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## Differences in Health Approaches between Generation Z and Generation X

### Author's

#### Agnieszka Walczak

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-5608-1294>

E-mail: [agnieszka.walczak998@gmail.com](mailto:agnieszka.walczak998@gmail.com)

University Clinical Centre in Gdańsk, 80-952 Gdańsk, Poland

#### Anna Hanslik

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5094-0012>

E-mail: [ania.han99@gmail.com](mailto:ania.han99@gmail.com)

University Clinical Hospital in Opole, al. Witosa 26, 45-401 Opole, Poland

#### Magdalena Mendak

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7347-1393>

E-mail: [magda.mendak@gmail.com](mailto:magda.mendak@gmail.com)

University Clinical Hospital in Opole, al. Witosa 26, 45-401 Opole, Poland

#### Agata Bialek

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3478-4698>

E-mail: [agataaa.bialek@gmail.com](mailto:agataaa.bialek@gmail.com)

University Clinical Hospital in Opole, al. Witosa 26, 45-401 Opole, Poland

**Adrian Hovagimyan**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8091-2817>

E-mail: [adrianhovagimyan8@gmail.com](mailto:adrianhovagimyan8@gmail.com)

University Clinical Hospital in Opole, al. Witosa 26, 45-401 Opole, Poland

**Monika Olszaniecka**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7135-2097>

E-mail: [olszaneckamonika@gmail.com](mailto:olszaneckamonika@gmail.com)

Czerniakowski Hospital, Stępińska 19/25, 00-739 Warsaw, Poland

**Tomasz Olszaniecki**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8495-5316>

E-mail: [tomolszan23@gmail.com](mailto:tomolszan23@gmail.com)

University Clinical Hospital in Opole, al. Witosa 26, 45-401 Opole, Poland

**Jakub Kurasz**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3955-1552>

E-mail: [jakubkurasz30@gmail.com](mailto:jakubkurasz30@gmail.com)

Faculty of Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, University of Opole, 45-040 Opole, Poland

**Abstract**

The aim of this article is to analyze the differences in health approaches between Generation Z (born after 1995) and Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980). Research conducted after 2018 indicates that lifestyle, priorities, and health habits significantly differ between these age groups, stemming from distinct cultural experiences and technological advancements. The article is based on a review of scientific publications discussing issues related to physical activity, diet, mental health, and the use of technology in health care. The findings suggest that Generation Z shows greater engagement with health technologies, while Generation X prefers traditional health maintenance methods. The conclusions drawn from this analysis are crucial for health policymakers, educators, and the medical sector.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Generation X, lifestyle, health, health technology, generational differences

**1. Introduction**

Social and technological changes influence how different generations care for their health. Generation X, who grew up in the 70s and 80s, exhibits a more traditional approach to health, whereas Generation Z, raised in the internet and technology era, adopts modern solutions and has different health priorities [7].

This article aims to present the differences in health care between these age groups in the context of:

- physical activity,
- diet and eating habits,

- mental health,
- the use of health technologies.

Understanding these differences is crucial for developing effective health strategies and educational campaigns targeting both generations. Discussing these aspects allows for a better understanding of the factors influencing health approaches in different age groups and how health interventions can be tailored for greater effectiveness.

## **2. Methodology**

The analysis is based on a literature review from 2018 to 2023, covering 39 scientific publications. Articles from Scopus, PubMed, and SpringerLink databases were used. The selection criteria were topics related to generational health and lifestyle differences. Each publication was evaluated for methodological reliability and the relevance of findings to the discussed topic. Industry reports and trend analyses were also included to provide additional context for generational comparisons.

The research covered various countries, allowing for the consideration of cultural and regional differences in health approaches. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were analyzed to gain a comprehensive view of the phenomenon.

## **3. Physical Activity**

### **3.1 Generation X**

Studies indicate that Generation X prefers moderate physical activities, such as jogging, walking, or fitness at sports clubs [2]. This preference results from a greater emphasis on traditional forms of activity and the need to balance work obligations with physical activity [10]. They often use local gyms and prefer group classes, which help maintain motivation. For this age group, physical activity is also a means of reducing stress related to work and family life. Additionally, Generation X is more engaged in recreational sports like tennis or golf, which not only support physical health but also serve as a form of social integration and relaxation [14]. Regularity and moderation in physical activity are key for this age group, reflecting their more established approach to health and fitness.

### **3.2 Generation Z**

In contrast, younger adults from Generation Z prefer shorter, intense workouts like HIIT or technology-supported activities, such as fitness apps [5]. Many from Generation Z use wearables that track their progress and monitor health in real-time. This younger generation combines various forms of activities, such as yoga with meditation, aligning with their holistic health approach [15].

