MEDICLINIC

GENERATIONAL **HEALTH SURVEY**

Health attitudes, perceptions and behaviours among Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers

GENERATION

GENDER

GEOLOCATION

why it matters

At Mediclinic, we understand that good healthcare starts with a better understanding of the people we care for.

Much of the health data we use today may not always reflect the experiences of communities in South Africa.

For more than four decades, Mediclinic has invested in quality healthcare for our local communities. Over time, our clients and their needs have evolved.

It is vital that we continue to understand this change and adjust our service offering accordingly.

Our clients and patients are shaped by unique social, economic and cultural factors, and these differences are clear across generations. This highlights the importance of the Mediclinic Generational Health Survey. These perspectives matter to Mediclinic.

BRAAM JOUBERT
Chief Executive Officer
Mediclinic Southern Africa

About this report

South Africans' health priorities, behaviours and perceptions evolve throughout every stage of life. From preventative healthcare and mental wellbeing to screening habits and gender-specific health, each generation brings its own experiences, concerns and expectations.

The Mediclinic Generational Health Survey explores these differences to better understand how South Africans perceive their health, engage with healthcare and prioritise their wellbeing.

Combining evidence-based findings with expert healthcare understanding, the report offers valuable insights into the country's evolving healthcare needs and aims to inspire informed conversations about healthier futures.

NOKUZOLA PLAATJIE
Senior Manager:
Corporate Communication
Mediclinic Southern Africa

About the research

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach in medicine. An individual's history, genetics and lifestyle all shape their medical needs and how they prioritise their health.

By creating a local source of reference, the Mediclinic Generational Health Survey helps us better understand how different genders and generations across some of our communities shape their views of health, their priorities and what they expect from healthcare. This insight guides how we share health information and connect with patients and communities so that our services, as the healthcare sector, address real needs.

Being the first to do this kind of generational health research locally reflects our commitment to care that is not only clinically excellent but also relevant and client-focused. It is the start of a journey, where we can begin to accumulate richer, relevant knowledge.

DR RACHEL MOORE
Chief Medical Officer
Mediclinic Southern Africa

Understanding the findings

The findings are based on research conducted among respondents across various South African provinces. Combining an online quantitative survey and face-to-face computer-assisted personal interviews, the study explored three key areas:

General health

Mental health

Men's and women's health

Throughout this report, some results are presented using the Top 2 Box (T2B) measure. This combines the two most positive response options (for example, 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree') to provide an overall indication of favourable responses.

Who took part?

generations

16%

BABY BOOMERS Born 1946–1964
Representing the oldest generation surveyed, Baby Boomers provide insight into healthy ageing, preventative healthcare and chronic health conditions.

28%

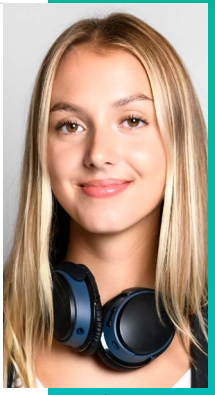
GEN X Born 1965–1980
Often balancing careers, family responsibilities and caring for ageing parents, Gen X offers a perspective on health during midlife.

28%

MILLENNIALS Born 1981–1996
Millennials are navigating busy working and family lives while increasingly focusing on long-term wellbeing and prevention.

28%

GEN Z Born 1997–2012
As the youngest generation surveyed, Gen Z provides insight into emerging health behaviours and changing attitudes towards physical and mental wellbeing.



Gender

Women and men were equally represented in the survey, ensuring a balanced sample across both groups.

** Respondents were from Kwazulu-Natal, Gauteng, Free State, Limpopo and Western Cape selected to provide an initial benchmark for the survey.*

mental health

Mental wellbeing is an essential part of overall health

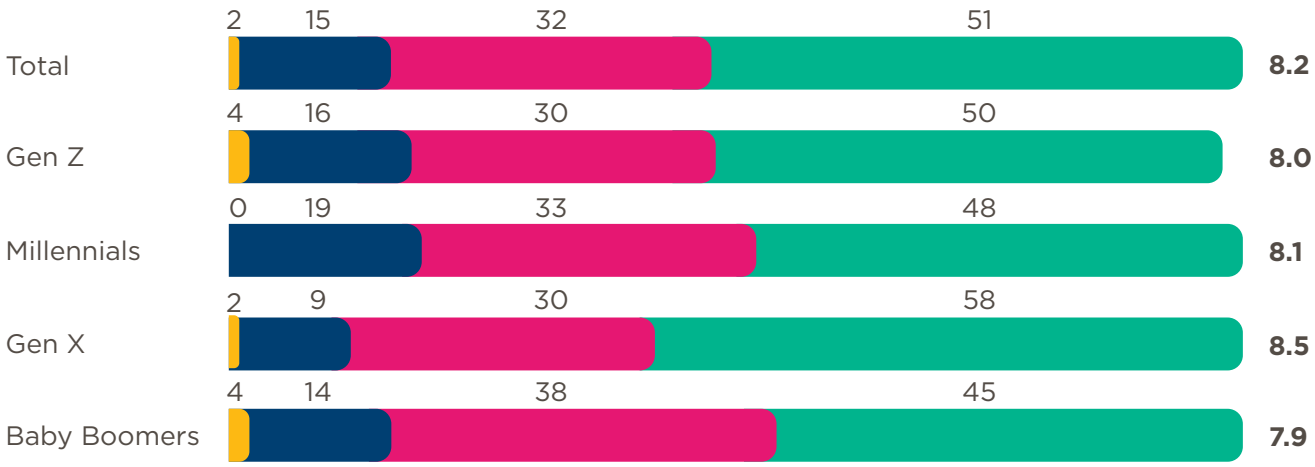
Mental health influences how we think, feel and cope with everyday life. As awareness grows, understanding attitudes towards mental wellbeing can help identify opportunities to reduce stigma and encourage people to seek support when they need it.

