



Fact vs. Fiction:
What Millennials
Really Want From
Worksite Health

Introduction

Millennials are now the largest generation in the workforce. This age group, born between the early 1980s and early 2000s, accounts for one-third of the total population and outnumbers Generation Xers and baby boomers.¹

Yet their health needs are varied and nuanced. For today's employer, simply knowing that millennials are everywhere isn't actionable. Wellness initiatives based on generalized and simplistic assumptions can undermine employee morale and retention, productivity, and health outcomes.

The emergence of health analytics is helping reveal what simple statistics cannot: **the unique demographics, trends and health profile of your millennial population.**

With data, you can reevaluate employee wellness to segment your millennial workforce, plan tailored engagement strategies, and implement personalized interventions.

The first step in developing your millennial wellness strategy is understanding the themes that define this generation's view of health.

Here are ten forces to consider when crafting your strategy for millennial wellbeing.



¹ "Population Estimates." U.S. Census Bureau, April 2016.

“In truth, *this generation’s characteristics vary* by ethnicity, age, gender, family income, educational and household status, and more, *making tangible and data-driven insights even more valuable.*”

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Diverse Demographics

Today’s headlines treat millennials as young adults with a monolithic set of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. In truth, this generation’s characteristics vary by ethnicity, age, gender, family income, educational and household status, and more, making tangible and data-driven insights even more valuable.

For example, it’s statistically true that millennials are an educated generation. About 30% hold bachelor’s degrees², but that also means that 70% don’t. It’s also true that millennials are marrying later. But they’re not necessarily delaying children. For example, in 2014, slightly less than 30% were married—and about 40% had children.³

Demographic forces like these mean that you’ll need to segment your workforce and tailor different engagement strategies and interventions for each group.

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Health Priorities

It’s often suggested that millennials are more interested in health than other generations. Indeed, about 50% do engage in regular physical activity⁴ and many cite fitness as a priority.

However, many face very real health issues at an unprecedented early age. Thirty-five percent are sedentary⁵ and 25% are already obese.⁶ Roughly half say stress keeps them awake at night⁷ and they’re also 50% likelier than Gen Xers or boomers to have a depression or anxiety diagnosis. They also say that if they had extra time and money, they’d spend it on health and fitness.⁸

They also face the health issues common to many in their 20s and 30s, like sports and fitness injuries, reproductive health matters including pregnancy and infertility, and pediatric care.

It’s imperative to understand which of these profiles dominate in your millennial workforce. What’s your mix of active millennials, stressed-out millennials, and millennials whose health priorities are markedly different from your boomer employees?

² “A New Silent Majority—Low-Income & Minority Millennials.” The Century Foundation, December 2015.

³ “Gallup Analysis: Millennials, Marriage And Family.” Gallup, May 2016.

⁴ “2016 Participation Report.” Physical Activity Council, April 2016.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Millennials Facing Short Life Expectancy Due To Obesity.” Scripps Howard Foundation, June 2015.

⁷ “Stress in America Survey Report.” American Psychological Association, February 2015.

⁸ “Food and Health Survey.” International Food Information Council Foundation, October 2015.

Healthcare Attitudes

Only 34% of millennials trust the traditional medical system.⁹ Over half of millennials use symptom checkers or other online health resources before they consult a physician¹⁰, and they're 40% likelier than the general population to view health, food and nutrition bloggers as authoritative. Many are cynical about the motives of employers, providers and insurers.

They also feel traditional healthcare is expensive and often doesn't meet their needs. Few have an ongoing primary care relationship or schedule routine preventive care. They're likelier than other U.S. adults to ask for provider discounts and cheaper treatment options.¹¹ They also want doctors to discuss costs up front.

They're likely to support opportunities identified by health analytics to provide better care, when it's needed most. They'll also welcome resources and tools that help them make informed decisions.

Culture of Health

Our "Healthiest Employers"¹² consistently identify a "culture of health" as a primary goal, echoing the 50%+ of millennials who say that "living or working in a healthy environment"¹³ affects their personal health.

Compared to other generations, millennials are likelier to define "healthy" in terms of whole-person wellbeing, including energy, happiness, and personal appearance.¹⁴

It's a definition that goes far beyond the simple absence of illness.

“Compared to other generations, *millennials... define “healthy”* in terms of whole-person wellbeing, including energy, happiness, and personal appearance.”

⁹ "Confidence in Institutions." Gallup Poll, June 2016.

¹⁰ "How Millennials Shop For Healthcare." Nuance Communications, August 2015.

¹¹ "Money Matters: Billing and Payment For A New Health Economy." PwC Health Research Institute, April 2015.

¹² Healthiest Employer Strategic Assessment, 2017.

¹³ "2014 Consumer Health Mindset," Aon Hewitt/National Business Group on Health/The Futures Company, February 2014.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Personalized & Communal Experiences

The millennial workforce wants and needs more than an onsite gym or a weight loss challenge. They're likelier to prefer togetherness and fun over competition,¹⁵ and new or innovative experiences over the same fitness class month after month. They're also likelier to feel that working out with a buddy will help them maintain or reach a healthy weight.

Fun twists on traditional nutrition and exercise like Blue Apron meal-prep plans and "mud run" events reflect millennial interest in experiences that bring them together with other like-minded people.

They also demand individualized interaction. Company-wide health challenges aren't nearly as appealing as the ability to design their own wellness programs.

