

WHITE PAPER

Reaching Gen Z:

Where and how pharma marketers
can best engage the next generation



Phreesia
LIFE SCIENCES

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Executive summary

No one can accuse the members of Generation Z of not caring about their health. They're more likely to use apps or wearable devices to track their physical health, do online research before or after their doctors' appointments, and openly discuss their mental well-being, Phreesia research shows.

Yet at the same time, they don't tend to pursue care in traditional ways. In fact, 43% of Gen Z patients have not seen their primary care provider in the past six months, and Gen Z-ers are more likely to turn to the internet for health information and support before they consult a doctor.

Given these tendencies, relying on the same channels and strategies pharma marketers use to reach older generations isn't the best way to resonate with Gen Z. So where—and how—can marketers connect with the Gen Z audience?

Based on survey responses collected in November 2021 from close to 4,000 patients when they checked in for doctors' visits on the Phreesia platform, this white paper will explore Gen Z-ers' health behaviors and the factors that motivate their healthcare decision-making to help pharma marketers understand the optimal ways to engage the next generation.

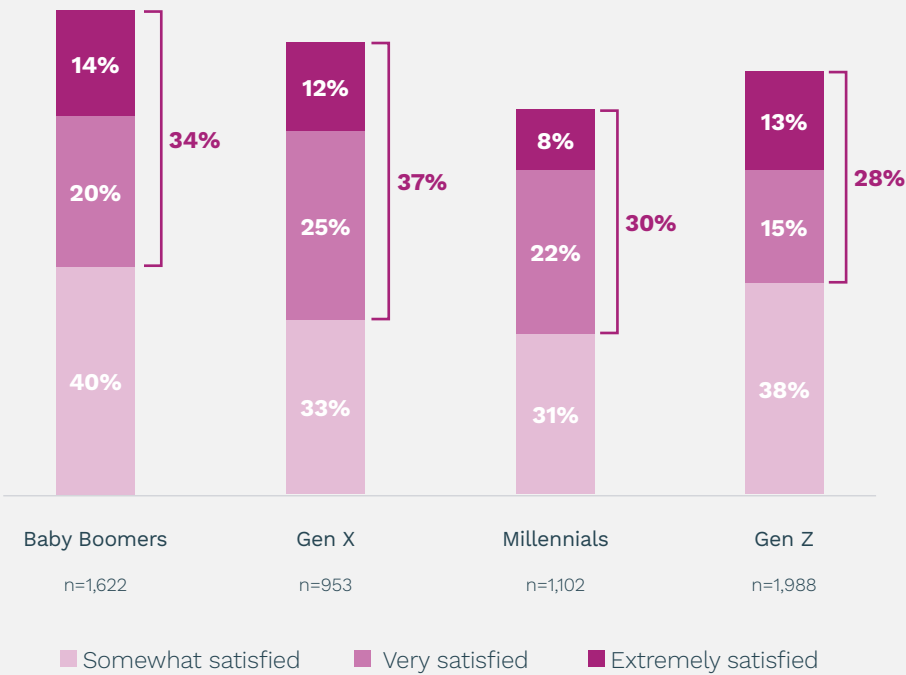


Introduction

Encompassing those born between 1997 and 2012, Generation Z is known for being more progressive, more racially and ethnically diverse and better educated than previous generations.¹ But those aren't the only features that set this group apart.

Gen Z also is much less satisfied with the current U.S. healthcare system than older generations are, Phreesia research shows. Fewer than 3 in 10 Gen Z patients (28%) say they're very satisfied with the status quo, significantly fewer than Baby Boomers (34%), born between 1946 and 1964, and Generation X (37%), born between 1965 and 1980.

How satisfied are you with the current healthcare system in the United States?