Unlike general health, self-rated mental health does not necessarily decline with age. Gen X respondents reported the highest levels of excellent mental health. Interestingly, Gen Z and Millennials had the largest share of respondents reporting below-good mental health.

What is mental wellbeing?

Mental wellbeing refers to a person's emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It influences how we think, feel and respond to everyday challenges and forms an essential part of overall health.

Understanding the prevalence of diagnosed mental health conditions across generations provides valuable insight into changing health needs and the importance of appropriate support and treatment.



SELF-RATED MENTAL HEALTH ACROSS AGE GROUPS

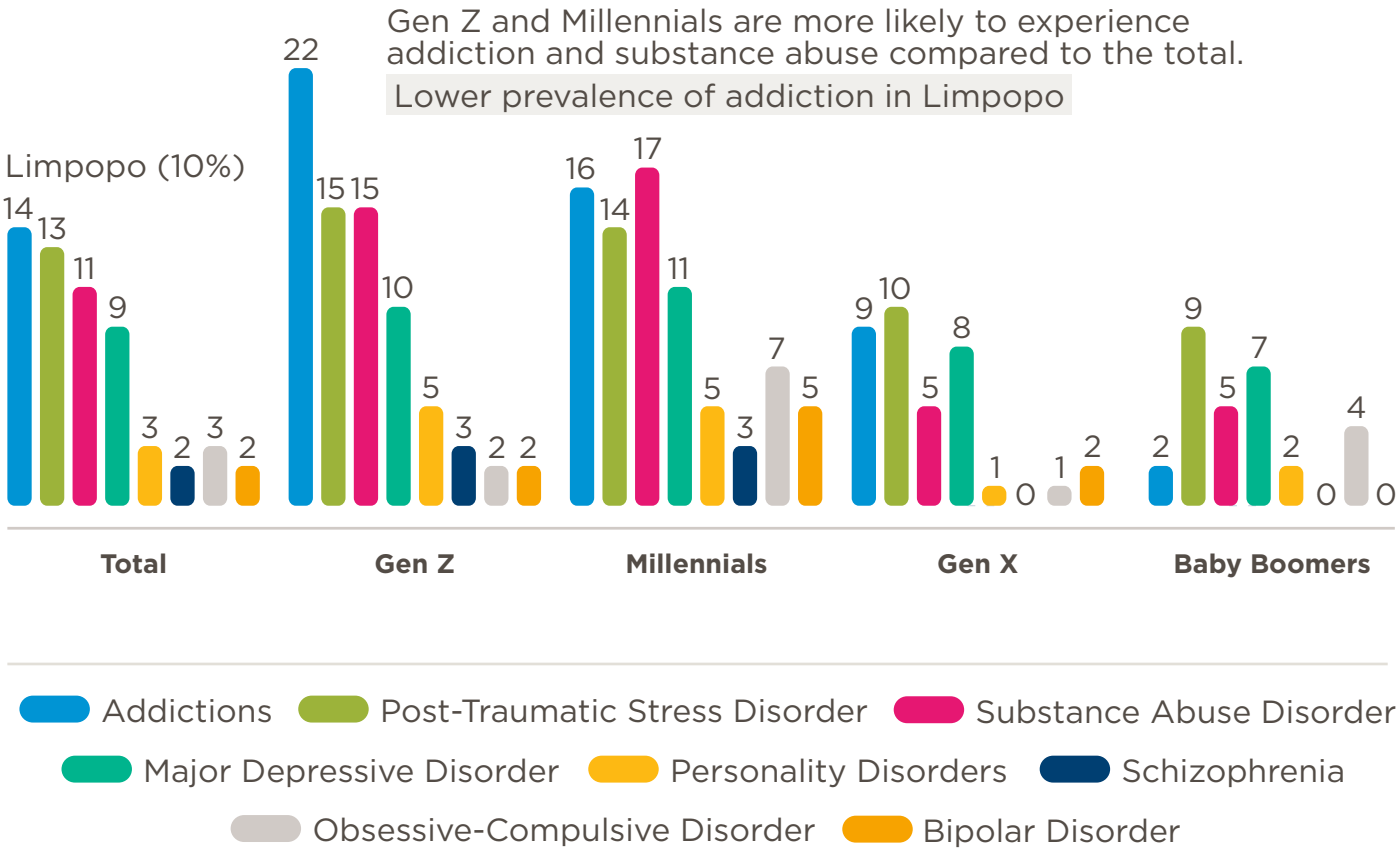
Average out of 10

Poor (0-3) Moderate (4-6) Good (7-8) Excellent (9-10)

Q: Have you been diagnosed with any of the following disorders?