A la carte program offerings give your employees DIY flexibility. Health intelligence platforms like Springbuk help you narrow the wide range of vendors and programs down to just the ones that are best suited to your millennial workforce (all while helping you measure the efficacy).



Targeted Engagement is Expected

For millennials, personalization doesn't end with program experiences. This generation has uniquely grown up in a data-driven world that caters to their behaviors and needs. With the rise of marketing tools to predict purchasing behaviors and deliver 1:1 "you might also be interested in" shopping recommendations, this generation can recognize relevant and timely communications.

Their ability to "sniff out" unrelated content can be a hurdle to engagement. Homogeneous, one-size-fits-all programing announcements will likely fall flat, when compared to highly relevant, personalized offers to improve specific areas of health. This type of insight is where tools like Springbuk shine: **they give you the ability to segment and intervene with pinpoint accuracy.**

¹⁵ "Annual Report." Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association.



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Pre-Clinical Engagement

Predictive analytics help you identify early pre-clinical risk indicators in your millennial workforce. This allows high-value wellness interventions before young employees reach the fork in the road that so often leads to the sedentary lifestyle, weight gain, and chronic disease prevalent among their older colleagues. Moreover, the cost-benefit ratio for health interventions is often very attractive at this point.

Most millennials don't yet have an extensive medical history. And their health issues are often not the same problems, at the same level of severity, with the same treatment options and outcomes as older employees.¹⁶

To get a full picture of a millennial workforce's health, savvy employers are predicting future health savings opportunities by integrating multiple data sources: wellness vendor data, pharmacy, medical claims, payroll data, biometric, and lab results. Don't overlook rich data opportunities from wearables and other external sources.

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Trust & Privacy

Millennials as a group are quick to share their own information – but slow to trust large organizations, and concerned about the privacy of their information online and when others control it.

Trust and privacy concerns vary by gender.¹⁷ For example, millennial women are likelier to be cautious about sharing location information, with obvious implications for mobile and social-media engagement strategies. Men are likelier to have concerns about data confidentiality.

Millennials' appreciation for social sharing and integrated data creates special concerns for employee health data management. It requires unusually meticulous attention to privacy, especially since technological innovation continues to create greater pressure and opportunity for information sharing. It's paramount that your health management team of brokers, vendors and partners share a commitment to privacy and protection.

¹⁶ "What Health Issues Will Millennials Face That Their Parents Didn't?" The Wall Street Journal, September 2014.
¹⁷ "Differences Within The Millennial Generation." American Press Institute, March 2015.

90%

have smart phones

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“Handheld” Medicine

Millennials are, without exception, digital natives. They’ve been immersed in technology and are students of the Internet. They’re also mobile-first: 90% have smartphones, they prefer online information to printed materials, and they’re twice as likely to use fitness and health apps.¹⁸

A phone app that allows employees to log individualized wellness goals and share progress with others inside and outside your organization is far likelier to be a win, than lifestyle tips and fitness diaries on your corporate intranet’s wellness portal.

As you evaluate and implement mobile tools, workforce health analytics will provide insight into which vendor solutions are likeliest to improve health outcomes and costs. Tools like Springbuk help you **create and compare cohorts, to measure which initiatives are improving health and containing costs.**

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The “Drive-Thru Generation”

For millennials, everything from friends to movie tickets to in-depth medical research has always been just a few keystrokes or voice commands away. It’s not surprising that they also prioritize convenient, streamlined wellness and healthcare.

In fact, 40% say they’re likelier to engage in “easy or convenient” programs.¹⁹ They prefer clinics to traditional medical offices²⁰ suggesting that for even smaller employers, millennial-heavy workplaces may be the ideal location for onsite or near-site clinics.²¹

Health analytics allow employers to quickly spot risks and opportunities, to mount rapid-response initiatives that fulfill the millennial desire for instant gratification. These platforms hydrate employers with proactive intelligence to **drive engagement and intervention today, while there’s still time to affect health and financial outcomes.**

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¹⁸ “Millennials Use Health and Fitness Apps More Than Other Age Groups”, Mobi Health News.

¹⁹ “2014 Consumer Health Mindset,” Aon Hewitt/National Business Group on Health/The Futures Company, February 2014.

²⁰ “Healthcare 2015: Why Millennials Avoid Seeing Doctors and What This Means for Rising Healthcare Costs.” International Business Times, August 2014

²¹ “Employer’s Guide to Onsite Clinics: How To Optimize Healthcare Dollars.” Springbuk, August 2016.

Is Data the Key to Helping the "Now" Generation?

As the largest generation within the American workforce, millennials have unique attitudes, expectations and requirements that will determine the success of your wellness initiatives.


Tools like Springbuk do more than segment your millennial workforce; the insights help you anticipate distinct health needs so you can prioritize program investment.

As your millennial workforce ages, the ability to understand their attitudes and behaviors, predict their future health concerns, and model alternative interventions becomes even more important.

Armed with powerful, easy-to-use health analytics that identify cost and health opportunities, wellness leaders can make data-driven investments based on a detailed and nuanced understanding of their unique millennial workforce. Are you ready to meet this "now" generation... now?

The right interventions begin with the right data and the right analysis. Highly-targeted initiatives tailored to millennial risk factors and health priorities allow employers to capitalize on this generation's unique social and technological preferences.

Ready to engage your millennial population?

 Request a demo today.
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