American Generations Timeline

Though there is a consensus on the general time period for generations, there is not an agreement on the exact year that each generation begins and ends.

**GI Generation** - *Born 1901-1924 (Age 91+)

They were teenagers during the Great Depression and fought in World War II. Sometimes called the greatest generation (following a book by journalist Tom Brokaw) or the swing generation because of their jazz music.

**Silent Generation** - *Born 1925-1942 (Age 73-90)

They were too young to see action in World War II and too old to participate in the fun of the Summer of Love. This label describes their conformist tendencies and belief that following the rules was a sure ticket to success.

**Baby Boomers** - *Born 1943-1964 (Age 51-72)

The boomers were born during an economic and baby boom following World War II. These hippie kids protested against the Vietnam War and participated in the civil rights movement, all with rock 'n' roll music blaring in the background.


They were originally called the baby busters because fertility rates fell after the boomers. As teenagers, they experienced the AIDS epidemic and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Sometimes called the MTV Generation, the "X" in their name refers to this generation's desire not to be defined.

Sometimes referred to as the “lost” generation, this was the first generation of “latchkey” kids, exposed to lots of daycare and divorce. Known as the generation with the lowest voting participation rate of any generation, Gen Xers were quoted by Newsweek as “the generation that dropped out without ever turning on the news or tuning in to the social issues around them.”

Gen X is often characterized by high levels of skepticism, “what’s in it for me” attitudes and a reputation for some of the worst music to ever gain popularity. Now, moving into adulthood William Morrow (Generations) cited the childhood divorce of many Gen Xers as “one of the most decisive experiences influencing how Gen Xers will shape their own families”.

Gen Xers are arguably the best educated generation with 29% obtaining a bachelor’s degree or higher (6% higher than the previous cohort). And, with that education and a growing maturity they are starting to form families with a higher level of caution and pragmatism than their parents demonstrated. Concerns run high over avoiding broken homes, kids growing up without a parent around and financial planning.


They experienced the rise of the Internet, Sept. 11 and the wars that followed. Sometimes called Generation Y. Because of their dependence on technology, they are said to be entitled and narcissistic.

The largest cohort since the Baby Boomers, their high numbers reflect their births as that of their parent generation. The last of the Boomer Is and most of the Boomer II s. Gen Y kids are known as incredibly sophisticated, technology wise, immune to most traditional marketing and sales pitches...as they not only grew up with it all, they’ve seen it all and been exposed to it all since early childhood.

Gen Y members are much more racially and ethnically diverse and they are much more segmented as an audience aided by the rapid expansion in Cable TV channels, satellite radio, the Internet, e-zines, etc. Gen Y are less brand loyal and the speed of the Internet has led the cohort to be similarly flexible and changing in its fashion, style consciousness and where and how it is communicated with. Gen Y kids often raised in dual income or single parent families have been more involved in family purchases...everything from groceries to new cars. One in nine Gen Yers has a credit card co-signed by a parent.
**Generation Z - Born 2001-Present (Age 1-14)** (Current Population: 23 million and growing rapidly)

These kids were the first born with the Internet and are suspected to be the most individualistic and technology-dependent generation. Sometimes referred to as the iGeneration.

While we don’t know much about Gen Z yet...we know a lot about the environment they are growing up in. This highly diverse environment will make the grade schools of the next generation the most diverse ever. Higher levels of technology will make significant inroads in academics allowing for customized instruction, data mining of student histories to enable pinpoint diagnostics and remediation or accelerated achievement opportunities.

Gen Z kids will grow up with a highly sophisticated media and computer environment and will be more Internet savvy and expert than their Gen Y forerunners.