Gen Z reports the highest prevalence of diagnosed mental health conditions across almost every category measured. Among these conditions, addiction and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are reported more frequently than many other diagnosed mental health conditions. Only **one in four** respondents reported accessing mental healthcare providers.

TOP DIAGNOSED CONDITIONS BY GENERATION



Q: If you have been diagnosed with any mental health disorders, please share more details about how you manage or treat these.

CONDITION	PRIMARY TREATMENT (MAJORITY)	SECONDARY TREATMENT	TERTIARY OR SUPPORTIVE MEASURES	LESSER MENTIONS
Addictions	Therapy	Support from friends and family	Support groups	Hobbies, exercise, keeping busy, positive thinking, setting up a schedule, joined church
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	Medication and therapy	Support from friends and family	Support groups	Exercise, relaxing activities, eating healthily, music, mindfulness, vacations, being outdoors, routine
Substance Abuse Disorder	Support from friends and family	Support groups	Therapy	Medication, rehab, going to church, meditation
Major Depressive Disorder	Medication and therapy	Support from friends and family	-	Positive thinking and acceptance; self care (exercise, eat healthily, avoid draining people and things)
Depression	Therapy	Medication	-	Exercise, mindfulness, support from family and friends
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder	Therapy	Medication	-	Prayer, positive thinking, support groups, hospitalisation, friends and family support, reduce compulsion by delaying chores
Personality Disorders	Medication	Therapy	-	-
Bipolar Disorder	Medication and therapy	Hospitalisation	Support groups	Self-care (exercise, eat healthily, spend time with loved ones, music)
Schizophrenia	Medication	Therapy and support groups	Exercise, mindfulness, hobbies, relaxation techniques	-
Anxiety	Medication and therapy	Support from friends and family	-	Lesser mentions of hobbies

Interestingly, **lifestyle adaptations** are also cited as tertiary or supportive measures for those living with mental health conditions, suggesting a more holistic approach to treatment.

Gen Z reported the highest prevalence of diagnosed mental health conditions across almost every category measured.

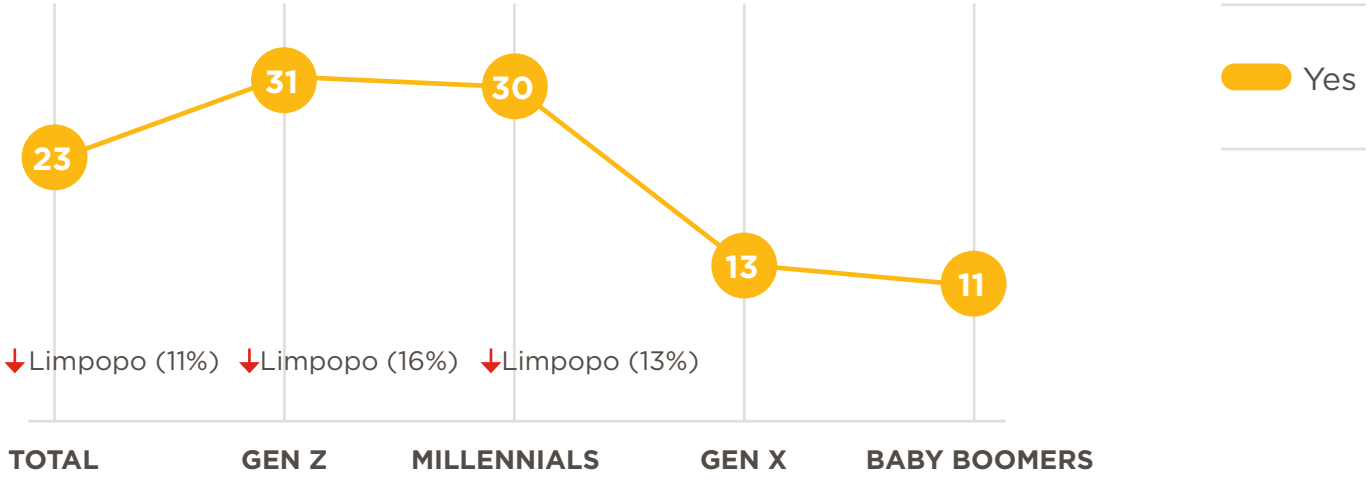
Healing is possible.

Read more

Substance abuse across generations

Self-reported substance abuse is more common among younger respondents, with just under **one in three** Gen Z respondents and Millennials reporting personal experiences.

Q: Have you ever personally experienced substance abuse?



Participants in Limpopo reported a significantly lower prevalence among Gen Z and Millennials than participants in other provinces.

