



# From Boomers to Zoomers:

The State Of Patient Engagement and  
Communication Across Generations

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# Introduction



In today's evolving healthcare landscape, effective patient communication is paramount to delivering high-quality care. As a leading provider of patient communication technology, Vital Interaction is committed to fostering better communication between healthcare providers and their patients. To achieve this goal, we conducted a comprehensive study to delve into patient communication preferences across different generations and genders.

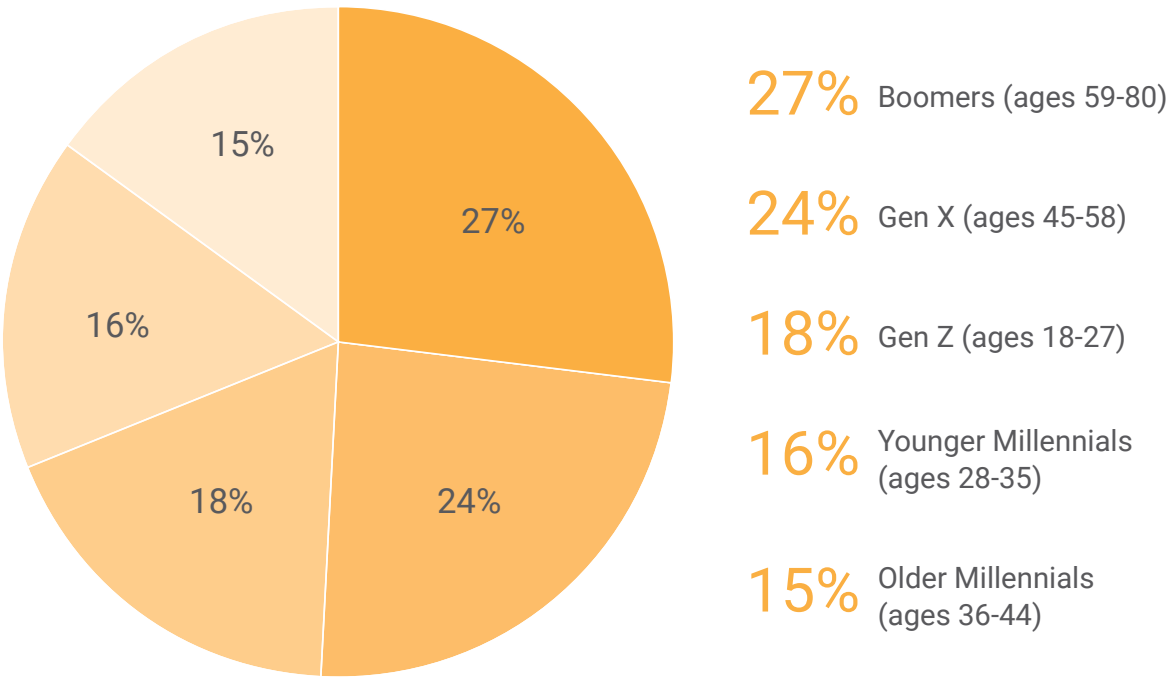
The study, conducted in partnership with The Center for Generational Kinetics (CGK), the leading experts in generational studies, aimed to uncover hidden trends in patient engagement and communication experiences. By understanding how patients of various demographics interact with healthcare providers, we can equip medical practices with valuable insights to optimize their communication strategies and improve overall patient satisfaction.

We are publishing the results of the study in two white papers. The first, **From Boomers to Zoomers: The State Of Patient Engagement and Communication Across Generations** explores the current state of patient-provider communication, while the second **Understanding Patient Expectations** delves into patients' unmet needs and desires for improved communication. The findings in the study underscore the cornerstone of our mission at Vital Interaction. By adopting a patient-centered approach, providers can foster trust, improve engagement, and ultimately, deliver better care. We hope you find these white papers to be informative and valuable as you strive to enhance your patient communication strategies. At Vital Interaction, we are committed to providing the tools and resources necessary to support healthcare providers in their efforts to deliver exceptional care through effective communication.

