

CHAPTER  
**3**

## Health

- The 55 percent majority of Americans aged 18 or older say their health is “excellent” or “very good.” Among 35-to-44-year-olds the figure is 61 percent.
- Americans have a weight problem, and Gen Xers are no exception. The average Gen X man weighs nearly 200 pounds. The average Gen X woman weighs more than 160 pounds.
- Men aged 15 to 44 have had a median of 5.6 opposite-sex partners in their lifetime. Women in the age group have had a median of 3.3 partners.
- Women spanning the ages from 30 to 44 accounted for only 36 percent of the nation’s births in 2007 (Generation X was aged 31 to 42 in that year).
- Many Gen Xers do not have health insurance. In 2007, 18 percent of people aged 35 to 44 were without health insurance coverage.
- Twenty-two percent of Americans aged 18 to 44 have experienced lower back pain for at least one full day in the past three months, making it the most common health condition in the age group.
- Thirty-eight percent of people aged 25 to 44 have taken at least one prescription drug in the past month, and 10 percent have taken three or more.
- Among Gen Xers, 40 percent have used alternative medicine in the past year.

# Most 35-to-44-Year-Olds Say Their Health Is Excellent or Very Good

**The proportion who say they are in very good or excellent health declines with age.**

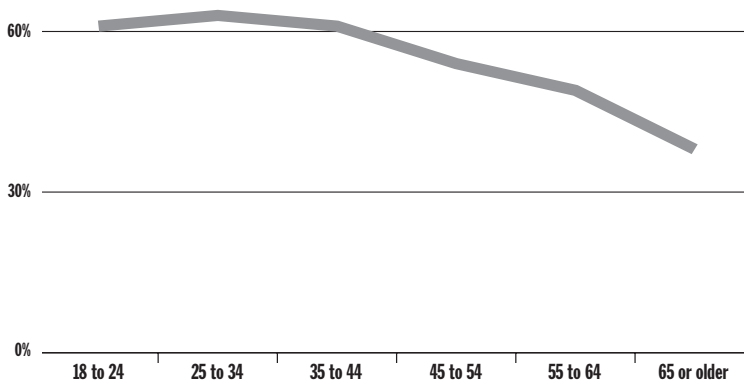
Overall, the 55 percent majority of Americans aged 18 or older say their health is “excellent” or “very good.” The figure peaks at 63 percent in the 25-to-34 age group. Among people aged 35 to 44 in 2008 (Gen Xers were aged 32 to 43 in that year), 61 percent say they are in very good or excellent. The figure falls with increasing age as chronic conditions become common.

Fewer than half of people aged 65 or older report that their health is excellent or very good. Nevertheless, the proportion saying they are in poor health remains below 8 percent, regardless of age. Among people aged 65 or older, the proportion saying their health is excellent or very good (38 percent) surpasses the proportion saying their health is only “fair” or “poor” (25 percent).

■ Medical advances that allow people to manage chronic conditions should boost the proportions of people reporting excellent or very good health in the years ahead.

## More than 60 percent of 35-to-44-year-olds say their health is excellent or very good

*(percent of people aged 18 or older who say their health is excellent or very good, by age, 2008)*



**Table 3.1 Health Status by Age, 2008***(percent distribution of people aged 18 or older by self-reported health status, by age, 2008)*

	<b>total</b>	<b>excellent</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>fair</b>	<b>poor</b>
<b>Total people</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>34.9%</b>	<b>30.0%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>
Aged 18 to 24	100.0	25.1	35.7	29.7	6.6	1.0
Aged 25 to 34	100.0	24.8	38.1	28.9	7.3	1.4
Aged 35 to 44	100.0	23.7	37.2	28.3	8.0	2.1
Aged 45 to 54	100.0	19.6	34.5	29.1	10.3	4.2
Aged 55 to 64	100.0	17.3	31.5	30.3	13.8	5.6
Aged 65 or older	100.0	11.4	26.7	34.1	18.0	7.4

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Prevalence Data, 2008, Internet site <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/>*

