



# Survey of Millennial Nurses:

## A Dynamic Influence on the Profession

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# INTRODUCTION

Like generations before them, Millennials (ages 19-36) are making their own unique and indelible mark on our society. Coming of age with the internet, social media, mobile communication, and changing societal dynamics, Millennials seem to hold very different expectations from previous generations – and they assume that their contributions will be different, too. These characteristics may be magnified in the nursing workforce, because this helping and caring profession always demands an extraordinary level of individual commitment. Millennial nurses are bringing a dynamic new perspective on such factors as career, leadership, education, and work environment.

These viewpoints are reflected in the data from the AMN Healthcare 2017 Survey of Registered Nurses. This report, **Survey of Millennial Nurses: A Dynamic Influence on the Profession**, extracts and examines responses from Millennial nurses contained in the 2017 RN Survey and compares them with responses from Generation X or Gen X (ages 37-53) and Baby Boomer nurses (ages 54-71). The results paint a portrait of a generation that rewrites the rules on nurse work environment expectations.

Millennials are often looking to better themselves through education or job changes, and they are more trusting of leadership than are older nurses. They also have distinct expectations about what constitutes a good working environment and how that can positively affect patient care. Among these expectations are professional development opportunities, transparent quality measures, a positive culture, and earnestly supportive leadership.

As the healthcare industry continues to face unprecedented shortages of qualified nurses, the insights from this report could prove valuable to healthcare leaders. By better understanding the viewpoints and desires of Millennial nurses regarding their profession, healthcare organizations can be better prepared to attract and retain nurses from the generational segment that is taking over the nursing workforce.

## KEY FINDINGS

### CAREER PLANS

- Will look for new nurse job: 17% Millennials, 15% Gen Xers, 10% Baby Boomers
- Become Advanced Practice RN: 49% Millennials, 35% Gen Xers, 12% Baby Boomers
- Work as travel nurse: 10% Millennials, 6% Gen Xers, 5% Baby Boomers
- Seek leadership role: 36% Millennials, 27% Gen Xers, 10% Baby Boomers
- Pursue higher degree: 71% Millennials, 56% Gen Xers, 20% Baby Boomers

### OTHER

- EMR improves job satisfaction: 74% Millennials, 57% Gen Xers, 49% Baby Boomers
- Support national nurse licensure: 77% Millennials, 73% Gen Xers, 61% Baby Boomers
- Trust clinical leader: 61% Millennials, 51% Gen Xers, 51% Baby Boomers
- Leader supports career development: 61% Millennials, 49% Gen Xers, 47% Baby Boomers

## METHODOLOGY

Data for Survey of Millennial Nurses: A Dynamic Influence on the Profession are derived from the AMN Healthcare 2017 Survey of Registered Nurses, which was completed by 3,347 registered nurses. The survey questionnaires were sent out in March and April 2017. In the survey, percentages are rounded to the nearest full percent.

## RESULTS

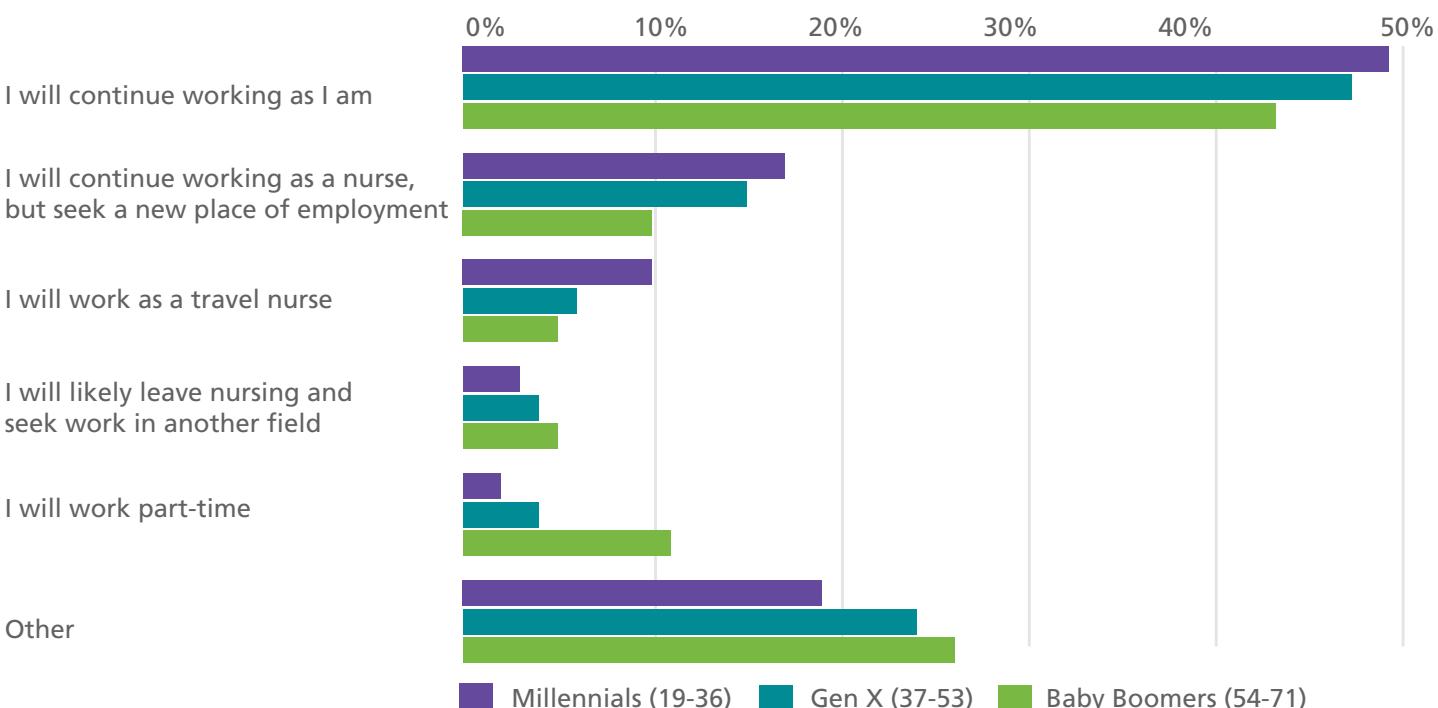
### CAREER – Upwardly Mobile, Not Afraid of Change

Millennial nurses are more likely than their older RN counterparts to consider seeking new employment, according to data from the 2017 RN survey. This trend is in keeping with U.S. Bureau of Labor findings showing that Millennials are more apt to change jobs than are older workers. And it comes as no surprise to managers and human resources departments, who have grown accustomed to this generation's itinerant nature.

A 2016 Bureau of Labor Statistics survey on employee tenure found that older workers stay at their jobs much longer than younger ones. For example, the median tenure of workers ages 55-64 is 10.1 years, more than three times higher than workers ages 25-34 years at 2.8 years.

In the 2017 RN Survey, nurses were asked how the improving economy might affect their career plans (Fig. 1). About 17% of Millennial RNs said they would seek a new place of employment as a nurse. This is compared to 15% of Gen Xers and 10% of Baby Boomers. In another indication of eagerness for career options, 10% of Millennial RNs said they opt for travel nursing, while only 6% of Gen Xers and about 5% of Baby Boomers expressed this sentiment.

