

State of the Consumer 2026

When tech acceleration
and cost pressures collide

Consumer Goods Forum Global Summit

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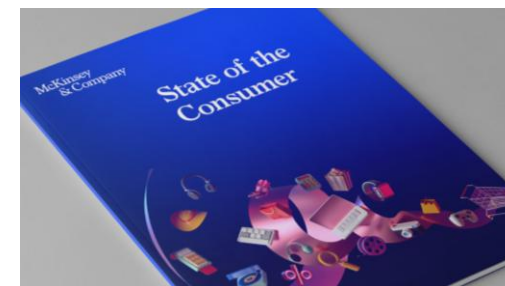
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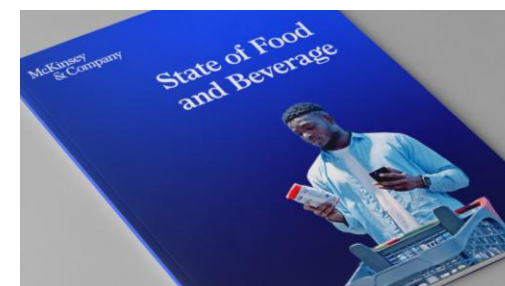


Learn more: ConsumerWise@mckinsey.com

State of the Consumer *Launching today*



State of Food and Beverage



An update on consumer sentiment



Four forces are shaping the consumer sector

Aging population

70% of consumers living in countries with birth rates below replacement rate

Seniors will account for 25% of population by 2050, 2x the 1997 share

Sustained cost consciousness

Inflation by far consumers' top concern

Spending conservatism now in its third year

Geopolitical uncertainty

Conflicts, protectionism, energy insecurity, and cyber risk all rising and creating volatility

Technology advancement

AI uptake exploding, much faster than previous tech waves

Zooming in: Two are redefining how consumers discover, decide, and spend

Sustained cost consciousness

Skipping purchases

Trading down

Demanding value



Technology advancement

Purchase journey becoming
increasingly digital

Upending search

On the horizon: Agentic commerce



State of the Consumer 2026 trends

01

The new tech-driven path to purchase

How people discover and decide is changing rapidly

02

The health revolution

Wearables and scientific breakthroughs are influencing consumer goals

03

The experience economy

Consumers prioritize meaning and memories

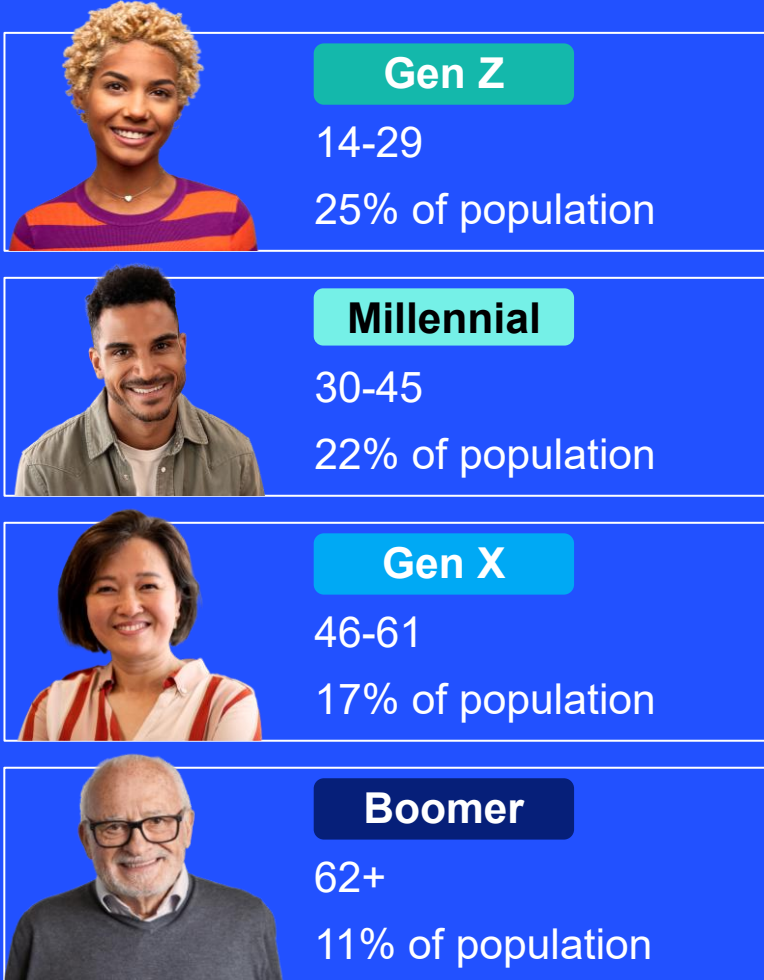
04

The rise of the “resourceful consumer”

Sustained price pressure leads to savvier spending

Basis for this perspective

Drawing on surveys of >20K consumers in Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and United States

