

## Worrying Health Decline in Gen X and Gen Y



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A new national study shows that Generations X and Y show a worrying decline in health compared to their parents and grandparents when they were the same age. The results are published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*.

Researchers found that, compared to previous generations, members of Generation X and Generation Y showed poorer physical health, higher levels of unhealthy behaviours such as alcohol use and smoking, and more depression and anxiety. The results suggest the likelihood of higher levels of diseases and more deaths in younger generations than we have seen in the past.

The researchers used data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 1988-2016 (62,833 respondents) and the National Health Interview Survey 1997-2018 (625,221 respondents), both conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics.

To measure physical health, the researchers used eight markers of a condition called metabolic syndrome, a constellation of risk factors for heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and diabetes. Some of the markers include waist circumference, blood pressure, cholesterol level and body mass index (BMI). They also used one marker of chronic inflammation, low urinary albumin, and one additional marker of renal function, creatinine clearance.

The researchers found that the measures of physical health have worsened from the Baby Boomer generation through Gen X (born 1965-80) and Gen Y (born 1981-99). For whites, increases in metabolic syndrome were the main culprit, while increases in chronic inflammation were seen most in Black Americans, particularly men.

The researchers also checked two other factors. They found smoking couldn't explain the decline. Obesity could help explain the increase in metabolic syndrome, but not the increases seen in chronic inflammation. It wasn't just the overall health markers that were concerning for some members of the younger generations. Results showed that levels of anxiety and depression have increased for each generation of whites from the War Babies generation (born 1943-45) through Gen Y.

Health behaviours also show worrying trends. The probability of heavy drinking has continuously increased across generations for whites and Black males, especially after late-Gen X (born 1973-80). For whites and Blacks, the probability of using street drugs peaked at late-Boomers (born 1956-64), decreased afterward, then rose again for late-Gen X. For Hispanics, it has continuously increased since early-Baby Boomers.

Results also suggest the probability of having ever smoked has continuously increased across generations for all groups.

Source: [Ohio State News](#)

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