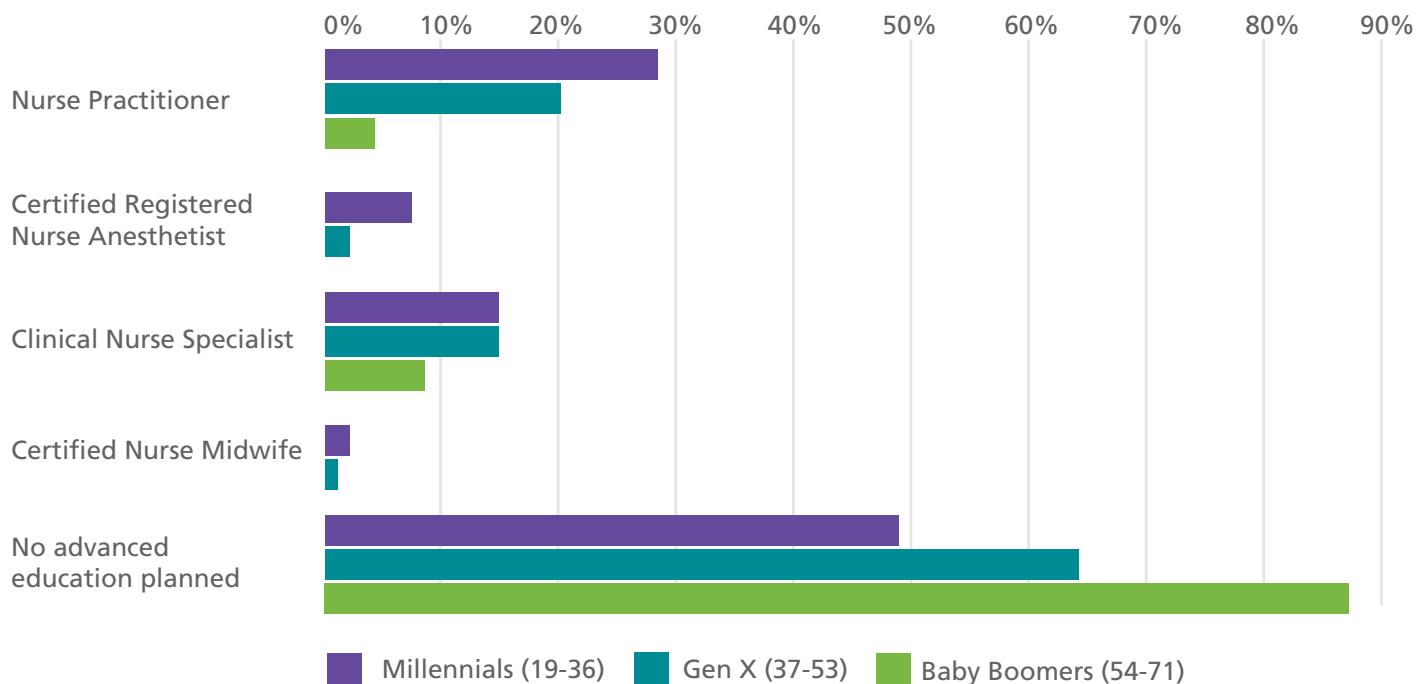
**Fig. 1: How might the improving economy affect your career plans?**



Nurse practitioner is one of the fastest growing occupations in the United States, and it offers a much higher level of autonomy than many other nursing positions, a compelling enticement for many RNs. With their penchant for bettering themselves through job change and educational achievement, it's not surprising that Millennial RNs show a strong interest in advanced practice nursing. More than one in four — 28% of Millennials — said they would pursue a Nurse Practitioner's degree in the next three years, compared to 19% of Gen Xers and 4% of Baby Boomers. Another 14% of Millennials said they would pursue education to become Clinical Nurse Specialists and 7% said they would become Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists. That adds up to nearly half of Millennial RNs planning to become advanced practice nurses (Fig. 2).

While this strong interest in advanced practice nursing is laudable, it could have the unintended consequence of reducing the number of nurses available as bedside RNs, who are in ever-increasing demand.

**Fig. 2: Which of the following advanced educations do you plan on enrolling in during the next three years?**



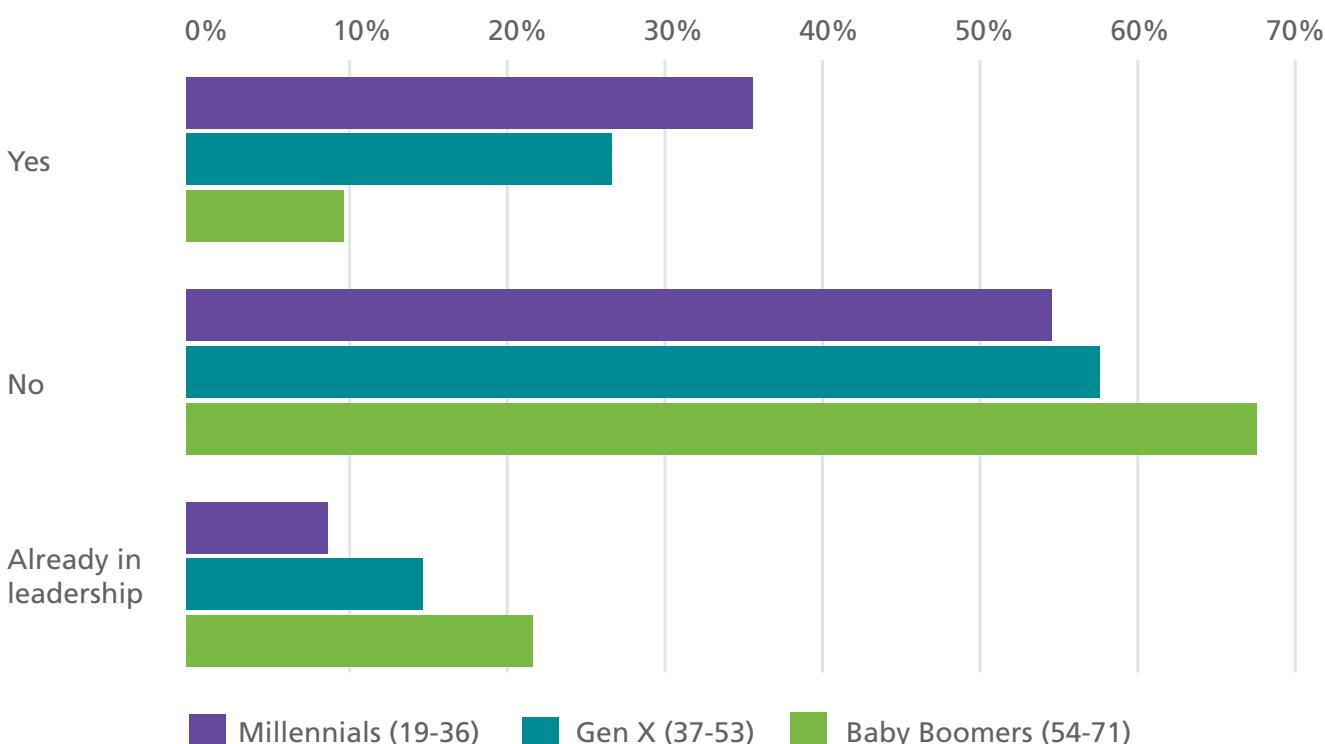


## LEADERSHIP – Optimism and Opportunities

RNs, in general, expressed little interest in pursuing leadership roles, despite showing overwhelming support for having more nurses in leadership positions. The exception to this was Millennial RNs.