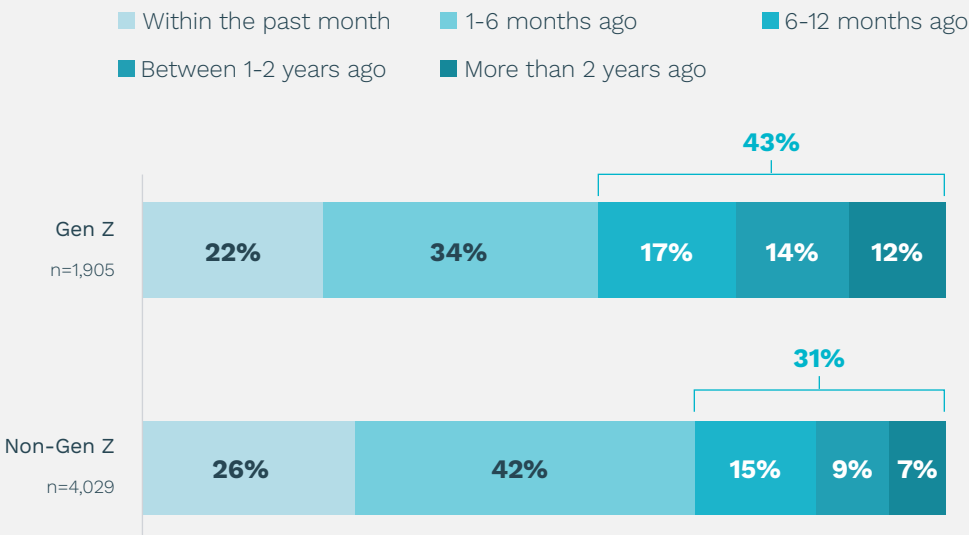


Saddled with a system they don't feel is working for them, it's no wonder that Gen Z-ers interact with healthcare resources and providers differently than older patients do. They see their primary care providers (PCPs) less frequently: 43% haven't seen a PCP in the past six months, compared with 31% of older patients. And they're more likely than older patients to first head online rather than to a doctor's office when they have a health- or treatment-related question.

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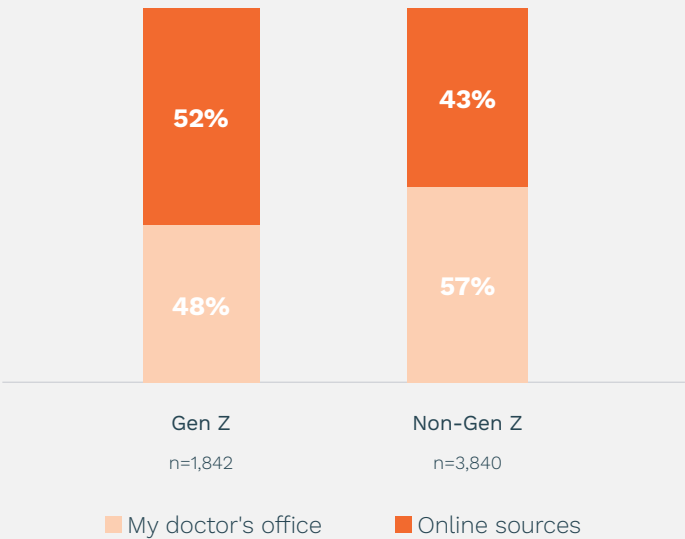
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When was the last time you saw
your primary care provider?



Pharma marketers need to recognize these preferences and tweak their strategies accordingly if they want to effectively reach Gen Z. The following sections outline tactics and messaging approaches that are likely to resonate with this group based on Phreesia’s survey findings.