Best,  
Ben Chapman  
CEO, Vital Interaction

# Study Methodology

This custom 26-question survey was conducted online by The Center For Generational Kinetics (CGK), a global research and strategy firm specializing in generational research. The breakdown of respondents are as follows:



\*Figures are statistically significant at the 90% and 95% confidence level. Margin of error is +/-3.1 percentage points.  
\*In an instance that a chart total for a single select question does not add to 100%, please note that this is due to the minimal effect of rounding.  
\*Weighted to the 2020 U.S. Census for age, region, gender, and ethnicity.  
\*Survey was conducted online from July 17, 2024, to August 5, 2024.

# The State of Patient Engagement and Communication Across Generations

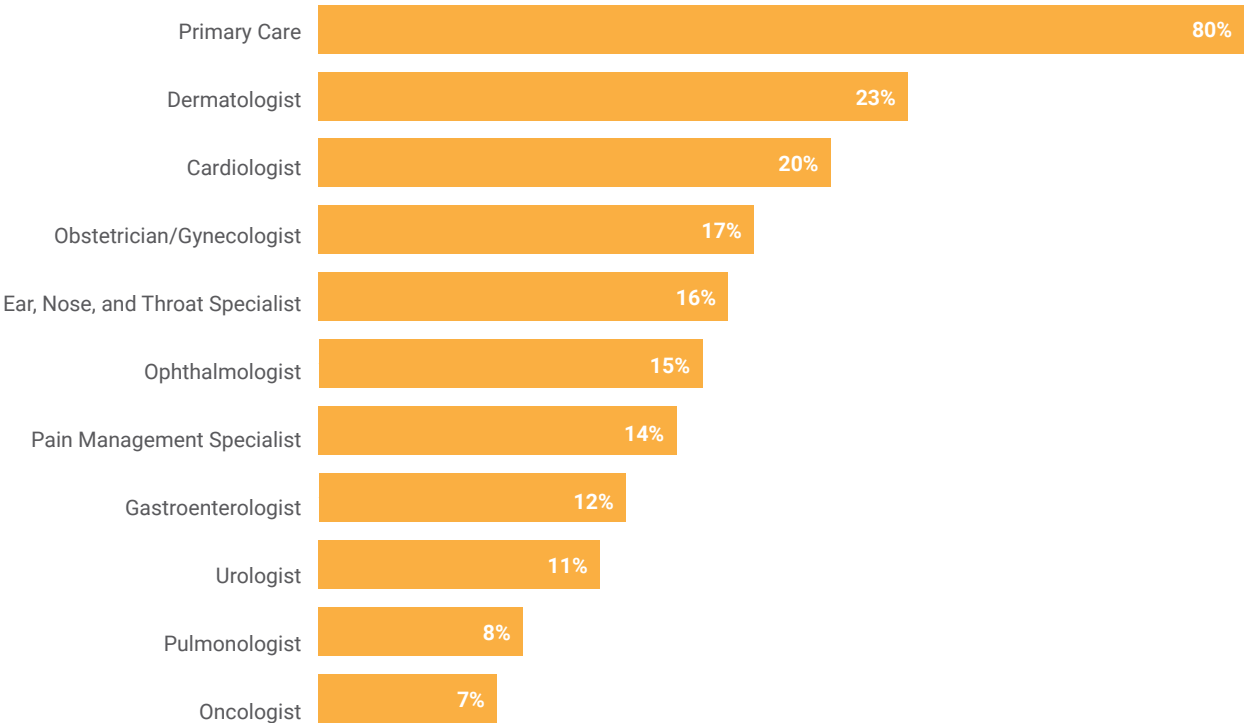
## Key findings

-  American patients have distinct preferences and experiences regarding healthcare provider communication. They are more likely to return to providers who offer easy, seamless, and convenient communication interactions, leading to an overall positive experience.
-  Communication preferences vary significantly among different patient demographics. These differences are influenced by generation, gender, type of healthcare professional visit, reason for the last visit, and frequency of visits.
-  Common communication experiences during the most recent medical visit included initial appointment scheduling, appointment reminders, and follow-up scheduling. However, the specific communication methods varied widely depending on the type of interaction.
-  Patients often shared personal information or medical history by completing paper forms in person. This information was frequently transmitted from their primary care physician to the healthcare provider.
-  Following the visit, patients were most likely to receive medical information, diagnoses, or test results through online patient portals or immediately in person after the examination.
-  The healthcare provider who conducted the examination was typically the one who communicated these results.
-  Patients generally prefer receiving medical information from the healthcare provider who examined them.

