphasis on health span, which is the number of years a person spends in good health. When asked to choose, 67% of Gen Xers and 70% of boomers would rather feel 25% healthier (within their normal lifespan) than live 25% longer (The New Consumer & Coefficient Capital, 2024).

LIFE EXPECTANCY HAS INCREASED OVER TIME, FROM 68 YEARS IN 1950 TO 77.5 YEARS IN 2022.

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Consistent with Year 1 findings, the majority of Gen Xers reported they were in "good" or "very good" physical and mental health (see Figure 2). Only 9% of Gen Xers reported their physical health as "excellent" and 16% for mental health. These moderate evaluations of their health are consistent with other indicators that members of Gen X may be encountering some health challenges. For instance, 48% of Gen Xers reported having a diagnosed chronic illness in a recent consumer survey (The New Consumer & Coefficient Capital, 2024).

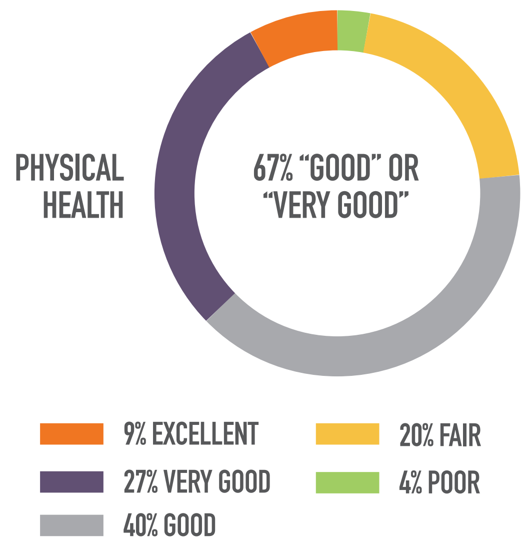
Looking to the future, data from the Health Survey for England suggests that Gen Xers may spend more years of their later lives in poor health compared to boomers (UCL Epidemiology & Health Care, 2020). Similarly, research from the National Cancer Institute estimates that cancer rates will be higher for Gen X than boomers (Rosenberg & Miranda-Filho, 2024).

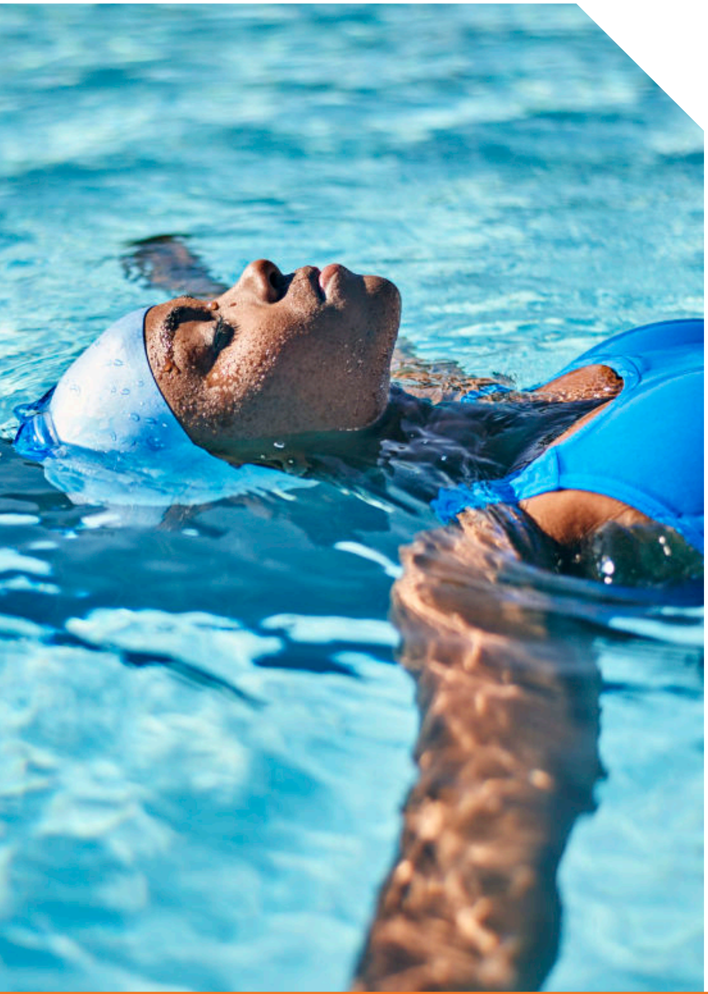
Based on this, Gen Xers may also encounter relatively greater health care expenses in the future. In 2021, Gen Xers spent an average of $5,550 on health care, which was 6.7% of their average annual expenses, and boomers spent an average of $6,594 which was 10.6% of their expenses (World Economic Forum, 2022).

BOOMER COMPARISON

Consistent with findings from Year 1, Gen Xers reported better physical health on average (36% very good/excellent vs. 32% for boomers), whereas boomers tended to have better mental health (57% very good/excellent vs. 45% for Gen Xers).

FIGURE 2. PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF GEN X RESPONDENTS





HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Many people aspire to develop good habits and healthy behaviors. For instance, the most common New Year's resolutions in 2024 were to improve fitness (48%), improve finances (38%), improve mental health (36%), lose weight (34%), and improve diet (32%) (Lloyd, 2024). Despite the hopeful aspirations underlying these kinds of resolutions, it can be challenging to make lasting changes to health behaviors.

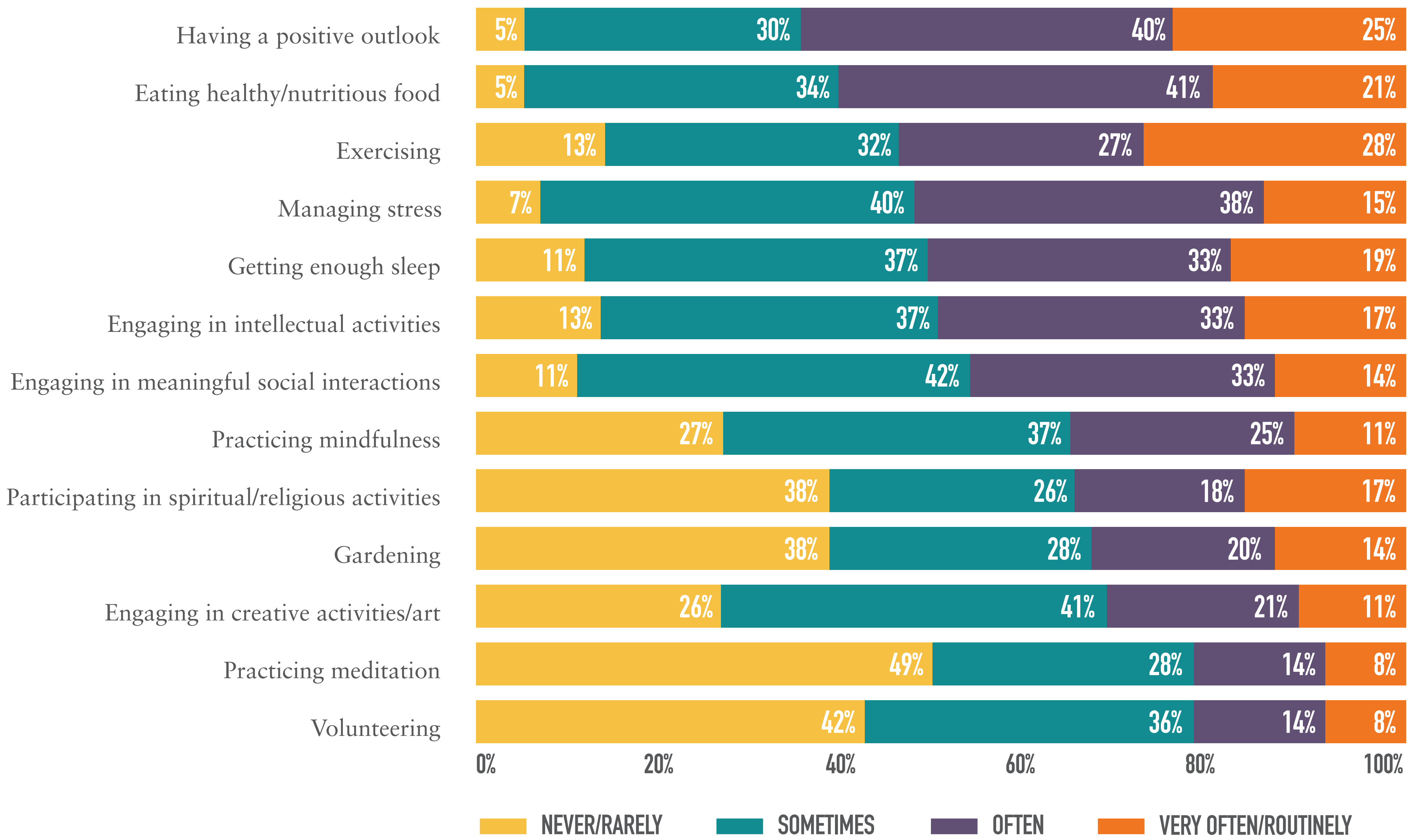
In this survey, respondents were asked how often they typically engage in 13 types of healthy behaviors that reflect different aspects of wellness, such as physical, emotional, social, intellectual, vocational, and spiritual wellness (see Figure 3, page 12). **On average, Gen X respondents tended to complete 5.7 of 13 healthy behaviors "often" or "very often/routinely."** Two-thirds of Gen Xers indicated they maintain a positive outlook often or very often/routinely (65%). This is promising for the generation's mental and physical health, as research has shown that a sense of optimism is associated with greater quality of life and even reduced risk of coronary artery disease (Conversano et al., 2010; Yanek et al., 2013). In addition, over one-half of Gen Xers reported engaging in basic healthy behaviors, such as exercising (55%) and eating healthy/nutritious food (61%), "often" or "very often/routinely."

ON AVERAGE, GEN X RESPONDENTS TENDED TO COMPLETE 5.7 OF 13 HEALTHY BEHAVIORS "OFTEN" OR "VERY OFTEN/ROUTINELY."

Participation was less frequent for more specific types of behaviors. Only one-fifth (23%) of Gen Xers reported practicing meditation often or more frequently, though one-third (36%) reported practicing mindfulness at least "often." Gen Xers were also less involved in volunteering (23% "often" or "very often/routinely") compared to other healthy behaviors. However, this may not be low relative to other generations. For context, 27% of Gen X volunteered in 2021 (then ages 41 to 56), compared to 20% of Gen Z (then ages 9 to 24), 22% of millennials (then ages 25 to 40), 24% of baby boomers (then ages 57 to 75), and 18% of the Silent Generation or prior (then ages 76+) (AmeriCorps, n.d.; Schneider & Marshall, 2023).

ONLY ONE-FIFTH (23%) OF GEN XERS REPORTED PRACTICING MEDITATION OFTEN OR MORE FREQUENTLY.