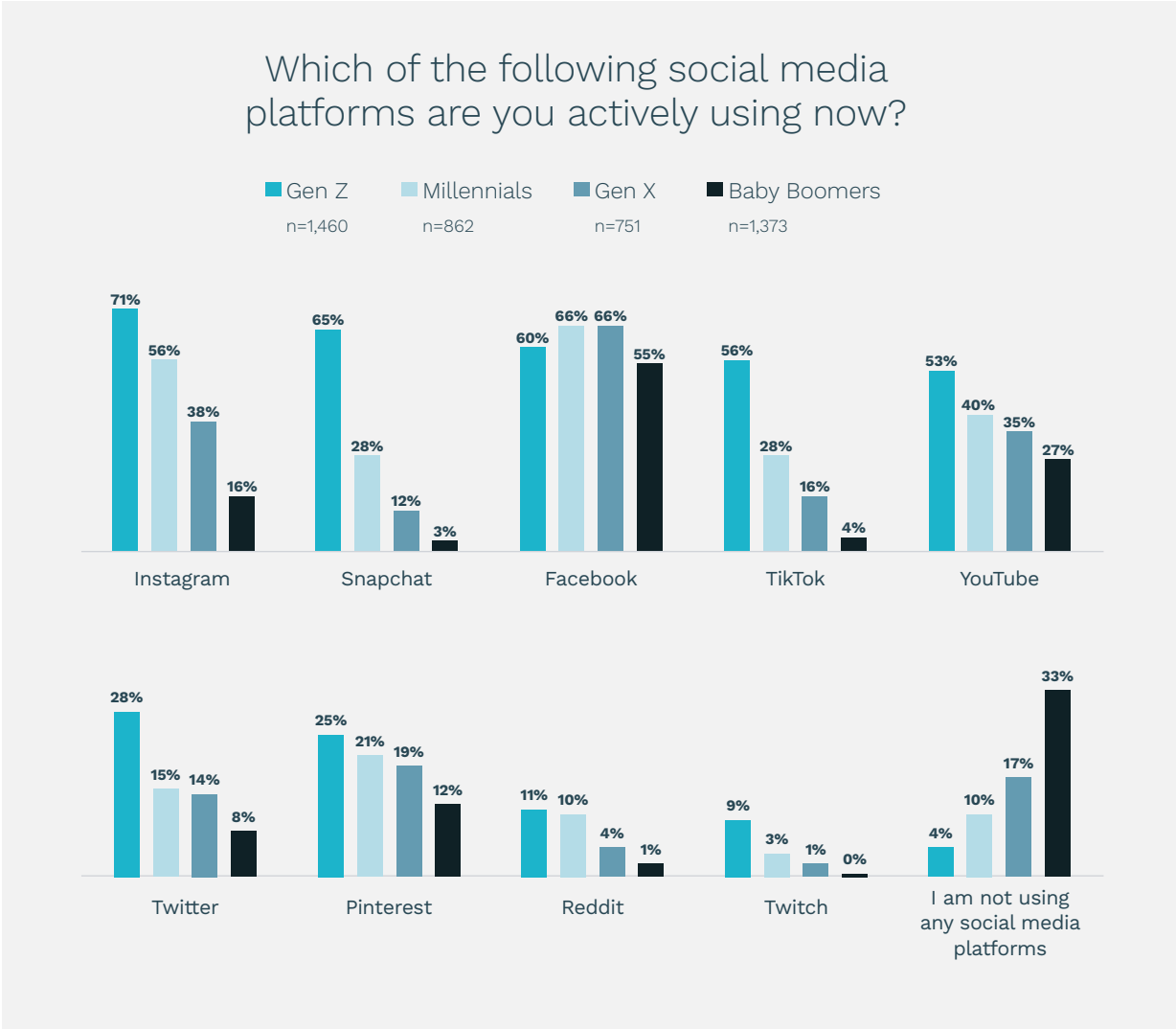
Between the two sources below, where do you
typically go first for information if you have a
health-or treatment-related question?



Where to reach Gen Z

Social media

It's no secret that members of Gen Z are active on social media, but just how active are they? Overall, 96% of surveyed Gen Z patients reported that they actively use social media platforms. With the exception of Facebook, Gen Z patients are the most active users on nearly every major social media platform. And when asked which social media platforms they use daily, more than half of Gen Z patients say they go on Instagram (62%), Snapchat (60%), Facebook (52%) and TikTok (51%) either every day or almost every day.



That kind of use makes social-media marketing a surefire bet for getting in front of Gen Z—and fortunately for marketers, Gen Z patients are more likely than older patients to trust the information they see on social media. More than one-third (35%) of Gen Z patients say they trust the health information they see on social media, compared with just 20% of patients from older generations. Similarly, 34% of Gen Z patients trust health information posted by influencers, compared with 25% of patients from older generations—and 49% of Gen Z patients follow at least one health and wellness influencer.