Why it matters

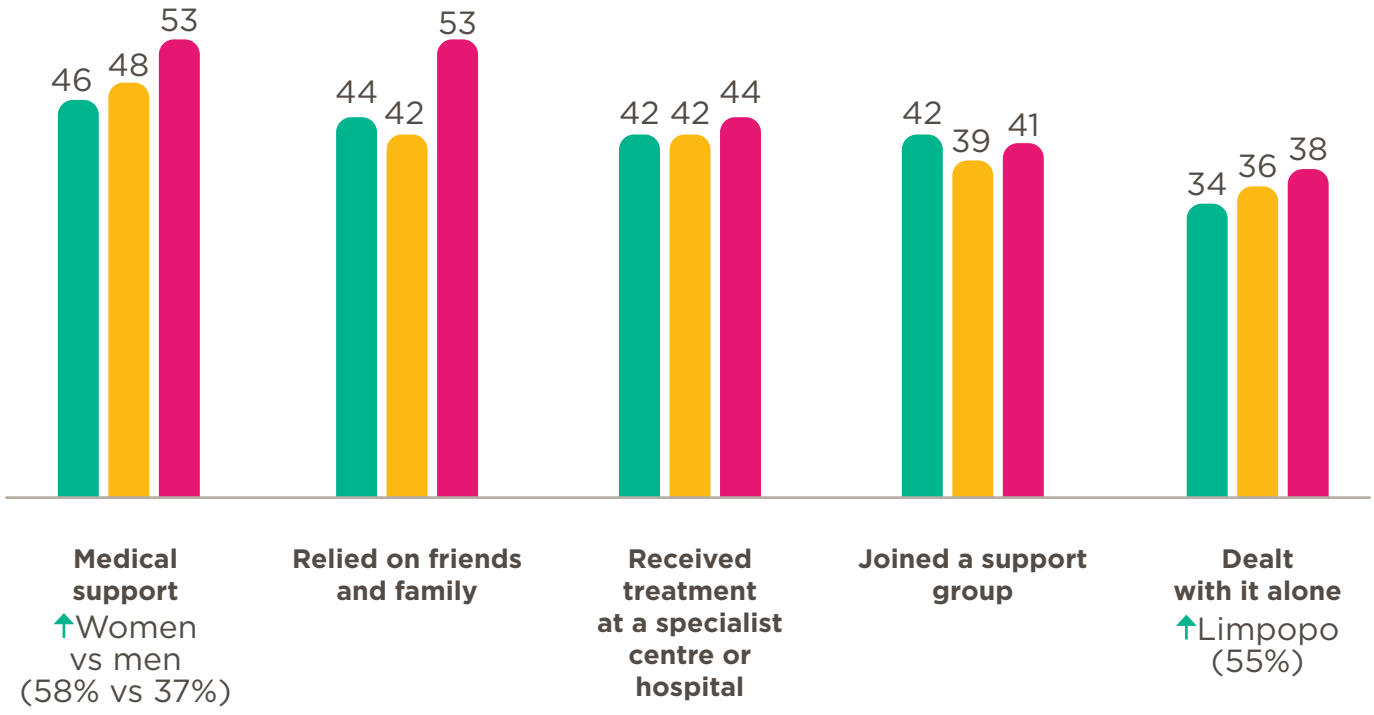
Substance abuse can affect people of all ages and backgrounds, influencing both physical and mental wellbeing. Understanding patterns across generations can help inform prevention, education and access to appropriate support.

Seeking support

Q: You mentioned that you have personally experienced substance abuse; which treatment options did you use?

People respond to substance abuse in different ways. Some seek professional healthcare services, while others turn to family, friends or community support. Understanding these treatment choices helps build a clearer picture of how support is accessed across generations.

TREATMENT OPTIONS USED FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE



Mental health matters

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Recognising when support is needed and knowing where to access it are important steps in maintaining overall wellbeing.

Why it matters

Recovery looks different for everyone. Access to timely, appropriate support – whether through healthcare professionals, family, friends or community services – can play an important role in a person's wellbeing and recovery journey.

Respondents reported using both formal and informal sources of support. Gen Z respondents were more likely to seek medical support and treatment through healthcare facilities, while Millennials were more likely to manage substance abuse independently.

Talking about mental health

The findings suggest that younger respondents are generally comfortable accessing mental healthcare services, with many reporting previous engagement with therapy. However, some remain reluctant to discuss their mental health with friends or family.

Baby Boomers were the least likely generation to have engaged with mental healthcare providers, which aligns with the lower prevalence of reported mental health conditions within this group.