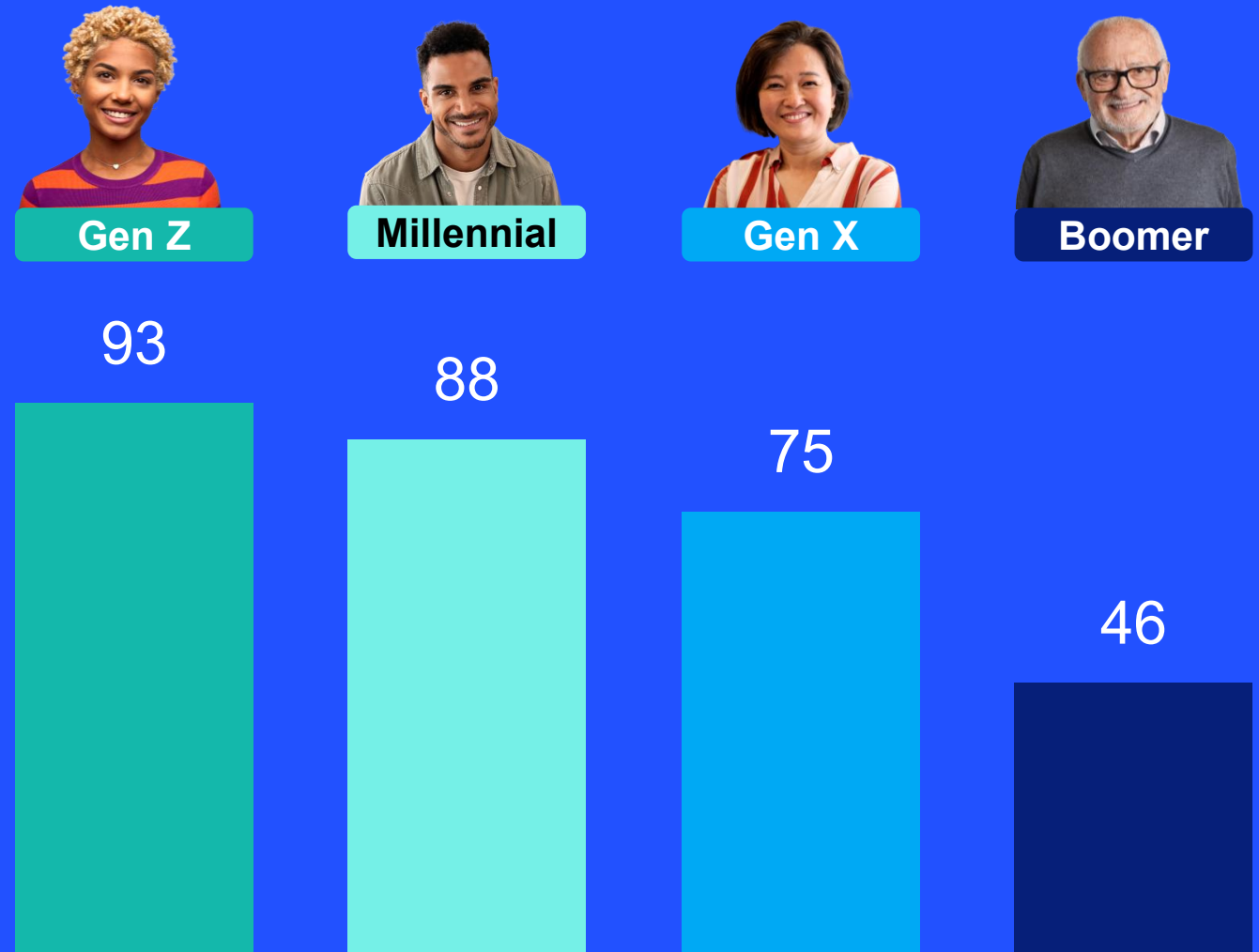


1. Generation Alpha constitutes ~24.4% of the population, and the Silent Generation (81–98 years old) constitutes ~2% of the population

01

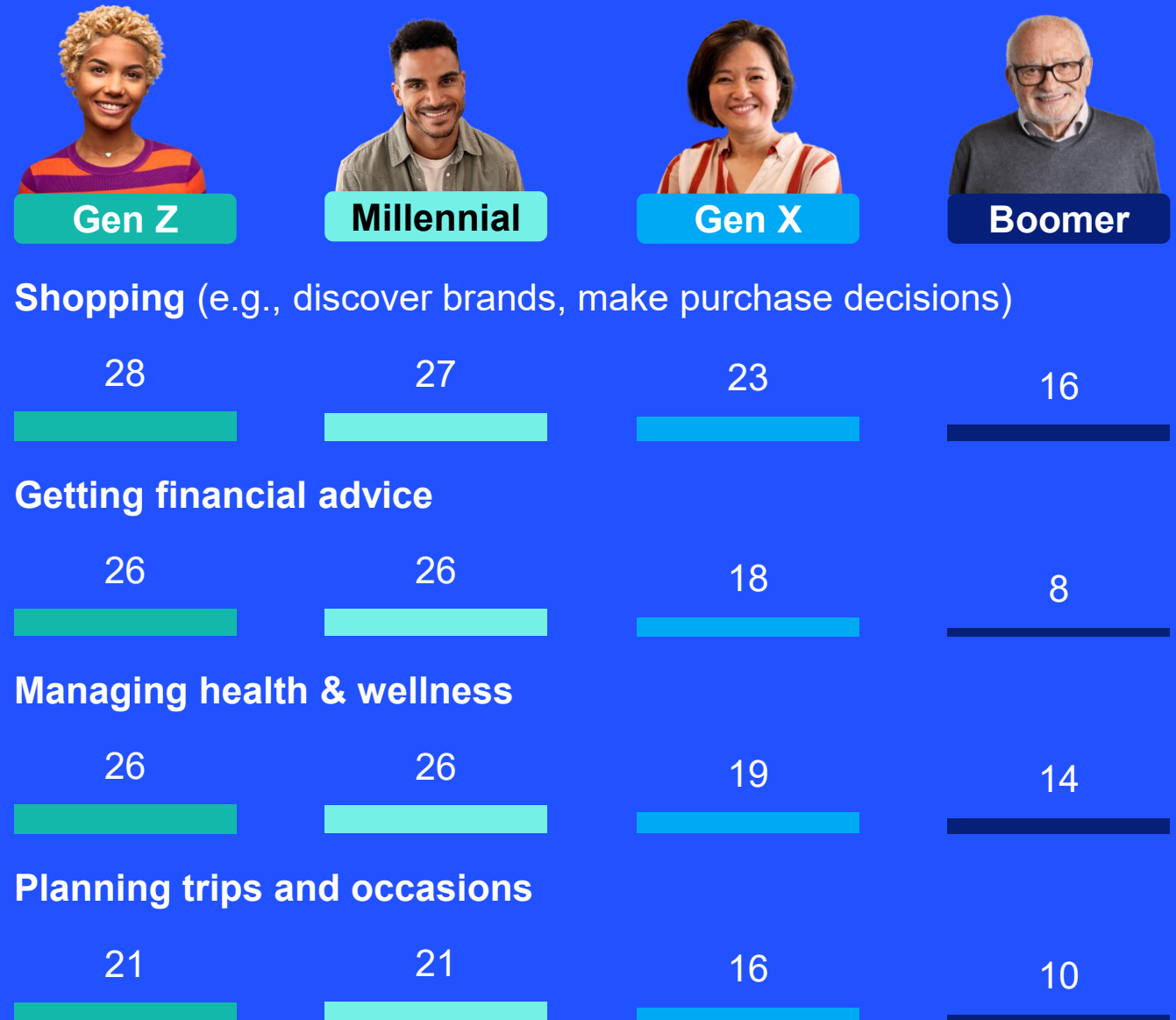
Nearly all Gen Z consumers said they use at least one gen AI tool

Consumers using at least one Gen AI tool, % of respondents



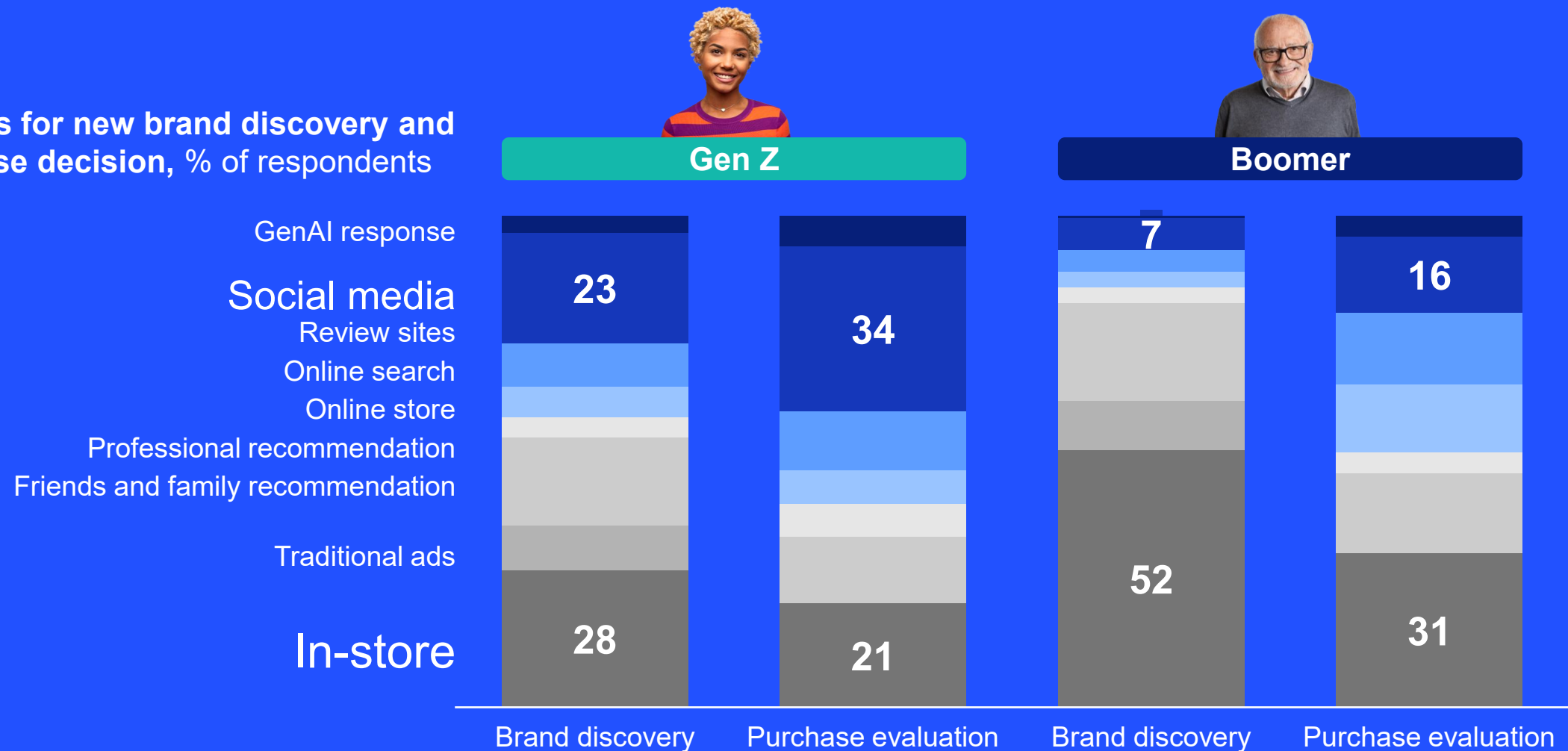
Younger shoppers are already using gen AI to shop