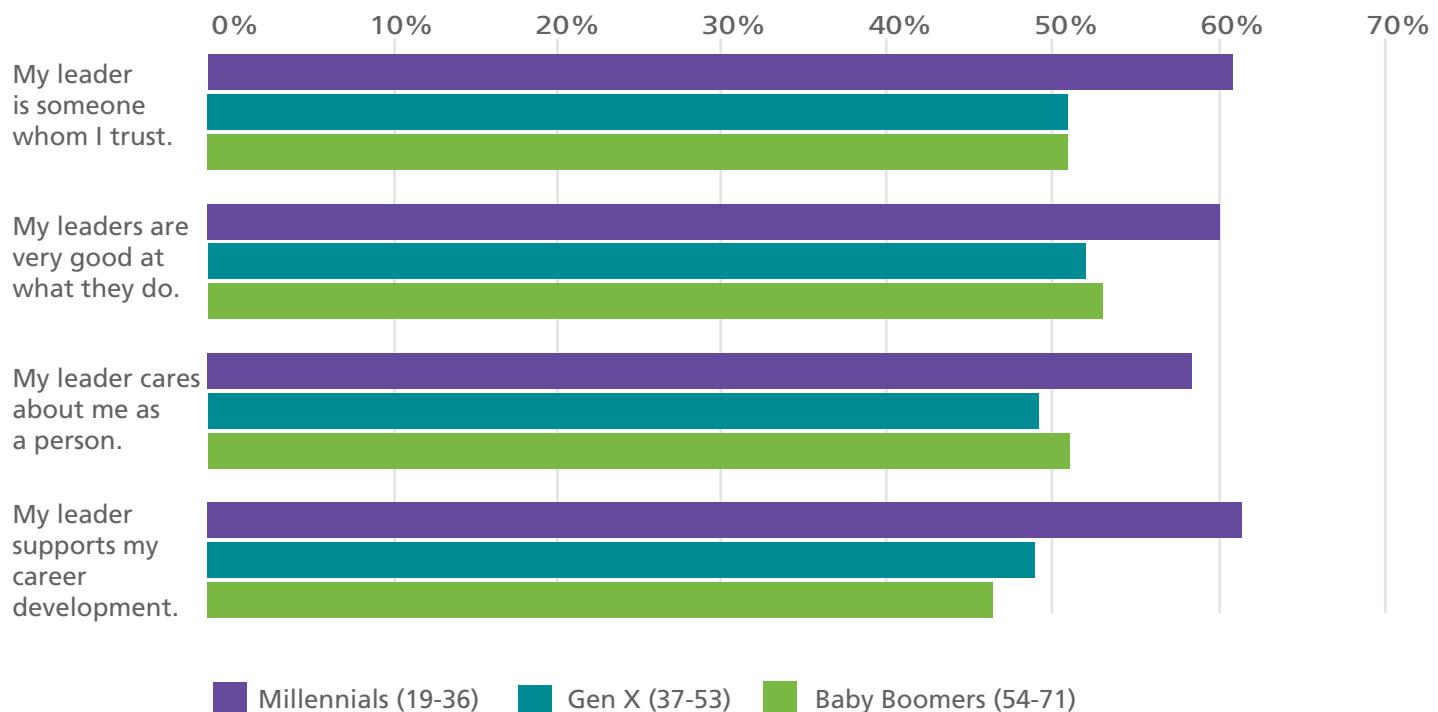
Millennial nurses were significantly more interested in leadership roles, with more than one third — 36% — saying they were considering a move into leadership (Fig. 3). This compared to about one-fourth of Gen Xers and only 10% of Baby Boomers. However, Baby Boomer nurses had a much higher percentage of RNs already in leadership positions compared to their younger counterparts.

**Fig. 3: Are you considering a move into a leadership position?**



Millennials were a little more optimistic toward leadership than other generations of nurses (Fig. 4). This tendency was true across several categories involving leadership, including how much they trust their leaders, and whether leaders care about them and their career development. Millennials more often said they "agree" or "strongly agree" regarding positive statements about their leaders than their older counterparts.

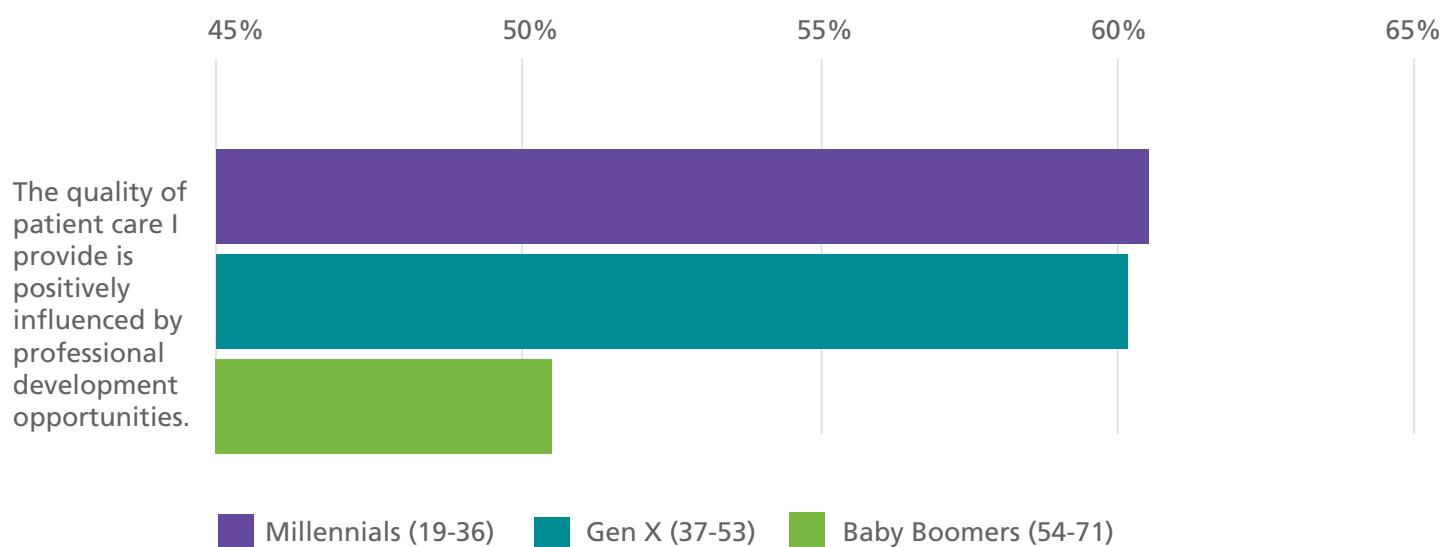
**Fig. 4: Combined responses of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' about leadership**





Millennials were joined by Gen Xers in viewing professional development opportunities as a significant factor in providing quality patient care (Fig. 5). More than half of Baby Boomers also saw these opportunities as important, but not to the same degree as younger nurses. It's widely recognized that professional development is important to both attracting and retaining Millennials in all professions, but it may be even more important in healthcare, where workforce demand is high and the need for expertise, quality care, and team collaboration is significant.

**Fig. 5: Combined responses of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' about professional development**



## EDUCATION – More Enthusiasm, Bigger Plans

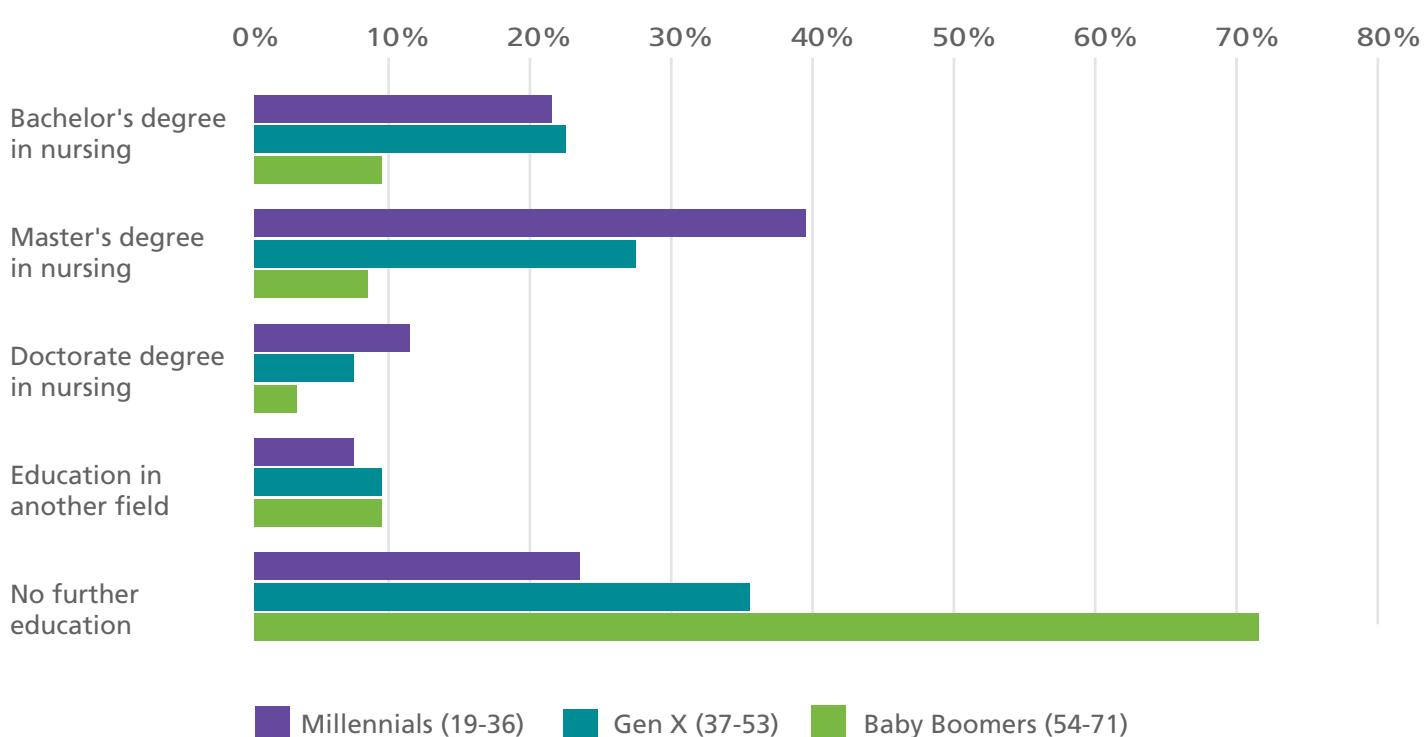
### Higher Degrees and Certification

Collectively, just under half (48%) of RNs surveyed said they don't plan to pursue further education. But when looked at by age group, Millennials showed much more interest than older nurses (Fig. 6).