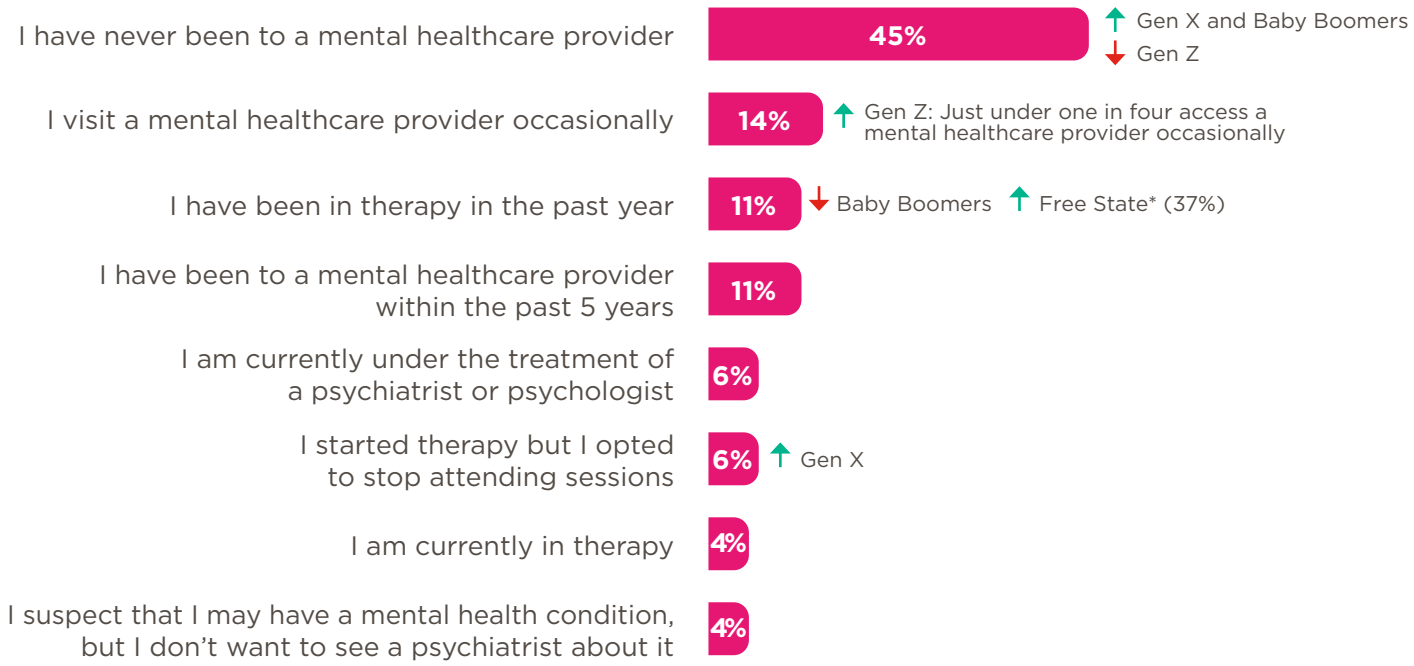
Support comes in many forms, from healthcare professionals to family and friends.

Understanding how people access support is only one part of the picture. We also explored how respondents engage with mental healthcare services more broadly.

Q: Which of the following best describes your engagement with mental healthcare services?

In line with a higher prevalence of mental health conditions, younger South Africans are engaging more often with mental healthcare providers, while older generations are less involved.

THE PREVALENCE OF ENGAGING WITH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IS DRIVEN BY THE INSTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