Gen AI use cases, % of respondents



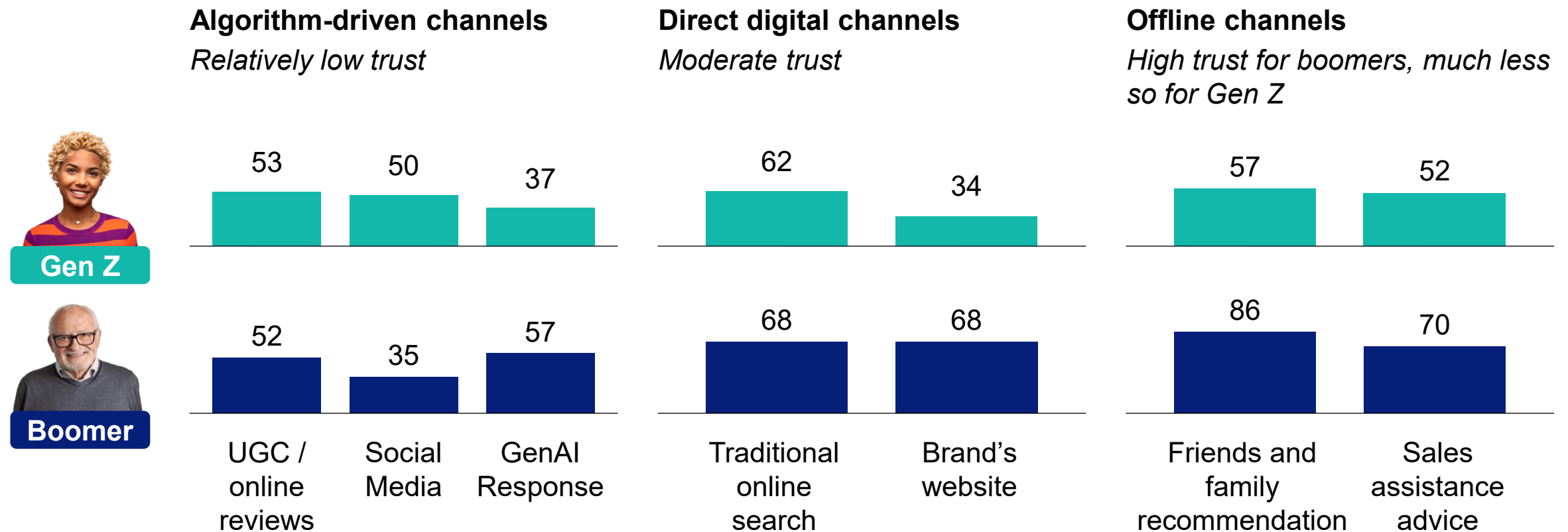
Social media increasingly shapes Gen Z's purchase decisions, while boomers still rely on stores

Sources for new brand discovery and purchase decision, % of respondents



But trust of social media and gen AI is lower than in other channels – and notably, Gen Z is generally skeptical

Net consumer trust (trustors less distrusters) for product research, % of respondents



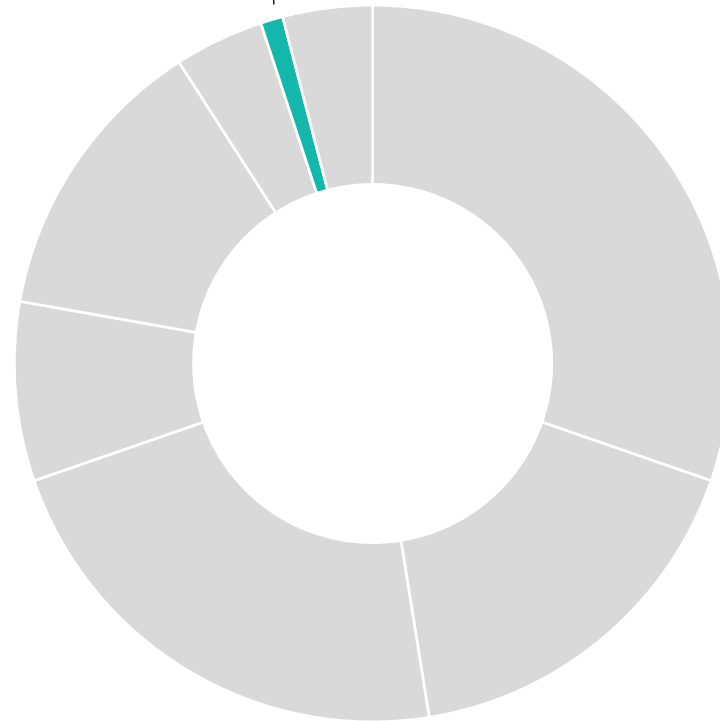
In AI search, the brand is rarely the source of truth