FIGURE 3. FREQUENCY OF HEALTHY BEHAVIORS OF GEN X RESPONDENTS *(Healthy behaviors are sorted from most to least frequent.)*

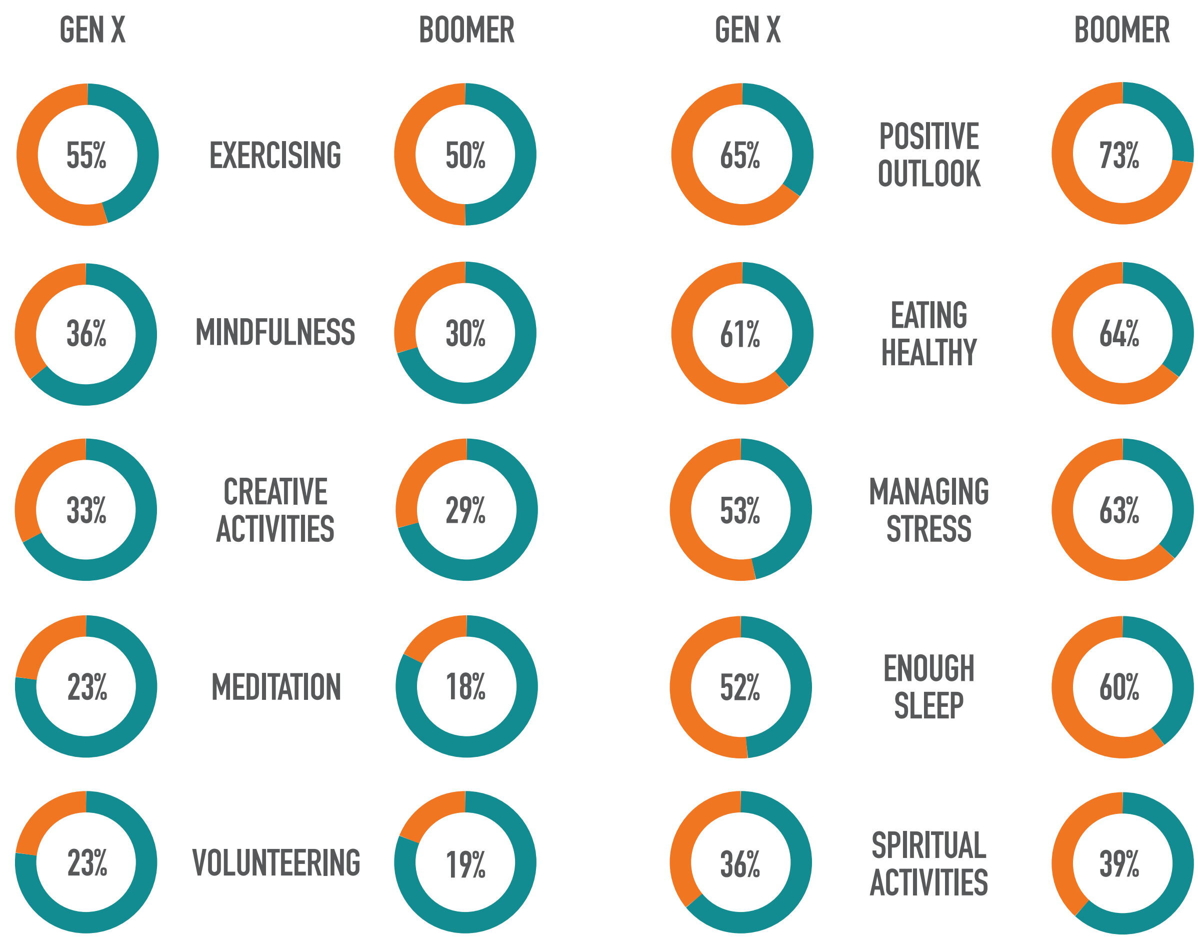


BOOMER COMPARISON

On average, boomer respondents completed a similar number of healthy behaviors often or very often/routinely (5.8 vs. 5.7 for Gen X). Like Gen X, having a positive outlook and eating healthy/nutritious food were the most frequent healthy behaviors for boomers. However, there were significant differences between Gen Xers and boomers in terms of how often they engage in certain types of healthy behaviors (see Figure 4). Gen Xers reported more frequent exercising, engaging in creative activities/art, practicing meditation, practicing mindfulness, and volunteering, whereas boomers engaged in more frequent eating healthy/nutritious food, getting enough sleep, having a positive outlook, managing stress, and participating in spiritual/religious activities. The two generations did not significantly differ on the frequency that they engaged in intellectual activities, meaningful social interactions, and gardening.

FIGURE 4. DIFFERENCES IN FREQUENCY OF HEALTHY BEHAVIORS BETWEEN GEN X AND BOOMERS

(% Often or Very often/Routinely). All differences shown below are statistically significant.

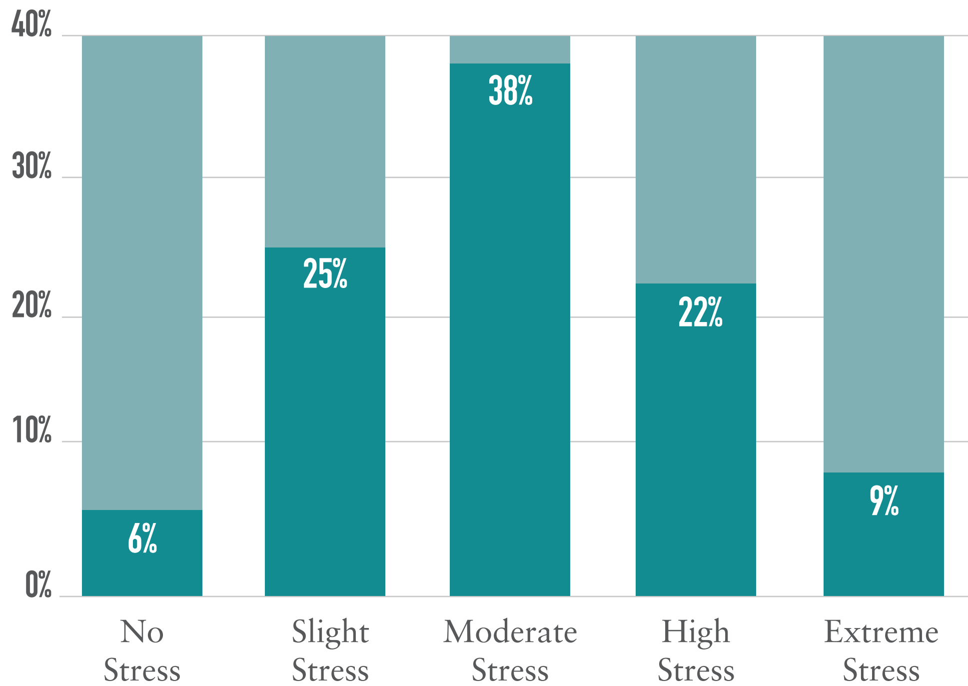


STRESS

One of the notable insights from Year 1 (2023) is that many Gen Xers are experiencing frequent stress, and stress levels remain high. In Year 2, **approximately 69% of Gen X respondents rated their stress over the previous three months as "moderate" to "extreme"** (see Figure 5). Money/finances was the greatest source of stress for 43% of Gen Xers, followed by family (19%) and job/career (19%) (see Figure 6). A recent survey of US adults of all ages found that inflation (65%) was a top source of financial stress, followed by lack of savings (44%) (Gutierrez, 2024). Aside from the stressors related to money and finances, many Gen Xers are still in the midst of balancing family and work life. Based on their current ages, many members of Gen X are currently in the sandwich generation, providing care to both children and parents, which may be leading to higher levels of stress, financial hardships, and work-life balance issues—all of which may in turn be impacting both physical and mental health (Novelli, 2023).

FIGURE 5. OVER TWO-THIRDS OF GEN XERS REPORT AT LEAST MODERATE STRESS

IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE AMOUNT OF STRESS IN YOUR LIFE?



BOOMER COMPARISON

More frequent stress management among boomers corresponds with lower levels of stress relative to Gen Xers. Reflecting on the previous three months, 31% of Gen Xers reported high/extreme stress compared to 17% of boomers.

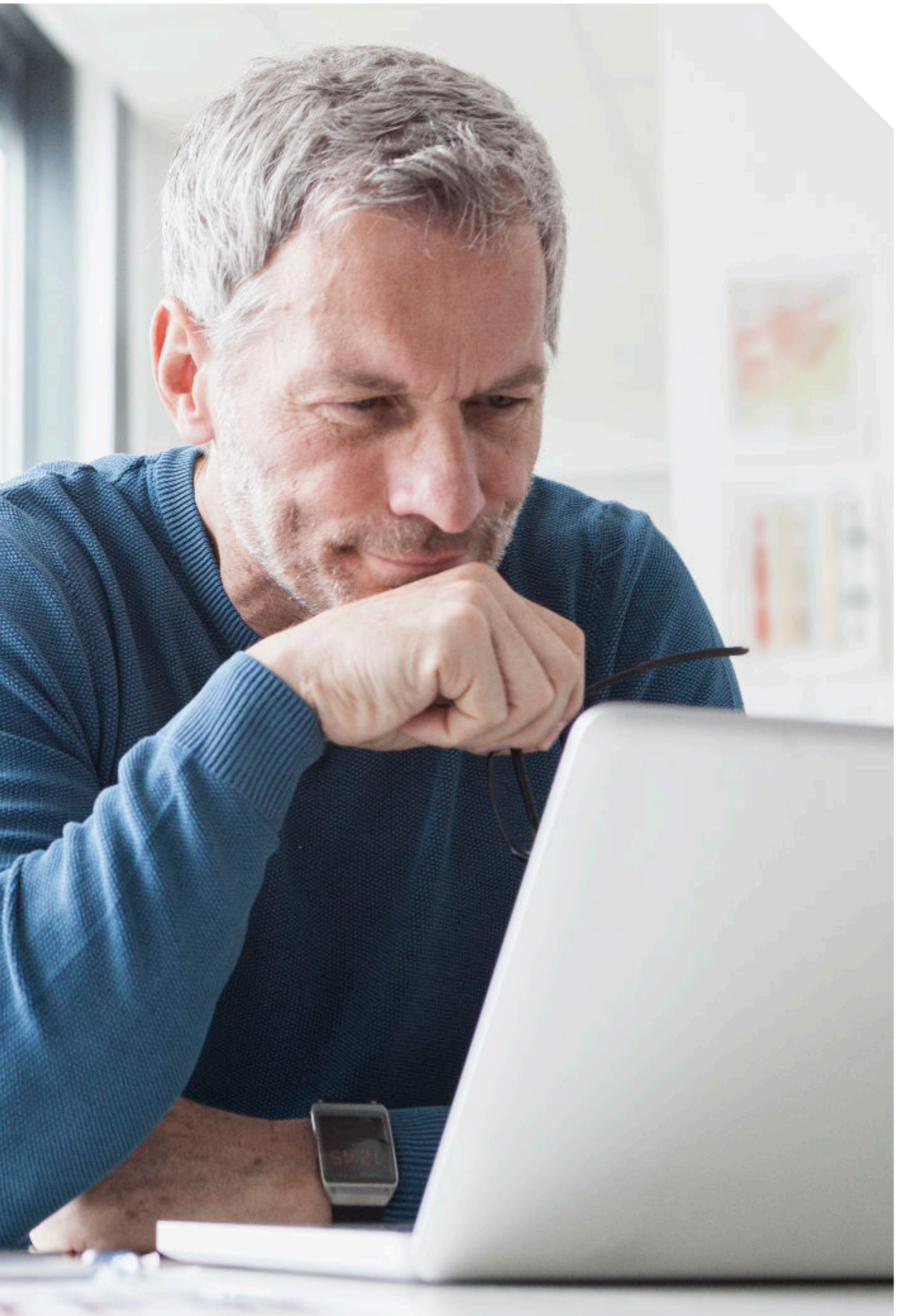
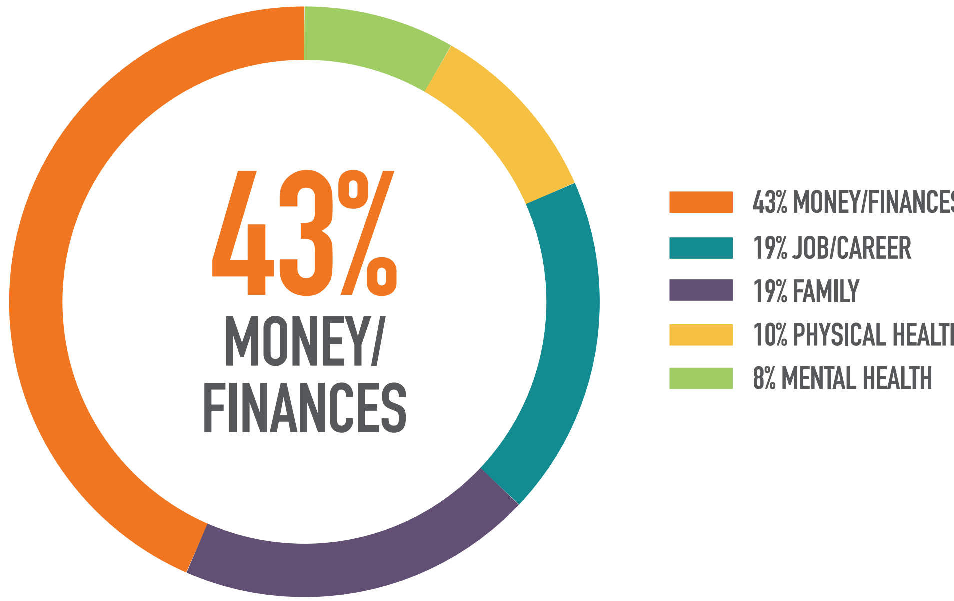