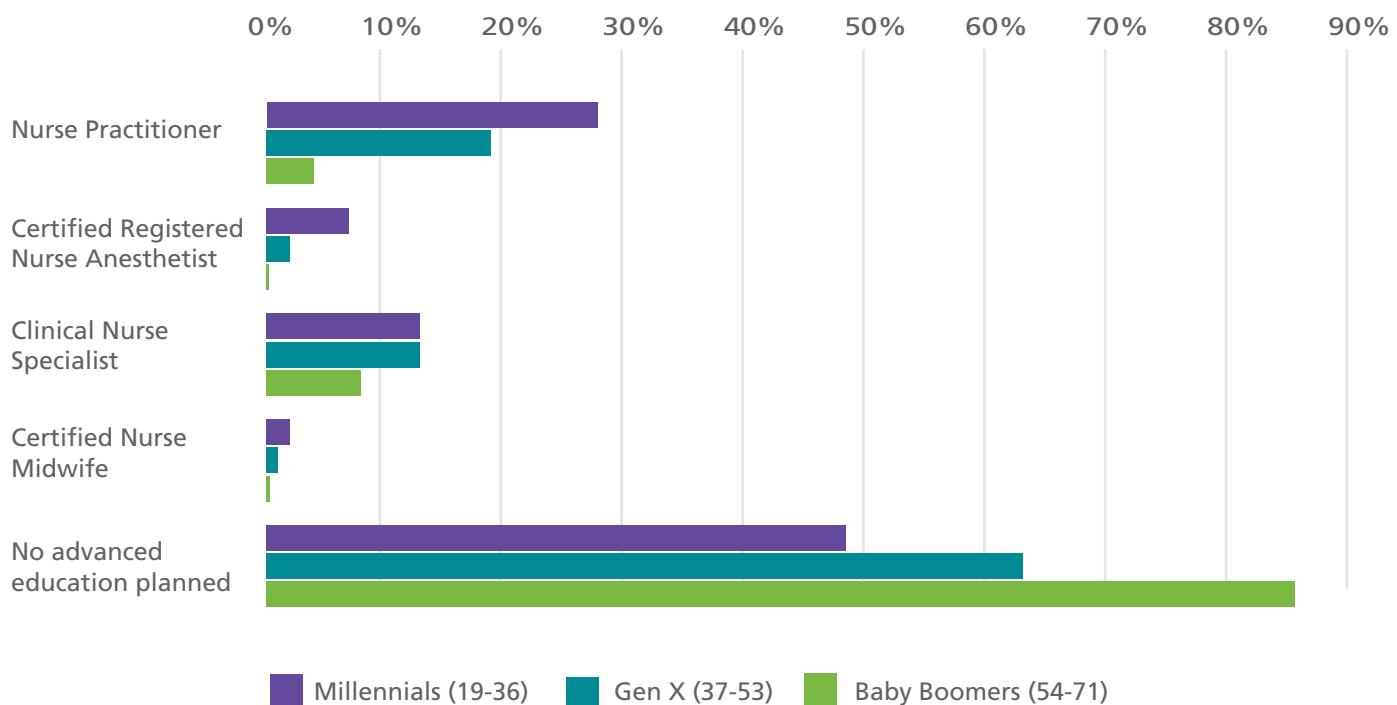
When asked whether they plan to pursue a bachelor's degree in the next three years, Millennials and Gen Xers answered positively at nearly the same percentages. However, 39% of Millennial RNs said they plan to pursue a master's degree in the next three years, while another 11% said they will seek a PhD. Both were significantly higher than Gen Xers. The fact that nearly 4 in 10 Millennial nurses plan for a master's degree in their future could be a very important step toward the goal of a highly educated nursing workforce. Millennial nurses also are more likely to pursue advanced practice degrees (Fig. 7) and professional certification (Fig. 8).

It's not surprising that younger nurses would be more interested in further educational attainment compared to older nurses, who are at the latter stages of their careers. Increasing education and training, however, is a priority for nursing in order to improve quality of care, so it's a salutary trend if younger nurses remain dedicated to achieving higher degrees.

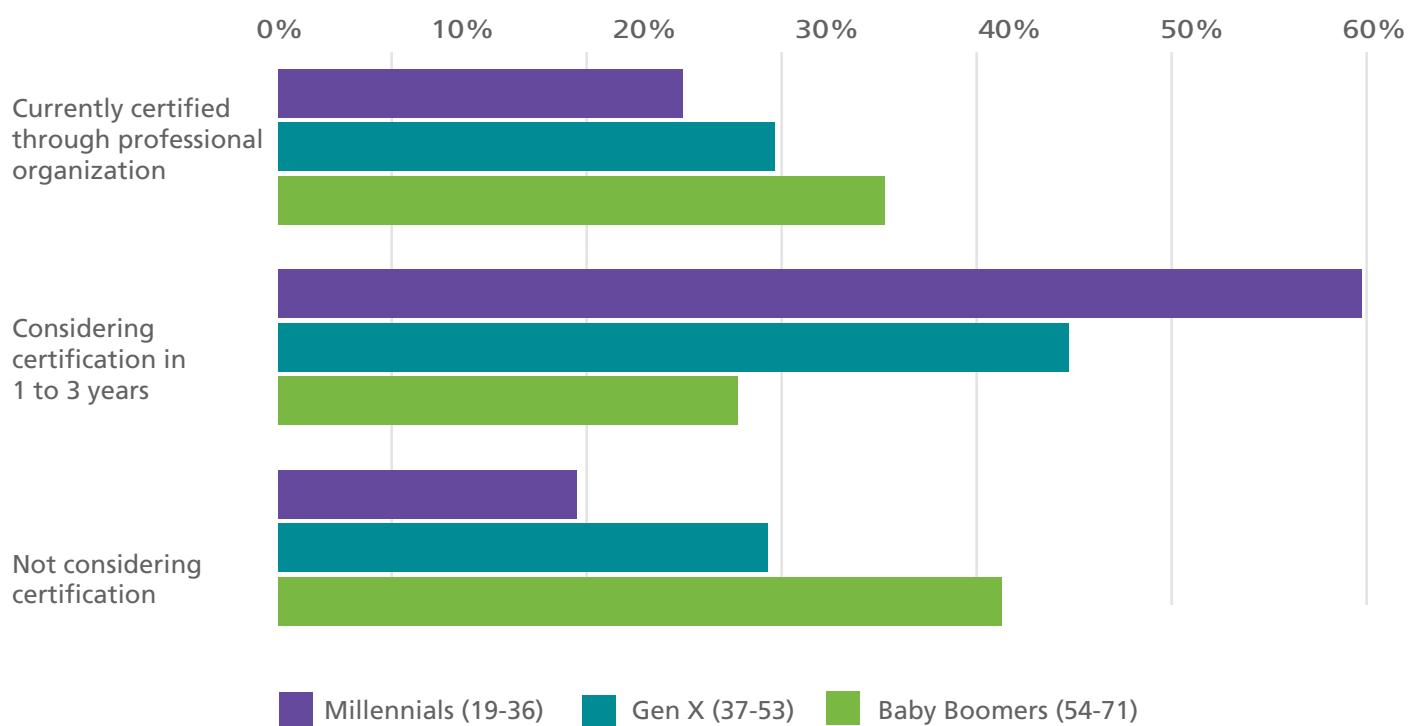
**Fig. 6: Higher degrees pursued in the next three years**



