

Which is the Better Generation



There has been lots of talk about which is the better generation, the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y (Millennials) or Gen Z. Generations, as we know them, have now become a social construct in the world. Does the saying “OK Boomer” still drive you to feel a particular way? Do you still read the headlines that explain another thing that “millennials have ruined?” Although we can never capture the data of what it feels like to be a part of another generation, it can be fun to see what individuals’ lives were actually like during different periods of time.

The naming of the generations begun in the 20th century. The idea that people should be grouped together based on similar characteristics was an idea from the 19th century, but it didn’t become popular until the 20th century. It is common for generations to bleed into one another, forming the microgeneration, but the analysis of each generation shows the different experiences and social changes that the generations went through, which ultimately forms the beliefs of many generations.

Silent Generation: 1928 - 1945

This generation received its name from being known as quiet and traditional. The Silent Generation lived through major events, such as the Great Depression and World War II. These individuals were born too late to participate in the war but were also not born early enough to experience the postwar financial success. The Silent Generation first received its name in *Time Magazine* from a 1951 essay. The name was meant to highlight the generation's collective cautiousness and passiveness when compared to more rebellious generations.

The silence may have come from the difficult times that they grew up in, leading this generation to stick to societal norms, rather than trying to change them. However, not all members were as quiet and complacent as the stereotype implies. Some outspoken members of this generation include Elvis Presley, Martin Luther King Jr., and Maya Angelou.

During the Generation

Social Marker: American civil rights movement

Iconic Car: Cadillac Series 62

Iconic Toy: Radio Flyer wagon

Music Device: transistor radio

Average Gas Price: \$0.27 per gallon

Baby Boomer Generation: 1946 – 1964

The Baby Boomers received their name from the massive increase of U.S. births after World War II. This generation is known for their activism and their rebellion, changing America's attitudes on movements, drugs and sexual freedom. Baby Boomers drove the popularity of rock and folk music through the large music festivals they attended.

The sudden increase in childbirth is thought to be related to the confidence that this generation had after the Great Depression and World War II. This generation saw economic success and security after these hardships that had lasting effects.

The baby boom went well beyond changing the faces of cities and landscapes. As the Baby Boomer reached adulthood in the '60s, '70s and '80s, their tastes in music, hairstyles and fashion influenced the nation's culture, driving the popularity of rock and folk music and early television programming. In some ways, the generation changed the America's attitudes on drugs, sexuality and those in power.

This generation is also known for its strong stance on political activism, which was mostly related to the Vietnam War. The Baby Boomers shared their stance against the war, leading to many protests during this time. As the war dragged on into the early '70s, the protests grew larger as the Baby Boomers joined in to call for an end to the war.

During the Generation

Social Marker: Moon landing

Iconic Car: Ford Mustang

Iconic Toy: Frisbee

Music Device: cassette tapes

Average Gas Price: \$0.36 per gallon

Generation X: 1965 – 1980

Generation X is often considered to be the “middle child” generation, due to being between two generations that made a large impact on society, the Baby Boomers and Millennials. Because of this, Gen X is often overlooked. But its members lived through some amazing times, such as witnessing the first space shuttle mission, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the launch of MTV.

The term Generation X came into existence by journalist Douglas Coupland in a 1987 article for *Vancouver Magazine*. In the article, Coupland stated that this generation was given its name due to not being concerned with societal pressure, money or status. Generation X came in a time of stressful financial futures during the '80s and '90s. Many grew up with less supervision than the Baby Boomers, leading them to be more resourceful and independent. They tend to be more liberal on social issues and more ethnically diverse than Baby Boomers.

During the Generation

Social Marker: AIDS epidemic

Iconic Car: Honda Accord

Iconic Toy: NERF ball

Music Device: Walkman

Average Gas Price: \$0.90 per gallon

Millennial Generation: 1981 – 1996

The Millennials saw a sudden increase in technological advancements. This generation was the first to grow up with home Internet connections and witnessed the rise of the smartphone. They were also impacted by the 9/11 attacks and the Homeland Security changes that followed.

The Millennials were originally called Generation Y until the term Millennial was used by Neil Howe and William Strauss. Howe and Strauss released a book *Generations* and found the term Millennial was appropriate for the generation that would become adults at the turn of the millennium.

Millennials are the first generation to grow up with home Internet and achieved a higher education level than all other generations before them. Some characterize Millennials as entitled because of their dependence on technology, while others consider them to be more open-minded and receptive to new ideas and ways of thinking. Many Millennials have delayed major life milestones, such as having children or buying homes. This may be due to their more uncertain financial future after experiencing the financial crisis in 2007-08 and the Great Recession that followed. Millennials are the first generation to be in a worst economic state than their parents.

During the Generation

Social Marker: September 11 attacks

Iconic Car: Toyota Prius

Iconic Toy: Beanie Babies

Music Device: MP3 player

Average Gas Price: \$1.88 per gallon

Generation Z: 1997 – 2012

Generation Z preceded Generation X and Generation Y, simply as continuing to give the generations names by working through the alphabet. This generation grew up during the Great Recession of 2007-09, and the oldest of this generation were entering adulthood and the workforce at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. They were born into a diversifying America, growing up with the first African American president and the legalization of marriage equality.

Gen Z is a generation that has been shaped by many social changes. They are more diverse than the generations before them in a variety of demographics, including ethnicity, family composition and identification with the LGBTQ+ community.

Generation Z is also known as the iGen due to being the first digitally native generation. The majority of Gen Z members have been living their lives fully connected digitally and do not remember a life before smartphones.

Member of Gen Z are often characterized as more pragmatic and earlier to mature, which may be due to experiencing their parents struggle with finances during the Great Recession or being raised by Gen X parents who were concerned with child safety. As a result, Gen Z is cautious about their spending habits due to being worried about not being able to afford a house or save for a nice retirement.

During the Generation

Social Marker: U.S. legalization of marriage equality

Iconic Car: Tesla Model S

Iconic Toy: Razor scooter

Music Device: smart speaker

Average Gas Price: \$3.01 per gallon

Our True Identity

The focus on generations is a huge concept in our society. We are each proud of the generation we were born into and may put down other generations for their ways of living and thinking. Although there are characteristics that align with us and our generations, it is important to note that we are all individuals. Defining yourself with a generation may bring you comfort with those that have had similar experiences as you, but it is like defining yourself with a zodiac sign; you may have a few of the characteristics but it is not what has made you who you are today.

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<https://www.britannica.com/topic/baby-boomers>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/education>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Experience-the-Millennial-Generation-2226899>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Experience-Generation-X-2226897>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Experience-the-Baby-Boomer-Generation-2226600>

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