FIGURE 6. MONEY/FINANCES IS THE GREATEST SOURCE OF STRESS FOR GEN XERS

WHAT AREA OF YOUR LIFE IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE GREATEST AMOUNT OF STRESS FOR YOU?



BOOMER COMPARISON

Similar to Gen X, money/finances was the greatest source of stress for two out of five boomers (40%). More boomers indicated that family (26% vs. 19%) and physical health (22% vs. 10%) were their primary sources of stress. In contrast, a greater proportion of Gen Xers reported money/ finances (43% vs. 40%), job/career (19% vs. 7%), and mental health (8% vs. 5%) as their main sources of stress.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LONG LIFE

Longevity has become a buzzword in the health, wellness, and technology industries. The current estimate of the global "longevity" or "anti-aging" market size is $268.6 billion, and it's forecasted to reach $455.4 billion by 2030 (P&S Intelligence, 2024). A consumer survey found that nearly one-third (32%) of Americans would like to live forever, while the remaining respondents preferred to live to 90, on average (The New Consumer & Coefficient Capital, 2024).

Gen X respondents were asked to rate the importance of seven factors for having a long life (see Figure 7, page 18). Except for spiritual/religious connection, most factors were rated at least moderately important by more than 80% of Gen Xers. Specifically, nearly all Gen Xers indicated that physical activity (94%) was moderately/very important for a long life, followed

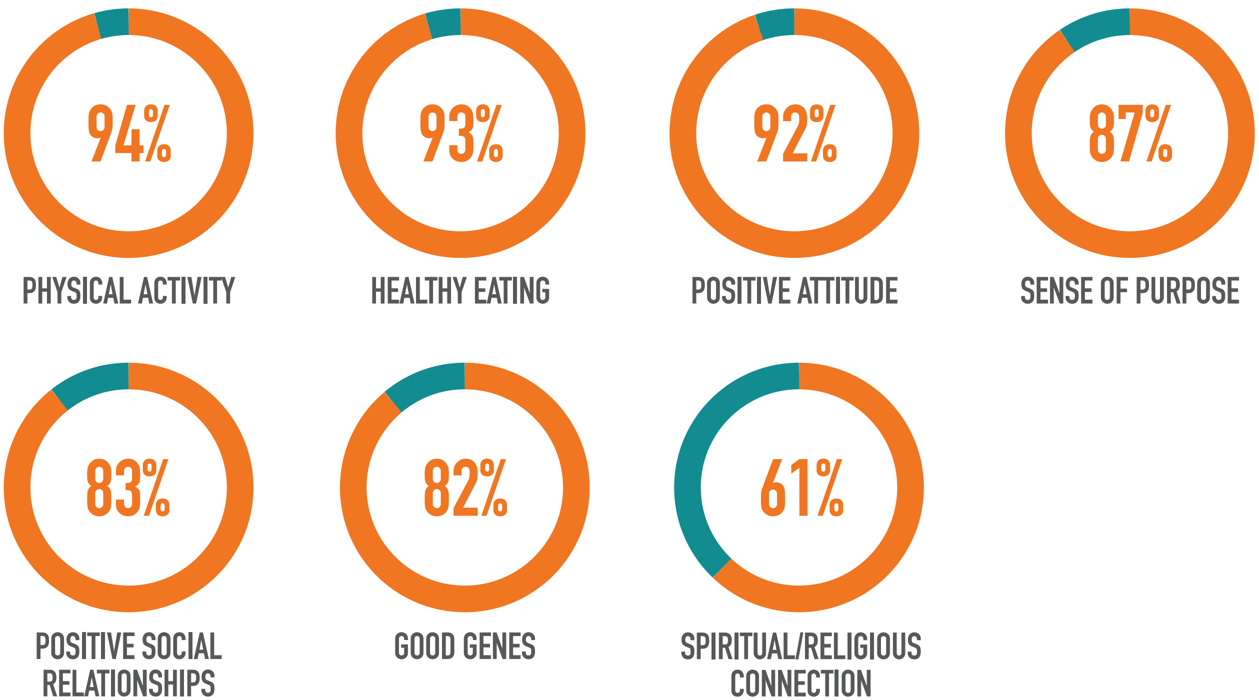
by healthy eating (93%) and a positive attitude (92%). Although spiritual/religious connection was the lowest-rated factor, this rating did vary based on religious practice. Gen Xers who reported participating in spiritual/religious activities "often" or "very often/routinely" rated this factor as significantly more important (91% moderately/very important) than Gen Xers who participated in spiritual/religious activities "never/rarely" or "sometimes" (45%).

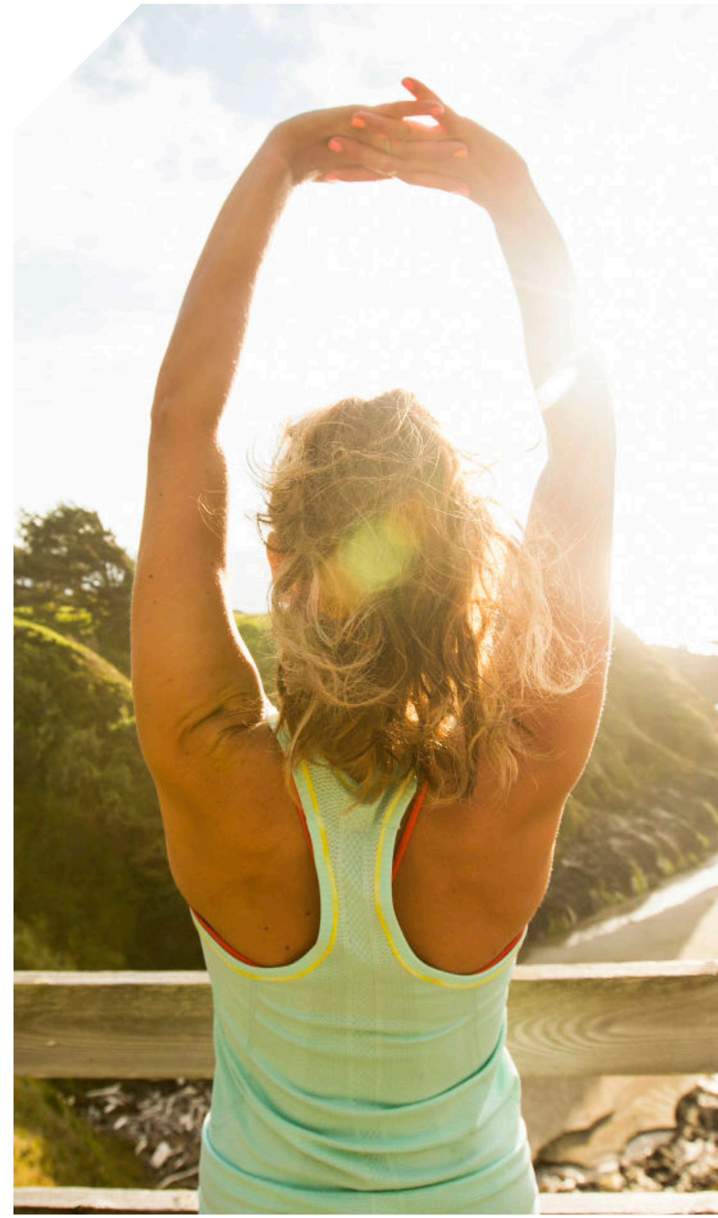
93% OF GEN XERS INDICATED HEALTHY EATING WAS MODERATELY/VERY IMPORTANT FOR LIVING A LONG LIFE.

BOOMER COMPARISON

When thinking about factors that contribute to a long life, physical activity, healthy eating, and a positive attitude were among the three most important factors, on average, for both Gen X and boomers; however, the relative importance varied. Boomers placed significantly more importance on positive attitudes (95% moderately/very important vs. 92%) and less on physical activity (93% vs. 94%). Boomers (vs. Gen X) also rated having good genes as higher in importance (87% vs. 82%).

FIGURE 7. IMPORTANCE FOR LONG LIFE ACCORDING TO GEN X *(% Moderately/Very Important)*

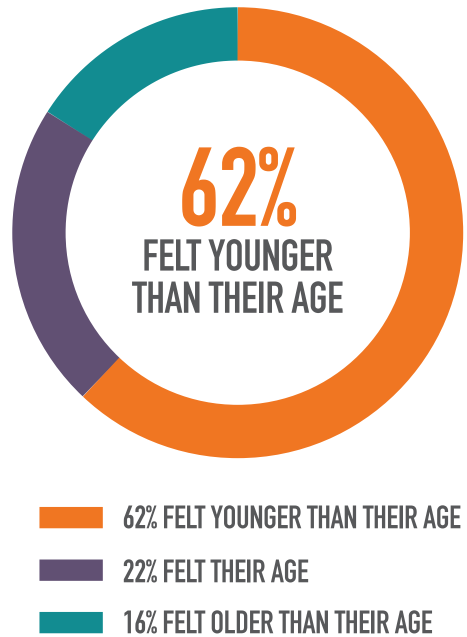




FELT AGE

Gen Xers were asked what age they feel most of the time. A majority (62%) said they feel younger than their actual chronological age, with relatively few (16%) feeling older than their age (see Figure 8). **On average, Gen Xers felt 6.5 years younger than their chronological age.** This is consistent with other research findings that adults tend to feel younger than they are. As people get older, the difference between the age they feel and their chronological age often grows, and those aged 40 and better tend to feel 20% younger than their actual age (Chopik et al., 2018; Rubin & Berntsen, 2006). A meta-analytic review that statistically combined results from multiple studies concluded that feeling younger than one's chronological age is associated with greater wellness, better cognitive performance, and lower depressive symptoms (Alonso Debreczeni & Bailey, 2021).

FIGURE 8. AGE GEN XERS FEEL RELATIVE TO THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL AGE



BOOMER COMPARISON

While Gen Xers felt on average 6.5 years younger than their actual age, boomers felt on average 11 years younger than their age—a significant difference between these two generations.

