Photo Credit: Chris Bethell, VICE

What to Expect as Gen Z Starts to Parent

Joe Waters, Capita, CEO
Meghan Chaney, Openfields, Sr. Manager

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What You'll Learn Here

- ➔ Demographics, characteristics, and values of Gen Z
- ➔ Environmental influences and societal trends shaping them
- ➔ How they're likely to parent differently than previous generations
- ➔ Where Gen Z gets information and how to engage them
- ➔ Possible futures for Gen Z

Photo Credit: Chris Bethell, VICE

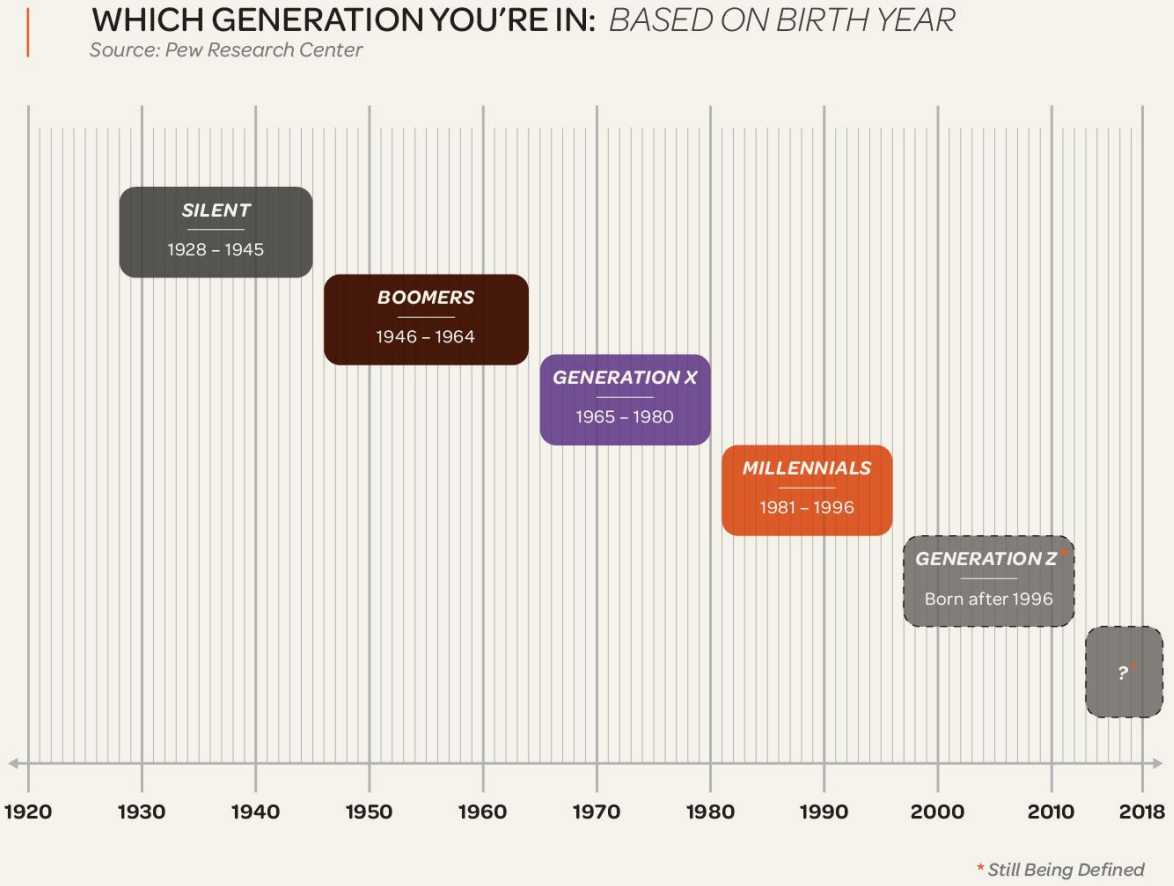
Gen Z Defined

Born after 1996

*No chronological endpoint has been established for this group yet. Likely to end sometime between 2010-2015 since generation delineations have followed approximately a 15 year cycle.