Generation Z often experiments with new activity forms, such as virtual workouts, allowing them to exercise anytime and anywhere. Flexibility and the ability to personalize workouts are crucial for this group, made possible by modern technologies [16]. This enables them to tailor their exercise routines to individual needs and preferences.

### **3.3 Medical Data**

Recent studies show that regular physical activity in Generation X leads to lower incidences of chronic diseases such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes [32]. Conversely, Generation Z's preference for high-intensity workouts correlates with a higher prevalence of sports-related injuries, including stress fractures and tendonitis, highlighting the need for proper guidance and recovery practices [33].

## **4. Diet and Eating Habits**

### **4.1 Generation X**

Generation X tends to consume traditional meals, often home-cooked. They value a balanced diet but may not always be aware of modern nutritional recommendations [4]. They prefer fresh and natural products, although their choices can be limited by time constraints and work-related stress. Many in this age group try to include more fruits and vegetables in their diet, with eating habits often shaped by family traditions [17].

There is also increasing interest in healthy eating and dietary supplementation among this group. They frequently seek advice from dietitians and doctors to improve their eating habits, especially concerning age-related health issues like overweight or heart disease [18].

### **4.2 Generation Z**

Younger generations more often opt for alternative diets, such as veganism, vegetarianism, or keto diets, driven by fashion, social media trends, and environmental concerns [6]. They use apps to monitor calorie intake and macronutrients [11]. For Generation Z, conscious purchasing of organic products and avoiding processed foods are also important [19].

Generation Z is more inclined to experiment with new dietary trends promoted by influencers and celebrities on social media. Their food choices often reflect concerns for the planet and ethical aspects of food production [20]. Many of them use meal subscription services that deliver ready-to-eat meals, saving time and facilitating convenient diet planning.

### **4.3 Medical Data**

Data indicates that Generation X is at a higher risk of metabolic syndrome due to dietary habits rich in saturated fats and sugars [34]. In contrast, Generation Z's experimentation with extreme diets has been linked to nutrient deficiencies, such as iron and vitamin D, which can impact long-term health [35].

## **5. Mental Health**

### **5.1 Generation X**

Mental health in Generation X was often a taboo subject, which affects their lower engagement in seeking professional help [7]. Many individuals in this group still rely on self-help or family support. Their approach to mental health tends to be more conservative, and seeking psychological help may be perceived as a sign of weakness [21].

Although Generation X is increasingly open to discussions about mental health, they often prefer to address issues privately. Their approach to therapy is more cautious, and the use of psychological services can be limited by time constraints or concerns about social judgment [22].

## **5.2 Generation Z**

Generation Z is significantly more open about mental health issues compared to previous generations. Young adults in this group often share their experiences on social media, helping to normalize mental health topics and reduce stigma [7]. Generation Z is more likely than their older counterparts to use therapeutic services, both in-person and online [8]. Therapies such as cognitive-behavioral therapy and mindfulness are accessible to them through popular apps like Headspace and Calm [23].

Additionally, Generation Z uses various social platforms to find support within their peer communities. Online forums and groups on Facebook or Discord dedicated to mental health offer spaces to share experiences and receive advice, which is particularly valuable for those who lack access to traditional therapy forms [1]. Generation Z places significant importance on mental health, treating it as an integral part of overall well-being rather than a separate aspect of life [8].

## **5.3 Medical Data**

Research shows that Generation X experiences higher rates of anxiety and depression related to financial and familial responsibilities, yet they are less likely to seek psychiatric help [36]. On the other hand, Generation Z has higher instances of reported anxiety and depression, with increased use of mental health services and medications like SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors) [37].

# **6. Health Technologies**

## **6.1 Generation X**

Generation X, although familiar with basic technologies, primarily uses them for diagnostic and consultative purposes. Telemedicine appeals to them mainly due to its convenience, especially for specialist consultations or prescription renewals [3]. However, Generation X shows some caution in using modern devices like smartwatches or health monitoring apps, due to concerns about the privacy of health data [4].

Health technologies are viewed by them as supplementary tools rather than primary means of health care. They use them mainly when necessary or recommended by a doctor [25]. It is noteworthy that Generation X is gradually increasing its engagement with health apps, particularly in areas such as monitoring blood pressure or glucose levels [10].