WELLNESS TRENDS

Views of "wellness" have shifted throughout Gen Xers' lives, and mainstream trends have shown a renewed focus on not only preventing illness but also enhancing holistic well-being (Brassey et al., 2023). Our survey asked about a variety of new or trending wellness activities and technologies that have gained attention in mainstream culture, with each experience briefly described for respondents. Some of these wellness experiences have their roots in ancient practices. For instance, nature bathing (or *shinrin-yoku*, "forest bathing") started in Japan in the 1980s and incorporated aspects of Japanese culture, including a spiritual connection with nature.

Other wellness trends, such as AI chatbots for mental health, capitalize on new technological advancements. Respondents who tried various new wellness experiences were asked to report on the impact of these experiences on their wellness, and those who haven't tried the experiences were asked their level of interest.

SHINRIN-YOKU, OR "FOREST BATHING", STARTED IN JAPAN IN THE 1980S AND INCORPORATED ASPECTS OF JAPANESE CULTURE.

PARTICIPATION IN AND IMPACT OF WELLNESS EXPERIENCES

Overall, participation in these wellness experiences tended to be low (see Table 1). Gen Xers reported trying intermittent fasting (35%) the most. Evidence on the benefits of intermittent fasting, such as improved metabolism and lower blood sugar, is promising (Harvard Health Publishing Staff, 2021). An example of intermittent fasting is to eat nutritious meals within an eight-hour period and fast the rest of the day. Telehealth for physical health (31%) was the second most tried wellness activity for Gen Xers, which is unsurprising given the increased adoption of telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Microdosing (5%), IV therapy (6%), and biohacking (6%) were the least commonly tried. More information is needed on the effectiveness, safety, and long-term effects of microdosing psychedelics (Murphy et al., 2024). Similarly, while IV vitamin therapies may be appropriate for people with nutrient deficiencies, more general claims of wellness benefits are unsupported by research, and side effects are possible (Shane-McWhorter, 2024). Biohacking, too, can come with pitfalls. While some forms of biohacking are well-studied, other types are tried by various "biohackers" before they have been tested in clinical research settings (Neumann & Stocker, 2024). It is important to note that wellness-related activities and technology may gain popularity without strong evidence of their safety or effectiveness.

Among Gen Xers, telehealth for mental health (84%) and nature bathing (84%) were rated as having a positive impact by the highest proportion of users. While it may not be optimal for all, telehealth can be an effective way of delivering mental health care for conditions such as depression and anxiety, and it can also increase accessibility of services (National Institute of Mental Health, n.d.). Spending time in nature has also been linked to a variety of benefits to one's cognitive and emotional well-being (Weir, 2020).

TABLE 1. GEN X PARTICIPATION IN AND REPORTED IMPACT AMONG THOSE WHO TRIED VARIOUS WELLNESS TRENDS

	HAVE TRIED IT	POSITIVE IMPACT
Intermittent fasting (alternating between voluntary fasting and non-fasting over a given time period)	35%	71%
Telehealth for physical health (the use of phone or videoconferencing technologies to receive physical health services, such as virtual doctor's appointments)	31%	75%
Body composition analysis (assesses how much of your body weight is fat, muscle, and bone)	26%	64%
Juice cleanses (consuming only fruit and vegetable juices and abstaining from solid foods for a given time period)	23%	73%
Telehealth for mental health (the use of phone or videoconferencing technologies to receive mental health services, such as virtual therapy appointments)	19%	84%
Electrical muscle stimulation (EMS) devices (a device that uses electrical currents in a specific area to make muscles contract and release, e.g., to strengthen weak muscles)	17%	74%
Personalized vitamins (custom vitamins based on personal data from sources such as DNA, blood, or one's responses to health and lifestyle questions)	16%	82%
Artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots used for mental health support (an AI system that can interact with humans and provide support, advice, and mental health resources)	15%	73%
Nature bathing (spending time in a natural atmosphere as a practice of therapeutic relaxation; doesn't involve bathing outside)	15%	84%
Digital detox (a voluntary break from digital technologies such as smartphones, computers, and social media)	14%	78%
Percussive therapy (a massage gun delivers rapid pressure and vibration to muscles)	10%	82%
Biohacking (monitoring your body and making changes to optimize performance and wellness)	6%	69%
IV therapy (fluids and vitamins/minerals delivered directly into the bloodstream)	6%	79%
Microdosing (taking very small amounts of a psychedelic substance to benefit from its physiological effects while minimizing hallucinogenic effects)	5%	76%

BOOMER COMPARISON

Across all wellness activities and technologies included in the survey, significantly fewer boomers have tried the experiences than Gen Xers. The largest differences in those who tried the activities were for intermittent fasting (35% Gen X vs. 22% boomer) and juice cleanses (23% Gen X vs. 10% boomer). Almost twice as many boomers indicated they had tried none of the wellness experiences listed (43% vs. 24% for Gen X).

Among those who tried it, a similar proportion of Gen Xers and boomers indicated the wellness activity or technology had a positive impact, except more Gen Xers reported a positive impact from AI chatbots for mental health support (73% vs. 57%) and body composition analysis (64% vs. 53%). Additional details are available in Appendix B.

INTEREST WAS GREATEST FOR PERSONALIZED VITAMINS AND BODY COMPOSITION ANALYSIS.

INTEREST IN WELLNESS EXPERIENCES

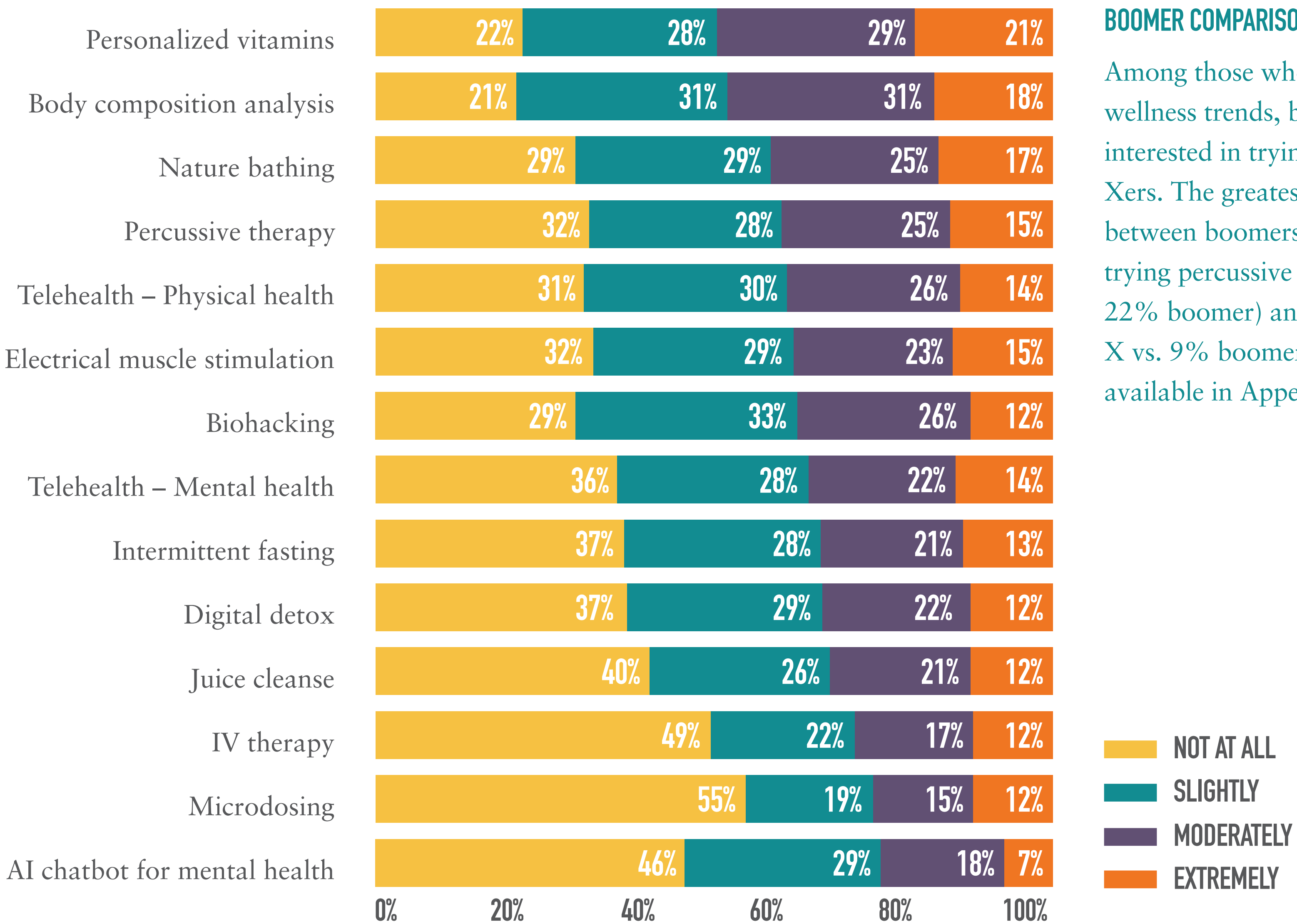
Respondents who had not tried the wellness activity or technology were asked how interested they were in trying the experience to improve their health and wellness. Overall, there was only slight interest among Gen Xers in trying these wellness experiences (see Figure 9, page 25). Interest was greatest for personalized vitamins (50% moderately/extremely interested) and body composition analysis (48%). Interest in personalized vitamins may be greater because vitamins in general are familiar. Approximately one-half of Gen Xers (53%) take daily vitamins or supplements (The New Consumer & Coefficient Capital, 2024). The greater interest in body composition analysis may be related to a growing awareness of the limitations of BMI (body mass index) and the importance of measuring body fat percentage to assess one's health (Braverman, 2024).

Only one-fourth of Gen Xers were moderately or extremely interested in trying AI chatbots for mental health support (25%), followed by microdosing (27%) and IV therapy (29%). As with microdosing and IV vitamin therapy, some caution is warranted in the use of AI chatbots for mental health. Potential benefits of AI chatbots include that it is immediately available and that the unscripted nature of generative AI may increase interest and encourage continued use. However, because it is unscripted, there's a risk that AI could provide guidance that is not therapeutically safe, and it may not be able to recognize or appropriately respond to crisis situations (Heston, 2023; Romael Haque & Rubya, 2023).

AI COULD PROVIDE GUIDANCE THAT IS NOT THERAPEUTICALLY SAFE.

FIGURE 9. INTEREST IN TRYING NEW WELLNESS TRENDS AMONG GEN X

HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN TRYING THE FOLLOWING EXPERIENCES TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS?



BOOMER COMPARISON

Among those who haven't tried new wellness trends, boomers were less interested in trying them compared to Gen Xers. The greatest differences in interest between boomers and Gen Xers were in trying percussive therapy (40% Gen X vs. 22% boomer) and microdosing (27% Gen X vs. 9% boomer). Additional details are available in Appendix B.