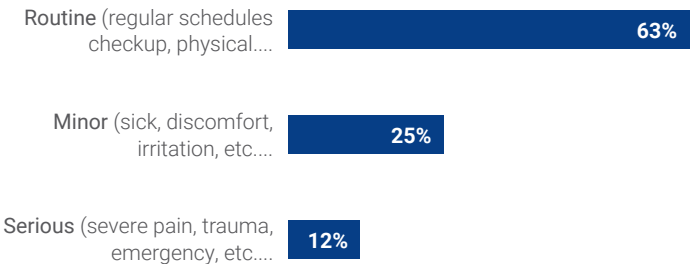
# Priority Screeners and Variables

To ensure data quality and accuracy, these are priority screeners and variables.

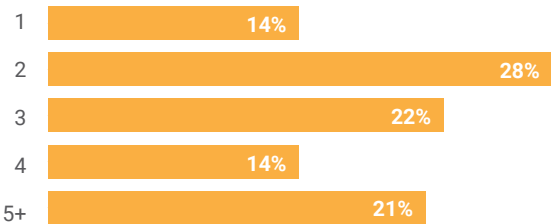
## Healthcare Professional(s) Visited In The Past 12 Months



## Reason For Last Healthcare Provider Visit



## Frequency Of Healthcare Provider Visits In The Past 12 Months



# The State of Patient Engagement and Communication with Healthcare Providers

## Part 1

### The Top Patient Communication Methods

During their most recent medical visit, the most common type of communication patients experience with their healthcare provider is **an initial appointment scheduling, an appointment reminder, and a follow-up appointment scheduling.**

However, men ( 22% vs women: 16%) were more likely to receive proactive outreach from their healthcare providers, including scheduling future appointments and receiving information on transportation and office access (men: 21%, women: 15%). Patients who had serious health concerns (65%) were significantly more likely to schedule follow-up appointments compared to those with routine (44%) or minor (46%) issues.

Notably, 22% of patients did not receive any interactions before their in-person appointments, and 61% had little to no communication afterward. These findings highlight a significant gap in patient-provider communication, especially for those seeking or requiring more frequent interactions. Furthermore, older generations, Gen X and Boomers, were significantly more likely than younger generations, Gen Z and Millennials, to have had no pre- or post-appointment communication, suggesting a generational divide in communication preferences or accessibility.

Boomers and Gen X were more likely to schedule follow-up appointments than Millennials. Interestingly, Gen Z

was more likely than older generations to discuss post-appointment billing and get questions answered after their visit. When it came to scheduling follow-up appointments, older generations were more likely to do so. Boomers (52%) and Gen X (51%) were significantly more likely to schedule a follow-up than Millennials (41%). Interestingly, Gen Z (27%) was more likely than older generations to discuss post-appointment billing and get questions answered after their visit.



**Post-appointment billing** (Younger Millennials: 26%, Older Millennials: 15%, Gen X: 19%, Boomers: 16%).



**Post-appointment questions:** (Younger Millennials: 26%, Older Millennials: 22%, Gen X: 18%, Boomers: 18%).

### Room for Improvement

The survey found providers have much room for improvement when it comes to post-appointment communication. On average, only 30% of patients received any message from their provider with post-appointment information, such as lab result verification or prescription refills. Women (33%) were more likely than men (27%) to be contacted. Surprisingly, only 20% of patients received patient satisfaction surveys and 19% received outreach for follow-up care after their appointments.

This data suggests providers have the opportunity to elevate their patient experience and provide better care by prioritizing post-appointment messaging including education, care protocol, satisfaction surveys, follow-up appointments, and more.

## Part 2

### Communication Patterns In Patient-Provider Interactions

Patients' communication experiences varied significantly depending on the specific communication interaction. When it came to scheduling their initial appointments patients were more likely to do so over the phone compared to any other communication method. However, Text or SMS messages were the most common way patients received appointment reminders. However, for tasks such as receiving information on transportation, parking, and office procedures, registering as a patient, scheduling follow-up appointments,

and getting post-appointment questions answered, in-person communication was the dominant method.

A significant portion of patients experienced limited or no communication with their healthcare providers before or after their in-person appointments. 54% of patients reported having interactions once a week or less leading up to their visits, while 46% had similar levels of communication afterward.

