

UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATING THE FOUR GENERATIONS

“A generation is a cohort-group whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and whose boundaries are affixed by peer personality.”¹ Born over a period roughly the same length as the passage from youth to adulthood (20-21 years) they collectively possess a common persona.

“The peer personality of a generation is essentially a caricature of its prototypical members. It is, in its sum of attributes, a distinctly person-like creation. A generation has collective attitudes about family life, sex roles, institutions, politics, religion, lifestyle, and the future.”²

| Names and Formative Years | Formative Experiences | Characteristics | Religious Characteristics | Common Areas of Concern |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| G.I. Generation (1901–1924) Silent Generation (1925–1942) | World War I, World War II, the Roaring Twenties, automobile, radio, big bands, the Great Depression, rural lifestyle, rationing, Charles Lindbergh | Hard workers, savers, frugal, patriotic, loyal, private, cautious, respectful, dependable, stable, intolerant | Committed to church, support foreign missions, enjoy Bible study, loyal to denominations, minister out of a sense of duty, worship in reverence | Finances, affordable housing, personal safety, declining health, adequate transportation, preparation for death, spiritual needs, use of leisure time |
| Baby Boomers Postwar Generation Sixties Generation Me Generation Vietnam Generation (1943–1960) | The cold war, Sputnik, television, economic affluence, education and technology, rock 'n' roll, the civil rights movement, space race, Woodstock, assassinations, Vietnam War, Kent State, Watergate, energy crisis | Educated, media-oriented, independent, cause-oriented, fitness conscious, rock 'n' roll fans, activists, quality conscious, question authority | Committed to relationships, want to belong, supportive of people, want to live their faith, want experiences with faith, tolerant of differences | Spiritual search, desire to return to traditional values, slower lifestyle, second career development, finances, reevaluating goals, midlife transitions, preparing for retirement, death of the American dream |
| 13th Gen Generation X Slackers Busters (1961–1981) | Roe v. Wade, birth control pill, high technology, video games and TV, the Challenger disaster, fall of the Berlin Wall, peer groups and work, music (MTV and VH1), Gulf War, AIDS, Oklahoma City bombing, Clinton administration, latchkey kids | Freedom, 1960s nostalgia, community causes, feel neglected and lonely, willing to work, boomer values rejected, practical education desired, postponing marriage | Committed to family, local causes, shorter attention span, want up-to-date options, want faith that meets needs, want less structure, need to relieve stress | Sports and fitness, friends and family, entertainment and music, improving the environment, search for serenity |
| Millennials Mosaics NetGen (Internet generation) Echo Generation Generation 9-11 (1982–2002) | Postmodern era, “Baby On Board,” technology, Internet, MTV, diversity, Columbine shootings, terrorist attacks, boomerang kids, helicopter parents | Entrepreneurial, tech savvy, neotraditional, interactive, diverse and tolerant, desire to be connected, group reliant | Committed to the group, desire interactivity, want honest relationships, want faith that is authentic | Desire for authentic faith, freedom from boredom, acceptance of others, techno gadgets, honest and open talk |

¹ William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future* (New York: Quill, 1991), 60.

² Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 63.