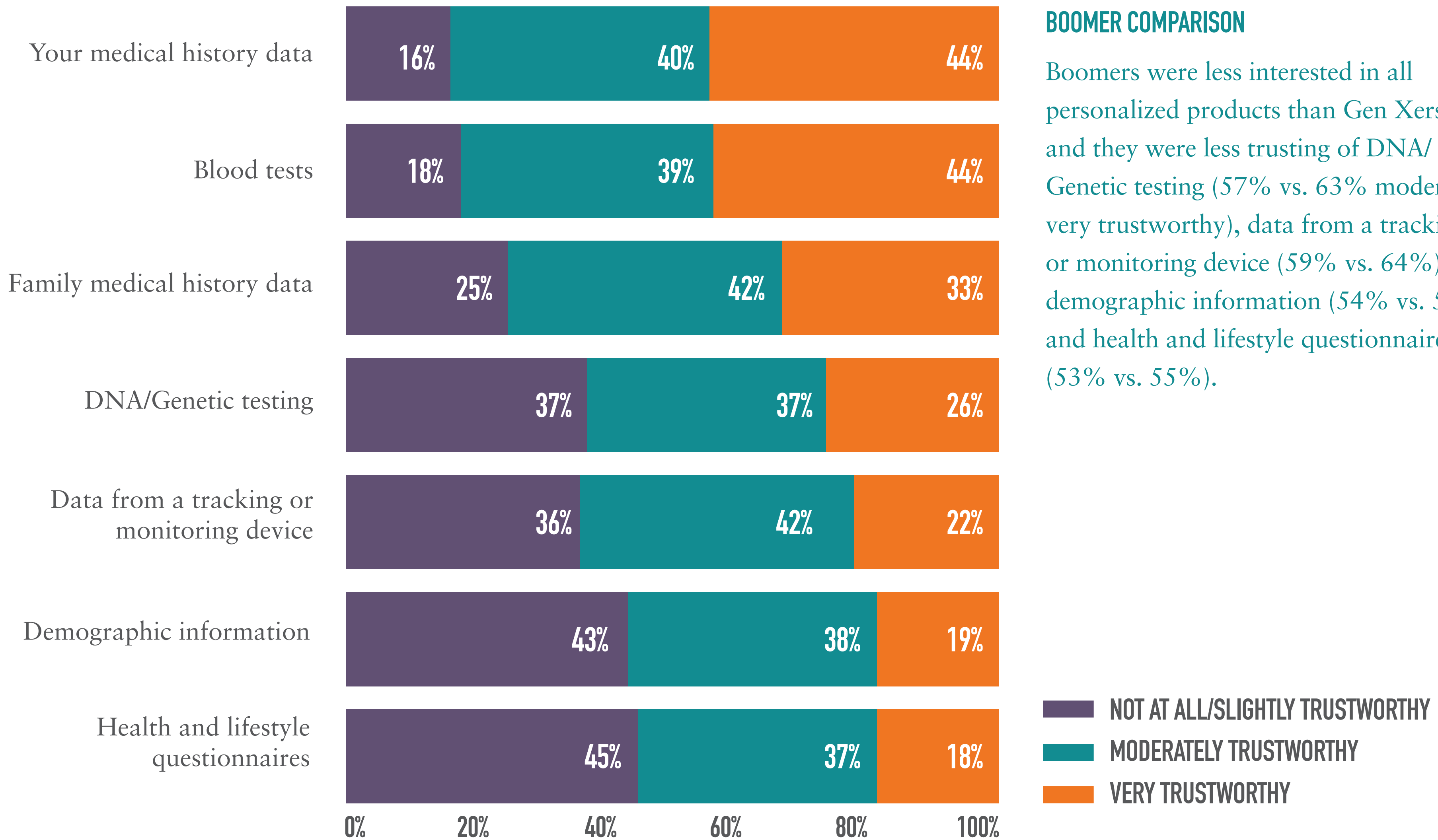
PERSONALIZED WELLNESS SERVICES

Personalized wellness services, which are individually customized in some manner, have become more prevalent due to the evolution of sciences and technologies such as wearable trackers, genetic studies, microbiome analyses, and wellness tracker apps and software (Kanter & Desrosiers, 2019). The technologies underlying personalization services are expected to continue to evolve and garner interest, with the McKinsey consulting firm identifying personalization using generative AI as a notable wellness trend for 2024 (Callaghan et al., 2024). Gaining insights into Gen Xers' perceptions of personalized wellness may help inform future innovations and marketing strategies relevant to this generation.

Roughly two-thirds of Gen X respondents expressed moderate or extreme interest in personalized products, including nutrition plans (67%), fitness plans (65%), vitamins (62%), and skin care (59%). Some methods of personalizing products/services were viewed as more trustworthy than others (Figure 10). Gen Xers indicated that personal medical history (84%) and blood tests (82%) were moderately/very trustworthy methods of personalizing products or services from wellness/technology companies. Demographic information and health/lifestyle questionnaires were less trusted for tailoring products/services.

ROUGHLY TWO-THIRDS OF GEN X RESPONDENTS EXPRESSED MODERATE OR EXTREME INTEREST IN PERSONALIZED PRODUCTS.

FIGURE 10. HOW TRUSTWORTHY DO YOU FIND THE FOLLOWING METHODS OF TAILORING A PERSONALIZED PRODUCT OR SERVICE FROM WELLNESS OR TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES?



BOOMER COMPARISON

Boomers were less interested in all personalized products than Gen Xers, and they were less trusting of DNA/Genetic testing (57% vs. 63% moderately/very trustworthy), data from a tracking or monitoring device (59% vs. 64%), demographic information (54% vs. 57%), and health and lifestyle questionnaires (53% vs. 55%).

SOURCES OF INFLUENCE WHEN CONSIDERING NEW HEALTH AND WELLNESS EXPERIENCES

Navigating the many sources of health information can be overwhelming, especially due to the rise of social media sources and other internet sources with varying degrees of credibility. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 58% of US adults use the internet to look for health or medical information (Wang & Cohen, 2023). To further understand how Gen Xers make health and wellness decisions, respondents were asked the importance of various factors when deciding whether to try a new health or wellness program/experience.

When deciding whether to try a new health or wellness program, **80% of Gen Xers indicated that scientific evidence of benefits was moderately or very important, with 20% of Gen Xers placing little importance on scientific evidence (see Figure 11).**

In addition, the belief a new health or wellness program/experience may contribute to a longer life (79%) and a recommendation from a doctor/medical adviser (77%) were important sources of influence for new health or wellness programs. By far, the least important source of influence for Gen Xers was endorsement by celebrities and influencers, with 68% of respondents viewing this source as not at all important. This may be good news for Gen X, as celebrity and influencer endorsements or advice can sometimes lead to health and wellness misinformation. For instance, one study on nutrition influencers found that just two of the nine most popular nutrition bloggers studied were deemed qualified to provide advice (Sabbagh et al., 2020).

FIGURE 11. WHEN DECIDING WHETHER TO TRY A NEW HEALTH/WELLNESS PROGRAM OR EXPERIENCE, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS TO YOU?

BOOMER COMPARISON

Boomers rated recommendations from their doctors/medical advisers higher in importance compared to Gen X (82% vs. 77% moderately/very important). Importance ratings were lower for boomers on all other items.

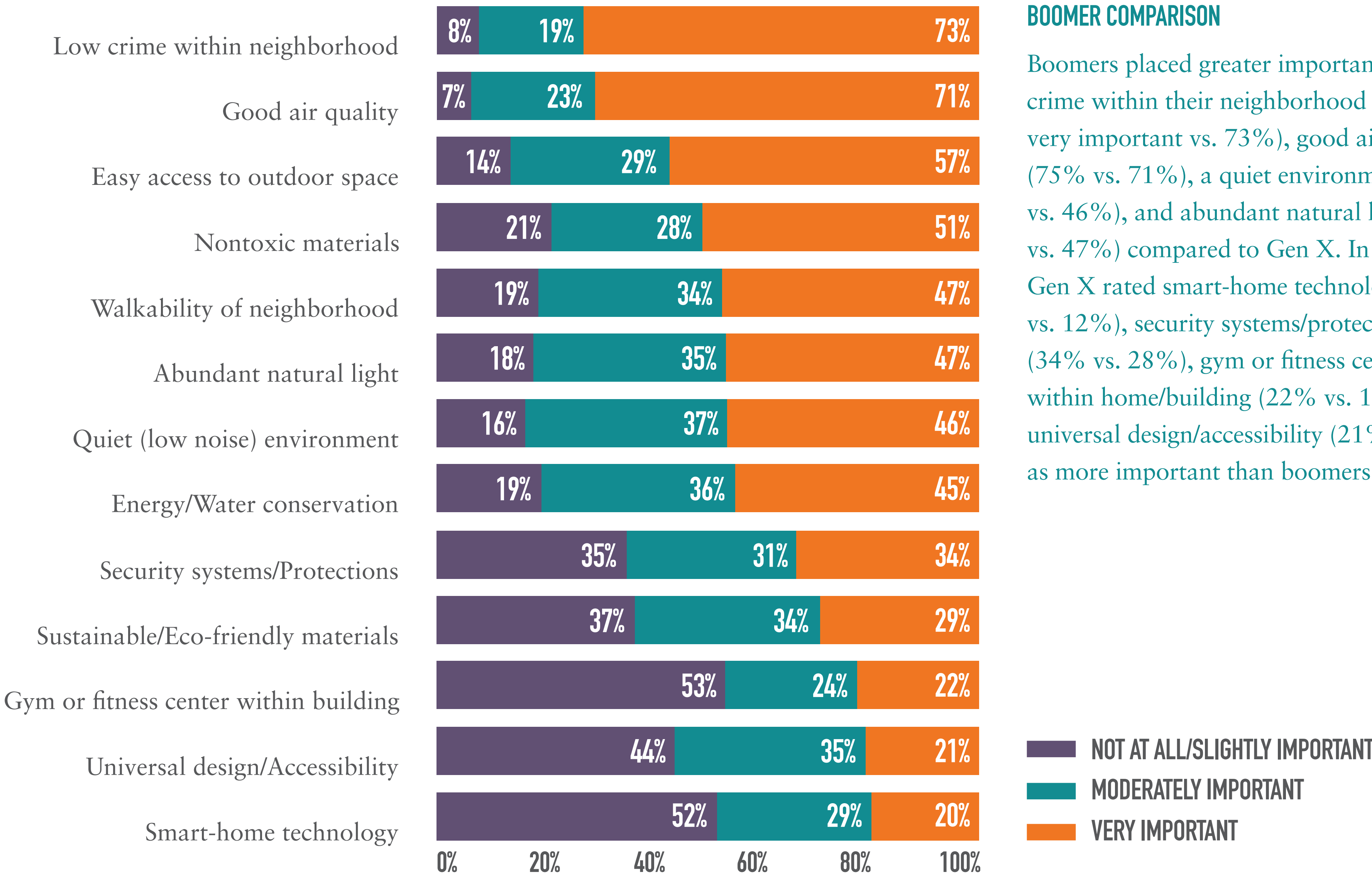
IMPACT OF HOME/NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES ON WELLNESS

People have been spending even more time in their homes than in past years, with one study noting that average time spent at home has increased from 16.5 hours in 2003 to more than 18 hours per day in 2022 (Sharkey, 2024). Because of this, it is especially vital to understand what makes a residence truly resonate with Gen Xers. Respondents were asked to rate what amenities or features are most important for their well-being (see Figure 12). The majority of Gen Xers (73%) rated low crime within their neighborhood as "very important" to their well-being. This aligns with prior research showing that neighborhood crime can impact a range of health-related outcomes, including reduced level of physical activity, depression, and psychological distress (Baranyi et al., 2021; Rees-Punia et al., 2018).

Many Gen Xers also find air quality to be an important home feature for their well-being, with 71% listing this as "very important." Studies have shown that poor indoor air quality can cause multiple mental and physical health problems, including cancers, respiratory and heart diseases, and cognitive issues (US Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Fewer Gen X respondents rated having a gym or fitness center within their building/home (22%), universal design/accessibility (21%), and smart-home technology (20%) as "very" important to their overall well-being.