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More than **one-third (35%)** of Gen Z patients say they trust the health information they see on social media, compared with just **20% of patients from older generations.**

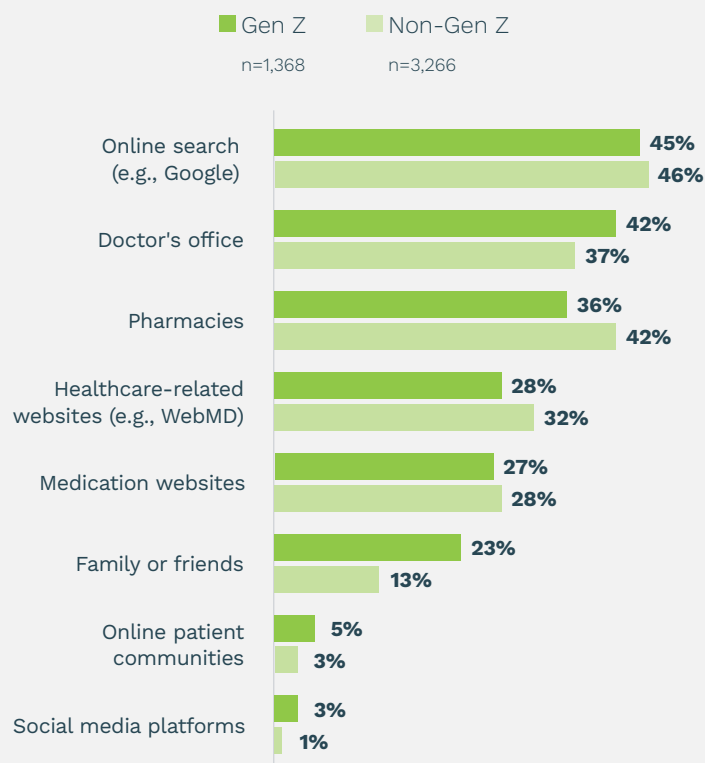
Gen Z patients also are particularly inclined to head to social media when it comes to managing their stress and mental health. Ten percent report using social platforms for that purpose, well above the 2% of patients from Gen X and other older generations who report using social media for mental health support.

Online search

But while social media may be a big part of Gen Z-ers' everyday lives and a trusted information source, it's still not their primary resource for medication information, survey results show. In other words, while social media is an important messaging platform, it shouldn't be the only place that drugmakers go to get Gen Z-ers' attention.

To learn more about pharmaceutical treatments, Gen Z patients are most likely to search online (45%), followed by consulting with a doctor (42%). Only 3% look to social media for drug information. And about half of Gen Z patients (52%) say they go online first to find answers to their health- or treatment-related questions, compared with 43% of older generations.

If you want to know more about a medication,
where do you typically go for information?



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Gen Z-ers also tend to conduct online research before or after their doctors' appointments (78%), with 44% reporting that they do so all or most of the time. Pharma marketers can be resource-ready with a combination of paid search advertising and comprehensive disease education and medication websites that address Gen Z's questions and concerns.

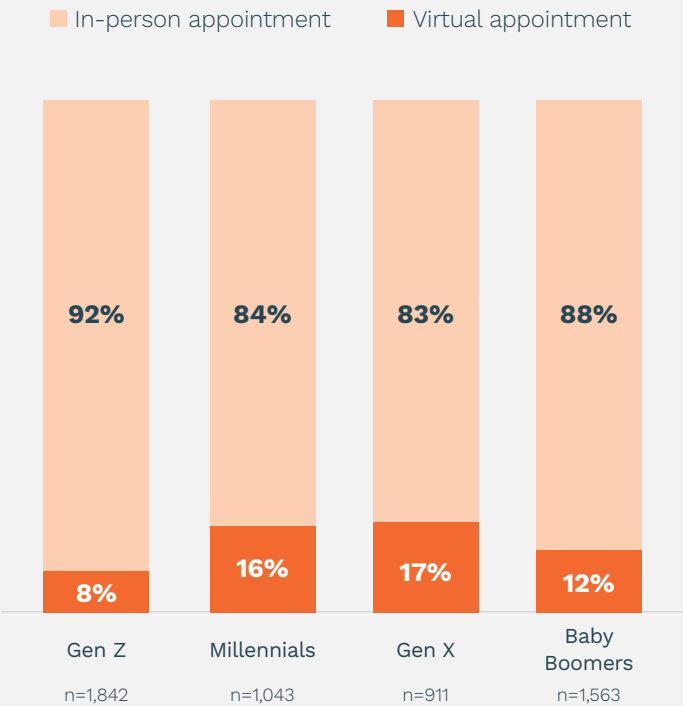
Point of care

While Gen Z patients may visit their primary care providers less often, their doctor's office is still one of the top places they go for treatment information—and drugmakers need to be prepared to provide that information at the point of care.

