

Link to updated article (3/16/2018): <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/16/how-millennials-compare-with-their-grandparents/>

PewResearchCenter

MARCH 19, 2015

How Millennials today compare with their grandparents 50 years ago

BY EILEEN PATTEN ([HTTP://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/AUTHOR/EPATTEN/](http://www.pewresearch.org/author/epatten/)) AND RICHARD FRY ([HTTP://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/STAFF/RICHARD-FRY/](http://www.pewresearch.org/staff/richard-ry/))

TODAY WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG

Race/ethnicity	Race/Ethnicity in 2014				
	WHITE	HISPANIC	BLACK	ASIAN	OTHER
Marital Status					
Male Education	Adult Millennials (ages 18-33)				
Female Education					
Male Labor Force Status	Gen Xers (ages 34-49)				
Female Labor Force Status					
Household Income	Boomers (ages 50-68)				
Veteran Status					
Metro Status	Silents (ages 69-84*)				
Population					

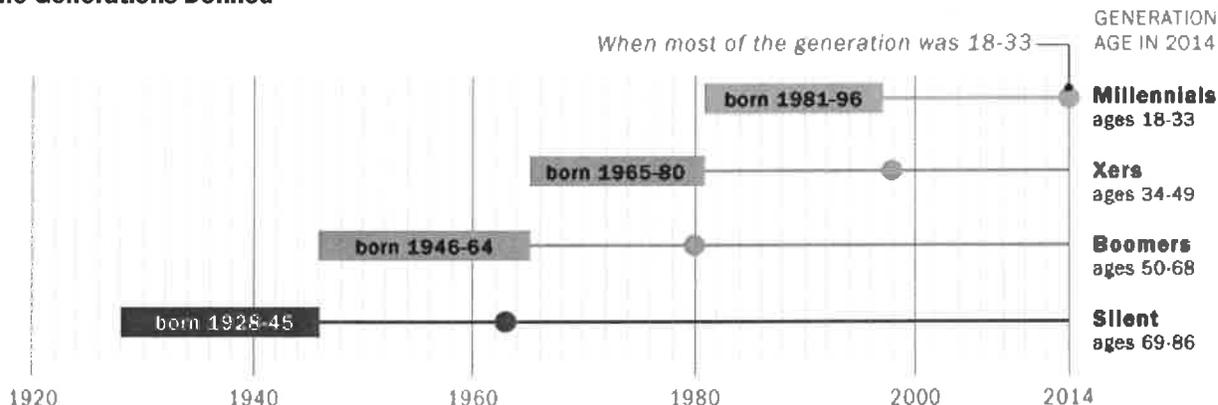
Ages shown are as of 2014. Members of the Silent generation were 69 to 86 in 2014. Since the Current Population Survey aggregates those age 85 and older into one category, results for 69 to 84 year-olds are shown. Hispanics are of any race. Racial groups include only non-Hispanics. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Shares less than 0.5% not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2014 March Current Population Survey from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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The Generations Defined



The past five decades – spanning from the time when the Silent generation (today, mostly in their 70s and 80s) was entering adulthood to the adulthood of today’s Millennials – have seen large shifts in U.S. society and culture. It has been a period during which Americans, especially Millennials, have become more detached from major institutions (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>) like political parties, religion, the military and marriage. At the same time, the racial and ethnic makeup of the country has changed (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/11/07/a-milestone-en-route-to-a-majority-minority-nation/>), college attainment has spiked (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/>), and women have greatly increased their participation in the nation’s workforce and their representation on college campuses (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/12/11/10-findings-about-women-in-the-workplace/>).

Our new interactive graphic (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/03/19/comparing-millennials-to-other-generations/>) (above) compares the generations today and in the years that each generation was young (ages 18 to 33) to demonstrate this sea change in the activities and experiences of young adults that has occurred over the past 50 years.

Our analysis finds several key distinctive ways that Millennials stand out when compared with the Silent generation, a group of Americans old enough to be grandparents to many Millennials:

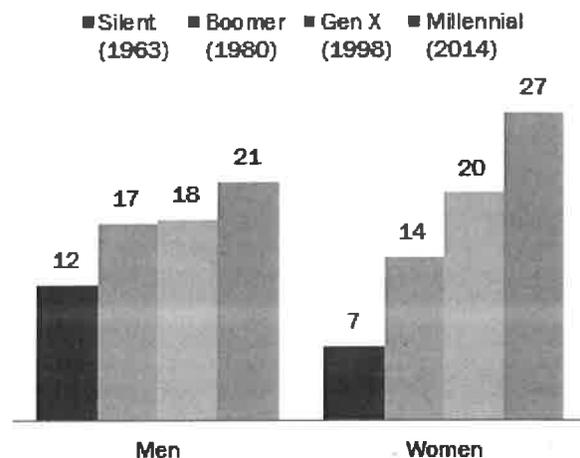
(<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/03/19/how-millennials-compare-with-their-grandparents>

1 /ft_millennials-education_031715/) **Today’s young adults (Millennials ages 18 to 33 in 2014) are much better educated than the Silent generation.** The educational trajectory of young women across the generations has been especially steep. Among Silent generation women, only 7% had completed at least a bachelor’s degree when they were ages 18 to 33. By comparison, Millennial women are nearly four times (27%) as likely as their Silent predecessors to have at least a bachelor’s degree. Educational gains are not limited to women, as Millennial men are also better educated than earlier generations of young men. About 21% of Millennial men have at least a bachelor’s degree, compared with only 12% of their young Silent counterparts. These higher levels of educational attainment among those ages 18 to 33 suggest that Millennials, especially Millennial women – while not currently ahead of Gen Xers and Boomers in 2014 – are on track to be our most educated generation by the time they complete their educational journeys.

