

Introduction

Literally the new kids in town, the Millennial generation—America’s children, teens, and youngest adults—is the most mysterious. The characteristics of Millennials are only now beginning to emerge as the oldest graduate from college and enter the workforce. The third edition of *The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994* provides a demographic and socioeconomic profile of the generation. Because Millennials are the children of Baby Boomers, the generation has attracted the media spotlight. Because of the generation’s size, business and government are paying attention to Millennial wants and needs.

The Millennial generation, aged 11 to 28 in 2005, numbers 75 million and accounts for 25 percent of the total population—close to the Baby Boom’s 26 percent share. For convenience, children under age 11 are also included in the Millennial profile in this book. The post-Millennial group adds another 44 million people, for a total of 119 million people under age 29 in the United States in 2005—a substantial 40 percent of the population.

The Millennial generation’s beginning marked the end of the small Generation X, also known as the baby-bust generation. The oldest Millennials were born in 1977, when the long anticipated echo boom of births began. In that year, the number of births ticked up to 3.3 million. This increase followed a 12-year lull in births called Generation X. By 1980, annual births were up to 3.6 million. By 1990, they topped 4 million. Altogether, 68 million babies were born between 1977 and 1994. The number of Millennials has grown beyond the 68 million because of immigration.

Like every other generation of Americans, Millennials are defined by their numbers. And like the large Baby Boom before them, the Millennial generation’s entrance is making waves. Public schools are straining with enrollment not seen since Boomers filled classrooms. Colleges and universities that had been competing for scarce Gen Xers now pick and choose from among the best as applications soar. Millennials are also making their mark in the housing market, the homeownership rate among young adults rising faster than that of older age groups. In time, Millennials will also make their mark on the labor market and will shape the nation’s families with their own lifestyles and values.

Every generation of Americans is unique, shaped not only by its numbers but also by the historical moment. Millennials are no exception. Already, three distinct characteristics are emerging, characteristics that will reshape American society as Millennials mature. One, Millennials are racially and ethnically diverse—so diverse, in fact, that in many parts of the country the term “minority” no longer has meaning for their peer group. Two, they are fiercely independent thanks to divorce, day

care, single parents, latch key lifestyles, and the technological revolution that has put the joy stick squarely in their hands. Three, Millennials feel powerful. Raised by indulgent parents, they have a sense of security not shared by Gen Xers. Optimistic about the future, Millennials see opportunity where others see problems.

The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994 examines the youth generation from two perspectives—as independent individuals establishing themselves in the household and labor market, and as workers, householders, parents, and consumers. Because about half the Millennial generation is not yet independent, the second perspective is on the lifestyles of children—examining, for example, the labor force participation of mothers, day care arrangements, and the spending of married couples with children. Together, the two perspectives provide a comprehensive picture of children, teens, and the youngest adults.

How to use this book

The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994 is designed for easy use. It is divided into ten chapters, organized alphabetically: Education, Health, Housing, Income, Labor Force, Living Arrangements, Population, Spending, Time Use, and Wealth.

The third edition of *The Millennials* includes statistics on the education, living arrangements, labor force participation, health, incomes, spending, and time use of the youngest generation and its parents. The socioeconomic estimates presented here are the all-important mid-decade demographics, offering enough of a trend line into the 21st century to guide researchers in their business plans or government policies. *The Millennials* presents labor force data for 2005, including the government's new labor force projections. It contains new data on the health of the population, including updated estimates of the sexual activity and drug use of teens and young adults. The Census Bureau's latest population projections are also included in the book, showing the growth of young adults over the next decade. *The Millennials* also presents the latest estimates of household wealth from the recently released Federal Reserve Board's 2004 Survey of Consumer Finances. New to this edition is the Time Use chapter, with many tables based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' new American Time Use Survey. The results show Millennials getting more sleep than older age groups, and despite their wired reputation they spend more time watching television than playing on computers.

Most of the tables in *The Millennials* are based on data collected by the federal government, in particular the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Center for Health Statistics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Federal Reserve Board. The federal government is the best source of up-to-date, reliable information on the changing characteristics of Americans. Also included in *The Millennials* are the latest data on alcohol, cigarette, and drug use among teenagers from the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, and the book includes results from the

2005 American Freshman Survey fielded by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute.

The Millennials includes the demographic and lifestyle data most important to researchers. Most of the tables are based on data collected by the federal government, but they are not simply reprints of government spreadsheets—as is the case in many reference books. Instead, each table is individually compiled and created by New Strategist's editors, with calculations designed to reveal the trends. The task of extracting and processing raw data from the government's web sites at times requires hours of effort to create a single table. The effort is worthwhile, however, because each table tells a story about Millennials and their families, a story explained by the accompanying text and chart, which analyze the data and highlight future trends. If you need more information than the tables and text provide, you can plumb the original source listed at the bottom of each table.

The book contains a comprehensive table list to help you locate the information you need. For a more detailed search, see the index at the back of the book. Also at the back of the book are the bibliography and the glossary, which defines the terms and describes the many surveys referenced in the tables and text.

Each new generation of Americans is unique and surprising in its own way. With *The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994* on your bookshelf, you won't be surprised by the unique characteristics of this exciting generation of Americans.