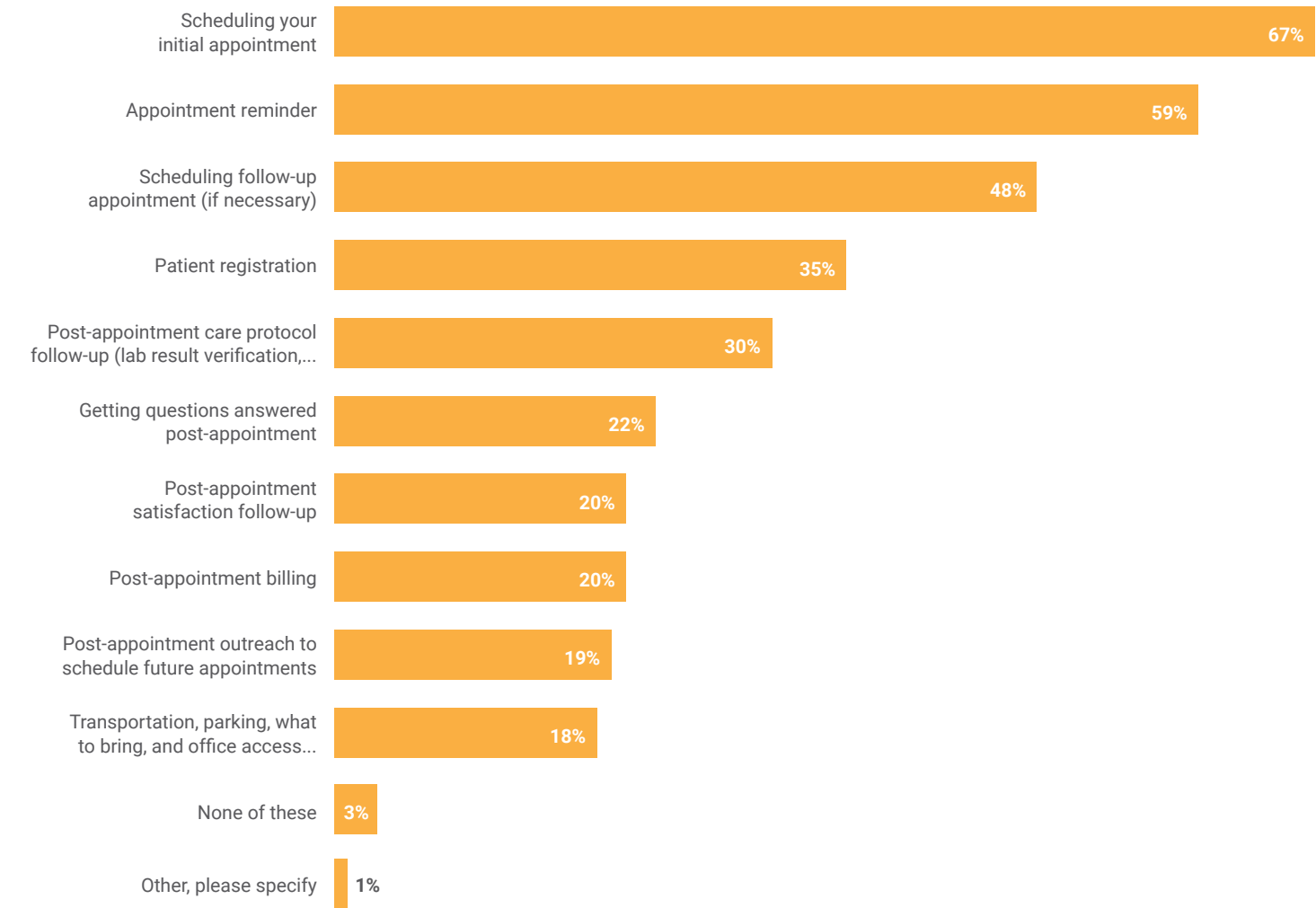


**No pre-appointment interaction:** (Gen Z: 9%, Millennials: 15%, Gen X: 29%, Boomers: 34%) or after their in-person appointment



**No post-appointment interaction:** (Gen Z: 21%, Millennials: 20%, Gen X: 36%, Boomers: 48%).

Which Type Of Communication Interactions Did You Have With Your Healthcare Provider During Your Most Recent Visit?  
(By total)



Quality Not Quantity

50% of patients say they have “**alert fatigue**” from too many random texts, robocalls, and spam messages resulting in them **ignoring or otherwise missing important communications** from their healthcare provider. Instead of emphasizing the frequency of communication, providers need to send better, more relevant, and personalized messages that resonate with their patients.