2 A greater share of Millennial women have a

Millennials On Track to be the Most Educated Generation to Date

% completing at least a bachelor’s degree at ages 18–33, by gender



Note: The educational attainment question was changed in 1992. So for Boomers and Silents, this refers to those who completed at least four years of college. Educational attainment was not available for the 1963 Current Population Survey. The education of Silents was approximated using 18–33 year-olds from the 1962 Current Population Survey.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the March Current Population Surveys (1963, 1980, 1998, and 2014) from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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bachelor's degree than their male counterparts – a reversal from the Silent generation. Gains in education have been steady over the last half-century as growing shares of both men and women have earned a bachelor's degree. However, women have made bigger gains over the period. Among Millennials ages 18 to 33, women are 6 percentage points more likely to have finished at least a bachelor's degree than men (27% vs. 21%). Back when Silents were ages 18 to 33, women were 5 percentage points less likely than men to have finished at least four years of college education. Gen Xers were the first generation of women to outpace men in educational attainment, with a 2 percentage point advantage among Gen X women ages 18 to 33 in 1998. By comparison, Baby Boomers were the last generation in which men were better educated than women, with a 3 percentage point advantage among young Boomer men (in 1980).

(http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/03/19/how-millennials-compare-with-their-grandparents/ft_millennials-

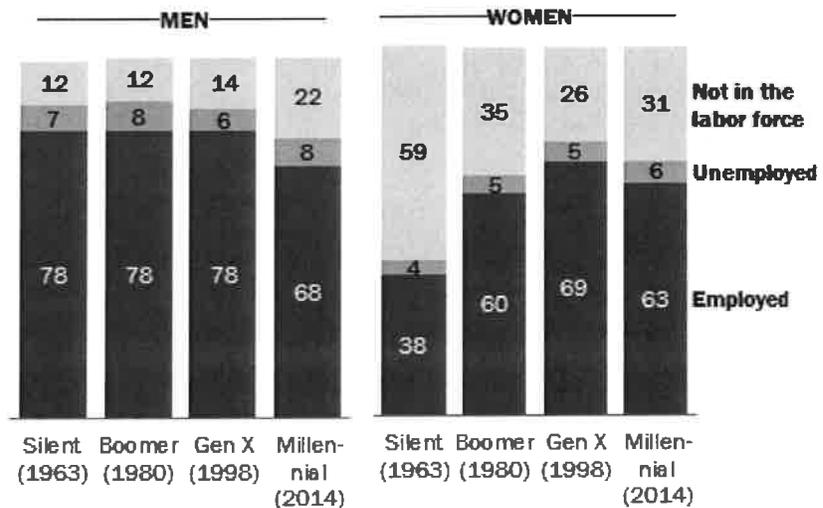
3 workforce_031715_v3/) **Young women today are much more likely to be working compared with Silent generation women during their young adult years.** In 1963, when Silent women were ages 18 to 33, a majority (59%) were *not* participating in the labor force and just 38% were employed. Among Millennials, that pattern has flipped. Today, 63% of Millennial women are employed, while just 31% are not in the labor force. This shift to more women in the workplace occurred as early as 1980, when Boomers were 18 to 33. Then, six-in-ten young Boomer women were employed and just 35% were not in the labor force.

Among Boomer women who were not in the labor force in their young adult lives, U.S. Census Bureau data indicate a majority of them were devoted to domestic activities, but less so than among young Silent generation women. When non-working adults were asked about the “major activity” that consumes their time, 70% of young Boomer women cited “housework,” compared with 85% among young Silent women. Among Boomer women, 22% cited “school” as their major activity, an increase from the 12% among Silent women. (This detailed information about reasons for not being labor force participants is not available for Gen Xers or Millennials.)

4 **Millennials have entered the labor force during tough times, and it shows in their employment figures.** It's been tough going in the job market for Millennials, who entered into the workforce during

As Young Women, Silents Were About Twice as Likely as Millennials to be Out of the Labor Force

Employment status of each generation at ages 18-33, by gender (%)



Note: Those who are enlisted in the Armed Forces are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the March Current Population Surveys (1963, 1980, 1998, and 2014) from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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the nation's deepest recession in decades. While other generations have faced tough employment markets as they entered adulthood, as some Boomers did during the 1981-1982 recession, the labor market recovery for Millennials has been much less robust (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/>) following the Great Recession. A consistent 78% of men in the Gen X, Boomer and Silent generations were employed at ages 18 to 33, a share that dropped 10 points to 68% among Millennial men. In addition, while employment among young women had been increasing with each generation, it dropped 6 points between Gen X women in 1998 (69%) and Millennial women in 2014 (63%). This can partially be attributed to enrollment in higher education – fully 18% of 18- to 33-year-old Millennials are currently enrolled full time, compared with just 11% of Gen Xers when they were the same age.

5 Millennials today are twice as likely to have never married as Silents were when they were young.

About seven-in-ten Millennials (68%) have never been married, and those who are married have put marriage off until their later adult years. In 1963, the typical American woman married at 21 years of age and the typical man wed at 23 (<https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/marital.html>). By 2014, those figures climbed to ages 27 for women and 29 for men. When members of the Silent generation were the same age as Millennials are now, just 32% had never been married. Still, about two-thirds of never-married Millennials (65%) say they would like to get married someday (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/chapter-1-public-views-on-marriage/>). When asked the reasons that they have not gotten married, 29% say they are not financially prepared, while 26% say that they have not found someone who has the qualities they are looking for and an additional 26% say that they are too young and not ready to settle down.

6 Millennials are much more likely to be racial or ethnic minorities than members of the Silent generation.

Fifty years ago, America was less racially diverse than it is today. Large-scale immigration from Asia and Latin America, the rise of racial intermarriage, and differences in fertility patterns across racial and ethnic groups have contributed to Millennials being more racially and ethnically diverse than prior generations. In 2014, fewer than six-in-ten Millennials (57%) were non-Hispanic whites, compared with more than three-quarters (78%) of Silents. The share who are Hispanic is nearly three times as large among Millennials as among Silents (21% vs. 8%), and the shares who are black, Asian or some other race (or races) have also increased.