TIME SPENT AT HOME INCREASED TO 18 HOURS PER DAY IN 2022.

FIGURE 12. HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING HOME AMENITIES OR FEATURES TO YOUR OVERALL WELL-BEING?



BOOMER COMPARISON

Boomers placed greater importance on low crime within their neighborhood (80.5% very important vs. 73%), good air quality (75% vs. 71%), a quiet environment (50% vs. 46%), and abundant natural light (48% vs. 47%) compared to Gen X. In contrast, Gen X rated smart-home technology (20% vs. 12%), security systems/protections (34% vs. 28%), gym or fitness center within home/building (22% vs. 14%), and universal design/accessibility (21% vs. 17%) as more important than boomers.

WELLNESS TECHNOLOGY

Overall, almost two-thirds of Gen Xers indicated that wellness technologies have been beneficial for their health and wellness (62%) (see Figure 13). This percentage is higher among people who reported using wellness technologies to track or monitor their health; 84% of Gen X tech users indicated the technology has been beneficial.

The global wearable technology industry was valued at nearly $158 billion in 2024 and has been projected to grow by 31.5% from 2024 to 2032 (Fortune Business Insights, 2024). Given this projection and the rapid evolution of these kinds of technologies, it is important to gain insights on Gen Xers' preferences regarding wearable wellness devices and other kinds of technologies that can be used to track health information. More than two-thirds of Gen X respondents have used wellness technologies of some form to monitor their health and wellness. Nearly one-half have used a smartwatch (49%), and mobile apps/computer programs were also common (39%) (see Figure 14). Five percent of Gen Xers used smart rings, a relatively newer product.

FIGURE 13. OVERALL, HAVE WELLNESS TECHNOLOGIES BEEN BENEFICIAL FOR YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS?

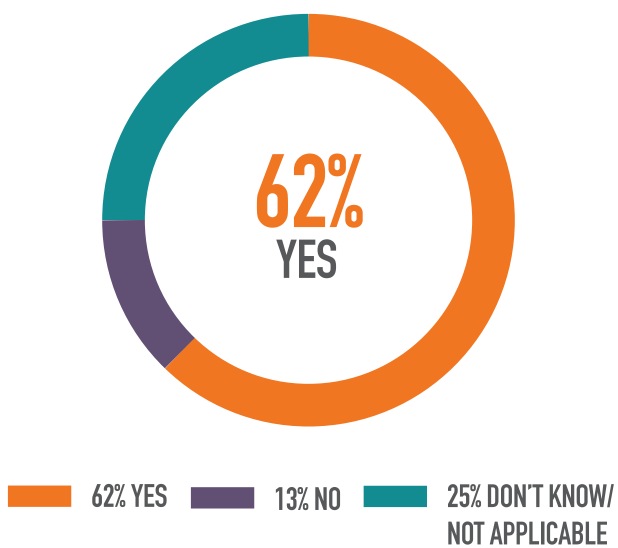
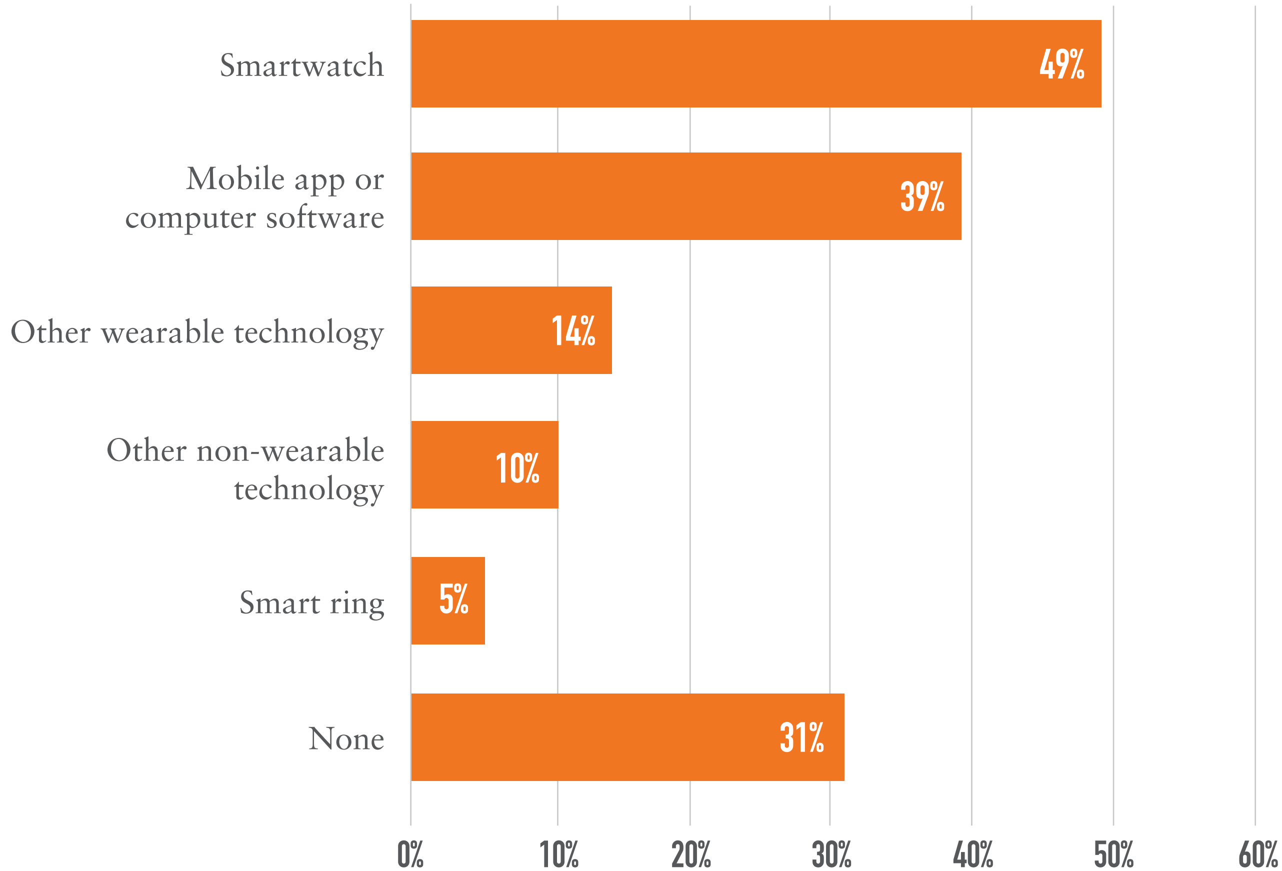


FIGURE 14. HAVE YOU USED WELLNESS TECHNOLOGIES TO TRACK OR MONITOR YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS?



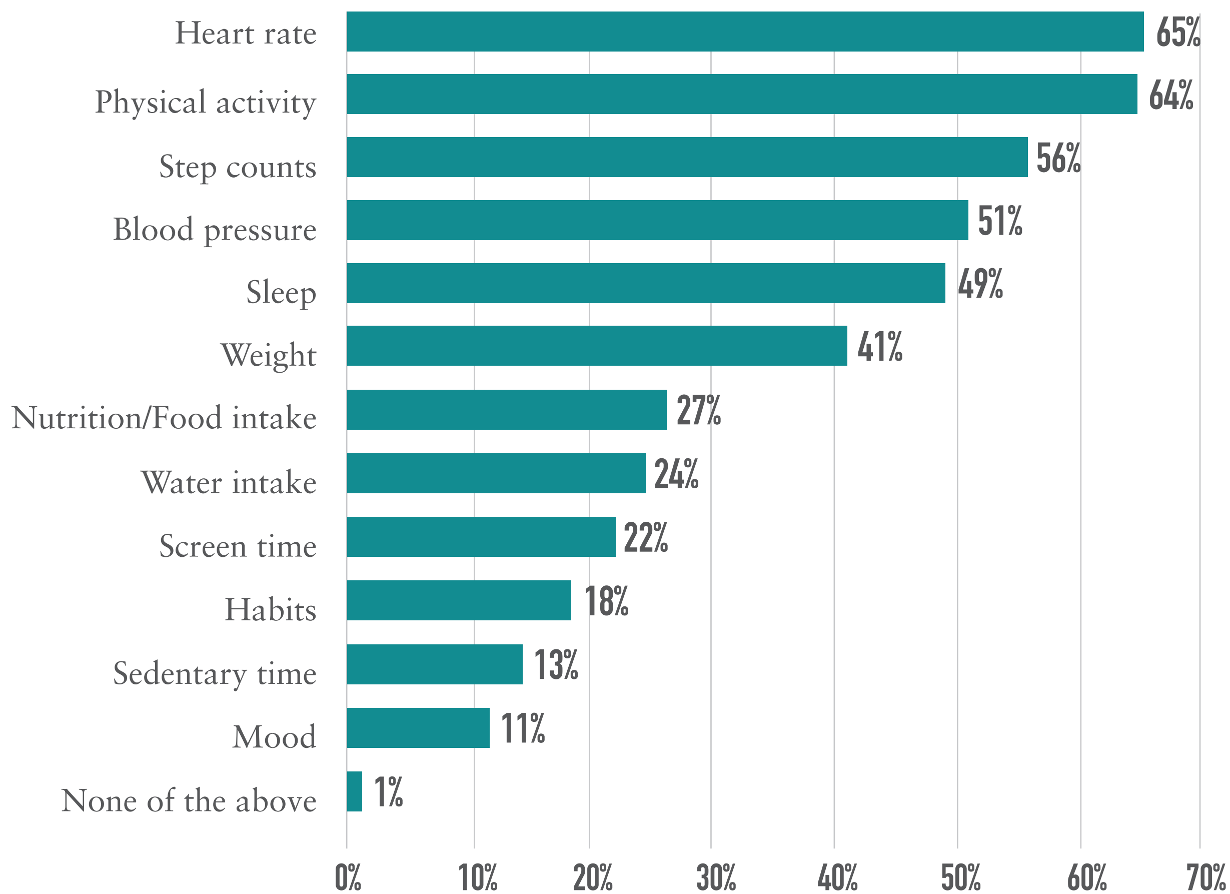
BOOMER COMPARISON

Gen Xers were more likely than boomers to report health and wellness benefits from wellness technologies (62% vs. 45%). Fewer boomers reported using any type of wellness technology (47.5% vs. 69% for Gen X).

TRACKING HEALTH AND WELLNESS DATA

Among Gen X wellness technology users, heart rate (65%) and physical activity (64%) were most commonly tracked (see Figure 15). This is likely because these kinds of indicators are often automatically and easily monitored by many common devices, such as smartwatches and -phones. Habits and mood were tracked less than other types of information by Gen Xers, possibly due to the comparatively higher effort needed to input these using wellness technologies. Sedentary time was also not as commonly tracked by Gen X respondents, which could be due to a higher interest in tracking active movements, such as step counts and physical activity, rather than tracking non-activity.

FIGURE 15. WHAT TYPES OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS INFORMATION DID YOU TRACK WITH WELLNESS TECHNOLOGY?



BOOMER COMPARISON

Fewer boomers used technology to track habits (8% vs. 18%), nutrition/food intake (18% vs. 27.5%), screen time (13% vs. 22%), mood (5% vs. 11%), water intake (19% vs. 24%), and weight (37% vs. 41%) compared to Gen X.