## Part 3

### Patient Data Collection Methods Differ by Age

During their most recent medical visits, patient personal information and medical history were primarily collected using paper forms completed in person. These forms were often sent from primary care physicians to specialists. However, there was a notable trend towards digital data collection. Patients with minor (34%) or serious (34%) healthcare experiences were significantly more likely to use digital forms (such as iPads or kiosks) to provide their information than those whose last healthcare visit was routine (23%). Additionally, patients with more frequent visits (5 or more in the past

year) were more likely (38%) to have their data transferred electronically from their primary care physicians to specialists.

Generational differences were also evident in data collection methods. Younger generations, Gen Z and Millennials were significantly more likely than older generations to use all methods—paper forms, digital forms, and online links to provide medical information. This suggests a preference for digital tools among younger demographics.



#### **Patients with minor (34%) or serious (34%) healthcare experiences**

were significantly more likely to use digital forms (such as iPads or kiosks) to provide their information than those whose last healthcare visit was routine (23%).

# Part 4

## How Patients Receive Medical Information

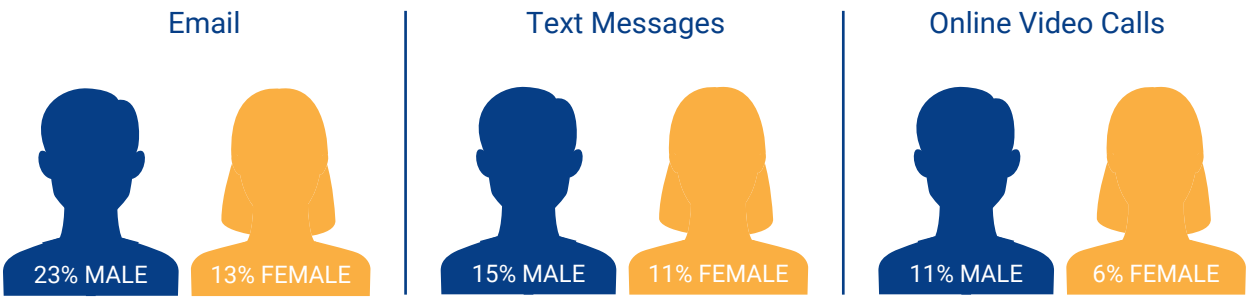
Following their most recent medical appointments, patients were primarily informed about their medical information, diagnoses, or test results through online patient portals or in-person discussions immediately after the examinations. The healthcare provider who conducted the examination was most often the one who communicated the medical information, diagnosis, or test results to the patient. However, there were notable variations.

Men were more likely than women to have their information communicated by a physician’s assistant (Men: 26%, Women: 17%). Men were also significantly more likely

than women to receive their results via email, text messages, or online video calls (Men: 23%, Women: 13%; Men: 15%, Women: 11%; Men: 11%, Women: 6%). This indicates a potential disparity in communication preferences or accessibility between genders.

The type of healthcare provider also influences communication methods. Patients who visited non-specialists were more likely to receive medical information from a healthcare provider employee or a different doctor from the one who examined them compared to those who saw a specialist. Additionally, those who

### Men Were Also Significantly More Likely Than Women To Receive Their Results Via Email, Text Messages, Or Online Video Calls



saw non-specialists received more communication through messaging (email, text messages, online video calls, online chat, or voicemail) versus those who saw specialists.

Differences across generations were also apparent in how medical information was communicated. Gen Z and Millennials were significantly more likely than Boomers to receive their results through phone calls, email, text messages, online video calls,

online chat, or voicemail. They were also more likely to receive their information from healthcare provider employees or someone different from who examined them compared to older generations.

These findings suggest that communication channels and the individuals responsible for communication may vary based on factors such as gender, age, and the type of healthcare provider.

## Part 5

### Post-Appointment Activities by Generations

Following their most recent medical appointments, patients commonly focused on improving their general health (76%), reviewing provided information or resources (73%), and scheduling follow-up appointments (73%). Gender differences emerged in post-appointment behaviors. Men were more likely than women to conduct independent research on their medical issues (Men: 63%, Women: 54%) and to contact their healthcare providers for further information (Men: 57%, Women: 50%).

