

2020 Healthcare Consumer Trends Report

THEME: 01 02 03 04

Meeting multigenerational expectations

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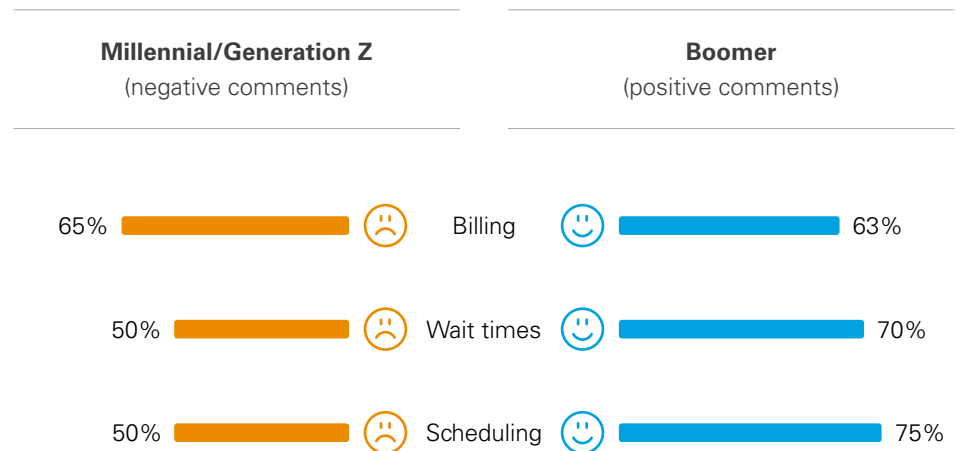
One of the major accomplishments of modern medicine has been the general increase in Americans' lifespans. But that achievement has also made serving American communities more complicated. Today's health systems must attend to a range of patient age groups that's broader than any other in history.

Predictably, this creates some challenges. Each generation of patients brings unique expectations to bear on their healthcare providers—and some of these expectations can be difficult to meet.

Patients older than 65, for instance, implicitly trust their providers. They're far more likely than younger patients to say that physicians and nurses "always" listen to them and "always" show the

patient appropriate respect.¹ But these older patients' trust comes less readily to digital innovations in healthcare. Only 4% of older adults have ever used telehealth services, and 80% of them express misgivings about doing so.² Meanwhile, 69% of Millennial and Generation Z consumers are likely to choose providers based on the availability of digital services,³ and 61% of them are willing to switch providers over a subpar digital experience.⁴

Nor are these the only domains in which generations disagree. NRC Health's research has unearthed stark contrasts between older and younger generations' comments on various aspects of the patient experience:



Failing to cater to the demands of Millennials and Generation Z will result in dissatisfaction and outmigration

These contrasts can make it difficult for organizations to identify the best places to marshal their resources. Should they focus on in-person encounters, or digital tools? On better invoicing, or smoother scheduling?

Answers to these questions will depend on an organization's patient mix. Regardless of a given community's age makeup, however, demography only moves in one direction: forward. As consumers age, Millennial and Generation Z consumers will eventually come to predominance in every health system's patient-cohort groups. Failing to cater to their expectations will put health systems at risk of incurring substantial losses from outmigration, and significant decreases in experience scores.

To find solutions, health systems may be tempted to tidily divide their customer base along generational lines. "Millennial" can be shorthand for "tech-savvy"; "Silent Generation" can be synonymous with "old-fashioned." But Brian believes that customers' desires are a little more nuanced than that.

"You can't just chalk up generational differences to cultural identities," Brian says. "So much of it has to do with the particulars of each customer's situation."

Each generation's phase of life circumscribes what they want from their health systems. Baby Boomers, for instance, are easing into their retirement years, while those from Generation X are reaching the peak of their work-related responsibilities. Meanwhile, Millennials are having children, and Generation Z is entering the workforce for the first time.

"These groups each want slightly different things, just because their lives are so different," Brian says.

Removing friction, then, starts with a deep consideration for what's happening elsewhere in the customer's life, and involves designing targeted interventions to make their lives easier—at least as far as their healthcare's concerned.

"It's something that transcends generations, this need for ease," Brian says. "Gen X, Boomers, Millennials, we're all stressed out. We all want things to be more convenient. If an organization can create that feeling of frictionless ease, no matter what the demographic of the customer, it'll make them happy."

"No matter how old we are, we all want ease."

BRIAN CURTISS

Marketing director, BayCare Health System

Each generation has its own set of expectations for healthcare systems. However, according to Brian Curtiss, marketing director at BayCare Health System in west-central Florida, a universal desire undergirds them all: the desire for convenience.

"At every point in healthcare, there's so much friction. Customers have a terrible time navigating the system," Brian says. "You take that friction away, and you make everyone happy."

According to Brian, generations differ primarily in *where* they tend to find that friction, and *how* health systems can best remove it for them.

SOURCES

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