Teacher's Key

Gen Z Health: What Is Better, What Is Worse, and Why (Level C1)

Vocabulary Matching

1 scrutinized = **N**
2 abstaining = **A**
3 caveat = **H**
4 foothold = **L**
5 persistent = **G**
6 stigma = **M**
7 contentious = **I**
8 quadrupled = **E**
9 sedentary = **D**
10 myopia = **O**
11 pinpointed = **J**
12 misinformation = **K**
13 go viral = **B**
14 credentials = **C**
15 outweigh = **F**

Fill in the Blank

1 scrutinized
2 abstaining
3 caveat
4 foothold
5 persistent
6 stigma
7 contentious
8 quadrupled
9 sedentary
10 myopia
11 pinpointed
12 misinformation
13 credentials
14 outweigh

True or False

1 **True.** The first paragraph says the honest answer depends on what you measure.
2 **True.** About two in three of them held that belief.
3 **False.** Nobody knows exactly why; researchers only suggest a mix of reasons.
4 **False.** The figure fell from 42 percent in 2021 to 33 percent in 2025.
5 **True.** A fading stigma may make people more likely to report distress.
6 **True.** It has more than quadrupled since 1990.
7 **False.** Only about one in four did.
8 **False.** Rates were rising in more than half of the 50 countries.
9 **True.** Checking the claim against a reliable institution is part of the advice.
10 **False.** The oldest members reach 30 in 2027.

Language Focus: Auxiliary Verbs in Comparisons

Example answer: Teenagers today sleep less than their grandparents **did** at the same age. The past tense is needed because the comparison is about the grandparents' own teenage years.

Comprehension Questions: Model Answers

1 A 24-year-old at a friend's birthday party orders sparkling water, checks her sleep on her watch, and watches a stranger's health video. The question it raises is whether her generation, Gen Z, is healthier than her parents' generation was at the same age.

2 Young adults are drinking less alcohol, and teenagers are smoking at the lowest level ever recorded. The caveat is that nicotine vapes have gained a foothold among young adults and pouches are a newer worry, so the nicotine habit may be changing form.

3 The share reporting persistent sadness or hopelessness rose through the 2010s (30 percent in 2015), peaked at 42 percent in 2021, and fell to 33 percent in 2025, which is still higher than in 2015.

4 As stigma fades, people who feel able to talk about distress are more likely to report it, so reported distress could rise even if the underlying level changed less. The writer says this may be only part of the explanation.

5 It mentions rising obesity in children and adolescents, too little exercise, too little sleep among American high school students, and myopia. Myopia is linked to time outdoors: children who spent more time outside had about a quarter lower risk.

6 Most people in the study were born long before Gen Z, and the risk for young adults is still low, so the evidence says little about Gen Z itself. The causes have also not been pinpointed.

7 Ask who is speaking and what credentials they hold; compare the claim with a national health service or a major hospital; see a professional before changing diet or medication. Each step guards against confident but wrong claims, because anyone can go viral and creators may be paid for views, not accuracy.

8 Open answer. A strong answer notes that the writer treats the cause as unsettled, so differences between generations probably have several causes (technology, economic pressure, changing attitudes), and that a single explanation is unlikely to be enough.

9 Open answer. A strong answer notes that the order balances encouraging and worrying evidence so the reader does not reach a one-sided conclusion, and that the open closing question is fair because the oldest members of Gen Z are only reaching 30 in 2027, so long-term outcomes are unknown.

10 False. The reading says the role of smartphones and social media is contentious and that researchers also point to other pressures such as economic insecurity.

11 Yes. The writer says the honest answer depends on what you measure and that none of the evidence settles the question, because a generation's health story is far from finished.

12 Best answer: to give a recognizable picture of the contrast between generations. The scene shows new habits (sparkling water, a sleep-tracking watch, a health video) set against the parents' habits, which introduces the question without needing a statistic.

