

Six Generations, One Care Environment: Healthcare's Experience Crisis



With healthcare facilities now serving six generations at once, designing for a single user profile is no longer sufficient. Patients and family members of varying ages bring different physical abilities, communication preferences, and care expectations, all of which must be supported within shared environments. At the same time, healthcare workforces are themselves multigenerational, with varying needs around technology, collaboration, privacy, and work style. When done well, multigenerational design improves safety, comfort, and accessibility, strengthening the patient experience while also supporting staff engagement, satisfaction, and operational efficiency.



Generational Realities Shaping Healthcare

Healthcare environments are shaped not only by who they serve, but by who works within them. When spaces are calibrated to support generational diversity, they can better accommodate differing needs, expectations, and emotional demands across patients and care teams. Thoughtful multigenerational design strengthens job satisfaction and elevates the patient experience—an increasingly critical driver of performance and financial success for healthcare organizations.



Patient Needs Across Generations

Healthcare facilities now serve six generations, each with unique wellness needs and preferences that must be addressed through more inclusive environments and personalized services.



Silent Generation
1928-1945
Want traditional care delivery with in-person appointments and verbal instructions from physicians.



Millennials
1981-1996
Expect digital options and prioritize quick service, accessibility, and a collaborative approach to care.



Baby Boomers
1946-1964
Value practices with strong reputations and tend to stay loyal to trusted providers.



Generation Z
1997-2010
Proponents of holistic health and wearable devices and expect seamless digital integration with providers.



Generation X
1965-1980
Need flexible appointment options due to caregiving responsibilities for both children and aging parents.



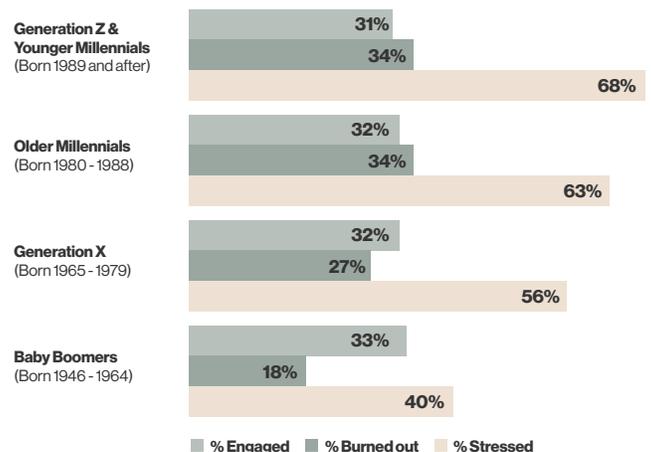
Generation Alpha
2011-2025
Expected to grow up with even greater reliance on AI-driven personalization and virtual care.

NRC Health, Next-generation Human Understanding, 2024

A Multigenerational Workforce Under Strain

Today's healthcare workforce spans five generations with different expectations for technology, work style, and support. Higher stress and burnout among younger caregivers signal growing risks to performance and long-term workforce stability.

Engagement, Burnout & Stress, by Generation



Gallup, Generation Disconnected: Data on Gen Z in the Workplace, November 2022

What's At Stake

For patients

- **Experience suffers**

Spaces that fail to accommodate varying expectations around comfort, amenities, and technology can leave patients feeling disconnected, unwelcome, and underserved.

- **Engagement drops**

Generational differences in how patients prefer to access care, including in-person and virtual touchpoints, can lead to fragmented care and lower satisfaction.

For caregivers

- **Daily friction increases**

Multigenerational care teams experience added strain and fatigue when environments don't support different work styles, technology preferences, and needs for focus or collaboration.

- **Engagement erodes**

When environments fail to support how multigenerational teams work best, connection and morale suffer.

For organizations

- **Experience scores suffer**

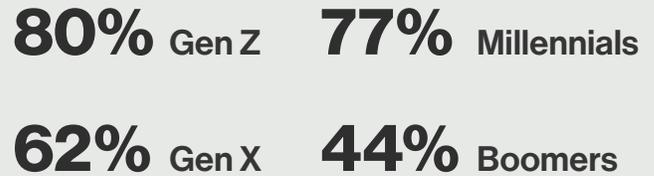
Facilities that fail to meet generational expectations for care access risk lower patient satisfaction and loyalty, as well as declining utilization.

- **Retention challenges grow**

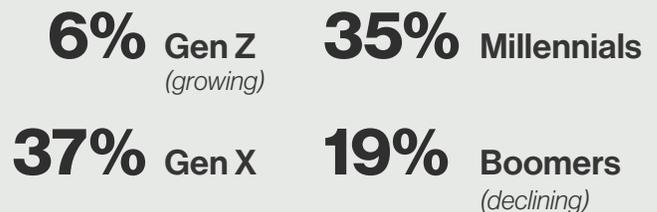
Without work environments designed for generational diversity, organizations that fail to meet evolving expectations risk disengagement, burnout, and turnover, especially as younger generations enter the workforce.



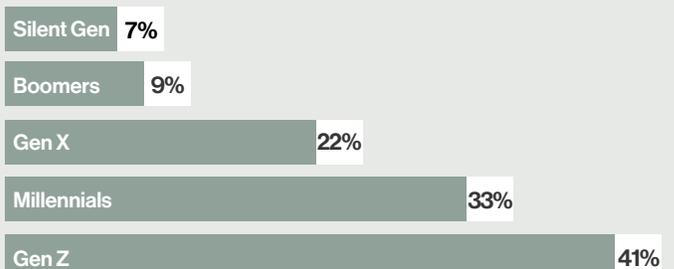
Desire for Additional Amenities in Healthcare Settings¹



The nursing workforce now spans multiple generations²



Telehealth Preferences by Generation³



1. JLL, 2023 Patient Consumer Survey, June 2023.

2. Nurse Leader, Generational Differences in the Nursing Workforce, October 2024

3. Becker's Hospital Review, 2024



Design Thinking:

Inclusive design that considers multiple generations ensures that every patient and accompanying family member can navigate and use community spaces comfortably, enhancing the overall care experience.

Inclusive design for multigenerational support and access

- **Community and social spaces**
Provide tech-enabled zones and worksurfaces to support productivity, a mix of private and communal areas to accommodate different social preferences, and varied seating options to ensure comfort and accessibility for all abilities.
- **Hospitality Lounges**
Hospitality lounges — with varied seating and surface heights to accommodate different postures, tasks, and interactions — redefine traditional healthcare dining areas and create inviting spaces where patients and families can relax, recharge, and connect.



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Design Thinking:

As care preferences vary across generations, exam environments must support both in-person and virtual interactions, allowing care teams to meet patients where they are without disrupting workflows.

Environments designed for evolving care

- **Hybrid-ready exam rooms**

Designed to support in-person visits, virtual consults, and family-inclusive conversations, these spaces accommodate generational care preferences while maintaining clinical efficiency and patient comfort.

- **Tele-health-ready spaces**

Dedicated pods equipped for virtual visits expand access while freeing traditional consult rooms for higher-demand, in-person care.



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Design Thinking:

A multigenerational workforce benefits from environments that balance focus and collaboration, providing caregivers with options for privacy, restoration, and teamwork that support engagement and effectiveness.

Choice-driven settings to support engagement

- **Flexible break areas**

To mitigate burnout for multigenerational staff, provide breakout spaces with a mix of private nooks and shared areas to support preferences for respite, focus, or connection.

- **Shared staff workspaces.**

Shared caregiver offices balance individual work needs with spaces for collaboration to support varying work style preferences.



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