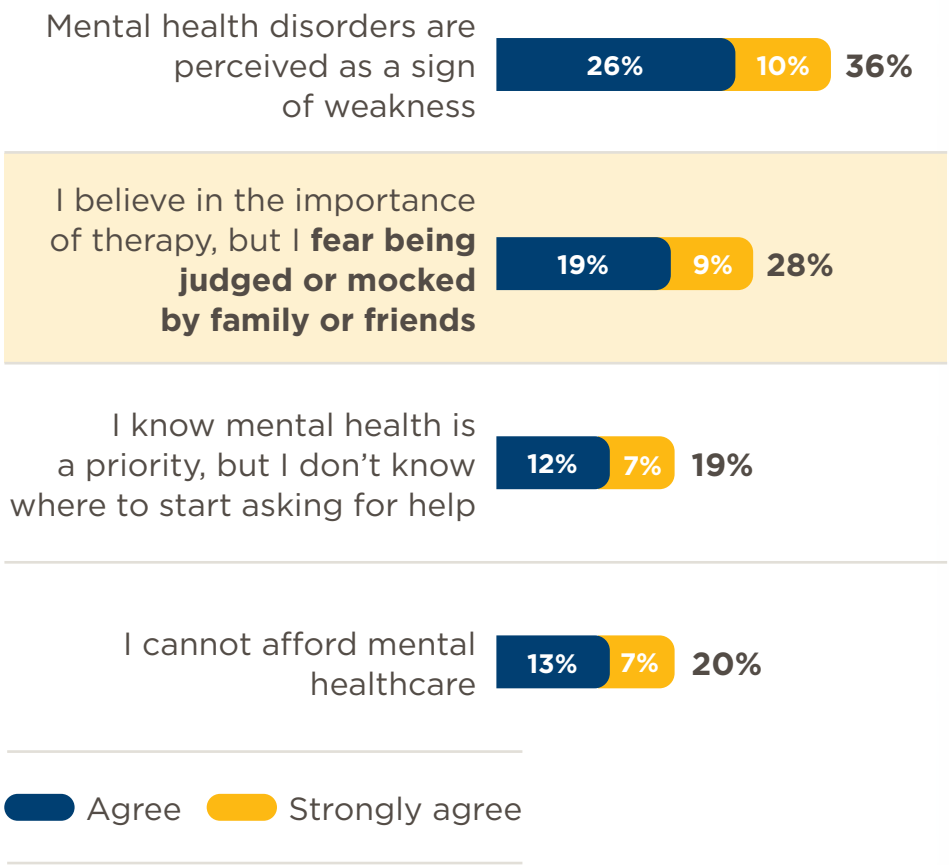


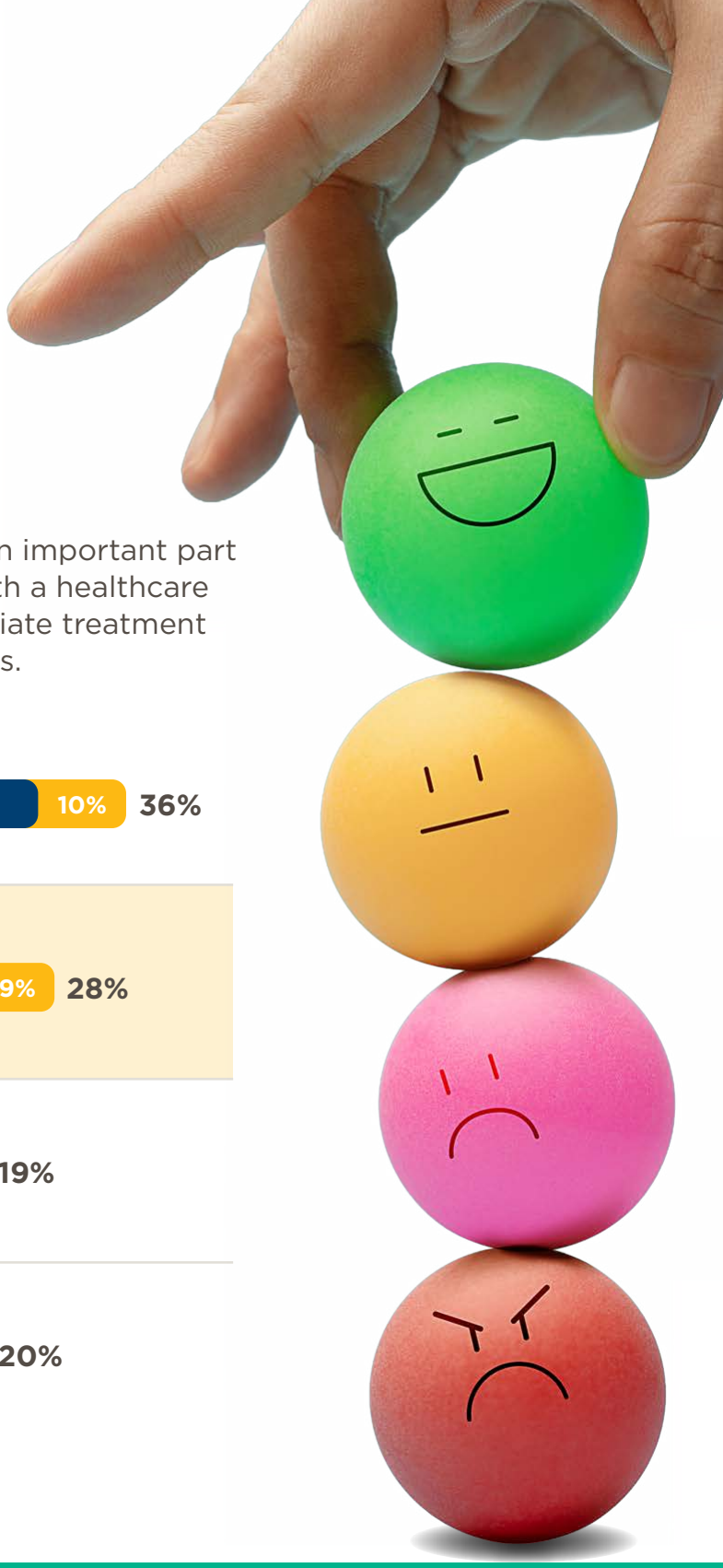
Two in three respondents in the Free State have engaged with a mental healthcare professional, while one in three report having done so within the past year.

↑↓ Significantly higher or lower compared to total

Why it matters

Seeking support for your mental health is an important part of overall wellbeing. Early conversations with a healthcare professional can provide guidance, appropriate treatment and support tailored to an individual's needs.