Some 42% of Gen Z-ers say they turn to their doctor when looking for medication information, ranking that resource just behind online search. And nearly half (48%) of the group consults their doctor before conducting online research to answer their health- or treatment-related questions.

While those marketers who can reach Gen Z patients ahead of in-person or virtual doctors' appointments will be best-positioned for success, with this age group, it's particularly important for point-of-care marketers to be ready to engage them in brick-and-mortar offices. Gen Z patients have the strongest preference for in-person appointments of any generation, with 92% favoring face-to-face encounters over virtual visits. They're also slightly less likely than older generations to schedule virtual doctors' appointments in the coming year.

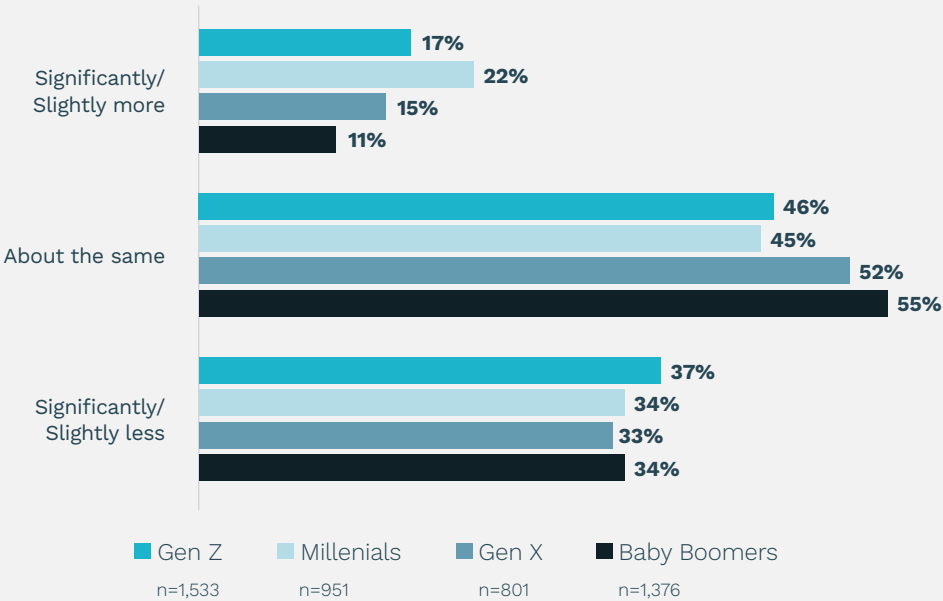
Assuming similar quality of care, which of the following types of doctor's appointments would you prefer?



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Marketers also can leverage the point of care to satisfy Gen Z's preferences to conduct research before or after their appointments by providing online resources during intake or through post-visit follow-up communications.

Do you plan to schedule more or fewer virtual doctor's appointments in the next 12 months?