The type of healthcare provider also influenced post-appointment actions. Patients who visited non-specialists (NS) were more likely to contact their healthcare providers for more information (S: 50%, NS: 58%) and to consider seeking a different provider based on their experience or outcome (S: 24%, NS: 33%). The severity of the medical visit also influenced post-appointment actions. Patients with serious visits were more likely to review information or resources provided by their healthcare providers compared to those with minor or routine visits (Routine: 73%, Minor: 69%, Serious: 81%).



**Generational differences** were also evident in post-appointment activities. Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X were more likely than Boomers to conduct independent research on their medical issues. However, Older Millennials were more likely than other generations to contact their healthcare providers for more information and to consider seeking a different provider.

## Part 6

### Patient Preferences for Information Delivery

Patients (90%) overwhelmingly preferred to receive their medical information, diagnoses, or test results from the healthcare provider who conducted the examination. Conversely, patients were least comfortable receiving their information from a different doctor or healthcare provider (63%). This indicates a desire for continuity of care and a preference for receiving information from the individual who provided the care. Older generations, Boomers and Gen X were significantly more comfortable receiving information from the examining healthcare provider compared to younger generations, Millennials, and Gen Z.

The type of healthcare provider also influences patient comfort levels. Patients who visited specialists (92%) were more likely to be comfortable receiving information from the

examining provider compared to those who visited non-specialists (89%).

Gender differences were also evident. Women were less comfortable receiving information from all sources except the examining healthcare provider or a physician's assistant. In contrast, men were more comfortable receiving information from nurses, healthcare provider employees, online portals, and even different doctors.

The frequency of visits also impacted patient comfort. Patients with more frequent visits (3+ in the past year) were more likely to be comfortable receiving information from the examining healthcare provider compared to those with fewer visits (1-2: 87%, 3-4: 91%, 5+: 92%). This suggests that familiarity with the healthcare provider may influence communication preferences.



Patients (90%) overwhelmingly preferred to receive their medical information, diagnoses, or test results **from the healthcare provider** who conducted the examination.

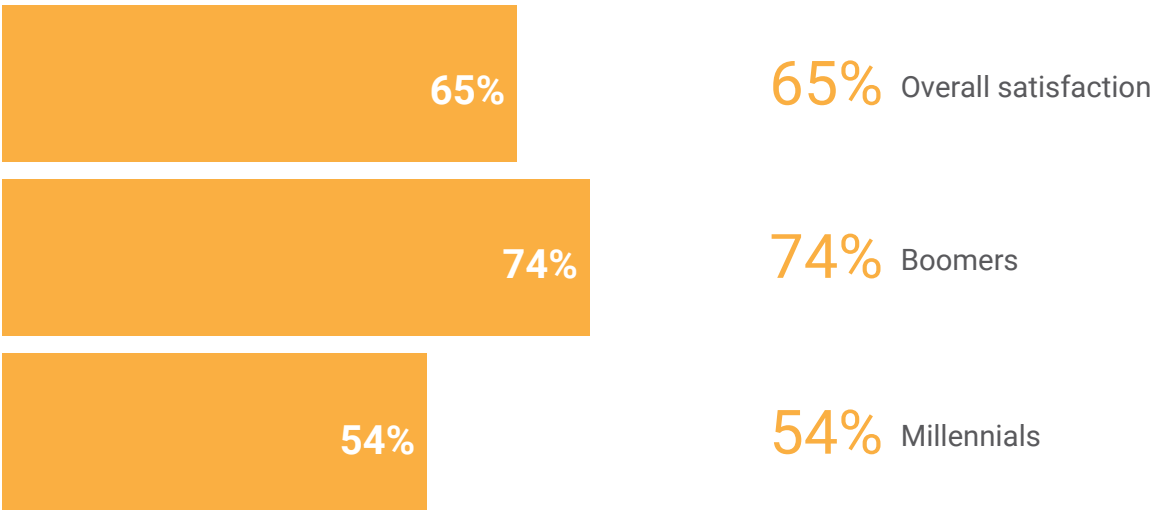
# Part 7

## Patient Satisfaction With Providers

Only slightly more than half of those patients (65%) surveyed reported being very satisfied with their providers during their most recent visit. Boomers expressed 9% higher satisfaction levels compared to Gen X but Gen A and Millenials were 20% lower than their

Boomer counterparts. These generational differences are highlighted by the fact that younger generations are more prone to change providers if they are unsatisfied with their patient experience and care.