Sources of LLM responses
for 25 leading CPG brands



Percent of all citations

1% Own brand
website



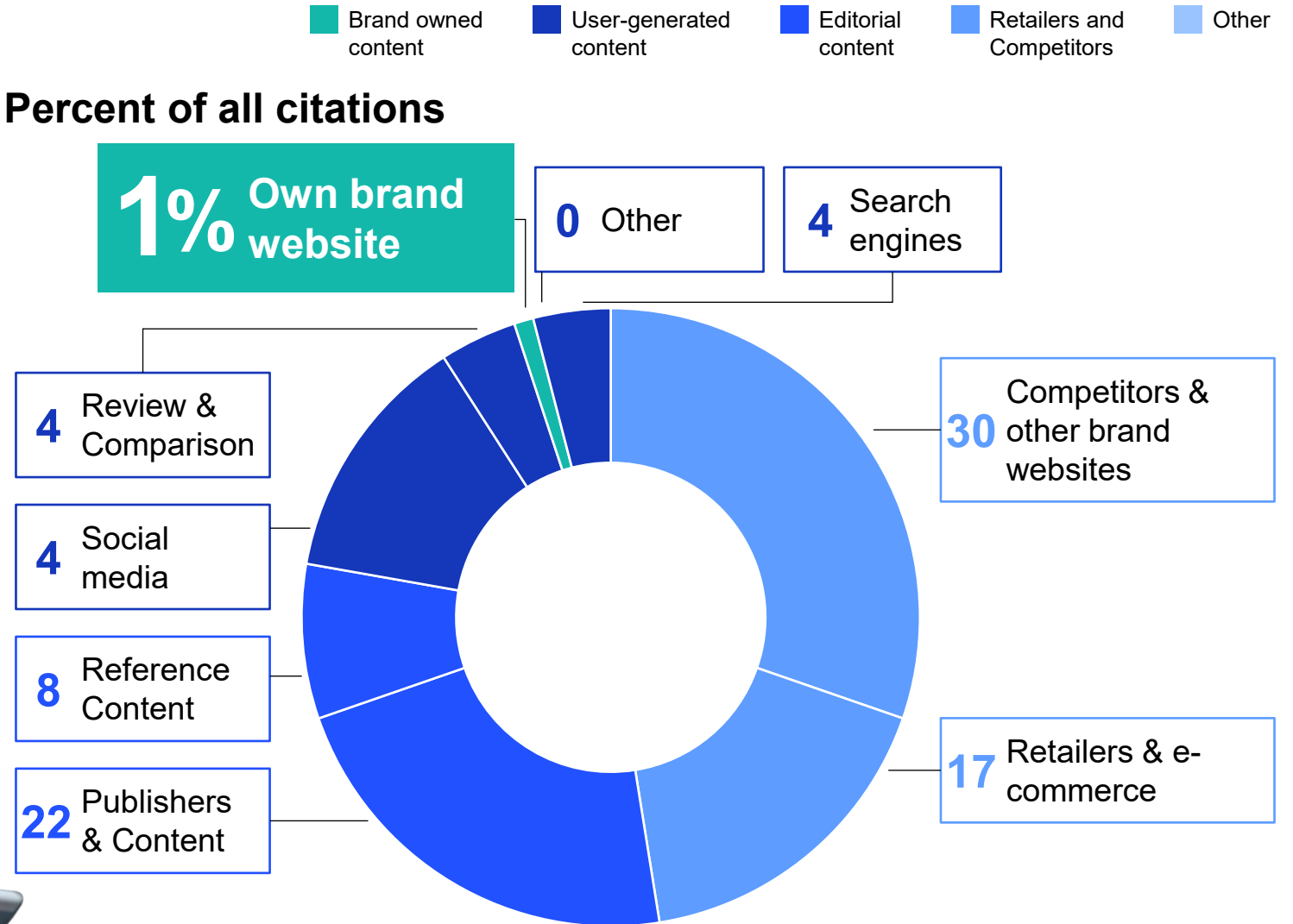
Only 1% of the sources cited by LLMs come from brand-owned websites