7 Young Silent men in 1963 were 10 times more likely to be veterans than Millennials are today.

Although Millennials came of age at a time when the United States engaged in military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, they are far less likely to have served in the military than previous generations. Among men, only 3% of Millennials are veterans, compared with 35% of Silent men, who came of age during the Korean War and its aftermath. The number of young men serving in the active-duty military has decreased drastically (<http://poprep.cna.org/2013/>) since the establishment of an all-volunteer force in 1973, which is reflected in the decreased share who are veterans since then. Comparable historical data for veteran status by generation is not available for women, but contrary to men, the number of women serving in the active-duty military (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/22/women-in-the-u-s-military-growing-share-distinctive-profile/>) has risen since 1973.

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12 Comments



Tom McCorkill • 5 days ago (#comment-650897)

It would be interesting to have information on births among these age groups, especially a comparison of married vs. singles.

Reply



Eileen Patten • 3 days ago (#comment-650944)

Hi Tom –

Here is a CDC publication that, while not directly tracking the generational age groups, can show you an age breakdown of birth rates from 1990-2013: [cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nv...](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nv...) (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_01.pdf)

A couple years ago, we had a report called “For Millennials, Parenthood Trumps Marriage” ([pewsocialtrends.org/2011/03/09/f...](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/03/09/f...) (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/03/09/for-millennials-parenthood-trumps-marriage/>)), which looked at attitudes and trends surrounding parenthood for Millennials, compared with Gen Xers when they were the same age. You can read about that here, but one thing you will notice is the share of births that were nonmarital was higher among Millennials than it had been among Gen Xers (51% vs. 39%).

Reply



JimMcD • 6 days ago (#comment-650873)

generations are defined as 18 year terms. Boomers 1946-1964, GenXers the country's 10th generation, 1965-1983, Millennials 1984-2002 who were born during the millennium which was in 2000 not 1996- duh!

Reply



Eileen Patten • 3 days ago (#comment-650946)

Hi Jim,

There is no exact science in labeling a group of people as a generation – these are invented groupings that are often defined and decided by media organizations. Our definition of the generations can be seen in the graphic underneath the interactive at the top of the page. These

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with **History**



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ON THE COVER

These Junior Historians from Dallas Heritage Village proved you can, indeed, trust teens with history as they created new exhibits

and interpretation of the institution's doctor's office and the Worth Hotel. *Photo courtesy Dallas Heritage Village*

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Can You Trust Teenagers with History?



Dallas Heritage Village

By Melissa Prycer

Ribbon cutting for the Doctor's Office project.

At the Dallas Heritage Village, we had just finished up another Teens in History event, featuring our ever-growing group of Junior Historians. The group had researched courtship, interior design, and schools and determined the best way to present to the public their newly discovered knowledge. I should have been over the moon, but instead I was a bit sad. These dedicated youth had just completed all this tremendous work, but it was completely unavailable to anyone but the folks who visited us that very day. I concluded that these teens needed a more permanent presence at the Village.

Dallas Heritage Village at Old City Park, founded in 1966 as Dallas's first city park, is a living history museum that sits in the shadow of downtown Dallas. For many years, the Junior Historian program was not very strong. The Village initiated the program in its first decade, initially as a way to involve the children of existing volunteers. In its formative years, the program consisted of a week-long training camp followed by the teens serving as docents. Upwards of fifty youth participated in each class of Junior Historians during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

However, by the time I began as Director of Education in 2004, the program was suffering badly. It had devolved into a place for kids who had aged out of our summer camp program. Though they were familiar with the Village, they had no real desire for a deeper involvement. And it showed. By the time of Candelight, our major volunteer-driven December program, most of that year's class of Junior Historians had vanished.

We started making small changes. First, we instituted an application process that included two recommendations. This simple, one-page form weeded out those who did not really want to be a part of the program in the first place. This greatly improved the group dynamic during camp, but it was hard to maintain the energy throughout the year. We began experimenting with various group activities, including a book club and group volunteer projects. But none of it really worked.

By 2009, the program had stabilized with about fifteen active participants, but it was not growing. Then Carley and Caroline, two of the older Junior Historians, approached me during an event and asked, "Why don't you have a teen day?" My response was, "Well, you're going to have to help plan it!" This sparked an idea. Small groups of Junior Historians would work on researching a history topic, but with a teenage twist. For example, instead of talking about

the student experience at the school, three girls performed a skit about becoming a teen teacher. We met about once a month and shared ideas and resources, but they completed the majority of their research time away from the Village. The Junior Historians of the Texas State Historical Association (of which our institution is a member) were coming to town for a conference, so we timed our event to coincide with their visit. Thus, our teens could share their work with hundreds of their peers. It was a truly wonderful day.

The power of this event trickled into other aspects of the program. Because they saw each other regularly as they worked on projects, they formed tighter bonds. That led to more volunteering at other events and on weekends. As a result of seeing that the institution valued their work highly, they developed a stronger sense of ownership in all that they did at the Village. Teens

no longer vanished after a year or two. Suddenly, we had to figure out how to honor our graduating seniors. Most importantly, more teens wanted to join the Junior Historian program because they were seeing the success of their peers' museum work.

After our second *Teens in History* event, I wondered what would happen if we let the Junior Historians do a full exhibition. What if we let them add a layer of interpretation to one of our buildings?

I approached our president Gary Smith and curator Evelyn Montgomery and

presented my idea. They were enthusiastic (in fact, Evelyn didn't have the typical curatorial heart attack at the thought of turning teens loose in an exhibit!). This project also fit into the Village's larger strategic plan of adding more interpretive layers to our historic structures. We had reached a point as an institution where we were eager to experiment with new ways of doing things. We decided to turn the Doctor's Office over to them and began work in January 2011.

Ultimately, ten Junior Historians, ranging in age from twelve to eighteen, chose to participate in the exhibition process. We divided into teams to tackle the project piecemeal. We met monthly (or every six weeks) to make decisions as a group and discuss our discoveries. Evelyn met with us as well, to answer the more curatorial questions that are beyond an educator. Together, we completed research on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century medical care. Though I certainly guided them (and Evelyn retained final approval on content), the youth wrote and researched everything and made all exhibit decisions.