**Fig. 7: Advanced practice degrees pursued in next three years**



**Fig. 8: Current status and future plans for specialty certification**



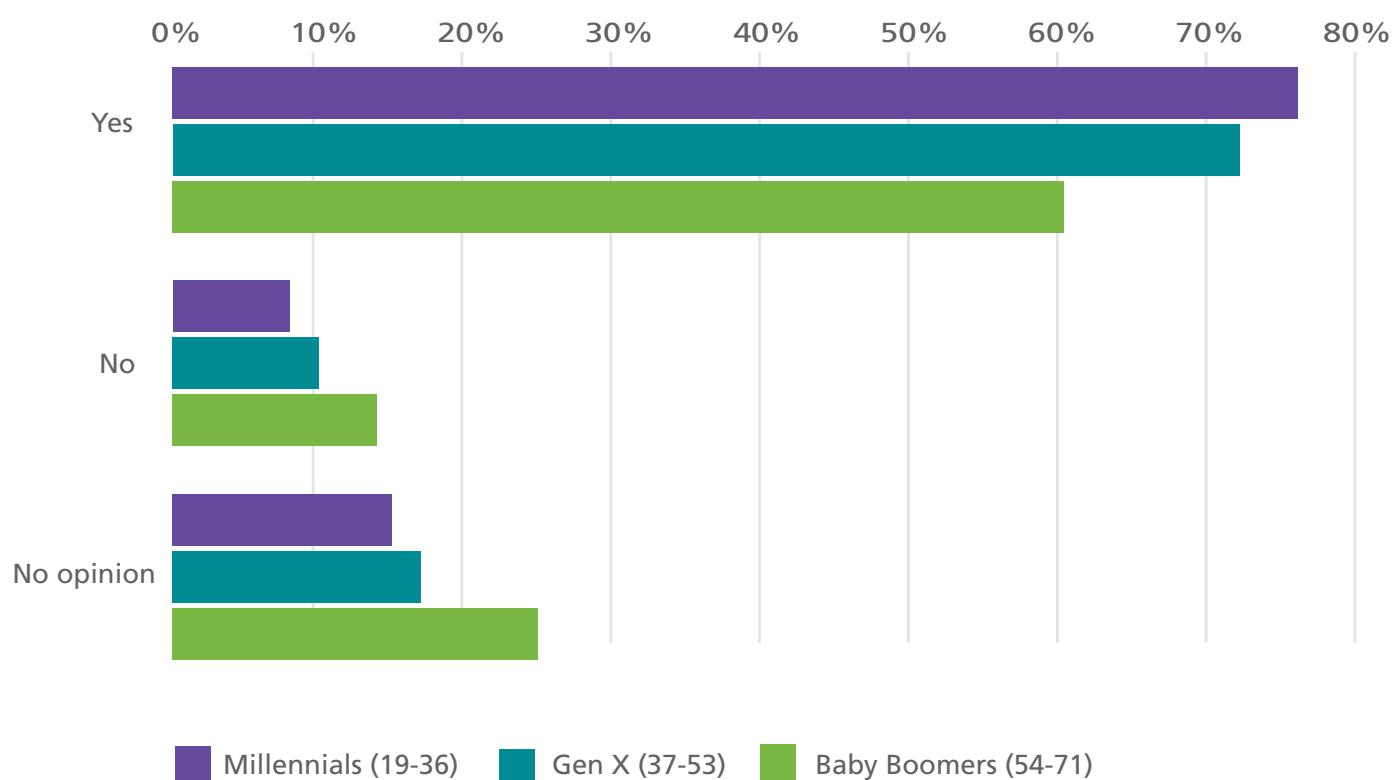


### Support for National Nurse Licensure

A nationwide initiative is underway to expand a multistate licensure compact for nurses to facilitate greater flexibility through practice across state lines. While a majority of RNs surveyed heavily supported national licensing rather than the current state-by-state licensing system, the strongest backers were Millennials.

According to the survey, 77% of Millennials want to see national licensing. This compares to 73% of Gen Xers and 61% of Baby Boomers (Fig. 9).

**Fig. 9: Would it help your career if nurse licensing were national instead of state-by-state?**



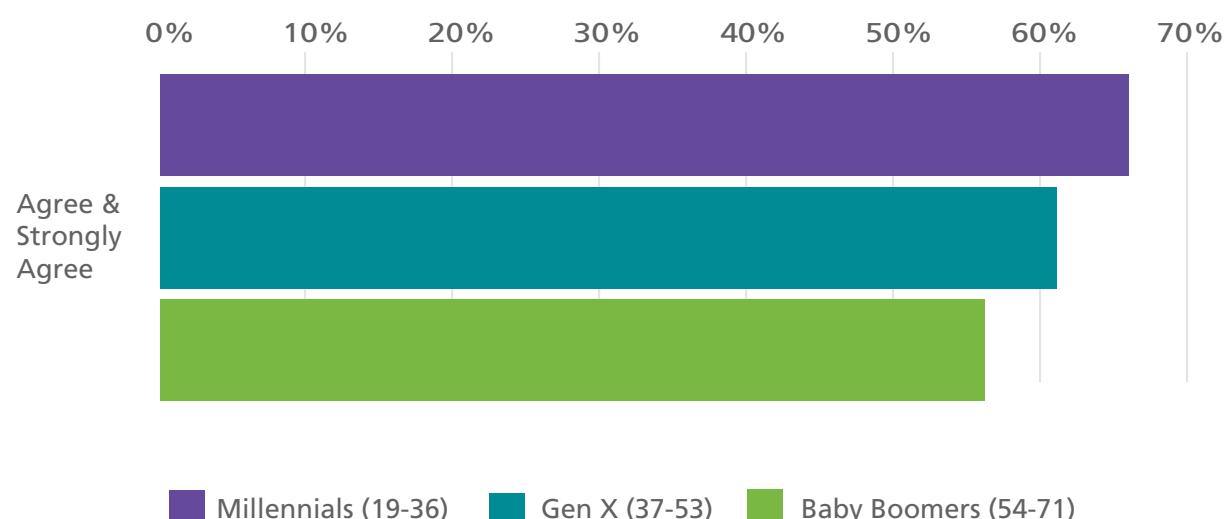
## WORK ENVIRONMENT – Strong Ties Between Culture and Quality

Millennials feel strongly that the culture of a healthcare organization can positively influence the quality of patient care (Fig. 10). When asked whether quality of patient care is positively influenced by culture, 68% of Millennials responded affirmatively compared to 62% of Gen Xers and 57% of Baby Boomers.

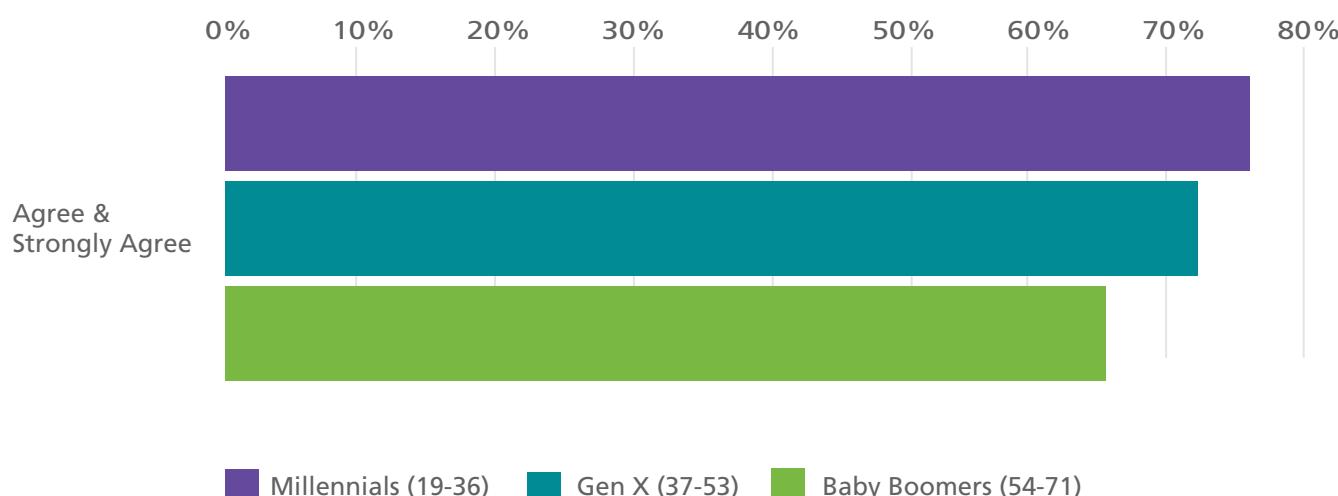
Similarly, Millennials felt more strongly than older nurses that the skill mix of nurses on the unit positively influenced the quality of care that they provide (Fig. 11). Among Millennials, 78% felt this way versus 67% of Baby Boomers – an 11-percentage point spread. Gen Xers, meanwhile, had like sentiments to Millennials at 74%, saying that unit skill mix affects patient care quality.