Oldest members of Gen Z turn 24 this year

Other names: Centennials, iGen, post-millennials



A Snapshot of Gen Z

True Digital Natives

Never known life without internet, smartphones, social media. Tech-fluent not just tech savvy. Navigate life seamlessly between virtual and non-virtual.

Pro-Government

More likely than older generations to look to government rather than businesses and individuals to solve problems.

Politically, Socially Progressive

See the country's growing diversity and changes to family structures and societal norms as a positive thing.

Social Justice Oriented

Value individuality, diversity and inclusion. Aware of injustice and inequality in society and are engaged in creating change, promoting fairness and equality.

Gen Z compared to other Generations

Most Racially & Ethnically Diverse

Gen Z is projected to be majority nonwhite by 2026. 1 in 4 are Hispanic.

Most Educated

Less likely to dropout of high school and more likely to be enrolled in college than all previous generations.

Loneliest

8 in 10 say they're lonely.

Worst Mental Health & More Likely to Seek Support with Mental Health

More likely to report poor mental health than any other generations. 6 in 10 Gen Z young adults report suffering from anxiety or depressive disorders. 37% have received therapy or treatment from a mental health professional.

Environmental Influences Shaping Gen Z

- Smartphones + Social Media
- Global economic recession
- War on Terror — *though too young to really remember 9/11 or were born after*
- Helicopter parents
- Mass shootings, active shooter drills in schools
- More frequent and intense natural disasters

Values Driving Gen Z's Behavior

The search for the truth is at the root of all Generation Z's behavior.

'Undefined ID'
"Don't define yourself in only one way"

Expressing individual truth

'Communaholic'
"Be radically inclusive"

Connecting through different truths

'Dialoguer'
"Have fewer confrontations and more dialogue"

Understanding different truths

Realistic
"Life life pragmatically"

Unveiling the truth behind all things

Gen Z Characteristics

Worried, cautious, risk-averse

Less idealistic about their future. Very concerned about how the economy, growing inequality, climate change will impact their futures.

Slower to “grow up”

Engaging later and less often in “coming of age” activities like getting a driver’s license, drinking, spending time with friends without parents, dating, and having sex.

Financially pragmatic and frugal

Raised during the Great Recession and coming of age in the COVID-19 induced recession, they are pragmatic spenders and frugal savers who think critically about how and where they spend their money.

Independent Thinkers

As individualists with declining trust for traditional institutions, government leaders, and news sources, they use their digital fluency to access information to form their own opinions and make decisions.

Socially, Politically Active

Aware of, and comfortable driving change on, many social justice issues. Key issues important to Gen Z include: climate change, income inequality, affordable health care, racism, gun violence, police brutality, and fair treatment of people of color and LGBT individuals

Overwhelmingly Urban

Nearly 9 in 10 Gen Zers live in urban or suburban areas (13% live in rural)