In addition to the labels, primarily written by Meghan (age sixteen), Emily (age twelve), and Caroline (age eighteen), they also wrote and recorded two scripts for a cell



One group researched the medicines in the cabinet, organizing the information by symptom. They also added a skull and crossbones to those herbs considered poisonous in certain quantities.

As they continued their work, it became deeply personal for these teens. They were doing history in a way they'd never had an opportunity to do before.

phone tour. On June 30, 2011, we hosted a reception to celebrate the project and all of our Junior Historians. As Gary put it, "From a museum perspective, this is top quality museum work, making the Doctor's Office a very informative, realistic, and interesting attraction at Dallas Heritage Village."

The project also had a tremendous impact on the Junior Historians themselves. Meghan reported, "What I like about this project is that the Junior Historians are finally getting to put a

stamp on Dallas Heritage Village, and it is fantastic that we get to be more included." Emily added, "I like the feeling that I might be getting someone interested in history through what I contribute to the exhibit." And Kyra (age fourteen) noted, "I like that we can show the world, or at least Dallas, that we aren't just lazy teens. I very much appreciate that Melissa gave us the chance to help and do our best work. I love what we did! I think we added something to the Doctor's Office that will appeal to other teens and younger kids."

The success of the Doctor's Office project, provided a momentary challenge to determine a follow-up project. To be honest, when I picked the 1904 Worth Hotel, I truly had no idea it would become one of the most interesting buildings at the Village! I chose the hotel for two main reasons. First, it had had a recent exterior restoration.

Second was the fact that it has many rooms, making it ideal for a group project. We knew that sisters Eula and Mary Moles were single and ran the hotel themselves. But beyond that, we knew very little about the people who worked and lived in the hotel.

At our very first meeting, the Junior Historians and I brainstormed the kind of stories we might be able to tell with the building. We quickly concluded that we wanted to cover the Moles sisters and the hotel's guests, often travelers passing

I concluded that these teens needed a more permanent presence at the Village.



Sophia and Evelyn install the label for the dining room.

through. As we talked about the latter, a Junior Historian joked, “Wouldn’t it be great if there was a serial killer living at the hotel?” I laughed and told them it was highly unlikely that there were any murderers living at the Worth Hotel. Then, they wondered if there might have been an affair or two. As teens, they are always looking for additional drama, so I tempered their imagination.

At our second meeting, we began to dive into primary sources. Unlike our previous projects, which relied on secondary sources, students had a wealth of primary sources to work with including census records, newspaper articles, and oral histories. We began with information from the museum’s own files. When the hotel was moved to the museum in the mid-1970s, volunteers gathered some oral histories. It was in these notes that we first discovered that there was indeed a murder and an affair associated with our hotel! (The kids were very nice and never said “I told you so” to me!) Though these notes contained good information, they also had many holes, particularly about the murder.

As we continued digging, we had many amazing conversations about the process of history itself—how a variety of sources is the only way to get close to a complete story.



Raquel talks with visitors during the second *Teens in History* event.

The things we uncovered only encouraged the teens to keep searching. One Junior Historian, Emily, now thirteen, got really interested in learning more about the people who lived in the hotel, in particular the death of David Moles, Eula and Mary’s brother. Through her work, we discovered that the only part of an oral history that was correct was that David had died in a train wreck. The correct date of David’s death (1903 rather than 1906) lent an entirely different perspective to the hotel’s origins. We had always known that Hansell Moles had built the hotel in 1904 as a business for his unmarried daughters. Hansell was growing older and custom dictated that it was the responsibility of male relatives to care for unmarried females. But Hansell’s son died in 1903 and at the ages of thirty and twenty-six respectively, it was unlikely Eula and Mary would ever marry. We concluded that Hansell viewed the hotel as an insurance

policy for his daughters, to support themselves after his death. It was a powerful story hiding at the museum, until a teenager uncovered it!

At this point in the process, we were still discussing focusing on the sisters’ actual history and creating composite stories for guests. For example, one Junior Historian was planning on working on an imaginary scrapbook of travels by train through Texas. Then Emily sent me the following by email: “As you know, I’ve been doing a lot of research on the residents of the hotel on Ancestry.com. I have been fascinated and touched by the stories of these people and I want to make sure all of them are told. I know it is probably impossible to fit all these people into such a small building, but I wouldn’t want any of these intriguing characters to be forgotten.”

This led the team to focus the storyline as a snapshot of the workers and residents in the hotel in 1910; thus, we could share a much wider variety of primary sources. Without Emily’s extra sleuthing, many of these stories would have remained hidden. Because we were able to find so much great information, we turned to both our cell phone audio tour and YouTube to better tell these stories. Upon learning about the children who lived at the hotel, we added toys to the exhibit itself. We also created a video telling the story of the Patterson family, a widowed mother who worked as cook.

Some of the magic of this project is non-transferable. The best part was the incredible stories we uncovered—and you don’t know what stories there will be until you start digging! But the initial hook for the project was the Junior Historians’ direct connection to the building—they were familiar with it and we were able to walk in it and discuss ideas. As they continued their work, it became deeply personal for these teens. They were doing history in a way they’d never had an opportunity to do before. We kept the project flexible, and let the kids and the history they uncovered take us in new directions. We placed an enormous amount of trust in their ability to research, write, and make curatorial decisions and ended up with a strong building interpretation. Without the confidence we had gained in their abilities during the Doctor’s Office project, the reinterpretation of the hotel wouldn’t have even been on our list. And now, that exhibit has become one of the most popular at the Village.

But please, don’t assume that working with teens is easy. Some confessions:

- Sometimes their enthusiasm overwhelms and exhausts me. Finding the right balance of making sure there’s plenty going on for them and that I don’t work every weekend is tough.
- They will occasionally miss project deadlines (after all, any work they do here at the museum is extra-extracurricular!).
- Though they’re very special teenagers, they’re still teenagers. There have been awkward crushes. Dressing in period attire is a major priority. They’re giggly. Cliques form. They want scandal and romance (and possibly vampires) in the museum.
- There is a huge age range (tweens to teens), and though it mostly works, it sometimes presents interesting challenges.



