

Introduction

The Millennial generation—America’s young adults—was once the new kid in town. No longer. The youngest Millennials turned 20 in 2014, and the oldest are in their mid-thirties. This sixth edition of *The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994* provides a demographic and socioeconomic profile of the generation that is, as of 2014, comprised entirely of adults.

Millennials ranged in age from 20 to 37 in 2014. They number 78 million and account for 25 percent of the total population—surpassing the Baby-Boom’s 24 percent. A special supplement included in this book profiles the generation that follows Millennials—born in 1995 or later (the oldest turned 19 in 2014) and now comprising the nation’s children. We call them the iGeneration, and their characteristics are only beginning to emerge. The end date for the iGeneration remains an unknown. There is evidence of a new Recession Generation forming, a consequence of the drop in births below the 4 million annual level beginning in 2010. A few tables in *The Millennials* show some of the demographics of the Recession generation.

The naming of new generations is the sport of marketers. Behind the effort, however, is a serious attempt to identify the shared characteristics of a group of people. By naming the generations, businesses and policymakers can make better sense of the chaotic jumble of 300 million-plus diverse and individualistic Americans.

The Millennials

The Millennial generation’s beginning marked the end of the small Generation X, once 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 followed a 12-year lull in births that is 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. Since then, the number of Millennials has grown to 78 million because of immigration.

As is true with Boomers, the Millennial generation is defined by its numbers. When Millennials moved through the education system, schools were strained by rising enrollments. Colleges and universities that had been competing for scarce Gen Xers could pick and choose from among the best as applications soared. Millennials also made their mark in the housing market, the homeownership rate rising to record highs by the mid-2000s. Fortunately, few Millennials bought houses during the bubble, the majority of them avoiding the nation’s overpriced real estate. In the future, these renters will be better positioned to buy at lower prices—if they decide they want to become homeowners.

Every generation of Americans is unique, shaped not only by its numbers but also by the historical moment. Millennials are no exception. Three characteristics have emerged to define the generation. 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 made communication with family and friends instantaneous and continuous. Three, Millennials feel powerful—even in the midst of the economic downturn. Raised by indulgent parents, they have a sense of well-being not shared by Gen Xers. Optimistic about the future despite their trouble finding jobs and becoming independent, Millennials see opportunity where others see problems.

The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994 examines the young-adult generation as it goes to college, finds jobs, establishes households, becomes parents, and struggles to gain a foothold in the nation’s increasingly fragile middle class.

The iGeneration

The special supplement on what we call the iGeneration examines the socioeconomic status of the nation’s children. The generation that follows Millennials was aged 19 or younger in 2014 (born in 1995 or later). We look at these children from the perspective of their family, exploring family incomes, time use, and labor force status of parents, day care arrangements, the spending of married couples and single parents with children, and many other family characteristics. The supplement also includes school enrollment data, mobility statistics, and an examination of the health and well-being of high school students.

Soon the youngest generation will go to college, join the labor force, and begin to establish their own households. At that time, they will require a reference book devoted entirely to their unique socioeconomic characteristics. Until then, however, *The Millennials* provides a comprehensive look at both the nation’s young adults and its children.

How to Use This Book

The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994 is designed for easy use. It is divided into 11 chapters, organized alphabetically: Attitudes, Education, Health, Housing, Income, Labor Force, Living Arrangements, Population, Time Use, Spending, and Wealth. The special supplement on the iGeneration is divided into nine chapters that examine the characteristics of families with children: Education, Health, Housing, Income, Labor Force, Living Arrangements, Population, Time Use, and Spending,

The sixth edition of *The Millennials* includes the latest data on the changing demographics of homeownership, based on the Census Bureau’s 2013 Housing Vacancies and Homeownership Survey. It documents the steep decline in the homeownership rate of “first-time” homebuyers—adults aged

30 to 34. The Income chapter, with 2013 income statistics, reveals the struggle of so many young Americans to find a stable job that pays a living wage as the economy climbs out of recession. The Spending chapter reveals trends in the spending of young adults and families with children through 2013, and examines how their spending changed after the Great Recession. *The Millennials* includes the latest labor force numbers showing the decline in participation among teens and young adults. The Wealth chapter presents data from the Survey of Consumer Finances, which reveal the impact of the Great Recession on the wealth of householders under age 35, with a look at 2007-to-2013 trends—including statistics on education loans. The Health chapter has up-to-date statistics on falling birth rates, out-of-wedlock childbearing, and 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 *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, 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 *The Millennials* on your bookshelf you can get the answers to your questions faster than online. Even better, visit www.newstrategist.com and download the PDF version of *The Millennials* with links to each table in Excel, including all tables in the special supplement.

The chapters of *The Millennials* 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, with each table telling a story about Millennials or the iGeneration—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.

Each generation of Americans is unique and surprising in its own way. With *The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994* on your bookshelf, you will understand the nation’s young adults and be ready for the generation that follows, still living at home, but soon to add its own stamp to the dynamic American culture.