Sources of LLM responses for 25 leading CPG brands



Source: XEO360

Percent of all citations

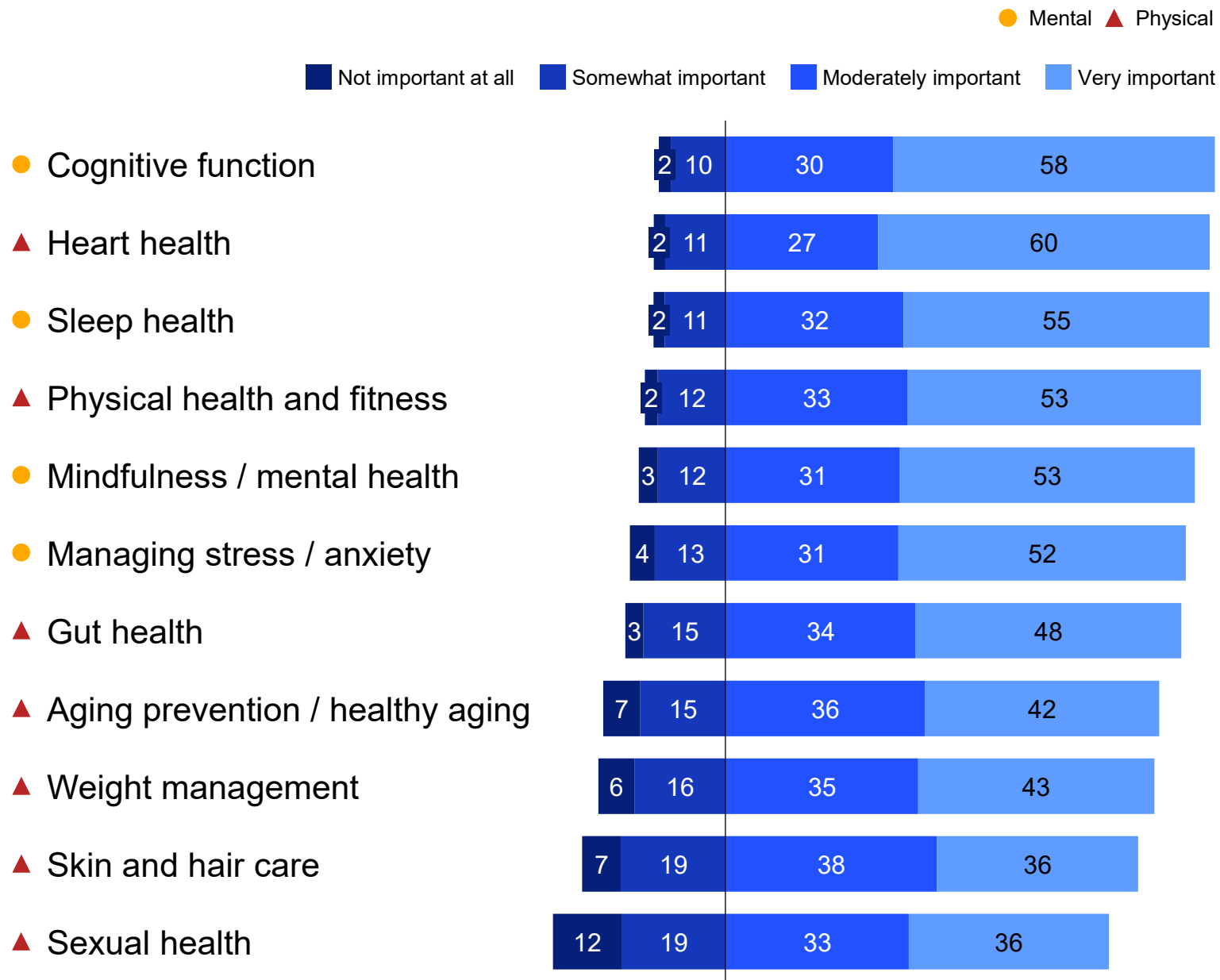


When zooming into the top 10 sources, only 6% are from brand's own websites

02

Globally, consumers value health across several dimensions

Health areas most important to consumers, % of respondents



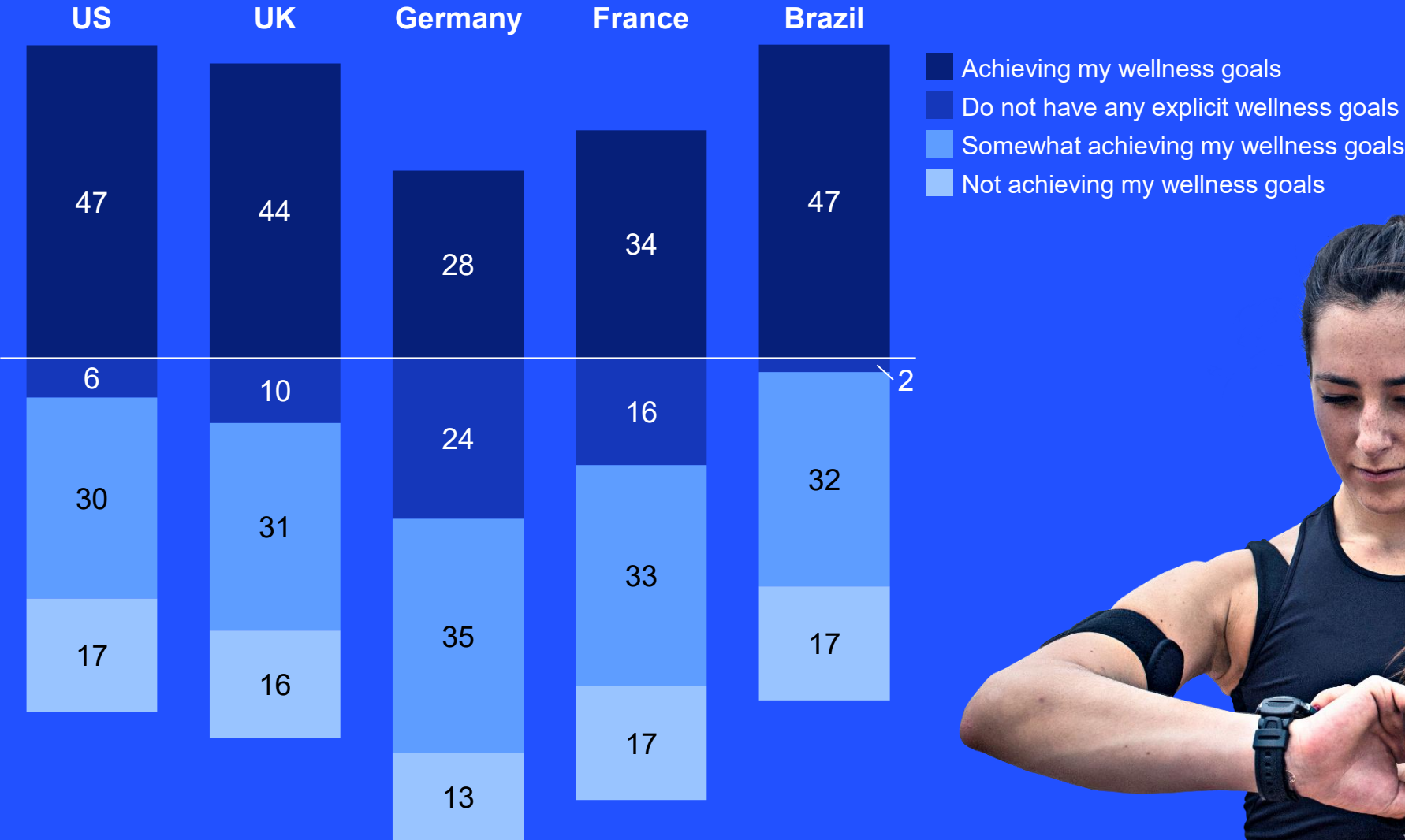
Source: State of the Consumer 2026

McKinsey & Company

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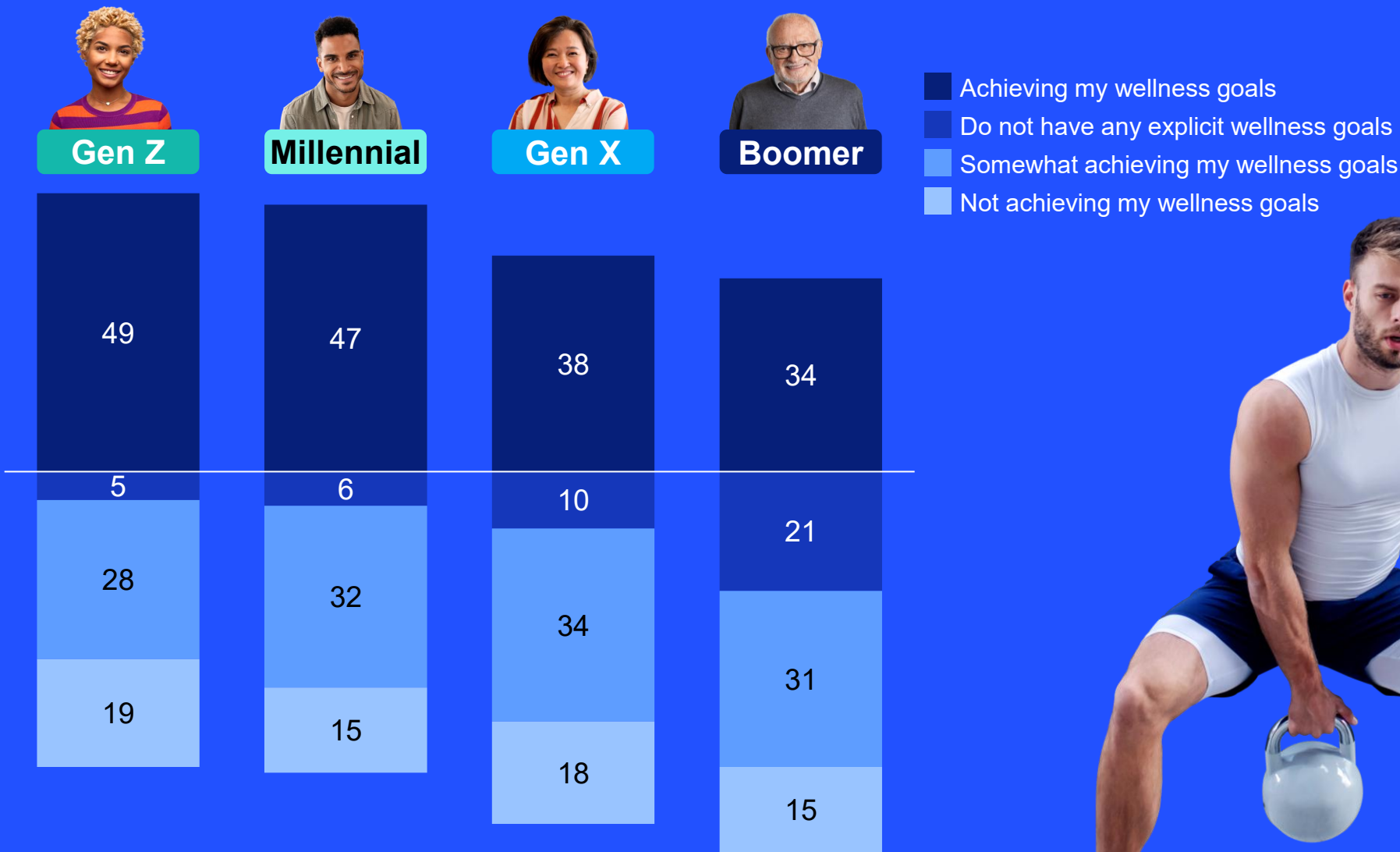
Yet many are not achieving their wellness goals

Consumer sentiment toward achieving their wellness goals, % of respondents



Younger consumers feel they are closer to achieving their wellness goals

Consumer sentiment toward achieving their wellness goals, % of respondents



Source: State of the Consumer 2026



About half of consumers are
reducing their consumption of...