When the team discovered that two young boys lived in the Hotel, we decided to add some toys to this bedroom.

All that being said, the Junior Historian program will always be one of my very favorites. I get to watch these kids grow up, form a relationship with them, inspire them with history, and know that we're making a difference in their lives.

If you're ready to launch a similar program or just looking to do more with the teens you currently work with, here are some very general tips:

TRUST THEM. Give them ownership in something, even if it's not an exhibit. Could they plan an activity at a special event? Create a new version of a tour? Do research on something you haven't had a chance to get to?

LISTEN TO THEM—they can be experts too. The things that work best come from their heads.

KEEP PARENTS IN THE LOOP—they're volunteering too! I always send email updates to both parents and the youth.

THIS KIND OF PROGRAM TAKES A LOT OF TIME TO GROW. Keep expectations reasonable and try to grow it incrementally. If it's working, it will build on itself.

ENLIST HELP FROM OTHER STAFF MEMBERS. The teens appreciate knowing more people, and it helps them to feel like a true part of the museum.

GIVE THEM CREDIT. We post "This exhibit is curated by Junior Historians" signs in each exhibit, as well as in our visitor guide. We talk about them regularly in our blog. And of course, we thank them as we would any volunteer. Make sure they know how their work matters to the entire institution.

So, what's next? We're currently doing an inventory of the farmstead, a hands-on area that we first developed in the late 1990s. Over the years, a variety of things have gone missing—or shown up in random drawers. Junior Historians will be inventorying and making recommendations on what should stay and

So, can you trust teens with history? Do teens even want to be involved with history? My answer is emphatically yes!

what should go. Along the way, I know they'll learn more about curatorial work and material culture. And I'm sure they'll learn a few things that we're not planning on.

So, can you trust teens with history? Do teens even want to be involved with history? My answer is emphatically yes! This program certainly isn't for every teen in Dallas, but we provide a special place for teens to stretch. The projects outlined here have dramatically changed the program, the teens involved, and the museum itself. The program has grown exponentially—there are currently more than forty members, and the vast majority of them are active and participating in at least one project. They have become a wonderful resource for us. Staff members who have never worked directly with teens in the past now trust them to do all sorts of interesting things. Through these projects, the entire staff is confident that these teens can handle whatever project we throw at them. Young visitors love interacting with teens—and many of those children

are eagerly anticipating turning eleven so they can become Junior Historians too. Through their increased involvement and presence at the Dallas Heritage Village, we've become a livelier, friendlier, and more fun museum for everyone. ●

Melissa Prycer has worked in the Education Department at Dallas Heritage Village since 2004 and was recently named Interim Executive Director. She can be reached at mprycer@dallasheritagevillage.org.

Here are a few practical details about our program that may be helpful to others.

Students must be eleven to apply, and we accept no more than fifteen each year. We don't do any direct recruitment or work with a particular school or district. New teens typically come to us via word-of-mouth or through a visit to the Village (hence, the importance of a permanent presence for the Junior Historian program). Our training camp is usually the first week after school ends and covers the history of and within our buildings, the tools of the historian's trade, and general information about working with visitors. We also always make sure to give them some time in our collections warehouse. During their first few months, pair them with either an older Junior Historian or an adult. Our project teams meet every four to six weeks, generally starting projects in January. Throughout the year, we also occasionally have general meetings to update them on museum activities. We have some sort of an annual party and have even made a few field trips. As director of education, I handled the program in its entirety (with some help from our volunteer coordinator). Now that I'm interim executive director, I'm splitting these duties with our education assistant. The program isn't grant funded and has no special line in the budget. It's something that we do because we feel it's important to our mission.

Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins

Fact Tank January 17, 2019 *Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins*

For decades, Pew Research Center has been committed to measuring public attitudes on key issues and documenting differences in those attitudes across demographic groups. One lens often employed by researchers at the Center to understand these differences is that of generation.

Generations provide the opportunity to look at Americans both by their place in the life cycle – whether a young adult, a middle-aged parent or a retiree – and by their membership in a cohort of individuals who were born at a similar time.



Michael Dimock, president of Pew Research Center

As we've examined in [past work](#), generational cohorts give researchers a tool to analyze changes in views over time. They can provide a way to understand how different formative experiences (such as world events and technological, economic and social shifts) interact with the life-cycle and aging process to shape people's views of the world. While younger and older adults may differ in their views at a given moment, generational cohorts allow researchers to examine how today's older adults felt about a given issue when they themselves were young, as well as to describe how the trajectory of views might differ across generations.

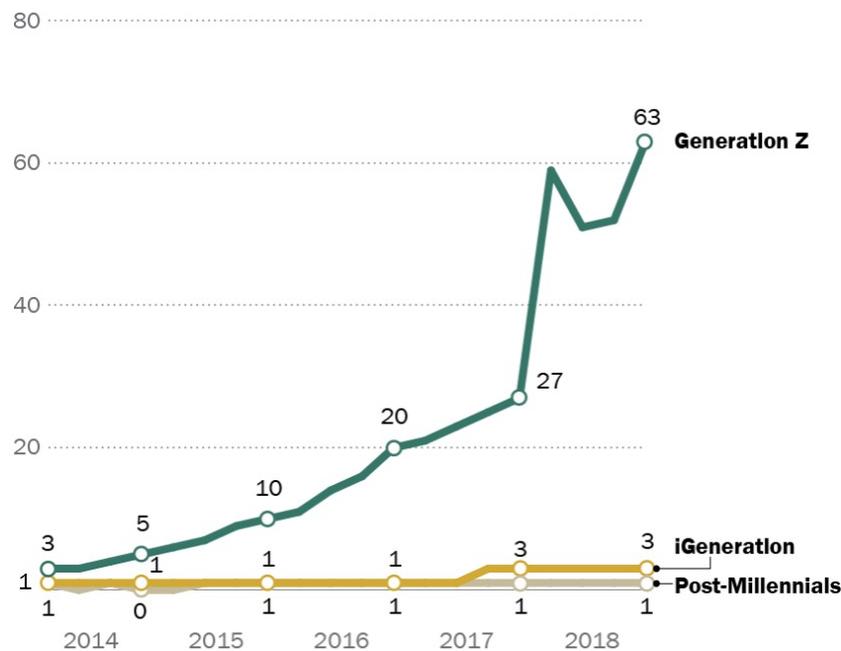
Pew Research Center has been studying the [Millennial generation](#) for [more than a decade](#). But by 2018, it became clear to us that it was time to determine a cutoff point between Millennials and the next generation. Turning 38 this year, the oldest Millennials are [well into adulthood](#), and they first entered adulthood before today's youngest adults were born.