This response could be viewed as a recognition among younger nurses that the mix of experience, greater institutional knowledge, and more specialized skills are vital on the unit, along with the benefits that younger nurses can bring.

**Fig. 10: 'Agree' or 'strongly agree' that patient care quality is positively influenced by culture**



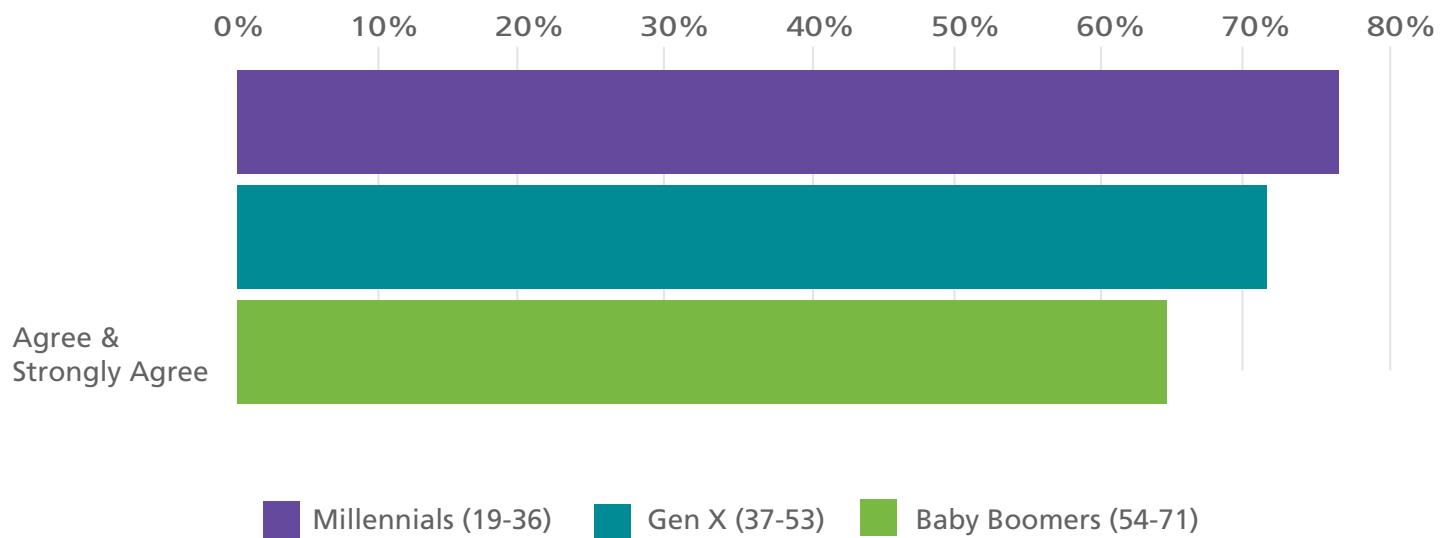
**Fig. 11: 'Agree' or 'strongly agree' patient care quality is positively influenced by skill mix on unit**





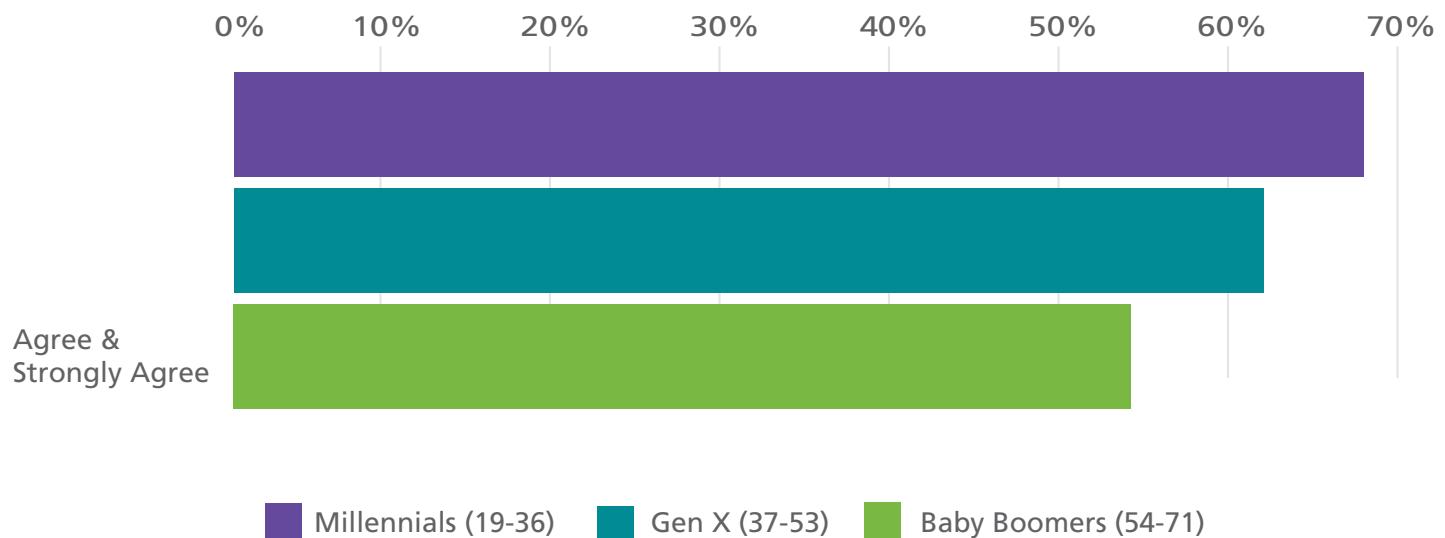
Regarding the impact of effective leadership on the quality of nursing care, Millennials again valued this characteristic more highly than their counterparts (Fig. 12). In responding to the statement, "the quality of patient care I provide is positively influenced by effective leadership," 77% of Millennials responded affirmatively, compared to 72% of Gen Xers and 66% of Baby Boomers. Once again, this represents an 11-point difference between Baby Boomers and Millennials.

**Fig. 12: 'Agree' or 'strongly agree' quality of patient care is positively influenced by effective leadership**



Younger nurses recorded the highest positive response rate (Fig. 13) when asked to respond to the statement, "The quality of patient care I provide is positively influenced by transparency of quality measures." Among Millennials, 68% responded affirmatively, while 62% of Gen Xers and 54% of Baby Boomers responded positively.

