

# Introduction

Generation X gained fame simply by following the Baby-Boom generation onto the stage of youth decades ago, a stage Boomers created and made the center of the nation's attention. Generation X was everything Boomers were not—small in number, cynical rather than idealistic, they were expected to make their way easily through life because of the swath Boomers had carved. But it did not turn out that way. Gen Xers have struggled to compete with the masses of Boomers ahead of them and the large Millennial generation at their heels. Perhaps no generation has been hit as hard by the Great Recession and collapse of the housing market as Generation X. Now they face a tough job market as millions of Boomers postpone retirement. The eighth edition of *Generation X: Americans Born 1965 to 1976* tells the sometimes grim story of the small generation spanning the ages of 38 to 49 in 2014.

Although their numbers are small, Generation X is a vital part of the nation's commerce and culture because of their lifestage. People in their forties are in their peak earning and spending years. They are supposed to be at the height of their career, their incomes should be rising, and their spending should be climbing. *Generation X: Americans Born 1965 to 1976* shows how Gen Xers are coping with midlife and what to expect in the future.

Gen Xers are a diverse segment of the population, with minorities accounting for a large share of the whole. One issue binds together this diversity: the struggle to reach and remain in the middle class. While other generations face the same issue, getting ahead and staying there is proving more difficult for Generation X because of their position between two larger generations. Only 16 percent of Americans are Gen Xers, while 24 percent are Boomers and 25 percent are Millennials (see the Population chapter). In part because they are overshadowed by others, Gen Xers are suffering economically. The percentage of men in their late thirties and forties who have worked for their current employer for 10 or more years has fallen (see the Labor Force chapter). The median household income of people ranging in age from 35 to 54 is 11 to 13 percent lower today than it was in 2000, after adjusting for inflation. The median incomes of men aged 35 to 54 have declined by more than 10 percent (see the Income chapter). Even women in the age group have lost ground since 2007.

It is not easy to study Generation X. Few surveys focus on the generation, and the ages spanned by the members of the generation make it difficult to tease them out of the government's traditional five- or 10-year age brackets. Many of the data in this edition of *Generation X* are for 2013, when the generation was aged 37 to 48. When possible, New Strategist's editors produced estimates to create a precise profile of the Gen X age group for the year in which data are shown. Consequently, *Generation X: Americans Born 1965 to 1976* provides real insight into the status of this struggling generation.

## How to Use This Book

*Generation X: Americans Born 1965 to 1976* is designed for easy use. It is divided into 11 chapters, organized alphabetically: Attitudes, Education, Health, Housing, Income, Labor Force, Living Arrangements, Population, Spending, Time Use, and Wealth.

The eighth edition of *Generation X* includes the latest data on the changing demographics of homeownership, based on the Census Bureau's 2013 Housing Vacancies and Homeownership Survey. The Income chapter, with 2013 income statistics, reveals the struggle of so many Americans to stay afloat. The Spending chapter reveals trends in Gen X spending through 2013, and examines how their spending changed after the Great Recession. *Generation X* includes the latest labor force numbers and the government's labor force projections that show rising participation among the Baby-Boom generation—not good news for Gen Xers anxious to advance in their career. The Wealth chapter presents data from the Survey of Consumer Finances revealing the impact of the Great Recession on household wealth, with a look at the trends from 2007 to 2013. The Health chapter includes 2013 statistics on health insurance coverage. The Attitudes chapter, based on New Strategist's analysis of the 2012 General Social Survey, compares and contrasts the perspectives of the generations.

Most of the tables in *Generation X* 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, and the Federal Reserve Board. The federal government is the best source of up-to-date, reliable information on the changing characteristics of Americans. By having *Generation X* on your bookshelf you can get the answers to your questions faster than online. Even better, visit [www.newstrategist.com](http://www.newstrategist.com) and download the PDF version of *Generation X* with links to each table in Excel.

The chapters of *Generation X* present the demographic and lifestyle data most important to researchers. Within each chapter, most of the tables are based on data collected by the federal government, but they are not simple reproductions 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 data from the government's web sites to create a single table can require hours of effort. New Strategist has done the work for you, each table telling a story about Gen Xers—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 list of tables 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 is the glossary, which defines the terms and describes the many surveys referenced in the tables and text.

With *Generation X: Americans Born 1965 to 1976* on your bookshelf, an in-depth understanding of this influential and struggling generation is at hand.