In order to keep the Millennial generation analytically meaningful, and to begin looking at what might be unique about the next cohort, Pew Research Center decided a year ago to use 1996 as the last birth year for Millennials for our future work.

Anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 23 to 38 in 2019) is considered a Millennial, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation.

Generation Z dominates online searches for information on the post-Millennial generation

Relative U.S. search volume of generation terms (Google Trends)



Note: Google Trends data are based on weekly query volume for a given query relative to the highest weekly volume of any queries being compared within the time period and geographic region examined. The maximum relative search volume in the period is 100. The trends above are quarterly averages of weekly relative search volume and include shortened versions of search terms (for example, “Generation Z” also includes “Gen Z”). Values do not reflect the absolute number of searches.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Google Trends (accessed Jan. 8, 2019).

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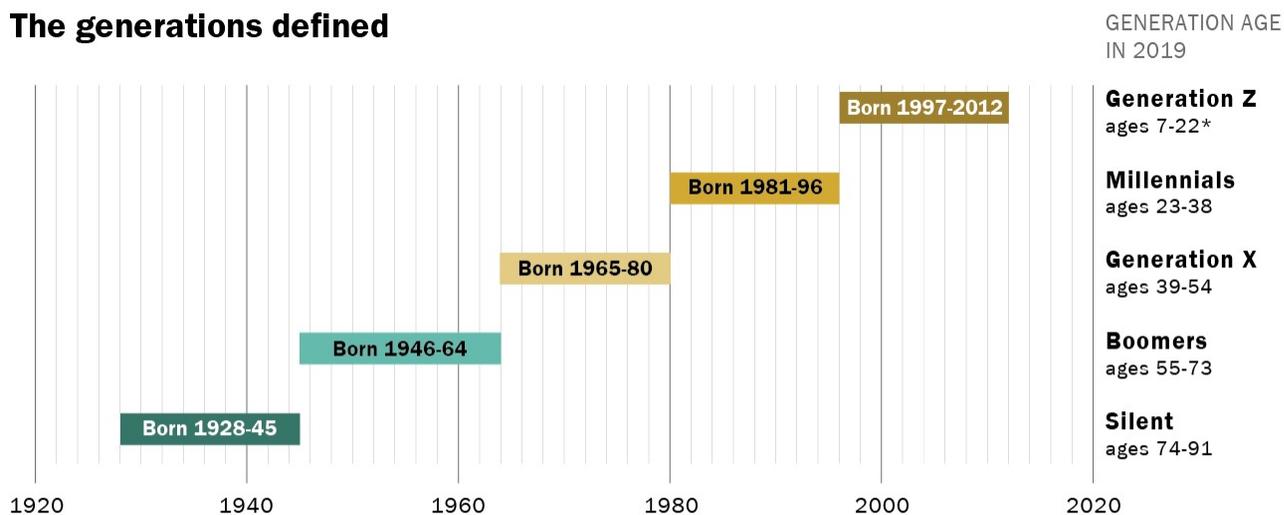
Since the oldest among this rising generation are just turning 22 this year, and most are still in their teens or younger, we hesitated at first to give them a name – Generation Z, the iGeneration and Homelanders were some early candidates. (In our [first in-depth look](#) at this generation, we used the term “post-Millennials” as a placeholder.) But over the past year, Gen Z has taken hold in popular culture and journalism. Sources ranging from [Merriam-Webster](#) and [Oxford](#) to the [Urban Dictionary](#) now include this name for the generation that follows Millennials, and Google Trends data show that “Generation Z” is far outpacing other names in people’s searches for information. While there is no scientific process for deciding when a name has stuck, the momentum is clearly behind Gen Z.

Generational cutoff points aren’t an exact science. They should be viewed primarily as tools, allowing for the kinds of analyses detailed above. But their boundaries are not arbitrary. Generations are often considered by their span, but again there is no agreed upon formula for how long that span should be. At 16 years (1981 to 1996), our working definition of Millennials is equivalent in age span to their preceding generation, Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980). By this definition, both are shorter than the span of the Baby Boomers (19 years) – the only generation officially

[designated by the U.S. Census Bureau](#), based on the famous surge in post-WWII births in 1946 and a significant decline in birthrates after 1964.

Unlike the Boomers, there are no comparably definitive thresholds by which later generational boundaries are defined. But for analytical purposes, we believe 1996 is a meaningful cutoff between Millennials and Gen Z for a number of reasons, including key political, economic and social factors that define the Millennial generation's formative years.

The generations defined



*No chronological endpoint has been set for this group. For this analysis, Generation Z is defined as those ages 7 to 22 in 2019.

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Most Millennials were between the ages of 5 and 20 when the 9/11 terrorist attacks shook the nation, and many were old enough to comprehend the [historical significance](#) of that moment, while most members of Gen Z have little or no memory of the event. Millennials also grew up in the shadow of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which sharpened broader views of the parties and contributed to the intense political polarization that shapes the current political environment. And most Millennials were between 12 and 27 during the 2008 election, where the force of the youth vote became part of the political conversation and helped elect the first black president. Added to that is the fact that Millennials are the most racially and ethnically diverse adult generation in the nation's history. Yet the *next* generation – Generation Z – is [even more diverse](#).

Beyond politics, most Millennials came of age and entered the workforce facing the height of an economic recession. As is [well documented](#), many of Millennials' life choices, future earnings and entrance to adulthood have been shaped by this recession in a way that may not be the case for their younger counterparts. The long-term effects of this "slow start" for Millennials will be a factor in American society for decades.