**Fig. 13: 'Agree' or 'strongly agree' transparency of quality measures positively influences care quality**



## INNATE TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

The younger generation of nurses, who grew up with computers, mobile phones and other communications technology, showed stronger positive reactions to questions about the use of electronic medical records (EMR) than other nurses. For the following questions, the affirmative responses were:



**“The use of EMR positively influences my job satisfaction”**

– 74% Millennials, 57% Gen X, and 49% Baby Boomers (Fig. 14)



**“The use of EMR positively influences patient care”**

– 66% Millennials, 55% Gen X, and 46% Baby Boomers (Fig. 15)



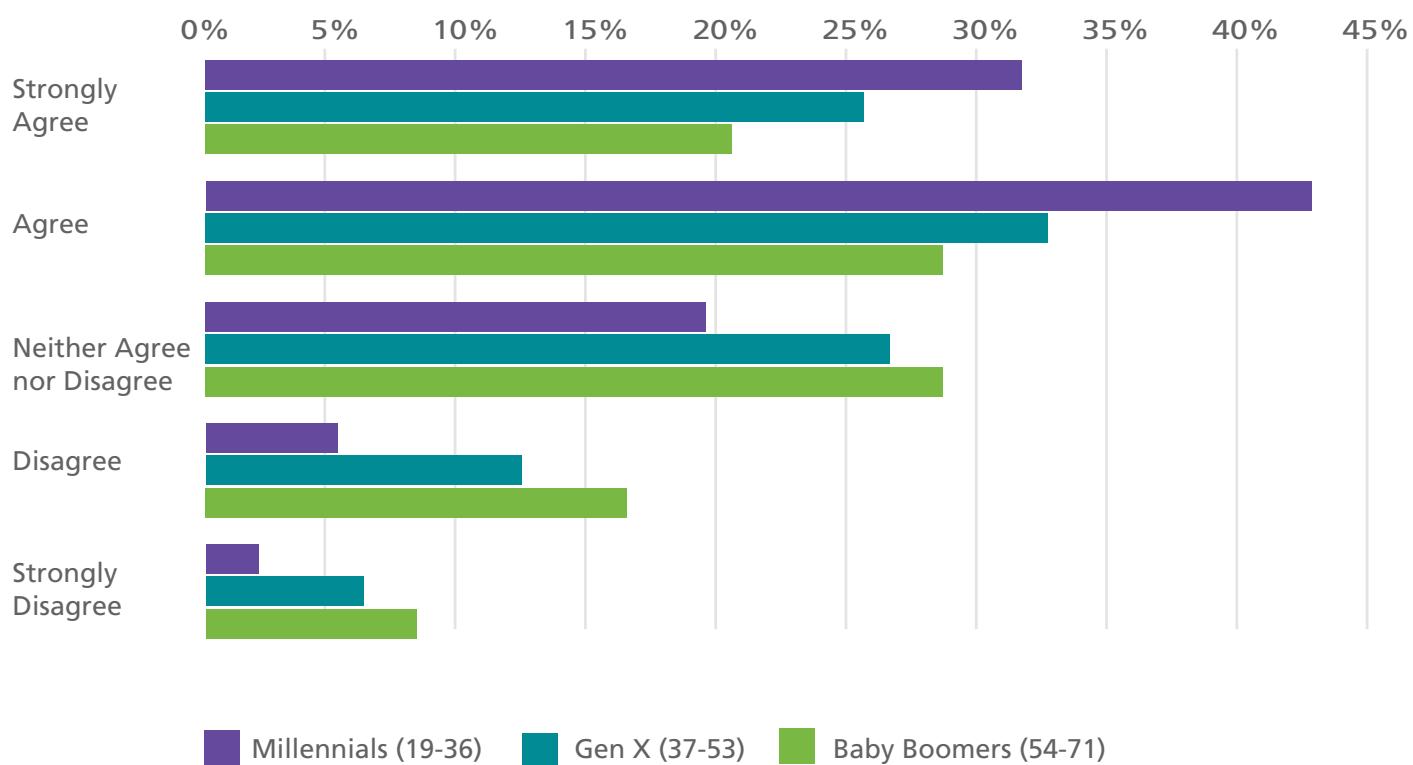
**“The use of EMR positively influences my productivity and time management”**

— 62% Millennials, 51% Gen X, and 42% Baby Boomers (Fig. 16)