# More than 80 Percent of Generation Xers Are in the Labor Force

**Among men, labor force participation is over 90 percent.**

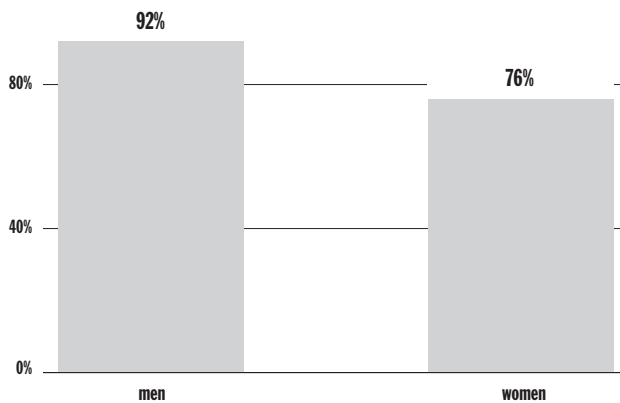
Eighty-four percent of people aged 30 to 44 were in the labor force in 2008 (Generation Xers were aged 32 to 43 in that year). The labor force participation rate varies little within the age group. Among men, from 92 to 93 percent of those aged 30 to 44 are in the labor force. Among women in the age group, the figures range from 74 to 77 percent.

Generation X men are slightly less likely to be unemployed than the average male worker—4.8 percent of men aged 30 to 44 versus 6.1 percent of all male workers. The unemployment rate among Gen X women is also slightly below the average for all women, at 4.7 percent compared with a rate of 5.4 percent for all women. Gen Xers are less likely to be unemployed than workers under age 30, but more likely to be job hunting than those aged 45 or older.

■ Workers aged 30 to 44 account for 33 percent of the employed and 27 percent of the unemployed.

## Most men and women of Generation X are in the labor force

*(percent of people aged 30 to 44 in the labor force, by sex, 2008)*



**Table 6.2 Employment Status by Sex and Age, 2008**

(number and percent of people aged 16 or older in the civilian labor force by sex and age, 2008; numbers in thousands)

	civilian noninstitutional population	civilian labor force				
		total	percent of population	employed	unemployed	
					number	percent of labor force
<b>Total aged 16 or older</b>	<b>233,788</b>	<b>154,287</b>	<b>66.0%</b>	<b>145,362</b>	<b>8,924</b>	<b>5.8%</b>
Under age 25	37,484	22,032	58.8	19,202	2,830	12.8
Aged 25 to 29	20,815	17,293	83.1	16,171	1,122	6.5
Aged 30 to 44	60,878	51,100	83.9	48,669	2,432	4.8
Aged 30 to 34	19,179	16,039	83.6	15,212	827	5.2
Aged 35 to 39	20,537	17,218	83.8	16,408	810	4.7
Aged 40 to 44	21,162	17,843	84.3	17,049	795	4.5
Aged 45 to 64	77,451	57,618	74.4	55,341	2,277	4.0
Aged 65 or older	37,161	6,243	16.8	5,979	264	4.2
<b>Men aged 16 or older</b>	<b>113,113</b>	<b>82,520</b>	<b>73.0</b>	<b>77,486</b>	<b>5,033</b>	<b>6.1</b>
Under age 25	18,909	11,537	61.0	9,881	1,656	14.4
Aged 25 to 29	10,451	9,431	90.2	8,774	657	7.0
Aged 30 to 44	30,115	27,843	92.5	26,506	1,337	4.8
Aged 30 to 34	9,548	8,871	92.9	8,409	462	5.2
Aged 35 to 39	10,142	9,404	92.7	8,971	433	4.6
Aged 40 to 44	10,425	9,568	91.8	9,126	442	4.6
Aged 45 to 64	37,635	30,273	80.4	29,042	1,229	4.1
Aged 65 or older	16,002	3,436	21.5	3,282	153	4.5
<b>Women aged 16 or older</b>	<b>120,675</b>	<b>71,767</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>67,876</b>	<b>3,891</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Under age 25	18,575	10,494	56.5	9,321	1,174	11.2
Aged 25 to 29	10,363	7,862	75.9	7,397	466	5.9
Aged 30 to 44	30,763	23,257	75.6	22,162	1,095	4.7
Aged 30 to 34	9,631	7,168	74.4	6,803	365	5.1
Aged 35 to 39	10,395	7,814	75.2	7,437	377	4.8
Aged 40 to 44	10,737	8,275	77.1	7,922	353	4.3
Aged 45 to 64	39,815	27,345	68.7	26,299	1,047	3.8
Aged 65 or older	21,160	2,808	13.3	2,697	111	3.9

