

## TRUTH ABOUT GEN Z

### Introduction

According to research (Pew Research Center; 2021; Global Web Index; 2020), Gen Zers report least positive outlook in terms of social and emotional well-being. Various consumer reports using surveys and interviews (See <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/addressing-the-unprecedented-behavioral-health-challenges-facing-generation-z>) also indicate that Gen Zers ranging from middle school to early professionals experience high levels of anxiety, depression and distress compared to previous generational cohorts. Since most of this generation is still likely to be in full-time education (Global Web Index; 2020), it is imperative for higher educational institutions to examine factors that are contributing to anxiety and depression among this generation. Capitalizing on this secondary research, the overarching goal of our “Truth about Gen Z” survey was to examine the social media habits of college students who identify as Gen Z at SUNY Brockport. Our secondary goal was to examine how social media usage was impacting Gen Zers’ mental health, wellness and relationships. This research will help the college communications understand the demographics and psychographics of the student population at SUNY Brockport and use evidence-based claims to create communications program that can help Gen Zers understand how to effectively manage their emotional well-being.

### Goals & Objectives

**Reputation & Relationship management goal:** To help College Communications strengthen the image of SUNY Brockport as a college that cares about its students’ physical and mental well-being.

**Awareness Objective:** To increase awareness among Gen Zers of their social media usage and how it impacts mental and physical health; specifically, to increase Gen Zers knowledge about their social media habits and how it is thwarting their social, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being (25 percent of students from all classifications).

**Action Objective:** To have an effect on action; specifically, to obtain inquiries from at least 15 percent of Gen Zers at SUNY Brockport of programs and support systems that can help them manage their social media usage and participate in on-campus activities that can help them cope with anxiety and depression.

### Method:

The target age range for this survey were individuals aged 16 to 24. There was a multitude of questions within the health and wellness survey that helped to determine what they understand, and how they evaluate their overall health and wellbeing. Questions such as how active they are, and about their mental health were asked. The social media survey had the goal of determining whether Gen Z believed that their mental health was negatively affected by social media use or not. Some questions focused on what types of social media platforms that the individuals used, and others focused on how social media affects the individual’s health and relationships. The survey’s used different styles of questions such as Likert scales, Ranking scales, Dichotomous, Semiotic differential, Demographic and Checklist. We used convenience sampling and posted surveys on club members’ Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages. A total of 138 Gen Zers took the survey. Participants who did not identify as Gen Z were removed from statistical analysis.

### Findings:

The health and wellness survey indicated that a majority of respondents (60%) felt that they were physically healthy, almost half of the respondents (55%) indicated that they take care of their mental health, and mostly agreed that social media usage is generally unhealthy. Overall, respondents indicated that social media usage negatively impacts their well-being (45%), they fell down after using social media (23%), and that social media created a sense of disconnection with likeminded others. Our social media survey indicated that Snapchat is the most popular platforms among generation Z, closely followed by TikTok and Instagram. Almost half of the respondents said they use social media to pass time. When asked if social media has a negative impact on their relationships, 37% believed that social media has a negative impact on their relationships. Additionally, 40 % reported that social media caused jealousy and miscommunication in relationships, and they felt down after using social media.

### Conclusion, Recommendations, and Assessment:

The two surveys highlighted that although generally physically healthy, yet social media was a major contributing factor in negatively impacting Gen Zers social relationships and overall wellness. Based on this research, the PR Club will make recommendations to the college Communications to develop PR Campaign in fall 2022 by incorporating elements such develop a website to connect with students with detailed programs that will help students manage their social media usage, increase their social media literacy and partake in activities that will help them effectively manage with their overall health and wellness. As for a budget, the Club has \$200 to work with and develop sample collateral for college communications to review. Assessment and evaluation of the survey objectives will be analyzed once the campaign is over in Fall 2022.