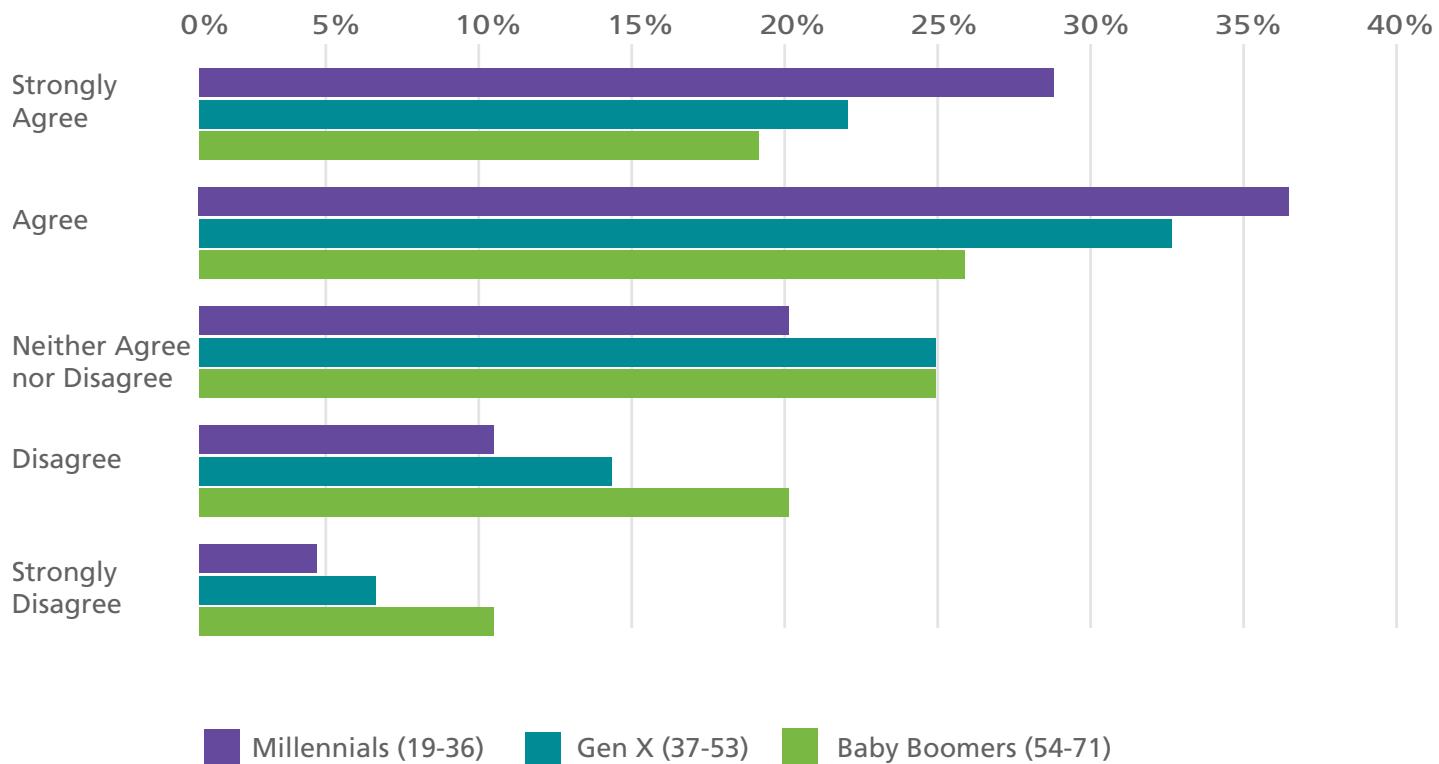


**Fig. 14: 'The use of EMR positively influences my job satisfaction.'**

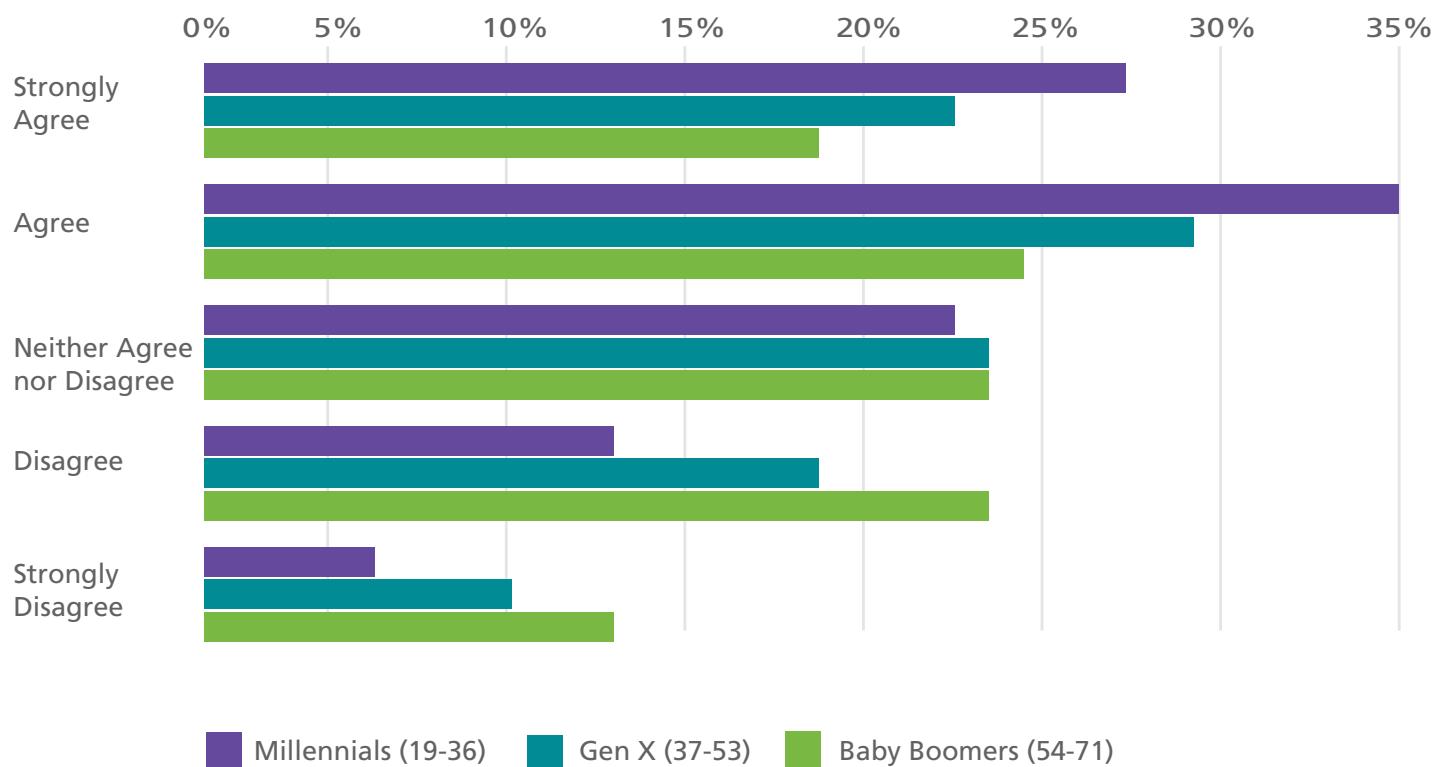




**Fig. 15: 'The use of EMR positively influences the quality of patient care.'**



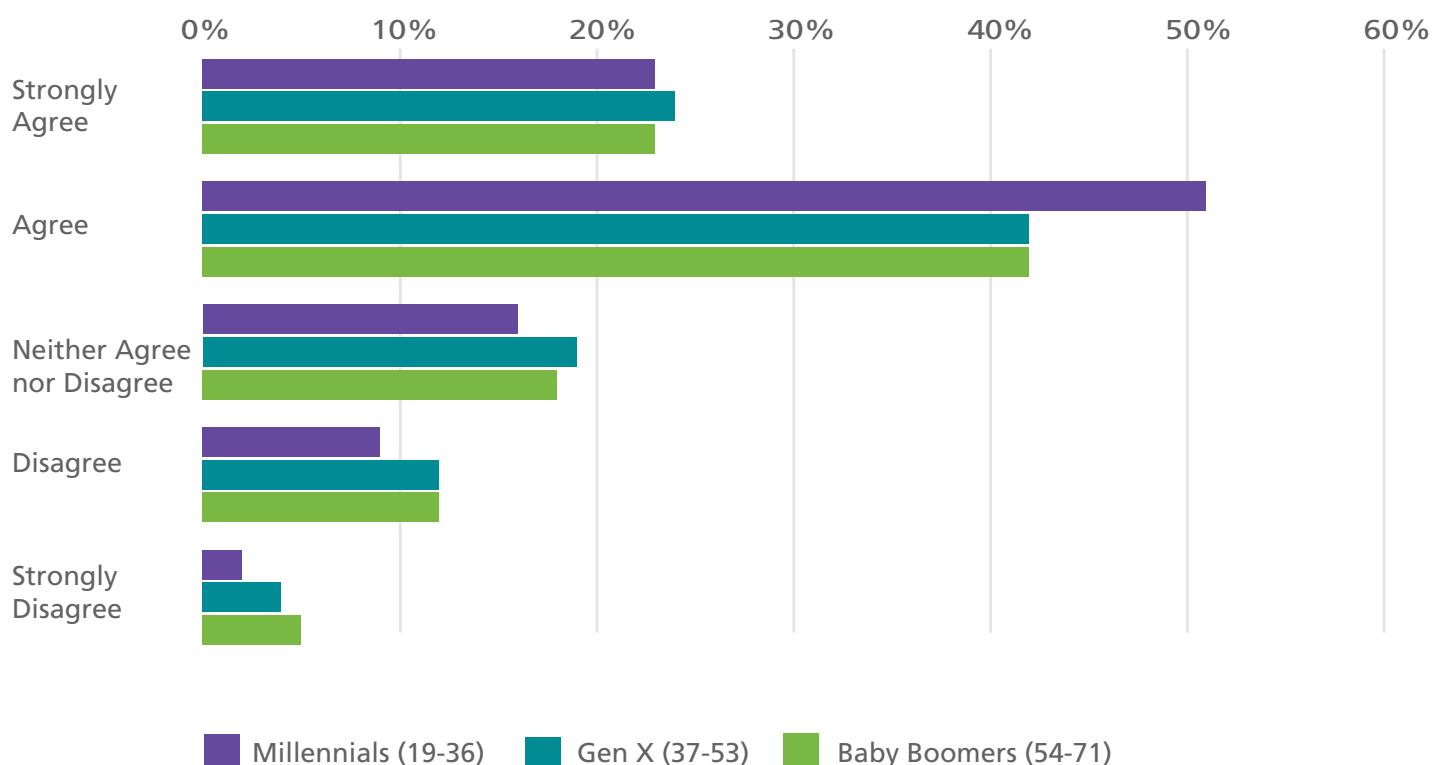
**Fig. 16: 'The use of EMR positively influences my productivity and time management.'**





In a separate survey question addressing the use of technology more generally, Millennials also showed the strongest positive response. When asked to respond to the statement, "The quality of care I provide is positively influenced by technology," 74% of Millennials agreed, while 66% of both Gen Xers and Baby Boomers felt this way (Fig. 17).

**Fig. 17: 'Quality of patient care is positively influenced by the use of technology.'**



## HERE COMES GENERATION Z

Looking ahead in the not-too-distant future is Generation Z. Gen Z (as they're often referenced), is currently ranging in age from about 2 to 19. Gen Z is the most diverse of any U.S. generation, and they have some decidedly different attitudes than their Millennial cousins.

A key differentiator for them is that they are the first generation born into a digital world. While most Millennials adapted to technology at a very young age, Gen Z (born beginning in 1998) can't recall a time when there wasn't internet, social media, and mobile phones. Most only know smart phones.

This plethora of readily available information likely make this generation "self-directed, technologically savvy, and innovative," a few terms now applied to them. For Gen Z, figuring out how to do something, like fixing a smartphone glitch, doesn't require asking somebody else for help, but rather can be mastered oneself by intuition and a quick YouTube tutorial. This do-it-yourself, solution-oriented approach to getting things done could prove particularly interesting in the clinical workplace for Gen Z nurses. Perhaps Gen Z nurses will be confident problem solvers, considering their innate awareness that new ideas and solutions are just an internet search away.

The variety of gadgets and applications used by Gen Z at the same time may also mean that they are better multi-taskers, with the ability to shift easily between tasks despite multiple, ongoing distractions. This could add new dimensions to the nursing unit.

A big difference between Millennials and Gen Z is that Millennials were born and raised in boom times, only to watch it all topple in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and two economic crashes, including one that was the worst since the Great Depression. Gen Z was born into this adversity, so coping with challenges, diligence in problem-solving, and a temperament of watchfulness may be their natural tendencies. If so, these could be helpful or at least congruent with nursing.

Another factor about Gen Z is that they are larger in numbers than Millennials, with approximately 60 million native-born American members in 2015, about one million more than Millennials. Since nurse shortages are a dominant factor in the healthcare industry today, even a somewhat larger cohort of workers could be helpful.



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