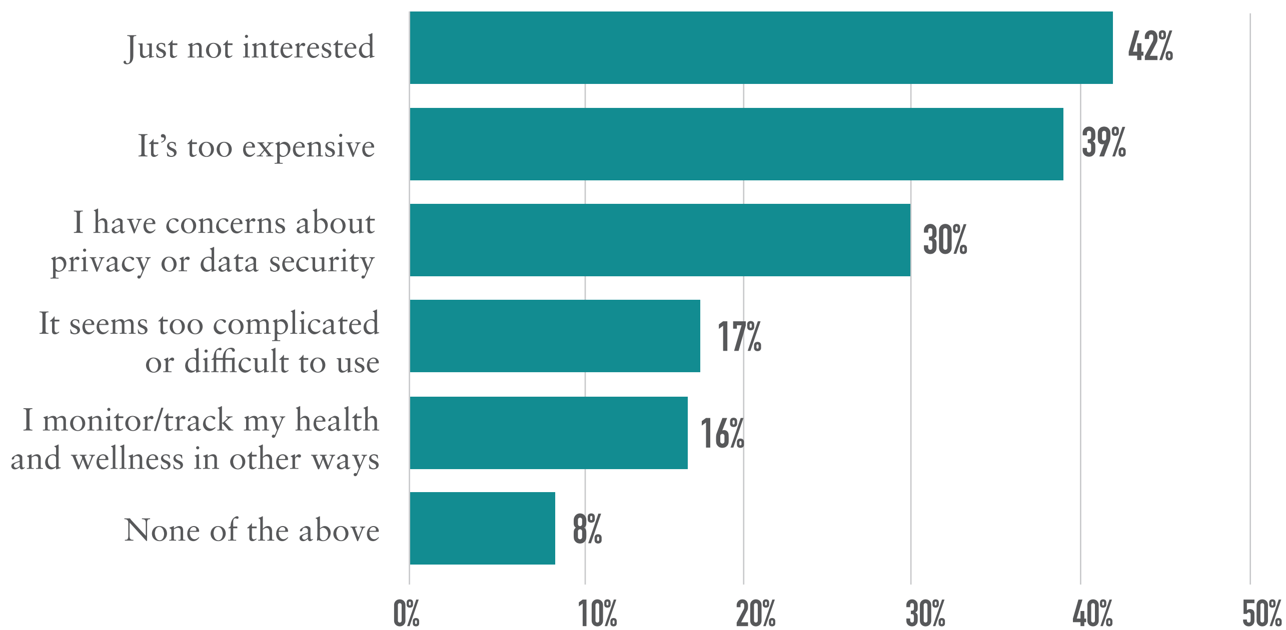
REASONS FOR NOT USING WELLNESS TECHNOLOGY

Respondents were also asked to provide reasons they don't use wellness technologies (if applicable). **Lack of interest (42%) and cost (39%) were the main barriers to using wellness technologies among Gen X** (Figure 16). Almost one-third of Gen Xers who don't use wellness technologies also reported concerns about data privacy/security (30%). Although the cost of certain wellness technologies may be prohibitive for some, the average selling prices for wearable devices are declining as more companies are beginning to introduce low-cost products to meet the market demand (International Data Corporation, 2024).

BOOMER COMPARISON

Significantly more boomers monitor/track their health and wellness in other ways (23% vs. 16% Gen X). Otherwise, their reasons for not using wellness technologies were similar to Gen X.

FIGURE 16. INDICATE IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ARE REASONS THAT YOU DON'T USE WELLNESS TECHNOLOGY



WELLNESS AT WORK

Wellness at work has also been evolving throughout Gen Xers' lifetimes. Wellness in the workplace is currently trending more toward holistic well-being that encompasses not only physical health but also environmental, emotional, financial, and social well-being (Brassey et al., 2023; HR.com, 2019). Given that an average person will spend 90,000 hours at work throughout the course of a lifetime, understanding and promoting holistic wellness in the workplace is crucial (FreshBooks, 2023). Work can also impact a myriad of health outcomes, making the amount of time we spend in the workplace especially meaningful. For example, job strain and long working hours have been linked to higher risk of health issues such as coronary heart diseases, stroke, and depression (Niedhammer et al., 2021). The workplace has even been dubbed "the new doctor's office," which emphasizes that the link between health and work should not be ignored (Ducharme, 2024).

Further highlighting the need for holistic wellness in the workplace is the fact that many employed Gen Xers are also caregivers. **One study found that more than 60% of the employed caregivers surveyed reported a work-related consequence due to their caregiving responsibilities** (TIAA Institute & University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, 2023). Understanding how to support Gen Xers' workplace wellness is vital, especially because many juggle these caregiving responsibilities and the younger members of Generation X are expected to continue to work for decades more.

WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE IS CURRENTLY TRENDING MORE TOWARD HOLISTIC WELL-BEING.

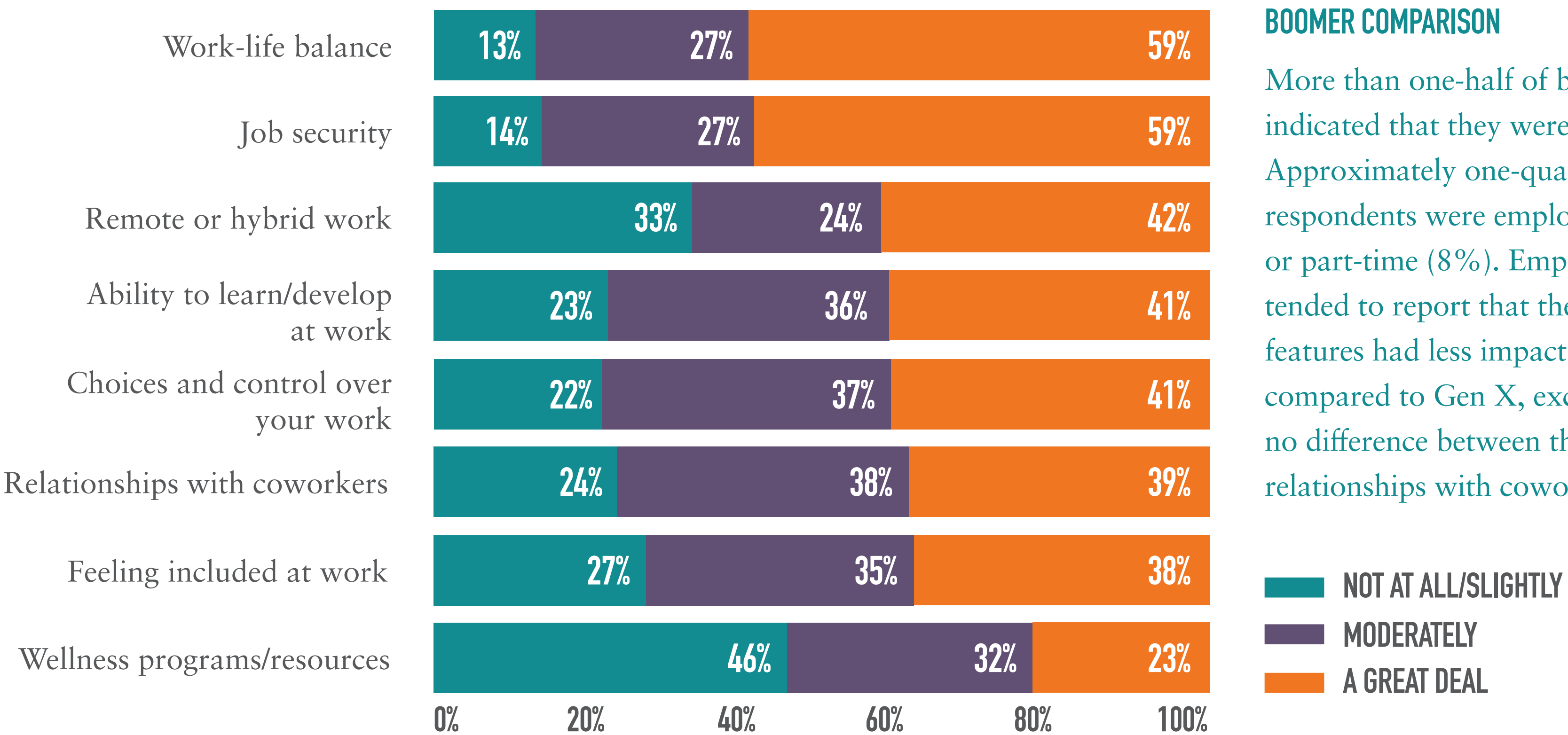
FACTORS THAT IMPACT OVERALL FEELING OF WELLNESS

In this study, 63% of Gen X respondents were employed full-time and 10% part-time. Employed respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which specific workplace factors impacted their overall feeling of wellness (see Figure 17). Approximately three out of five employed Gen Xers indicated work-life balance (59%) and job security (59%) impacted their wellness a great deal.

Gen Xers' feelings about opportunities for remote or hybrid works were mixed, with 42% indicating having these opportunities impacted their wellness a great deal, whereas approximately 33% reports slight (15%) or no (18%) impact. Respondents with greater incomes, higher levels of education, full-time positions, and younger ages tended to report that opportunities for remote/hybrid work had a greater impact on their wellness. Whether someone's work can be performed remotely was not measured in this survey. Most US employees (61%) do not have jobs that can be performed remotely, with employees who have lower incomes or who do not have a four-year college degree being more likely to fall into this category (Parker, 2023).

Less than a quarter of Gen X respondents indicated that workplace wellness programs/resources impacted their health "a great deal" (23%). Nearly one-half expressed that the availability of workplace wellness programs/resources impacts their health "not at all" (22%) or "slightly" (24%). This response may be a reflection of the relative importance of other factors or of the limited availability (or awareness) or quality of workplace wellness programs.

FIGURE 17. HOW MUCH DO THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IMPACT YOUR OVERALL FEELING OF WELLNESS?



BOOMER COMPARISON

More than one-half of boomers indicated that they were retired (63%). Approximately one-quarter of boomer respondents were employed full-time (18%) or part-time (8%). Employed boomers tended to report that these workplace features had less impact on their wellness compared to Gen X, except there was no difference between the groups on relationships with coworkers.

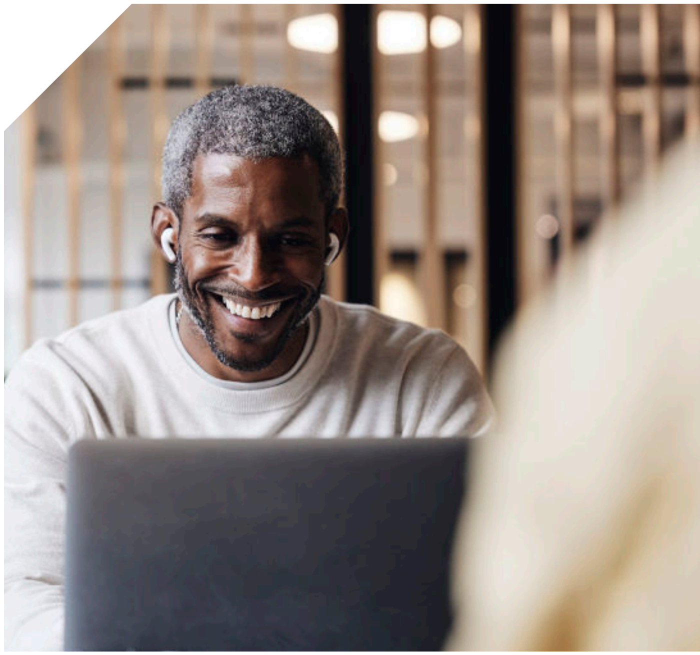
AVAILABILITY, PARTICIPATION & IMPACT OF WELLNESS PROGRAMS IN THE WORKPLACE

AVAILABILITY

Overall, employed Gen Xers reported limited availability of workplace wellness programs. **According to employed Gen X respondents, employee assistance programs (43%) and flexible work schedules (37%) were the most commonly available wellness programs/ resources** (see Table 2). Participation in employee assistance programs was lowest (44%) despite the relatively greater availability of such programs. It is important to note that one-quarter of Gen Xers indicated that none of the wellness programs were available in their workplaces (25%). It's possible that respondents were not aware of all wellness resources available to them at work.