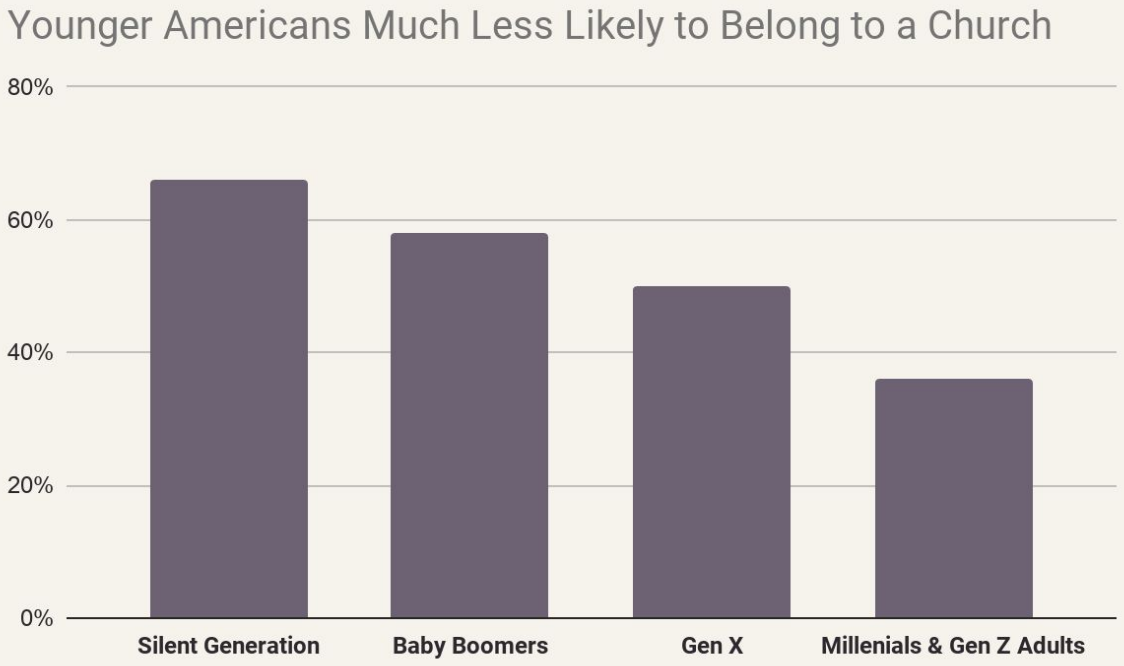
More Likely to be Second Generation Immigrant

22% of Gen Z has at least one immigrant parent, up from 14% of millennials. Only 6% are immigrants themselves, down from 7% millennials

Gen Z craves community, but is less likely to belong to formal groups

Gen Z is looking for connection, community, “something bigger than themselves”. But, they’re less likely to be connected to groups and institutions like a house of worship, organized sports leagues, and civic groups— places were Americans have traditionally found community.

Only 1 in 3 Gen Z adults belong to a church, synagogue, or mosque, compared to nearly 2 in 3 members of the oldest generation.



Increasingly Identify as LGBT

1 in 6 Gen Z adults (aged 18-23) considers themselves LGBT. Of those Gen Z adults who are LGBT, 72% say they are bisexual, this is compared to about half of millennial LGBT adults identifying as bisexual.

More Comfortable with Gender Fluidity

1 in 3 Gen Z adults personally know someone who goes by gender-neutral pronouns. 6 in 10 Gen Z adults say that when a form asks about gender it should include options other than “man” and “woman” and about half say society isn’t accepting enough of people who don’t identify as “man” or “woman”.

Gen Z is the leading edge of American's less traditional views on marriage and parenting

With favorable views of cohabitation and negative views of single parenting, Gen Z views marriage as inessential but partnership as key to healthy relationship and parenting.

~9 in 10

believe couples living together without being married isn't harmful for society.

35%

say that single women raising children on their own is a bad thing for society.

Solid majorities of American adults now hold less traditional views on a range of moral issues impacting family life.

62%

of American adults say having children outside of marriage is acceptable.

29%

say it's very important for a couple to marry if they have a child.

91%

view birth control as morally acceptable.

60%

think that same-sex couples should be able to adopt children.

17%

of American adults, or nearly 1 in 5, view polygamy as morally acceptable.

Though marriage rates are declining and less than half (49%) of American adults are currently married, the desire to marry is still high with 8 in 10 singles saying that want to marry.

Do you think your generation is having more children than millennials did at your age?

"It's hard to say... I think maybe Gen Z is realizing you don't need to have a traditional family life, you don't need to have a house and get married. Maybe our generation is challenging social norms, which is a really good thing.
A family is what you make it."