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008 Current Population Survey, Internet site <http://www.bls.gov/cps/tables.htm#empstat>; calculations by New Strategist

# Generation X Is Sandwiched between Larger Generations

## Age groups shrink when Generation X moves in.

Generation X numbers 50 million, a figure that includes all those born between 1965 and 1976 (aged 32 to 43 in 2008). Generation Xers account for 16 percent of the total population. They are surrounded by the two largest generations: the Boomers (25 percent of the population) and the Millennials (also 25 percent).

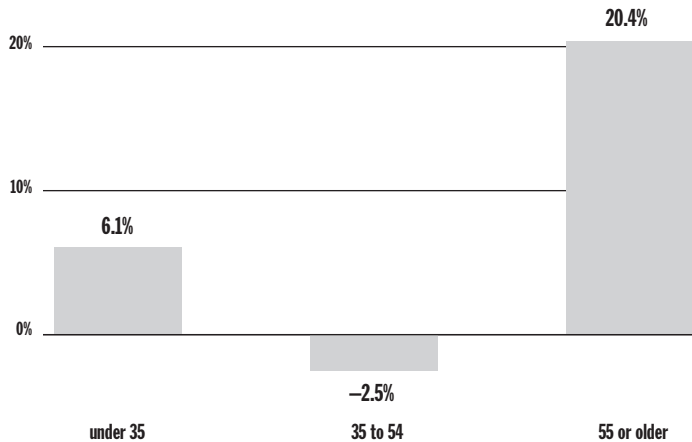
As Generation X moves through the age structure, age groups shrink. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of 35-to-39-year-olds fell by nearly 8 percent as Generation Xers replaced Boomers in the age group. The number of 30-to-34-year-olds fell 4 percent during those years.

Between 2008 and 2015, the number of people aged 35 to 54 (Generation Xers will be aged 39 to 50 in 2015) will shrink by 2.5 percent—a loss of more than 2 million people. In 2015, Generation X will account for 15 percent of the population, a share that will fall to 14 percent by 2025.

■ Because Generation X is small, attention focuses more on Boomers and Millennials. But Generation X is about to enter its peak earning and spending years and should not be ignored.

### The middle-aged population will shrink during the next decade

*(percent change in number of people by age, 2008–15)*



**Table 8.1 Population by Age and Generation, 2008***(number and percent distribution of people by age and generation, 2008; numbers in thousands)*

	number	percent distribution
<b>Total people</b>	<b>304,060</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Under age 5	21,006	6.9
Aged 5 to 9	20,065	6.6
Aged 10 to 14	20,055	6.6
Aged 15 to 19	21,514	7.1
Aged 20 to 24	21,059	6.9
Aged 25 to 29	21,334	7.0
Aged 30 to 44	62,099	20.4
Aged 30 to 34	19,598	6.4
Aged 35 to 39	20,994	6.9
Aged 40 to 44	21,507	7.1
Aged 45 to 49	22,880	7.5
Aged 50 to 54	21,492	7.1
Aged 55 to 59	18,583	6.1
Aged 60 to 64	15,103	5.0
Aged 65 to 69	11,349	3.7
Aged 70 to 74	8,774	2.9
Aged 75 to 79	7,275	2.4
Aged 80 to 84	5,750	1.9
Aged 85 or older	5,722	1.9
<b>Total people</b>	<b>304,060</b>	<b>100.0</b>
iGeneration (under age 14)	57,115	18.8
Millennial (aged 14 to 31)	75,757	24.9
Generation X (aged 32 to 43)	49,958	16.4
Baby Boom (aged 44 to 62)	76,319	25.1
Older Americans (aged 63 or older)	44,911	14.8

*Source: Bureau of the Census, Population Estimates, Internet site <http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2008-sa.html>; calculations by New Strategist*