Technology, in particular the rapid evolution of how people communicate and interact, is another generation-shaping consideration. Baby Boomers grew up as television expanded dramatically, changing their lifestyles and connection to the world in fundamental ways. Generation X grew up as the computer revolution was taking hold, and Millennials came of age during the internet explosion.

In this progression, what is unique for Generation Z is that all of the above have been part of their lives from the start. The iPhone launched in 2007, when the oldest Gen Zers were 10. By the time they were in their teens, the primary means by which young Americans connected with the web was through mobile devices, WiFi and high-bandwidth cellular service. Social media, constant connectivity and on-demand entertainment and communication are innovations Millennials adapted to as they came of age. For those born after 1996, these are largely assumed.

The implications of growing up in an “always on” technological environment are only now coming into focus. Recent research has shown dramatic shifts in youth behaviors, attitudes and lifestyles – both positive and concerning – for those who came of age in this era. What we don’t know is whether these are lasting generational imprints or characteristics of adolescence that will become more muted over the course of their adulthood. Beginning to track this new generation over time will be of significant importance.

Pew Research Center is not the first to draw an analytical line between Millennials and the generation to follow them, and many have offered well-reasoned arguments for drawing that line a few years earlier or later than where we have. Perhaps, as more data are collected over the years, a clear, singular delineation will emerge. We remain open to recalibrating if that occurs. But more than likely the historical, technological, behavioral and attitudinal data will show more of a continuum across generations than a threshold. As has been the case in the past, this means that the differences within generations can be just as great as the differences across generations, and the youngest and oldest within a commonly defined cohort may feel more in common with bordering generations than the one to which they are assigned. This is a reminder that generations themselves are inherently diverse and complex groups, not simple caricatures.

In the near term, you will see a number of reports and analyses from the Center that continue to build on our portfolio of generational research. Today, we issued [a report](#) looking – for the first time – at how members of Generation Z view some of the key social and political issues facing the nation today and how their views compare with those of older generations. To be sure, the views of this generation are not fully formed and could change considerably as they age and as national and global events intervene. Even so, this early look provides some compelling clues about how Gen Z will help shape the future political landscape.

In the coming weeks, we will be releasing demographic analyses that compare Millennials to previous generations at the same stage in their life cycle to see if the demographic, economic and household dynamics of Millennials continue to stand apart from their predecessors. In addition, we will build on our research on [teens’ technology use](#) by exploring the daily lives, aspirations and pressures today’s 13- to 17-year-olds face as they navigate the teenage years.

Yet, we remain cautious about what can be projected onto a generation when they remain so young. Donald Trump may be the first U.S. president most Gen Zers know as they turn 18, and just as the contrast between George W. Bush and Barack Obama shaped the political debate for Millennials, the current political environment may have a similar effect on the attitudes and engagement of Gen Z, though how remains a question. As important as today’s news may seem, it is more than likely that the technologies, debates and events that will shape Generation Z are still yet to be known.

We look forward to spending the next few years studying this generation as it enters adulthood. All the while, we'll keep in mind that generations are a *lens* through which to understand societal change, rather than a *label* with which to oversimplify differences between groups.

Note: This is an update of a post that was originally published March 1, 2018, to announce the Center's adoption of 1996 as an endpoint to births in the Millennial generation.

Pacific Standard

HOME IDEAS UNDERSTANDING GEN Z

HOW GEN Z PRESENTS A CHALLENGE TO TRADITIONAL ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

Social institutions that nourish the arts need to offer young people aesthetic experiences that reflect their lived experiences.

MARY ITTELSON · APR 15, 2019

"Move Over Millennials, It's Gen Z's Turn to Kill Off Industries," warned a headline in the *San Francisco Chronicle's* business section this past August. The accompanying article predicts the demise of brick-and-mortar retail, magazine publishing, and major-league football, among other sectors—all, allegedly, at the hands of Gen Z. Should arts institutions be added to the list?

Today's arts organizations are in the midst of a crisis. Walk into a museum or go to a play, and you will observe firsthand what the statistics have been telling us: The current audience and donor pool is primarily Baby Boomers. While Millennials have been reluctant to pay for subscriptions and memberships, or to make donations to civic organizations, Gen Z (defined as Americans aged 18 to 25) looks to be even more resistant to what conventional arts organizations have on offer. And arts organizations are struggling to respond.

Results from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts every five years since 1982, tell a story of declining attendance at traditional performing and visual arts offerings, with the most significant audience declines among those under 45. "Arts Consumption Through Electronic Media," a category tracked for the first time in the 2012 survey, shows that 71 percent of Americans participate in the arts electronically, as compared with 49 percent who participate in the visual and performing arts in person. The 2017 data is expected to show a continuation of these trends.

Against this backdrop, and having done extensive interviews with Gen Z'ers about their art preferences, I offer an impressionistic view of Gen Z's relation to the arts, and of the implications for organizations working to ensure that the arts can flourish and enrich the lives of all people.

We know that young people have always been slower to get involved in civic organizations. And we know young people are spending significantly more time online than older people. But the divide separating Gen Z from arts organizations cuts deeper.

Based on my interviews with representatives of this generation, for Gen Z'ers, daily life provides constant opportunities to be both artist and subject. Think of the selfie, which is self-promotion but also personal expression: "This is how I want you to see me," and also: "This is how I see the world." Just as the Medicis, the famous patrons of Florentine art during the Italian Renaissance, paid visual artists to depict family members posed with birds, maps of the world, and religious figures, Gen Z'ers use their social media identities as homages to themselves—and as ways to signify and depict the world around them.

Gen Z'ers create their own art: They are active makers of photographs, videos, music, memes, and Web pages. Gen Z'ers also like to be their own curators of art: They make playlists and Instagram feeds, and seek out recommendations of new art experiences from their friends. Further, Gen Z'ers act as distributors of art: They routinely pass on to others what they have created and curated.