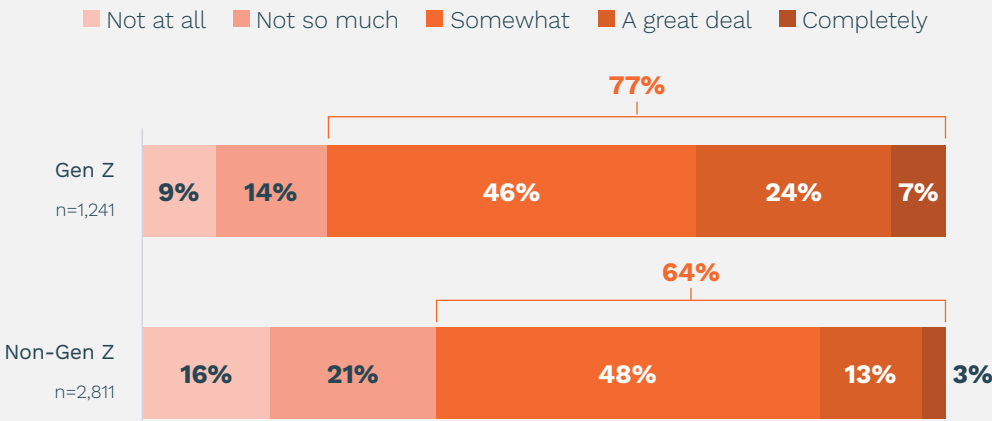
How to reach Gen Z

Increase transparency

Of course, getting in front of Gen Z is only half the battle for pharma marketers; the other half is crafting messaging that they will trust and identify with.

But there's good news for marketers in that department: Gen Z patients not only overwhelmingly trust health information from pharma companies (77%), they're also more likely than any other generation (64%) to trust information from pharma sources.

How much do you trust health information from pharmaceutical companies?



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Among patients who don't trust information from pharma companies, however, Gen Z-ers are most often skeptical because they perceive a lack of transparency. Nearly half (47%) of surveyed Gen Z patients cited a lack of transparency as their top reason for mistrusting pharma companies, compared with 37% of non-Gen Z patients.

Drugmakers can combat that perception by putting transparency at the forefront of their communications with Gen Z. Highlighting clinical trial results and openly acknowledging a medication's potential side effects—rather than burying that information in the fine print—could go a long way toward building Gen Z-ers' trust and increasing their receptivity to other marketing messages.

Focus on overall wellness

Across the board, patients from all generations strongly agree that pharma companies should support patients' physical health by doing more to promote healthy living—including 90% of Gen Z patients, 91% of Millennials and 88% of older generations.

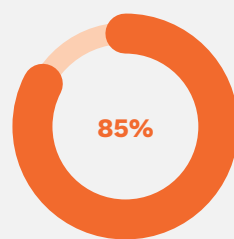
But those in Gen Z take it a step further. They not only want drugmakers to additionally support patients' mental health and well-being while they're in pharmaceutical treatment, but 85% of them believe it's pharma's responsibility to do so. That's significantly higher than the proportion of Millennials and Gen X and older patients who share that belief, at 76% and 64%, respectively.

Many pharma companies already offer resources to help patients undergoing treatment with lifestyle changes and emotional aid through patient support programs. But patients don't know such resources exist: Just 3% of eligible patients currently use patient support programs, and only 8% have used patient support programs in their lifetime, prior Phreesia research shows.

These survey results suggest that amping up awareness around available treatment-related resources will not only benefit all patients, but also will appeal to Gen Z-ers who want to see pharma play a more active role in patients' overall health and wellness.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Percentages displayed are those who strongly/somewhat agree.



Gen Z
n=1,069

76%
Millennials
n=645

64%
Gen X
and Older
n=1,582

It is pharmaceutical companies' responsibility to provide patient support to cover patients' **mental and wellness care** when on treatment.



Gen Z
n=1,165

91%
Millennials
n=697

88%
Gen X
and Older
n=1,717

Pharmaceutical companies should do more to promote **healthy living**.