## **6.2 Generation Z**

Generation Z is the first to grow up fully immersed in the digital world, which has significantly influenced their approach to health technologies. Smartwatches, fitness apps, and medical portals have become standard tools for daily use. Young people in this group frequently use such apps to monitor their health parameters, adjust training plans, and track progress toward health goals [1].

Moreover, Generation Z shares their health achievements on social platforms and seeks inspiration there. Trends like fitness challenges on social media or apps that enable competition with friends in physical activity are popular in this group [6]. Generation Z also values the ability to personalize health services offered by digital technologies, allowing for more conscious health management [5].

Apps like MyFitnessPal, Apple Health, or Google Fit provide not only health data but also lifestyle recommendations, enhancing their engagement in health care. In the context of mental health, these technologies allow for mood monitoring, stress level tracking, and offer tools supporting mental well-being, crucial for their holistic approach to health [26].

## **6.3 Medical Data**

Studies show that wearable technology adoption among Generation Z leads to improved health outcomes, such as increased physical activity and better chronic disease management [38]. Conversely, Generation X's cautious adoption of health technologies has limited their benefits, suggesting a need for better education on the advantages of these tools [39].

## **7. Historical and Social Context**

### **7.1 Generation X**

Generation X grew up in a period marked by economic transitions and the introduction of home computing. Their approach to health reflects the pragmatic mindset shaped by balancing family and career responsibilities. They are more likely to seek guidance from traditional authority figures such as doctors or fitness instructors [27].

### **7.2 Generation Z**

In contrast, Generation Z is the product of the internet age, with unrestricted access to online resources shaping their attitudes toward health. This has made them self-reliant in researching and adopting health practices but also more vulnerable to misinformation [28]. Their health priorities are closely aligned with current global issues, such as sustainability and mental health awareness.

## **8. Influence of Media and Education**

The role of media and education in shaping public perceptions and behaviors related to health has evolved significantly across generations. In the late 20th century, educational reforms and health awareness campaigns played a pivotal role in informing Generation X about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. These initiatives, often spearheaded by government agencies and non-profit organizations, emphasized traditional methods of health education. Schools introduced mandatory health education classes that covered topics such as nutrition, physical activity, and the dangers of smoking and substance abuse. Public service announcements on television and radio further reinforced these messages, aiming to instill a sense of responsibility towards personal well-being [29].

In contrast, Generation Z has grown up in an era dominated by digital media, where information about health is not only more accessible but also more diverse in its presentation. This generation has been exposed to a vast array of digital health content from a young age, ranging from wellness influencers on social media platforms to interactive e-learning modules designed to engage users in a more dynamic learning process. The rise of wellness influencers, who often share personal health journeys and tips, has made health-related information more relatable and immediate. These influencers leverage platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to reach millions, creating communities that prioritize mental health, self-care, and fitness.

Moreover, the availability of interactive e-learning platforms has revolutionized how health education is delivered to Generation Z. Unlike traditional classroom settings, these platforms provide a personalized learning experience, allowing users to explore health topics at their own pace and according to their interests. Gamification of health education, through apps and online courses, has further enhanced engagement by making learning about health fun and rewarding. As a result, Generation Z's understanding of health is not only more comprehensive but also more nuanced, reflecting the complex interplay of physical, mental, and social well-being [29]. Overall, the influence of media and education on health perceptions differs markedly between Generation X and Generation Z, shaped by the technological advancements and societal shifts of their respective eras. While Generation X's health awareness was molded through structured educational reforms and mass media campaigns, Generation Z's knowledge has been significantly shaped by the digital landscape, highlighting the evolving nature of health education across generations.

## **9. Regional and Cultural Differences**

Cultural norms significantly influence generational health practices, with notable variations across different regions and societies. In Western countries, there is a strong emphasis on individual health goals, where personal responsibility and self-care are considered paramount. This perspective is deeply rooted in the values of autonomy and independence, often reflected in public health campaigns and educational materials that encourage individuals to take charge of their own health. Practices such as regular physical exercise, balanced diets, and routine health check-ups are promoted as personal achievements that contribute to overall well-being [30].

In contrast, collectivist cultures, which are prevalent in many parts of Asia, approach health from a more communal perspective. In these societies, health decisions are often made with the well-being of the family or community in mind. Traditional practices such as Ayurveda in India or Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) emphasize harmony and balance within the body and with the environment, reflecting a holistic approach to health. The role of elders and community leaders in guiding health practices is significant, as their experience and knowledge are highly valued. Family members often take collective responsibility for the health of elderly relatives, and community health initiatives are seen as a shared duty [30].

