

# 7 Ways Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z See the World Differently

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9-11 minutes

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**To better understand Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z, take a look at their upbringings, personal style, and how they feel about each other.**

The return of low-rise jeans and bucket hats is an obvious reminder that everything is cyclical—especially fashion.

Trends come and go, and then come stomping back with full force. It's as if Doc Marten combat boots and Steve Madden platforms are pounding the pavement like the 2010s never happened.

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*Some things are beloved across generations. Image via [Ira Simonova](#).*

## **Who Makes Up Each Generation?**

For members of Generation X, who were born between 1965 and 1980, a generational divide between themselves and Millennials was always obvious.

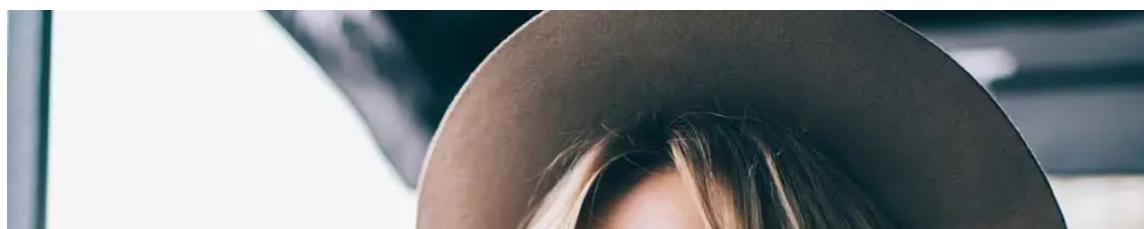
When [Millennials](#) (born between 1981 and 1996) were starting out in the workforce, there was much hullabaloo about [how to talk to them](#), market to them, and work with them. They were the last generation to experience childhood without the Internet.

They experienced so many tragedies, including September 11th and the 2008 recession. These shaped their identities and understanding of the world.

[Generation X](#) was a little more established when these monumental events took place. To them, the plight of the Millennials seemed a little over-hyped. The differences between the two groups sewed quite a bit of discord.

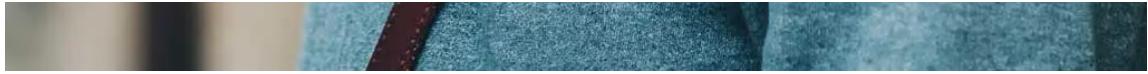
But now, members of the younger [Generation Z](#) (born between 1997 and 2012) are coming into their own. Both Generation X and Millennials aren't as annoyed by them as they are inspired.

Maybe this is due to the pandemic trapping us at home for the last two years and reshaping our sense of selves. Perhaps it's due to their inclusive and dynamic attitudes about work, politics, sexuality, and style.









*Images via [GaudiLab](#), [Nana studio](#), and [Anna Nahabed](#).*

For the first time in a long while, youth culture is back. Gen X'ers are dusting off their band T-shirts and flannels. [Millennials](#) are crushing on pop stars like they did in 2003. Gen Z is orchestrating it all through [TikTok](#), [maximalist style](#), and [unorganized \(but supercharged\) rebellion](#).

Read on to learn seven other ways Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z see the world differently.

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You can probably see the magazine covers now: “What is Generation X?” “Who are Millennials?” “What Do We Know About Generation Z?”

But beyond what the mainstream media thinks and says about every generation, it’s up to the people actually in that generation to figure out who they really are.

Over the last fifty years (especially the last twenty, when race, gender, and sexuality have been more widely discussed and affirmed), understanding one’s own identity has been a process of exploration and experimentation.

In 2022, our identity and how we want the world to see us is displayed on our Facebook and Instagram accounts, with [Millennials and Gen Z sharing the most information](#) about themselves online.





Images via [CarlosDavid](#), [Maria Markevich](#), and [CREATISTA](#).

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## 2. How They Do (or Don't) Fit in the Workplace

It's almost a cultural tradition that every new generation is maligned as they enter the workforce. Generation X were thought of as unprofessional slackers—poorly groomed and lacking in basic manners.

The most common word hurled at [Millennials](#) was *entitled*—they were called snowflakes, and criticized for needing constant validation.





*Work looks different across the three generations. Images via [LStockStudio](#), [BublikHaus](#), and [insta\\_photos](#).*

Generation Z is still starting out, but as the beginning of their careers aligns with the work-norm [shattering pandemic](#), there's an opportunity for them to [radically reshape work](#) into something that better aligns with their values.

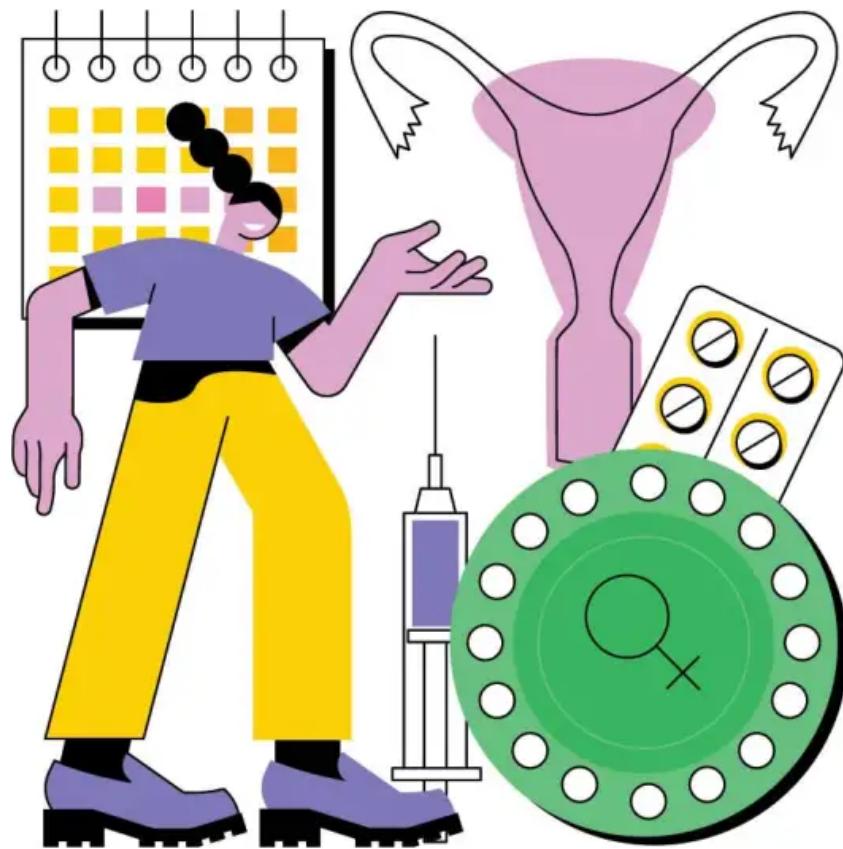
Gen X and Millennials will no doubt be happy for their efforts.