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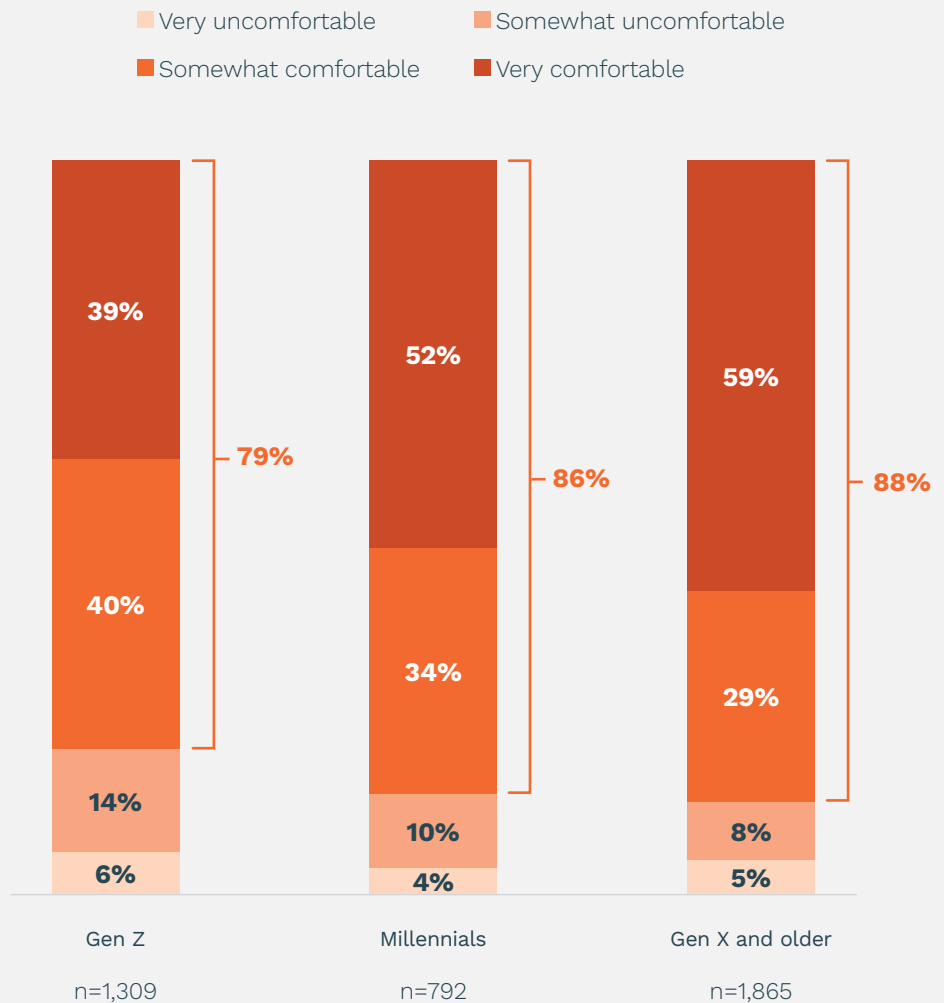
Facilitate doctor conversations

Gen Z patients are more attentive to and open about their mental health than older generations, with 60% reporting that they discuss their mental health with friends and 59% saying they do so with family. Lower percentages of Gen Z patients seek out mental health professionals (33%) or turn to other healthcare professionals for help (22%), though they still do so at a higher rate than older patients do.

But when it comes to discussing their mental health with doctors, many Gen Z-ers aren't comfortable—in fact, they're less comfortable than older patients. Just 79% say they are comfortable talking about their mental health with their doctor, compared with 86% of Millennial patients and 88% of those in Gen X or older.

Marketers can promote those conversations by providing tools such as doctor-patient discussion guides before patients' appointments.

How comfortable are you discussing your mental health with your doctor?



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Key takeaways

With Gen Z-ers comprising a significant portion of the U.S. population—and harboring very different views on pharma and healthcare than previous generations—pharma marketers need to alter the playbook, if not tear it up completely, if they want to reach them.

By targeting members of Gen Z on social media, at the point of care and before and after their doctors' appointments, marketers can meet them where they are and connect with them where they're already looking for health information. And by highlighting transparency, focusing on overall patient wellness and facilitating more holistic doctor-patient conversations, drugmakers can build trust and reduce barriers to treatment.

While engaging Gen Z comes with unique challenges that mirror the generation's unprecedented approach to healthcare, marketers who can build data-driven strategies that take Gen Z's behaviors and preferences into account have an opportunity to capture millions of new patients.

About Phreesia Life Sciences

Phreesia empowers life sciences companies to connect meaningfully with clinically relevant patients, delivering targeted health content in a one-to-one setting. Our PatientConnect offering identifies and motivates the right patients to initiate meaningful brand conversations, and our PatientInsights product enables our clients to better understand their target patient populations.

Phreesia meets patients where they are, both virtually and in person, and reaches them at multiple touchpoints throughout their healthcare journey.

To learn more about Phreesia Life Sciences, visit lifesciences.phreesia.com

End notes

1. ["On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know About Gen Z So Far."](#) Pew Research Center, May 14, 2020.
2. ["Industry Perspectives: Expanding Awareness of Patient Support Programs."](#) Phreesia Life Sciences, July 2021.