Furthermore, dietary habits also illustrate these regional differences. In Western countries, there is a growing trend towards plant-based diets and organic food consumption, driven by individual health benefits and environmental concerns. In contrast, many Asian cultures integrate traditional ingredients and cooking methods that are believed to have medicinal properties, such as the use of herbs and spices in daily meals to prevent illnesses and promote longevity. Festivals and communal eating are integral to many cultures, where the act of sharing food reinforces social bonds and collective well-being.

Religious and spiritual beliefs also play a crucial role in shaping health practices. In some Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures, practices like fasting during Ramadan or observing dietary restrictions based on religious teachings are common. These practices are not merely seen as acts of faith but also as ways to purify the body and mind, contributing to overall health. In conclusion, regional and cultural differences profoundly shape how generations perceive and practice health. Understanding these nuances is essential for creating effective health interventions that respect and incorporate cultural values, thereby promoting more inclusive and holistic approaches to health and well-being [30].

## **10. New Health Trends and Innovations**

The rapidly evolving field of personalized medicine and the widespread adoption of wearable technology signal a transformative shift in health approaches, emphasizing data-driven and individualized care. Personalized medicine, which tailors medical treatment to the individual characteristics of each patient, is becoming increasingly popular, particularly among Generation Z, who are more accustomed to digital and customized experiences in various aspects of their lives. This innovative approach utilizes genetic information, lifestyle data, and environmental factors to create personalized health plans, thereby enhancing the efficacy of treatments and minimizing adverse effects [31].

Wearable technology, such as fitness trackers, smartwatches, and health monitoring devices, has further revolutionized the health landscape. These devices collect real-time data on various health metrics, including heart rate, sleep patterns, physical activity, and even stress levels. This information empowers users to make informed decisions about their health, promoting a proactive approach to wellness. Generation Z, being digital natives, are particularly drawn to these technologies, which seamlessly integrate into their tech-savvy lifestyles. The constant feedback and goal-setting features of wearables encourage continuous engagement with personal health, fostering a sense of control and accountability.



Generation X, while initially slower to adopt these innovations, is gradually embracing personalized medicine and wearable technology as they become more mainstream and accessible. This generation values the convenience and insights provided by these advancements, particularly as they seek to manage age-related health concerns. The ability to monitor health in real-time and receive tailored health advice appeals to their growing interest in maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle well into middle age and beyond [31].

Additionally, telemedicine has emerged as a critical component of modern healthcare, offering remote consultations and digital health services that are both convenient and efficient. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of telehealth, making it a vital tool for maintaining healthcare access amidst social distancing measures. Both Generation Z and Generation X have benefited from this shift, appreciating the flexibility and immediacy of virtual healthcare services. This trend towards digital health solutions is likely to continue, driven by advancements in technology and the increasing demand for accessible and personalized healthcare options.

In summary, the growing field of personalized medicine and wearable technology, along with the rise of telemedicine, highlights a future where health approaches are increasingly data-driven and individualistic. These innovations cater to the preferences and needs of Generation Z, while Generation X is progressively integrating these advancements into their health practices, reflecting a broader societal shift towards personalized and technology-enhanced healthcare [31].

## **11. Conclusions**

The analysis reveals that the approaches of Generation Z and Generation X to health care are shaped by their distinct socio-cultural backgrounds and technological advancements. Generation Z's integration of health technologies and emphasis on mental well-being contrast with Generation X's more traditional and cautious approach. These insights underscore the need for tailored health strategies that consider generational preferences and challenges.

## **12. Recommendations**

- **Health Policymakers:** Develop inclusive health policies that cater to the digital preferences of Generation Z while supporting Generation X in adopting new technologies.
- **Educators:** Implement health education programs that leverage digital tools to engage Generation Z while providing Generation X with resources to understand emerging health trends.
- **Healthcare Providers:** Offer personalized care options that incorporate technology for younger patients and ensure that older patients have access to traditional and digital health solutions.

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Conceptualization - Agnieszka Walczak, Anna Hanslik;

Methodology - Magdalena Mendak, Agata Białek;

Software - Agnieszka Walczak; Monika Olszaniecka;

Analysis - Agata Białek, Tomasz Olszaniecki;

Investigation - Tomasz Olszaniecki, Jakub Kurasz;

Resources - Monika Olszaniecka, Magdalena Mendak;

Data curation - Adrian Hovagimyan, Anna Hanslik;

Writing - Anna Hanslik, Agnieszka Walczak;

Preparation - Anna Hanslik, Jakub Kurasz;

Visualization - Magdalena Mendak, Monika Olszaniecka;

Supervision - Agnieszka Walczak, Adrian Hovagimyan;

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