

# GROWERTALKS

## Acres & Acres

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### The Generations

*Chris Beytes*

I was in West Chicago at Ball Publishing HQ for some meetings in August, and in one, we got on the topics of Generation Z and a trend called “underconsumption.”

“Wait a second, which ones are Gen Z again?” I asked. “How old are they?”

Being one of those rare, exclusive members of Generation Jones/AKA the second half of the Baby Boom (1954-1964), I find these younger generations are beginning to blur. I know Gen X because most of my co-workers are Gen X: indifferent, latchkey kids, overlooked, ignored, and they like it that way. “Meh—whatever ...” sums up their attitude toward just about everything.

But I digress.

Wanting to remind the staff in the room of just who the generations are, I put this on the board with their help (and Google’s). I figured it might do you some good, too:

**Gen ?** 2028-2043

**Gen A (Alpha)** 2013-2027 (ages 0 to 11)

**Gen Z** 1997-2012 (ages 12 to 27)

**Millennials (Gen Y)** 1981-1996 (ages 28 to 43)

**Gen X** 1965-1980 (ages 44 to 59)

**Baby Boomers** 1946-1964 (ages 60 to 78)

**Silent** 1928-1945 (ages 80 to 96)

**Greatest** Before 1928 (ages 97+ )

You’ll note I took the liberty of extrapolating out to the next, as-of-yet-unnamed generation that’ll start arriving in 2028 (based on the 15-year separation of most of the other generations). Probably something clever, like Gen B (beta).

Why are Millennials called that? They arrived before the new millennium. But Gen Y didn’t stick as a name ...

The Greatest Generation deserved that name, going through World War I, the influenza pandemic, the Great Depression and World War II. They deserved the ‘50s! The Silent Generation got dubbed that because of a 1951 Time magazine article that highlighted their “collective cautiousness and passivity compared to previous generations.” The article described the generation as “a still, small flame” in comparison to their more rebellious and outspoken parents. One story and an entire generation gets pigeon-holed.



CHRIS BEYTES

I left off Generation Jones because not too many people recognize we exist. Although I can tell you as someone with a brother born in '45 and a sister born in '52, we were worlds apart! They grew up with the Beatles and Woodstock; I grew up with Kiss and disco.

A few more generational tidbits to think about:

Gen Z (ages 12 to 27) may be older than you imagined; the oldest are entering the kids and houses and white picket fences stage of life. And according to *The Wall Street Journal*, Gen Z workers will outnumber Baby Boomers in the U.S. workforce this year. (All the more reason to get to know them!)

According to the Internet, these are the populations of the generations (as of 2023):

**Greatest** 440,000

**Silent** 16.5 million

**Baby Boomers** 70.1 million

**Gen X** 65.35 million

**Millennials** 72.7 million

**Gen Z** 69.3 million

**Gen Alpha** 42.75 million (so far)

We've been waiting for the bump in retail sales to come since going through the Gen X dip, and we should be there now, with plenty of Millennials in the 28 to 43 age bracket. That sounds like new home landscapers, gardeners and decorators to me! And there will be more than 69 million Gen Z following on their heels.

What I wonder is how big will Generation Alpha be? Globally, the experts say it'll be the largest population in history. But in the developed West, where more and more couples seem to be opting for just one kid or none ...? We'll have to wait and see. Based on the current number, folks had better get busy!

But back to Gen Z. ... As I said, this whole topic came up because Jen P (Editor Jennifer Polanz) found an article online about how Gen Z may be caught up in some sort of trend called "underconsumption"—as in "Look how much I didn't spend." It's getting its start (like many fads/trends) online, in TikTok videos in which members of Gen Z (mostly women, says the article) are dealing with today's financial challenges by being frugal—using a broken mirror, squeezing the last bit of toothpaste from the tube, washing an old pair of sneakers so they look new again.

Some say it's a backlash against the online influencers pushing the purchase of every trendy object. Others say it's a form of environmentalism—using up what you have and only buying what you need. Or perhaps it's a way to cope with the high cost of living.

Gosh, what a concept! My dear late dad, a Greatest (1919) would be proud of them. He lived by the motto, "Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without."

Maybe the next Greatest Generation is among us. **GT**