Artificial flavors

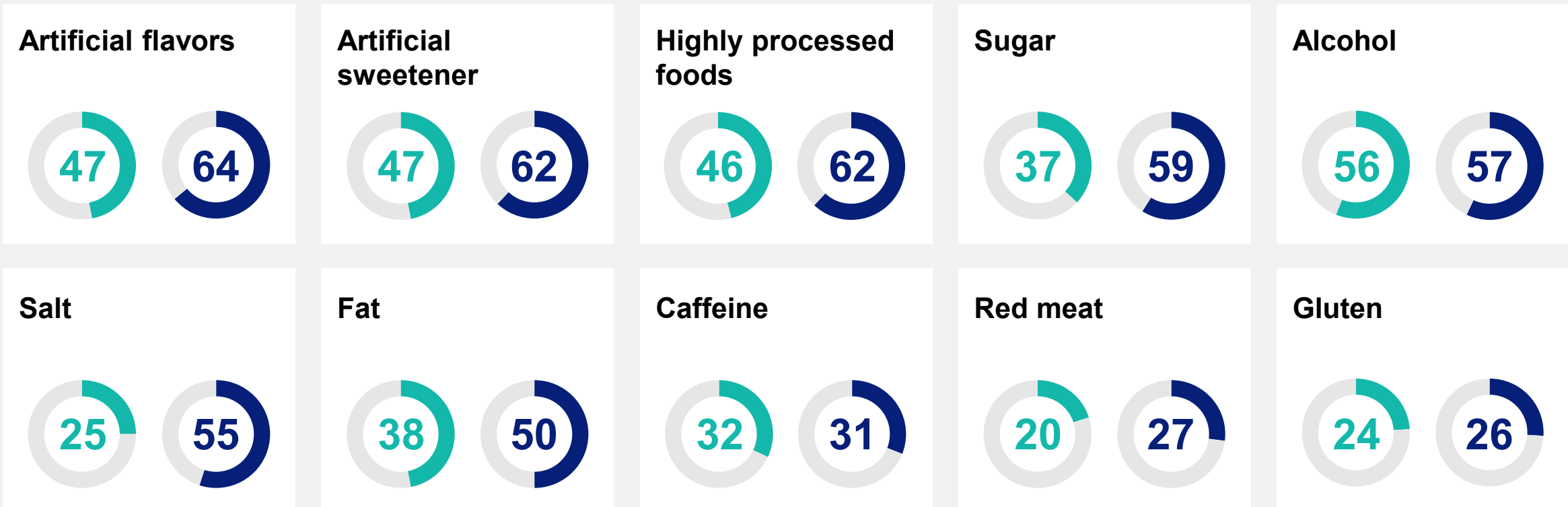
Highly processed foods

Sugar

Alcohol

About half of consumers are reducing their consumption of artificial ingredients, highly processed food, sugar, and alcohol

Reduction in consumption of products in the past 12 months, generation, % who avoid completely or limit their consumption