HANNAH KILLEEN

Source: Chris Bethell, VICE

Gen Z likely to be the most impacted generation by the COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic intensified and accelerated existing trends. *It will be a defining event for this generation, likely entrenching and exacerbating the ways Gen Zers are already pragmatic, frugal, risk-averse, lonely, anxious, depressed, and worried about the economy, growing inequalities, and social injustices.*

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In many ways, the COVID-19 Pandemic has been more challenging for Gen Z than other generations

Record high unemployment + lifetime wage loss

- **Workers under the age of 25 experienced a 93% higher rate of layoffs during the pandemic than those over 35 years old.**
- Pandemic may bring another "lost decade", like Millennials experienced with Great Recession, that negatively impacts the lifetime earnings of Gen Z

Highest rates of loneliness during the Pandemic

- **61% of young people ages 18-25 and 51% of mothers of young children reported feeling lonely "frequently" or "almost all the time or all the time"** over a 4 week period in October 2020. This is compared to 36% of all American survey respondents.

Struggling at work more than other generations

- **60% of Gen Z (ages 18-25) employees reported they are merely surviving or flat-out struggling right now,** compared to 61% of business leaders, who are likely to be Gen X or Millennials, who report they are thriving.

How has it been raising a child through a pandemic?

“Really hard. She was two in December so this all started when she was 15 months old. We were going to baby classes, she was seeing other kids, but she hasn't been exposed to other children for a year now. I can see how that's had an effect on her. She seems confident running around here, but when we're in playgrounds, she's shy, very to herself. For me, it's been hard as well – I had a job which I then lost. I love being a mum, but having a break two or three times a week when I went to work helped.”

ZOE

Source: Chris Bethell, VICE

Photo Credit: Chris Bethell, VICE

ZOE, 23
MELODIE, 2

Gen Z's Pandemic-Formed Future

- *How will shutdowns and social distancing impact the development of younger members of Gen Z?*
- *How will disruptions to in-person education intensify existing achievement gaps for school-aged members of Gen Z?*
- *How might the many challenges of the pandemic further delay adulthood and starting a family for this generation that is already characterized as "growing up slowly"?*
- *How might the economic fallout of the pandemic destabilize the financial security of young vulnerable families?*

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When are members of Gen Z likely to have children?

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- **Gen Z has record low teen birth rates with just 17 births in 1,000 girls aged 15-19 in 2019. Birth rates have cut in half from the time Gen Z entered child bearing age,** plummeting from rates of 53 in 1996 and 34 in 2011
- **Trend of waiting longer to have children— average age for women is now 26,** up from 21 five decades ago, and **31 for men**, up from 27.
- After a decade of decline, motherhood and family size are ticking up. **Women today are more likely than women a decade ago to have children— and more of them.**
- Experts believe the **postponement of childbearing is likely to continue with Gen Z** given societal and economic trends

What We Might Expect from Gen Z as Parents

- **Accepting, understanding, empathetic** towards their children, as well as other children and their families.
- **Concerned, maybe even fearful, for their children's futures, but willing to be involved** in their community and politically to create a better future for their children.
- More likely than previous generations to **talk with their children about emotions and mental health, equip them with social-emotional skills, and seek mental health treatment** when needed.
- Likely to be **hands-on parents who value sharing experiences alongside their children** in reaction to how they grew up with highly scheduled childhoods and technology as their babysitter.
- More likely than Gen X and Millennial parents to **recognize the potentially harmful impacts of technology and social media** and to possibly adapt their, and their children's, usage to buffer these negative impacts — but less likely to be able to build relationships without online connections.

What Institutions Need to Know about Engaging Gen Z

- ➔ They **refuse to be put in a box and will reject a "one size fits all" approach**. They expect personalization and an acceptance of differing lifestyles.
- ➔ They are **shrewd consumers who will not take information and advice at face value**. They will research issues for themselves and consult their extensive social networks to form an opinion and make decisions.
- ➔ They expect NGOs, businesses, government agencies and other institutions to be socially respectful and ethically responsible. They **will demand that organizations "practice what the preach" and act ethically.** When organizations actions do not align with their professed values, it will be be noticed by Gen Zers who will view them as inauthentic and even untrustworthy.
- ➔ Increasingly they **expect organizations to take a stance on social and political issues and will align themselves with orgs that have similar views and values as theirs**— and will distance themselves from those that don't. They see engagement and consumption as an expression of their values and identify.