But stigma still persists

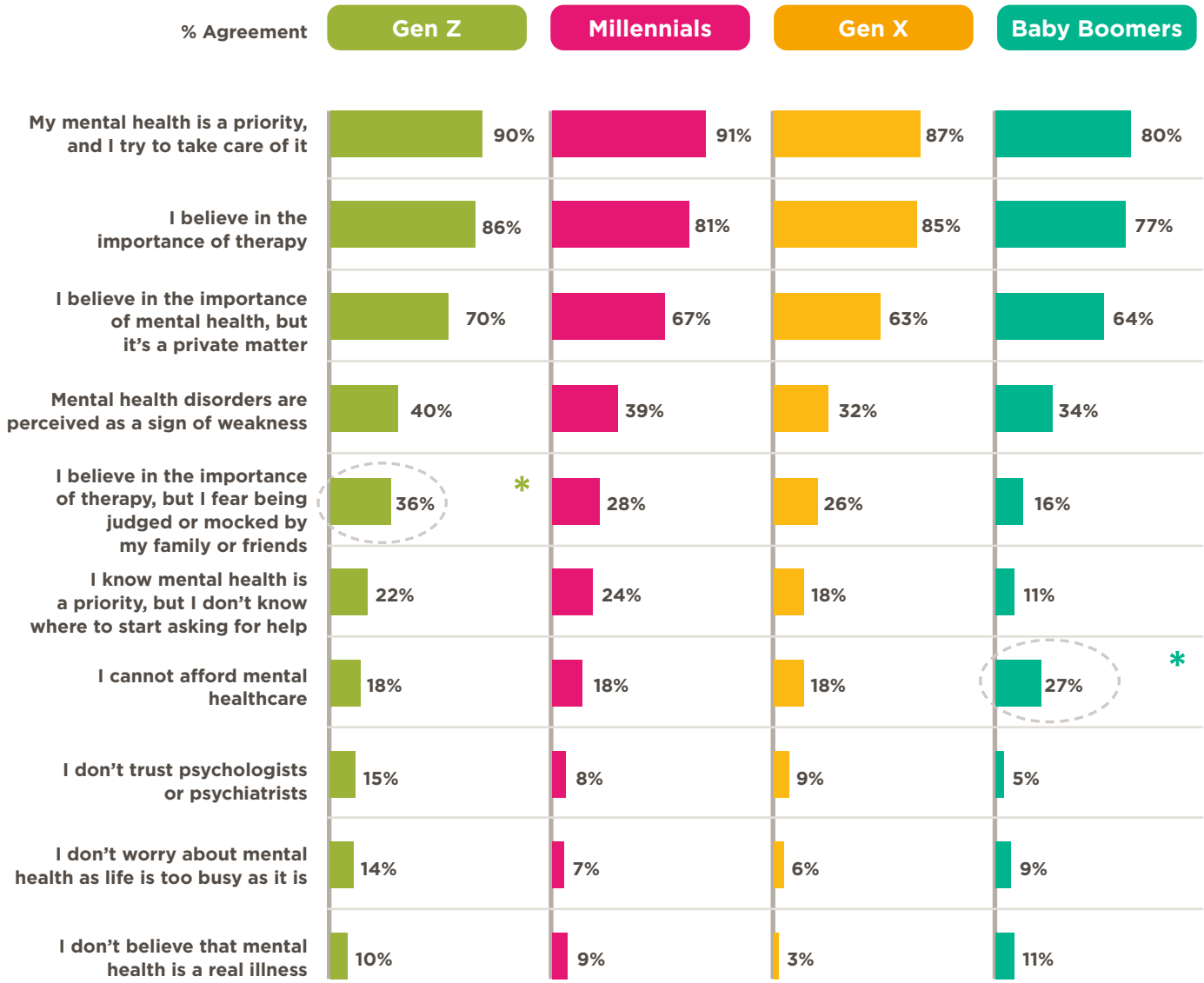
One in three feel that mental health conditions are a sign of weakness

One in four fear judgement around mental health (this is lower in Gauteng, reducing to one in five)

One in five don't know where to start asking for help

South Africans across different generations engage with mental healthcare in different ways. Younger respondents were more likely to report accessing mental healthcare services, while many Gen Z respondents also described mental health as deeply personal and expressed concern about being judged by others.

GENERATIONS NOTE SIMILAR PERCEPTIONS AROUND MENTAL HEALTH, WITH ONLY A FEW NUANCES EMERGING



*Fear of judgement prevalent for Gen Z *While Baby Boomers continue to note affordability concerns

Attitudes towards mental health are broadly similar across generations.

Understanding mental health stigma

Open conversations about mental health and increased awareness can help reduce stigma and encourage earlier access to care. Mental health stigma refers to negative attitudes or beliefs that may discourage people from speaking openly about their mental health or seeking support. Reducing stigma can help create environments where people feel more comfortable accessing care when they need it.

The factors shaping mental wellbeing

Respondents were asked which factors have the greatest negative impact on their mental health. Across every generation, financial stress emerged as the leading concern. Other influences, including family circumstances, physical activity, employment, social media and global events, varied according to life stage and generation.