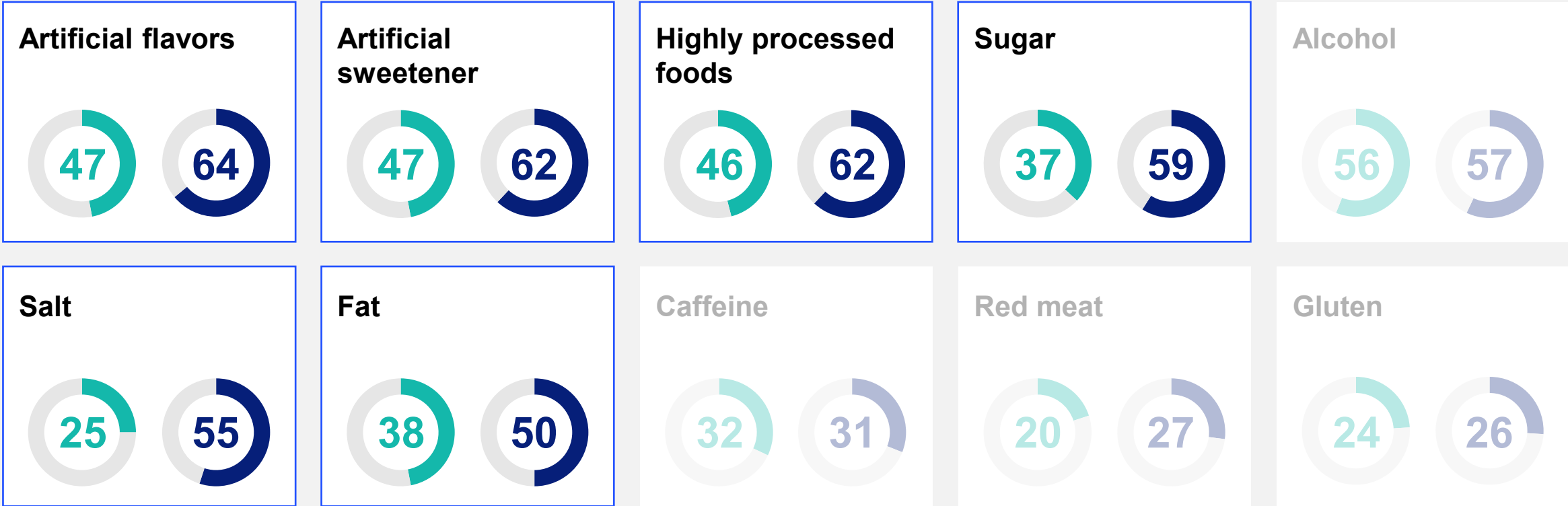


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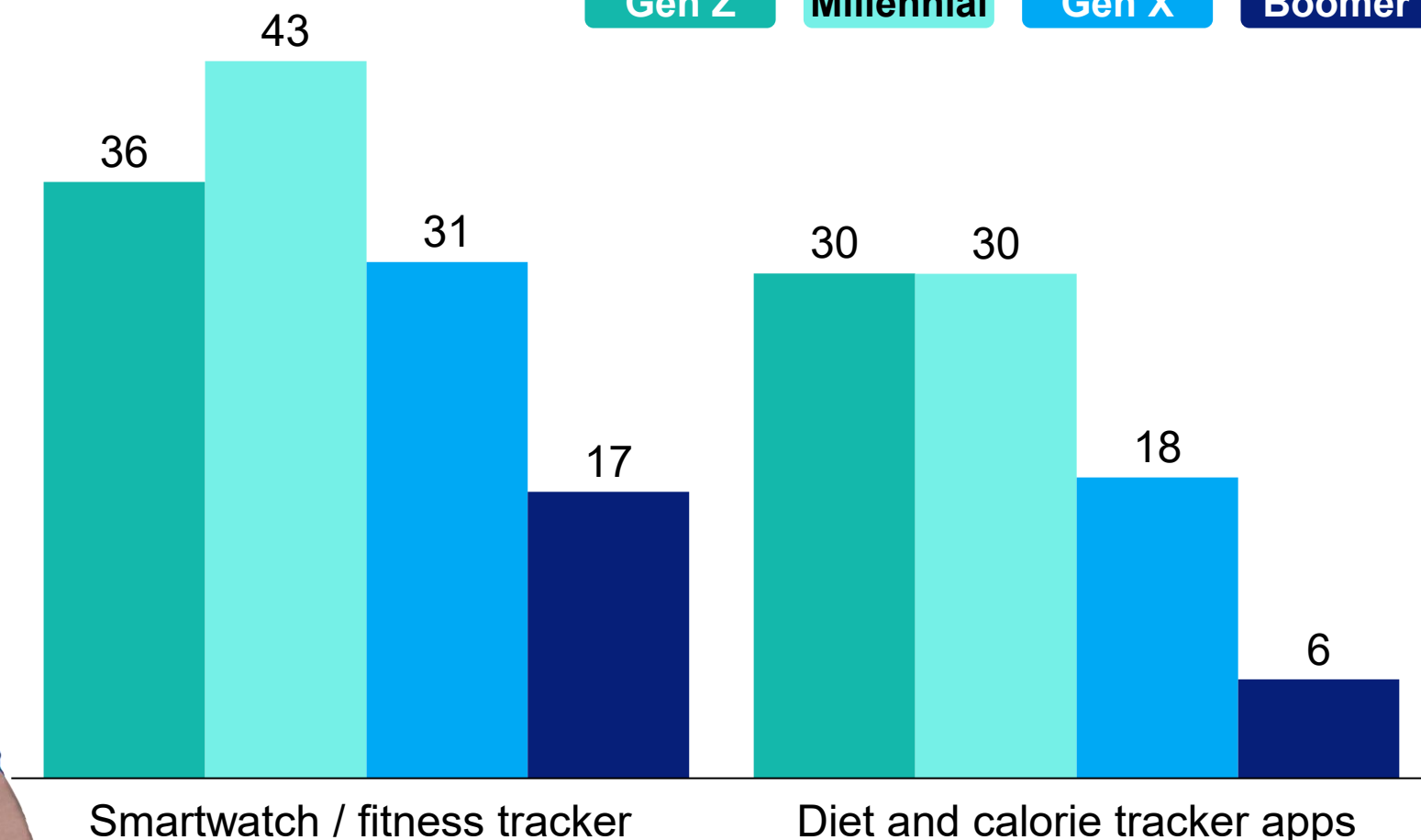


Stark differences



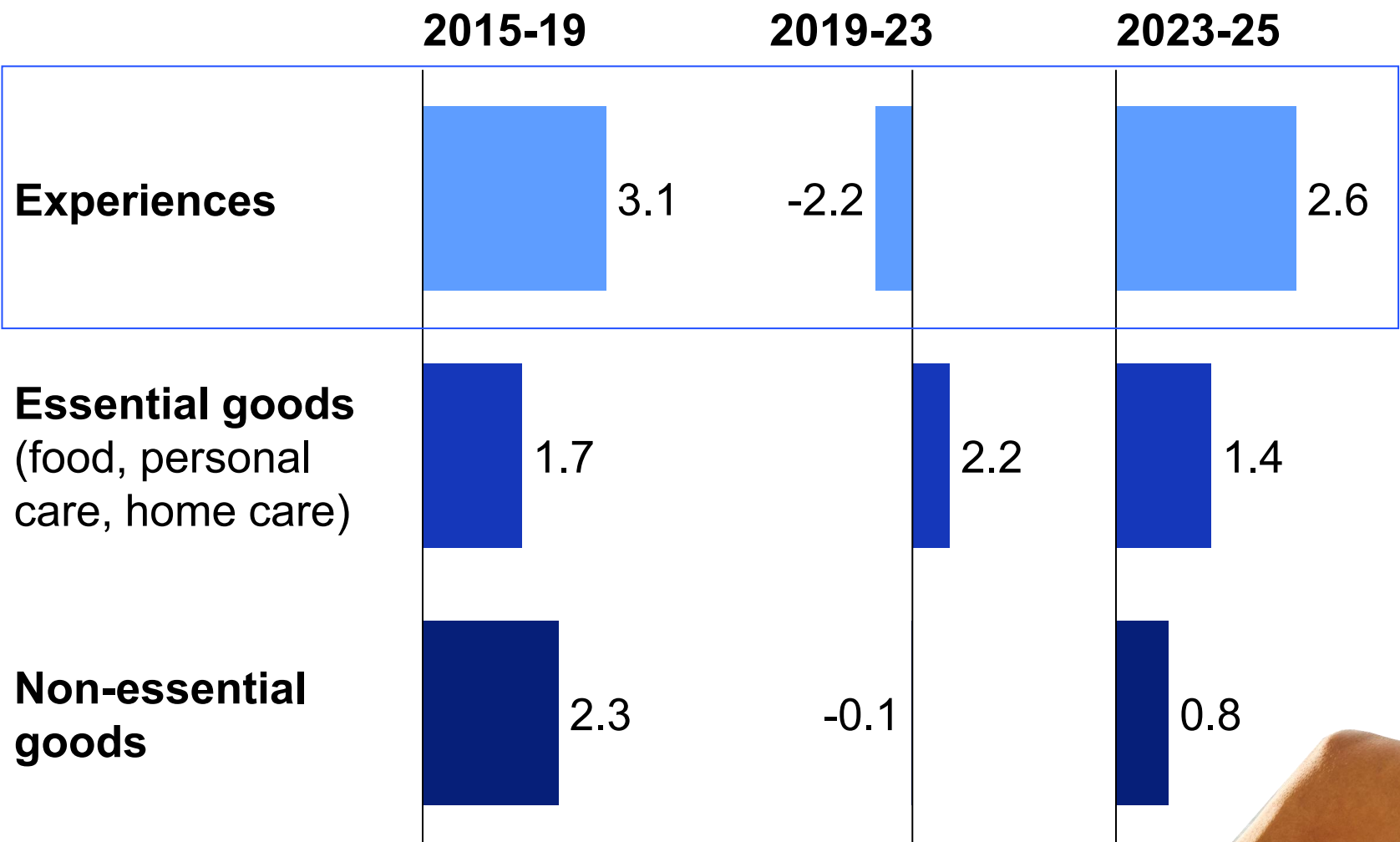
Younger consumers are turning health into something they can track and measure