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### **3. How They Fall in Love**

Each generation has their own way of dating, committing, and even deciding whether or not to have children.

For Gen X, sexual politics were all over the place. There was newfound freedom in the '80s and '90s, especially for women. Widely-available birth control meant there was no longer a need to rely on a male partner.



*Image via [Vector Juice](#).*

Millennials took this one step further. They've waited as long as possible to get married, with thirty-two being the average age of first-time marriage.

For Gen Z, all options are on the table, including who they fall in love with ([20% of Gen Z'ers identify as LGBTQ](#)) and when—or even if—they get married at all.





Images via [Vector Juice](#) and [Vector Juice](#).

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#### 4. How They Get Involved with Politics

Politics is a tough one to parcel out. Focusing on what being politically-minded looks like for each generation is a simple way to avoid getting into political affiliation.

Each generation has things to be angry about. These include wars, human rights, foreign policies, and politicians themselves. How each generation goes about speaking about and voting on these issues can say a lot about their relationships to politics.





*Image via [Christine Glade](#).*

As the eldest generation in this story, Gen X has seen it all. They were born in the shadow of the Vietnam War. They witnessed Ronald Reagan and a new kind of conservative politics enter the mainstream, and they saw the first president since 1868 get impeached on live television.

That said, [their voting record isn't as strong as Millennials and Generation Z](#). Younger generations seem to be universally fed up with the status quo and are voting in record numbers.

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## 5. How They Have Fun

Out of all three generations, Gen X definitely had the most in-person fun. They were going to coffee shops, record stores, and concerts.

Prior to the internet, when questionable decisions weren't saved online forever, staying present wasn't something one had to remind themselves to do.





Images via [Kevin Estrada/Shutterstock](#), [santypan](#), and [Ivan Kurmyshov](#).

Millennials got a taste of that freedom, especially in the “[indie-sleaze” phase](#) of the early 2000s. Once Instagram hit the scene in 2010, all bets were off. Millennials became the generation that took pictures at brunch, relied on influencers to make purchase recommendations, and reframed hooking up as “Netflix and Chill.”

And, now that most of us are online 24/7, Gen Z isn’t much different. In fact, while they grew tired of staying home over the last two years, they’re still [not as socially \(or sexually\) active](#) as previous generations. They [often rely on screen time activities](#) like streaming services, TikTok, and online shopping to keep them entertained.





*Images via [NDAB Creativity](#), [Olesya Kuprina](#), and [Personal Belongings](#).*

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## 6. How They Decide What to Wear

As previously mentioned, [fashion trends are totally cyclical](#). [Millennials](#) almost seemed shocked to see the return of certain styles from the beloved Delia's catalogs of their youth. Gen X'ers were probably not surprised at all.

What's interesting today is how each generation adapts the trending styles to fit both their age and the time period they

themselves grew up in.

For instance, members of Gen Z are fully embracing [neon](#), [pastels](#), baggy jeans, and crop tops. But for Millennials, letting go of their chunky sweaters and skinny jeans is nearly impossible.

Gen Xers, who at their oldest are a cool 57, might not be snatching up the groovy lime green accessories at Target, but they're playing with hair color, allowing themselves to reveal more skin, and are just generally having a little more fun with fashion.

One important note: Every [generation \(even Baby Boomers\)](#) [loves New Balance sneakers](#).





*Images via [Alessandro Biascioli](#), [Tatiana Buzmakova](#), and [insta\\_photos](#).*

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## 7. How They Find and Listen to Music

Gen X'ers probably remember the first cassette tape they ever purchased. Millennials probably remember their first CD.

Most Gen Z'ers, on the other hand, have probably never used either of those technologies. For them, music has always lived online.





*Images via [Deyan Georgiev](#) and [Vladitto](#).*

Pandora launched in 2000. iTunes launched in 2001. Spotify launched in 2006. While both Gen X and Millennials were able to download music (sure, sometimes illegally) from sites like Napster, the prominence of streaming music services eventually took over the entire music industry. This caused music stores—which often doubled as hangout spots—to shutter across the globe.



*Images via [Paul Sakuma/AP/Shutterstock](#) and [GaudiLab](#).*

That said, music is still a highly collaborative art form. Today, with apps like TikTok, musicians are able to find audiences without the help of major labels.

In some ways, it's not so different from the coffee house/open-mic aesthetic of the mid-90s—just with a little more autotune.

*Cover image via [Anastasiya Aleksandrenko](#).*