PARTICIPATION

Participation was greatest for eating healthy food and snacks (89%), adopting flexible work schedules (88%), and attending social events/gatherings outside of work (87%). Gen X employees did not report as high participation in programs such as employee assistance programs (44%) and financial counseling programs (48%). One possibility for lower participation may be concern regarding confidentiality related to participating in workplace wellness programs. One study found that 14% of Gen Xers surveyed did not take advantage of their employers' mental health resources due to concerns about confidentiality (Securian Financial, 2022). It's also possible that wellness programs may not be communicated well, leading to lower awareness and participation. **When it comes to workplace communications, Gen Xers appreciate honesty and efficiency—being transparent and direct about workplace wellness programs may be one way to get increased Gen Xer participation** (KBI Benefits, 2023). The lack of participation in certain wellness programs may also be related to Gen Xers more generally not being able to prioritize their own self-care. In Year 1 of Mather Institute's study on Generation X, more than 40% of Gen Xers reported not being able to get as much self-care as they needed.



IMPACT

Although the availability of workplace wellness opportunities was limited, employees who engaged in them tended to have a positive experience. **Across all workplace wellness initiatives included in the survey, at least four out of five Gen X employees who participated indicated the program/resource had a positive impact on their wellness.** Positive impact was highest for flexible work schedules (93%) and lowest for employee assistance programs (80%) and standing desks (80%), although those were still largely favorable. However, there are mixed findings in the broader research literature on whether employee wellness programs are beneficial overall. On the one hand, some organizations have seen as high as a six-to-one return on investment from health plan savings when they have implemented well-run, comprehensive employee wellness programs (Berry et al., 2010). On the other hand, recent research has shown there is little to no effect from workplace wellness programs, such as resilience training, mindfulness, and well-being apps, on employee well-being (Fleming, 2024).

TABLE 2. AVAILABILITY, PARTICIPATION, AND IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

	AVAILABLE AT WORK	PARTICIPATED (IF AVAILABLE)	POSITIVE IMPACT (IF PARTICIPATED)
Flexible work schedules	37%	88%	93%
Social events/gatherings outside of work	23%	87%	86%
Healthy food and snacks	21%	89%	88%
Employee assistance programs	43%	44%	80%
Volunteer opportunities	23%	70%	85%
Wellness challenges/competitions	22%	67%	84%
Well-being apps	18%	76%	82%
Standing desks	18%	68%	80%
On-site fitness center or memberships	16%	67%	89%
Financial counseling	19%	48%	84%
Resilience/stress management programs	15%	53%	83%
On-site childcare or after-school care	6%	52%	81%
None of the above	25%		

BOOMER COMPARISON

43% of boomers (vs. 25% of Gen X) indicated that none of the wellness programs were available in their workplaces. Comparisons of specific programs were not conducted due to the low numbers.

IMPLICATIONS

When interpreting these findings, it's important to keep in mind that generational labels are broad categories. This report provides insights about an "average" or typical member of Generation X, but there are many individual differences within generations as well. Care should be taken not to make assumptions about individuals based on their age. In addition, differences between Gen X and boomers may be due to differences in life stages rather than "generational" differences. Because this study was conducted at one point in time, we cannot determine whether Gen X and boomers would respond in similar ways if they were the same age.

Members of Gen X are an important part of the workforce. These findings have implications for supporting their health and well-being.

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY BEHAVIOR CHANGES THAT FOCUS ON THE ESSENTIALS

Fewer than 10% of Gen Xers are in "excellent" health, which is likely related to unhealthy behaviors. Fewer than two-thirds eat nutritious food (61%) or exercise (55%) often. Many Gen Xers are pressed for time, balancing careers and family life, and not prioritizing their own health and well-being. This may have contributed to Gen Xers' limited interest in wellness trends. **Employers can look for opportunities to establish programs in the workplace that support basic healthy behaviors, such as healthy meal options for employees, sharing quick and nutritious recipes in newsletters, access to on-site fitness centers, step counting competitions, gym membership discounts, walking meetings, and more.**

FEWER THAN 10% OF GEN XERS ARE IN "EXCELLENT" HEALTH.

EMPHASIZE LIFESTYLE CHANGES FOR LONGEVITY

Nearly all Gen Xers indicated that physical activity and healthy eating are important for living a long life. Emphasizing the impact of lifestyle behaviors on longevity and health span may increase interest in wellness programs and services.

SUPPORT STRESS REDUCTION

Gen Xers continued to report high levels of stress, and money is one of the primary sources of stress for many. Some members may benefit from financial counseling and education related to retirement. Resources to reduce or offset childcare and education expenses could also be helpful, such as on-site childcare, scholarships for themselves or their children, tuition reimbursement, flexible scheduling, and health savings accounts. In addition, resilience or stress management training may also reduce levels of chronic stress.

ALIGN WORKPLACE WELLNESS OFFERINGS WITH EMPLOYEE NEEDS

There are opportunities to increase workplace wellness programs to support common health and wellness challenges that Gen Xers are facing. **Only 15% of employed Gen X respondents had resilience and stress management programs in the workplace, despite experiencing high levels of stress.** Similarly, finance was a primary source of stress, but only 19% of Gen X employees noted that financial counseling is available to them through their workplaces. Support for work-life balance is also likely to be important to Gen Xers. Given their many commitments, it's important to ensure that Gen Xers have time to participate in wellness programs. **Micro-trainings or on-demand wellness programs may be successful with this generation.**

ENHANCE AVAILABILITY AND AWARENESS OF WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

The availability of workplace wellness programs was fairly low overall. Employee assistance programs were the most common, but less than one-half of respondents had access. One-quarter of Gen Xers indicated that none of the wellness programs were available in their workplaces. The current study is unable to distinguish between lack of availability and lack of awareness of workplace wellness programs.

PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF WELLNESS OFFERING BENEFITS

Gen Xers care about honest and trustworthy wellness information, as is reflected in the importance they place on having scientific evidence of benefits when trying a new health program or experience. Similarly, personalized wellness products and services need to be based on credible information. Pairing wellness offerings with evidence-based information about the potential benefits would be helpful.

CONTINUE TO ACCOMMODATE NON-TECH USERS

Gen Xers grew up during the transition from analog to digital technology, and this divide is reflected in their responses. Overall, Gen X has embraced health and wellness technology more than boomers, but this doesn't apply to everyone. **Nearly one-third of Gen Xers haven't used technology to track their health, and only one-half indicated that smart-home technology was moderately/very important for their wellness.** Gen Xers are likely to be more tech savvy than boomers, but not everyone will embrace technology.

REDUCE BARRIERS TO WELLNESS TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

For Gen Xers who lack interest in health and wellness technologies, showing more evidence of their impact on well-being or providing more awareness on what these technologies can do may be helpful in increasing adoption. Developing low-cost wearable or non-wearable wellness technologies, or subsidizing the expense, will be key for Gen Xers who noted cost as a barrier. Clearly stated information related to data privacy and security may also convince more Gen Xers to adopt these technologies.

FUTURE STUDIES

Year 3 of this five-year initiative will focus on examining the experiences of Generation X in the workplace. The study will include a comparison across four generations—Gen X, boomers, millennials, and Gen Z. Future annual surveys will address purpose and meaning in life and plans for the future.

APPENDIX A WEIGHTED RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Respondent Characteristics	Generation X	Baby Boomers
Number of respondents	2,514	2,516
Age	**Mean = 51.5**	**Mean = 68.0**
44 to 48	31%	N/A
49 to 53	31%	N/A
54 to 59	38%	N/A
60 to 65	N/A	39%
66 to 71	N/A	33%
72 to 78	N/A	28%
Gender		
Female	51%	53%
Male	49%	47%
Race/Ethnicity		
White (Non-Hispanic)	60%	**72%***
Black (Non-Hispanic)	**12%***	10%
Asian (Non-Hispanic)	**7%***	5%
Other (Non-Hispanic)	3%	2%
Hispanic (all races)	**18%***	10%
Income		
Less than $25,000	11%	**18%***
$25,000 to less than $50,000	13%	**23%***
$50,000 to less than $75,000	13%	14%
$75,000 to less than $100,000	14%	14%
$100,000 to less than $125,000	**10%***	8%
$125,000 to less than $150,000	**9%***	7%
$150,000 to less than $175,000	**10%***	6%
$175,000 to less than $200,000	**8%***	4%
$200,000 or more	**13%***	7%

Respondent Characteristics	Generation X	Baby Boomers
Sexual Orientation		
Bisexual	**3%***	2%
Gay or lesbian	3%	3%
Heterosexual or straight	93%	**95%***
A sexual orientation not listed here	1%	1%
Marital Status		
Never married	**17%***	14%
Partnered/Married	**66%***	54%
Separated/Divorced	15%	**21%***
Widowed	2%	**10%***
Education Level		
Less than 9th grade	<1%	<1%
Some high school (no diploma)	**2%***	1%
High school graduate or GED	29%	30%
Associate degree	17%	**21%***
Bachelor's degree	29%	29%
Master's degree	**19%***	14%
Doctorate or professional degree	5%	5%
Employment Status		
Employed full-time	**63%***	18%
Employed part-time	**10%***	8%
Unemployed and looking for work	**8%***	4%
Unemployed and not looking for work	**2%***	1%
Student	**<1%***	<1%
Retired	7%	**63%***
Homemaker	**8%***	3%
Unpaid caregiver	<1%	<1%
Unable to work	5%	5%

**Indicates significantly greater proportion compared to the other group.*

APPENDIX B COMPARISON OF PARTICIPATION, IMPACT, AND INTEREST IN WELLNESS TRENDS BETWEEN GEN XERS AND BOOMERS

	Have tried		Positive Impact		Interest	
	Generation X	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Baby Boomers
Intermittent fasting	**35%***	22%	71%	69%	**35%***	18%
Telehealth for physical health	**31%***	26%	75%	76%	**39%***	25%
Body composition analysis	**26%***	15%	**64%***	53%	**48%***	32%
Juice cleanses	**23%***	10%	73%	74%	**33%***	17%
Telehealth for mental health	**19%***	8%	84%	82%	**36%***	20%
Electrical muscle stimulation (EMS) devices	**17%***	13%	74%	80%	**38%***	25%
Personalized vitamins	**16%***	10%	82%	82%	**50%***	34%
Artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots used for mental health support	**15%***	5%	**73%***	57%	**25%***	15%
Nature bathing	**15%***	9%	84%	87%	**42%***	26%
Digital detox	**14%***	5%	78%	71%	**34%***	20%
Percussive therapy	**10%***	5%	82%	75%	**40%***	22%
Biohacking	**6%***	3%	69%	65%	**38%***	22%
IV therapy	**6%***	2%	79%	81%	**29%***	12%
Microdosing	**5%***	1%	76%	82%	**27%***	9%

**Indicates significantly greater proportion compared to the other group.*

Have tried: “Have you tried any of the following wellness-related activities?” (% Selected)

Positive Impact: If they indicated they have tried it, “When you tried it, what impact did the following experiences have on your health and wellness?” (% Positive Impact)

Interest: If they indicated they have not tried it, “How interested are you in trying the following experiences to improve your health and wellness?” (% Moderately/Extremely Interested)

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