Adoption by device & app type across generations,
% of respondents

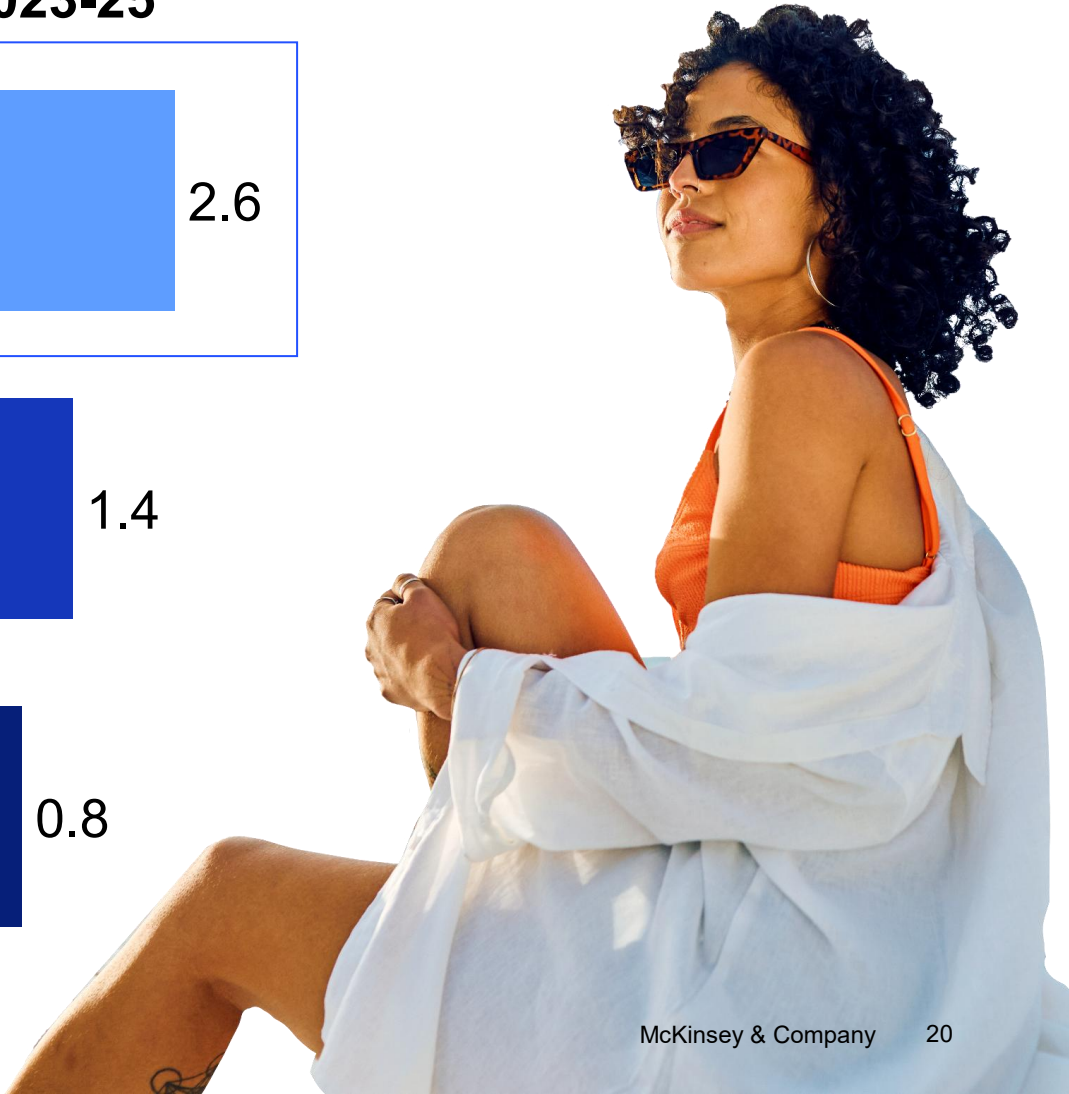


03 Experiences are winning wallet share

CAGR 2015 – 2025, Percent



Source: Euromonitor



If given extra cash, >60% of consumers said they would splurge on experiences

Consumer top category for splurging, % consumer 2026

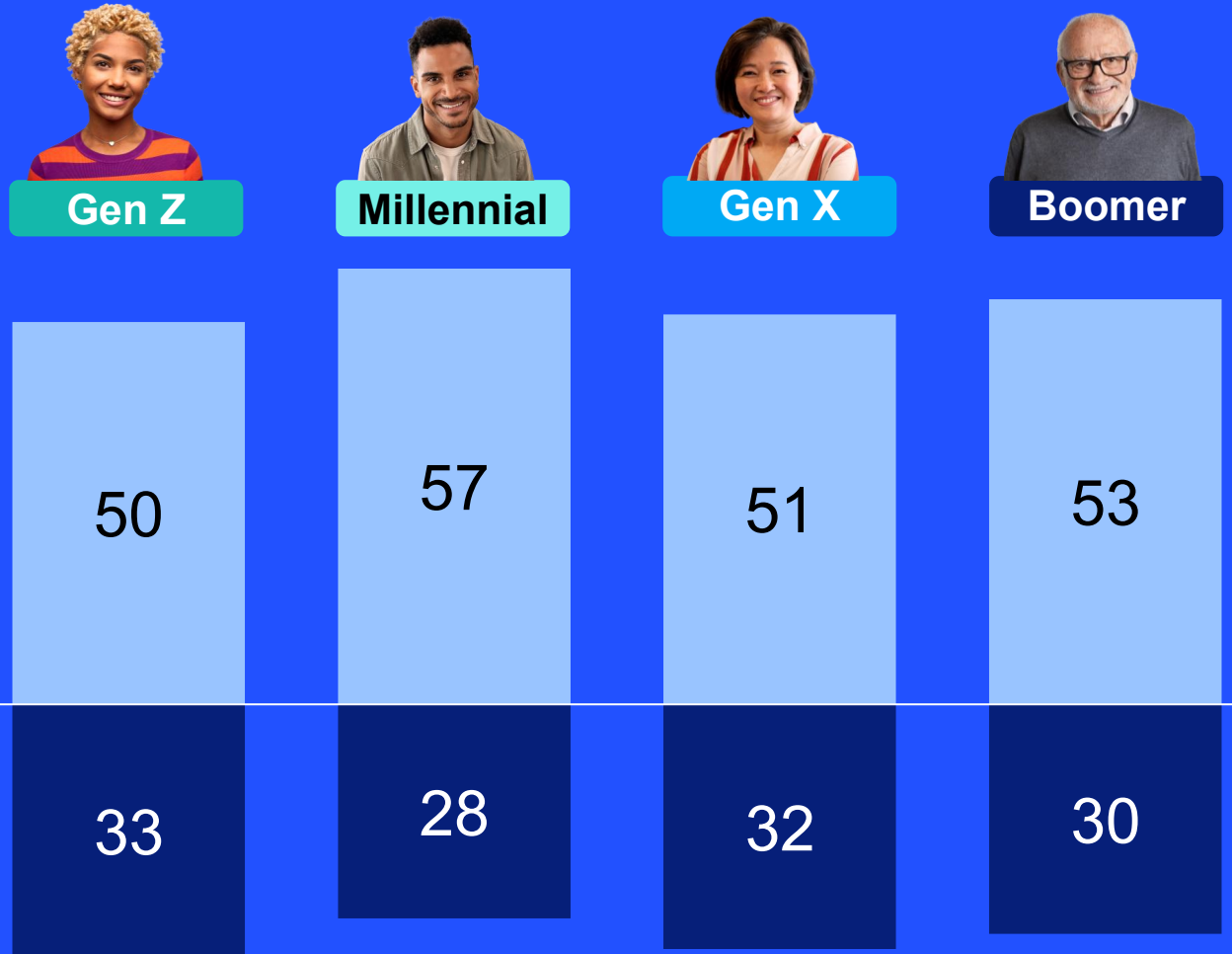


1. Question: Imagine you have an extra \$200 to treat yourself or splurge on something nice. How are you most likely to spend it?

Source: State of the Consumer 2026

04 Nearly a third of consumers say they struggle to afford the foods they want

% of consumers



Survey conducted pre-Iran war

Cost pressures push consumers – especially Gen Z – to extend product use, reduce purchases, and seek DIY inspiration

Actions consumers take to spend wisely, % of respondents



Source: State of the Consumer 2026

What does this mean for leaders today?

01

**The new tech-
driven path to
purchase**

02

**The health
revolution**

03

**The experience
economy**

04

**The rise of the
“resourceful
consumer”**

What does this mean for leaders today?

01

The new tech-driven path to purchase



Show up wherever decisions are shaped, from AI answers and social platforms to reviews, creators, communities, retailers, and stores.

02

The health revolution



Make wellness propositions specific, credible, and measurable — focused on outcomes consumers can understand and track.

03

The experience economy



Use experiences to create moments that consumers find memorable, meaningful, and worth paying for.

04

The rise of the “resourceful consumer”



Excellent value is an imperative; helping consumers get the most out of your products will drive loyalty.