Notes on the Evidence

- No source text was supplied, so the reading is original and was built from the sources below (checked October 5, 2026). The opening scene is hypothetical and makes no claim about how common any habit is. Generation labels vary: the Pew Research Center, which the reading follows, starts Gen Z in 1997 (Pew's 2019 note); the end year of 2012 is the common convention, and other organizations use different end years.
- Drinking and nicotine. Gallup's Consumption Habits poll (July 7 to 21, 2025; 1,002 US adults; margin of error about 4 points; self-reported) found 50 percent of adults aged 18 to 34 drink, against 56 percent of adults 35 and older, and 66 percent of the younger group said moderate drinking is bad for health (NPR, August 2025; Axios, Semafor). Sources disagree on the 2023 figure for 18 to 34 (58 or 59 percent), so the reading gives no change over time for this group. The 2025 National Youth Tobacco Survey (FDA, released July 2026) reports current smoking at 1.4 percent of US students aged 11 to 18, the lowest since the survey began in 1999 (summary by Jarman, Ma, and Hartmann-Boyce, The Conversation, opened). It also reports e-cigarette use at 5.2 percent (lowest since the 2019 peak) and nicotine pouches at 1.7 percent. The claim that vaping has gained a foothold among young adults rests on a news report of a 2025 US national survey of adults aged 19 to 30, which found past-30-day nicotine vaping tripled since 2017 (NIH-reported figures via Dallas Express); the NIH release itself was not opened, so check it. The reasons given for lower drinking (attitudes, less in-person socializing, cost) are expert opinion in the NPR report, not established causes.
- Mental health. The review by Gimeno and colleagues (Population Studies, published online May 21, 2026) covers 51 studies of six British birth cohorts (more than 88,500 people born 1946 to 2000-02); it reports higher mental ill health in adolescence for the Gen Z cohort, higher childhood overweight and obesity, and a pattern strongest for obesity, mental ill health, and diabetes. The authors note that the drivers are not yet understood and that older cohorts were less ethnically diverse. The CDC's Youth Health in Focus (2015 to 2025 YRBS, released September 2026; opened) gives persistent sadness or hopelessness as 30 percent in 2015, 31 in 2017, 37 in 2019, 42 in 2021, 40 in 2023, and 33 in 2025, and 43 percent of girls against 24 percent of boys in 2025. These are student self-reports, not diagnoses. The statement that some of the rise may reflect fading stigma is a hypothesis, not a finding from these sources. The smartphone debate is real: Jonathan Haidt argues that phones and social media are a main cause; critics such as Candice Odgers (Nature review, 2024) say the evidence for causation is weak. The reading takes no side.
- Body. NCD Risk Factor Collaboration with WHO (Lancet, February 29, 2024): obesity among 5 to 19 year olds rose from 1.7 to 6.9 percent in girls and from 2.1 to 9.3 percent in boys between 1990 and 2022, with 159 million affected in 2022 (more than quadrupled). Physical activity: Guthold and colleagues (Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, 2019) found 81 percent of 11 to 17 year olds worldwide did not meet the one-hour guideline (85 percent of girls, 78 percent of boys), using surveys from 2001 to 2016 in 146 countries. This is the only global estimate found in search; check whether WHO has published a newer one. Sleep: 24 percent of US high school students got at least 8 hours in 2025 (27 percent in 2015); the American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends 8 to 10 hours for ages 13 to 18 (CDC report). Myopia: the figure of 80 to 90 percent of young adults in parts of East and Southeast Asia comes from a review in Nature Reviews Disease Primers (2020) as described by the University of Melbourne; the paper itself was not opened, and the reading gives the more cautious 'as many as eight in ten'. A 2025 meta-analysis in the Journal of Global Health (31 studies, more than 380,000 children and adolescents in China) found about 25 percent lower risk with more outdoor time (pooled odds ratio 0.75), as reported by trade news; the paper was not opened. A 2025 Lancet Regional Health Western Pacific analysis found overall myopia prevalence in Chinese children levelled off (2006 in cities, 2013 in rural areas) while high myopia kept rising, so the reading makes no claim that overall rates are still climbing. How outdoor time protects the eyes is not fully understood.
- Cancer and health information. Sung and colleagues (Lancet Oncology, December 11, 2024; data to 2017; ages 25 to 49): early-onset colorectal cancer rose in 27 of 50 countries and territories (54 percent). South Korea's rate (14.3 per 100,000) was fifth highest after Australia, Puerto Rico, New Zealand, and the United States. People aged 25 to 49 in 2017 were born roughly 1968 to 1992, so the study says little about Gen Z, as the reading states. The causes are unknown; obesity, diet, and the gut microbiome are suspects named by several institutions (for example Baylor College of Medicine). Health-information habits: a 2024 poll by Zing Coach, a personal-training app (1,000 Gen Z adults), found 56 percent use TikTok for health advice, and a McKinsey survey reported social media as the second most used source for Gen Z (38 percent) against under 6 percent for baby boomers. Both are company surveys with unclear sampling, so the reading says only that company and consultancy surveys suggest social media is among the first places many look. Other figures about misinformation rates in videos were not verified and are not used. Date-sensitive: all 2025 and 2026 figures may be superseded by later releases.