	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Total
1	Financial stress **65%**	Financial stress **59%**	Financial stress **66%**	Financial stress **59%**	Financial stress **63%**
2	Lack of regular exercise **44%**	My family situation **38%**	My family situation **35%**	Lack of regular exercise **34%**	My family situation **36%**
3	My family situation **42%**	My relationship situation **35%**	Global political, environmental, and economic instability **34%**	Global political, environmental, and economic instability **30%**	Lack of regular exercise **34%**
4	Social media **40%**	My job **34%**	Lack of regular exercise **31%**	My family situation **27%**	Global political, environmental, and economic instability **29%**

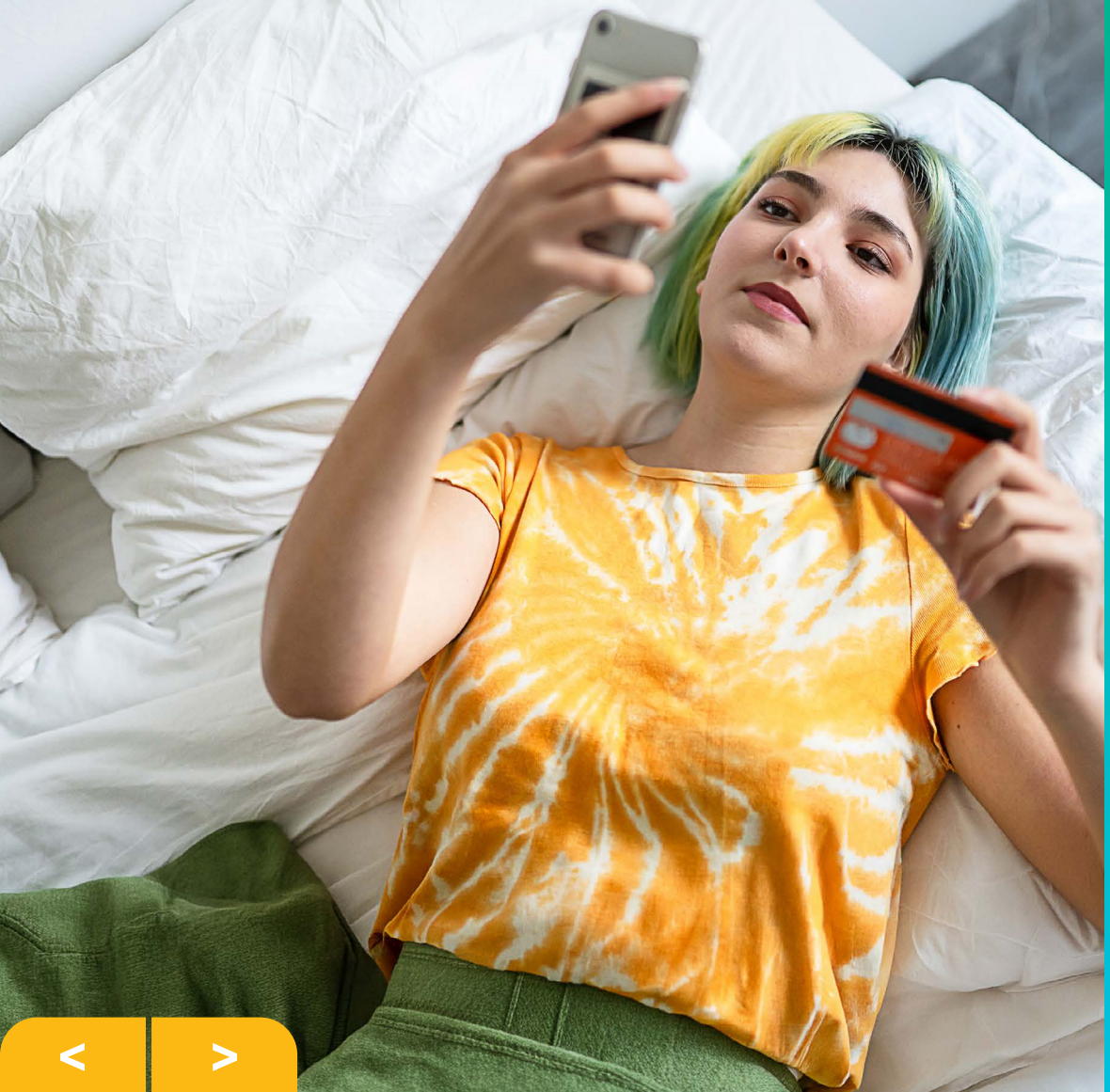
Social media and **bullying** have a more detrimental impact on **Gen Z,** with **four in ten** stating that these have a negative impact on their mental health.

Baby Boomers are less likely to note negative impact on their mental health as a result of their jobs (as many are likely to be retired), while work is a leading contributor for about **three in ten** respondents in other generations.

FINANCIAL STRESS IS THE LEADING CONTRIBUTOR TO POORER MENTAL HEALTH ACROSS EVERY GENERATION.

Why it matters

Mental wellbeing is influenced by a combination of personal, social and financial factors. Recognising these influences can help individuals, communities and healthcare providers better support mental health and wellbeing.



Noted trends

While **seven in ten** Gen Z respondents believe mental health should be prioritised, more than **one in three** also expressed concern about being judged by friends or family. This perception was more common among Gen Z than among other generations.

looking ahead

Understanding today's health behaviours helps shape tomorrow's healthcare

Health is shaped by more than age alone. It is influenced by the choices we make, the environments we live in and the support available to us throughout our lives.

The findings of the Mediclinic Generational Health Survey show that while each generation has its own priorities and challenges, South Africans share a common belief in the value of good healthcare, prevention and trusted support.

As South Africa's health landscape continues to evolve, these insights provide an important foundation for more informed conversations, better healthcare decisions and healthier generations to come.