In other words, Gen Z has a deeply personal relationship with the processes of creating, curating, and distributing art, so why would they visit a museum or a concert hall or a playhouse to see what someone else—especially someone older—is presenting?

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In their conversations with me, members of Gen Z say they need an active rather than a passive experience with the arts. No more interested in a Temple-on the Hill for quiet contemplation, Gen Z wants their lived arts experiences to offer the personalization and interactivity of their virtual ones. They want instant connections to people and their stories, to move seamlessly between high culture and low, between art, design, and fashion. They want to post, comment, and like.

Some entities, though primarily not arts organizations, have capitalized on this trend. The Museum of Ice Cream (MOIC) has staked out a corner just down the street from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and the Museum of

the African Diaspora. Every day, about 1,700 people, mostly Gen Z, pay \$38 to queue for a series of Instagrammable moments, including the chance to eat ice cream while posing on a plastic rainbow unicorn as friends click and share.

Instead of adding my "harrumph" to the chorus of arts pundits who see the demise of culture with every new museum devoted to a food or a superhero, I decided to visit the MOIC and see for myself. I did not learn much about ice cream (or anything else, for that matter). But I did have fun in the sprinkle pool. While not an artistic organization, nor an aspirational model for one, the MOIC leadership knows a thing or two about how to attract and retain new audiences.

Some leaders of traditional arts organizations are rising to this Gen Z challenge while hewing to their artistic and educational mission. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is a notable example, with a young adult visitor pool that is the envy of the museum's peer institutions; over 45 percent of attendees at SFMOMA are under 35 years old, per statistics from the museum. Beyond offering reduced admission to visitors aged 19 to 24 and coffee bars adjacent to the exhibition spaces, the museum partners with tech companies to integrate participatory experiences throughout the museum. Recently, visitors could enter virtual worlds inspired by René Magritte paintings. The photography galleries feature an interactive space called *Self Composed*, where visitors can reimagine and create their own selfies.

At the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, where I am a life trustee and former board chair, I have had a ring-side view of the kind of transformation that is possible. In the past, the museum had only episodic success attracting younger audiences. Now on any typical visit to the MCA, you will see young adults donning audio or virtual-reality headsets to interact with participatory art in the galleries, and attending events in the Commons, a space reconfigured with hanging plants, lounge chairs, and board-game tables. According to the museum website, the Commons "is meant to encourage formal and informal dialogue as well as interaction among artists, visitors, and communities." While the MCA aims to serve all ages, these recent changes have been especially appealing to younger visitors.

Michael Darling, chief curator at the MCA, describes the museum's approach to young people as a "radical welcome." Beyond redesigning spaces to be conducive to gathering and sharing, the museum's most radical changes have been to its programming.

"Gen Z gives us no slack," Darling observes. "They demand art that is relevant to their concerns. Not satisfied with being 'responded to' by arts organizations, they demand a seat at the table. We have to reflect the tide of the times."

Recognizing that the habits and patterns of Gen Z can take them "deeper and deeper into their own world and interests," Darling and his colleagues at the MCA are working to mine "the macro issues that resonate across and beyond the cohort, such as issues of identity, race, human rights, inequality, [and] social justice," Darling says. "Fortunately, there is lots of great art that deals with these topics."

Changes such as those underway at the MCA are not without risk of alienating the patrons who are still most responsible for the economic well-being of arts organizations. An environment that feels lively and inviting to a Gen Z'er might put off a Baby Boomer. While visiting the major international art fairs this past spring, the MCA's director, Madeleine Grynsztejn, remarked on this disconnect: "What the commercial art dealers are showing and selling to their clientele [who also happen to be art museums' major donors] is less and less like what is in our galleries."

Even assuming that leaders of arts organization can succeed at balancing their offerings to meet the needs and expectations of both younger and older audiences, the arts still face a more serious generational threat. Many members of Gen Z and the cohorts that follow haven't been raised to visit museums, concert halls, and playhouses. Cuts in arts education for public schools have made the annual museum field trip a thing of the past for kids in the poorer school districts. Many schools have no art programs whatsoever. Most of the children attending these schools come from families and communities with little or no access to art.

Research shows that the single biggest predictor of arts participation as an adult is exposure to arts as a child. Further positive benefits of early arts exposure include improved academic performance, social behavior, and emotional well-being. A report published by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2012 focusing on at-risk youth found that "socially and economically disadvantaged children and teenagers who have high levels of arts engagement or arts learning show more positive outcomes in a variety of areas than their low-arts-engaged peers." Those outcomes extend to "school grades, test scores, honors society membership, high school graduation, college enrollment and achievement, volunteering, and engagement in school or local politics."

In the face of such persuasive evidence, there is an urgent need for more organizations to work toward ensuring that every child in every school has access to the arts.

Beyond the widening education gap, increasing income inequality threatens the entire arts ecosystem. Thankfully, even in the most abject and inhospitable places, there will always be those who persevere in making art and those who seek out ways to experience it. But artists and the network of organizations that link them to audiences need patrons in order to survive. What will happen to our great institutions if the rising generations can no longer afford to attend or support them? How will we make up for the artists who find it impossible to make both art and a living?

The stakes are serious if you believe, as I do, that the arts are essential to a life well lived in a civil society. And while arts organizations alone cannot reverse the tide of inequality and its potentially devastating implications for the arts, they are among the civic institutions that can play a leadership role. Engaging Gen Z'ers in active discourse with a rich variety of art and artists is a worthy place to begin. To that end, arts organizations must rethink their programs and financial infrastructure to ensure their continued vitality and relevance. Gen Z will be a responsive audience once the social institutions that nourish the arts begin to offer aesthetic experiences that better reflect their lived experiences. That entails risk, but business as usual is no longer an option for these institutions.

Understanding Gen Z, a collaboration between Pacific Standard and Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, investigates the historical context and social science research that helps explain the next generation. Join our newsletter to see new stories, and let us know your thoughts on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Understanding Gen Z was made possible by Stanford University's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) and its director, Margaret Levi, who hosted the iGen Project. Further support came from the Knight Foundation.

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