### Comparison of Satisfaction Between Generations



# Conclusion

This study reveals significant opportunities for healthcare providers to enhance patient experience through improved communication strategies. While patients commonly utilize online patient portals and in-person interactions for receiving medical information, there is a notable lack of post-appointment communication, particularly regarding information like lab results and prescription refills. This indicates a need for providers to prioritize post-appointment messaging to address patient needs more comprehensively.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of tailoring communication methods to patient preferences. While patients value a variety of communication channels, they are increasingly overwhelmed by excessive messages. Providers should focus on sending relevant, hyper-personalized messages that resonate with patients, rather than simply increasing the frequency of communication. In terms of data collection, paper

forms remain the primary method, although digital collection is gaining popularity, especially among younger generations. This suggests a need for healthcare providers to adopt more digital solutions to streamline data collection and improve efficiency.

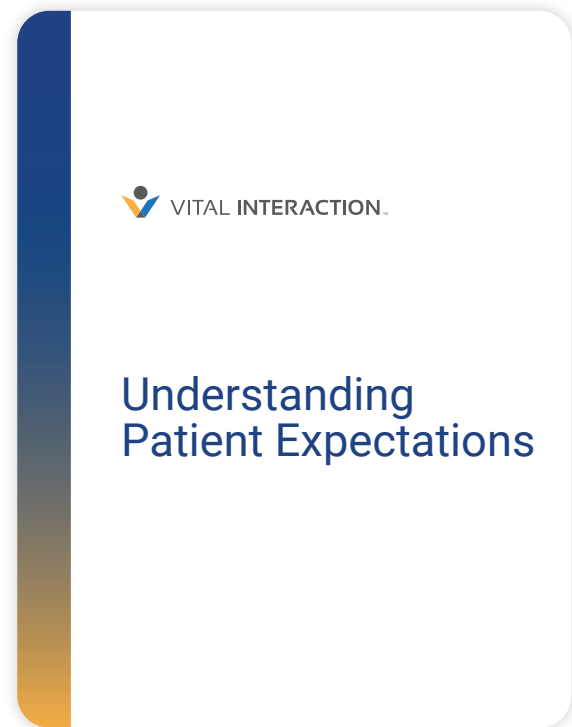
Regarding patient satisfaction, while the majority of patients are satisfied with their providers, there is room for improvement. Boomers expressed higher satisfaction levels than younger generations, indicating a potential generational gap in expectations or experiences.

Additionally, patients with more frequent visits were more likely to report satisfaction, suggesting the importance of building strong provider-patient relationships.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of effective patient communication in healthcare. By prioritizing post-appointment messaging, personalizing communication methods to patient-

preferences, embracing digital solutions, and addressing generational differences in expectations, healthcare providers can enhance patient experience, improve care quality, and drive better outcomes.

Our second white paper, **Understanding Patient Expectations**, is coming soon. This paper identifies gaps in patient-provider communication and explores patient preferences and desired improvements in patient-provider communication.





## About Vital Interaction

[Visit Website](#)

Vital Interaction is an award-winning leader in patient communication technology, specializing in patient reactivation and retention. Trusted by over 13,000 providers, Vital Interaction facilitates more than 40 million messages to 5 million patients annually. The company's proprietary Smart List Engine continuously scans

practice management systems using criteria such as appointment, clinical, and billing data to create automated, customizable campaigns for hyper-personalized patient outreach. Vital Interaction is dedicated to improving patient communication and engagement to support better patient outcomes.



## About CGK

[Visit Website](#)

CGK is the leader in generational research, speaking, and solutions, with special emphasis on Millennials (aka Gen Y) and Gen Z (aka iGen). Their Ph.D.-led team leads primary research to determine the hidden drivers that leaders need to understand and improve to drive measurable results. Using their frontline approach, they combine quantitative and qualitative research with their deep generational expertise to uncover new insights, emerging trends, and specific actions that solve urgent challenges for clients in every major industry.

They pride themselves on being the #1 research and solution firm to focus on Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers. They love helping people and organizations discover cutting-edge insights, ready-to-use actions, and thought leadership resources to turn generational challenges into breakthrough opportunities for growth.