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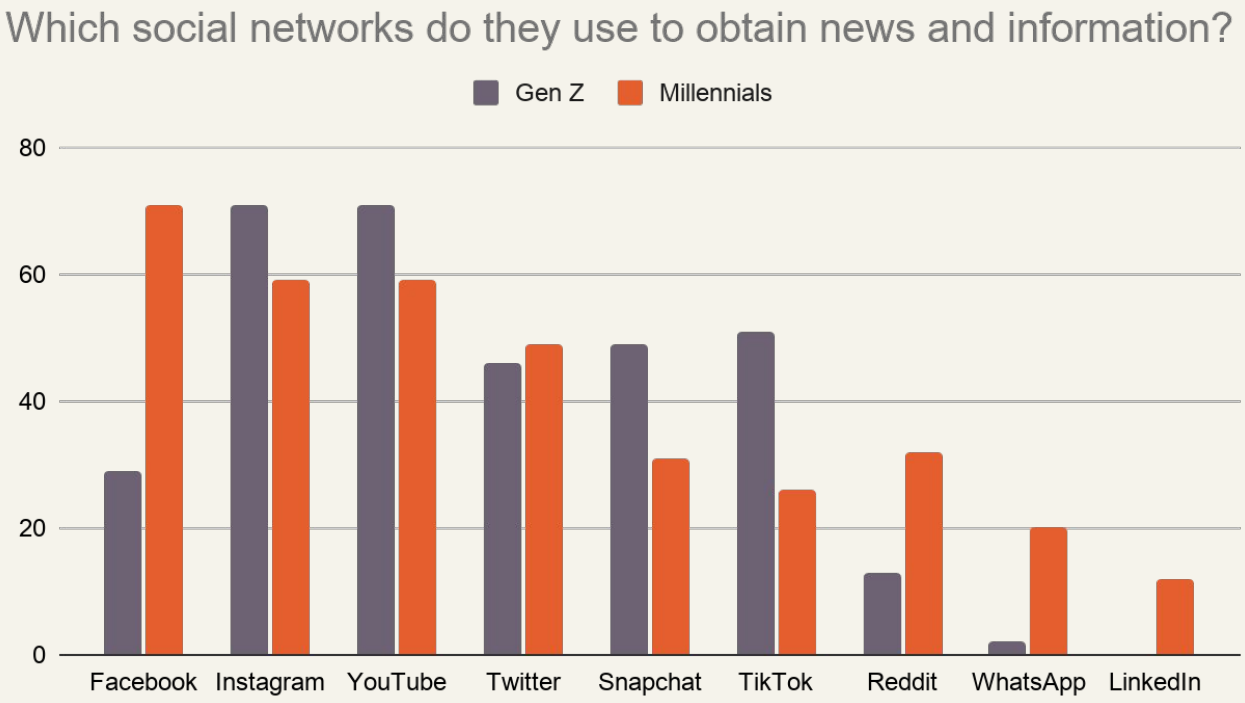
Where Gen Z Gets Information

Nearly half of Gen Z (49%) uses social media to get news and information. More than 1 in 4 (27%) say social media is their primary source for news

Millennials utilize social media for news at nearly the same rates as Gen Z but the generations use very different sources.



Source: Y Pulse Survey Data | June 12th, 2020 – June 16th, 2020

Mothers are increasingly turning to the internet and social media for parenting and infant health advice.

An peer-reviewed article from the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* found that mothers turn to social media because they appreciate the ability to gather unlimited information and multiple opinions quickly and anonymously. They also like the immediacy of affirmation, support, and tailored information through social media.

As the internet and social media are rapidly becoming important and trusted sources, it is important to look at who the information is coming from.

Influencer / n.

one who exerts influence : a person who inspires or guides the actions of others

a person who is able to generate interest in something (such as a consumer product) by posting about it on social media

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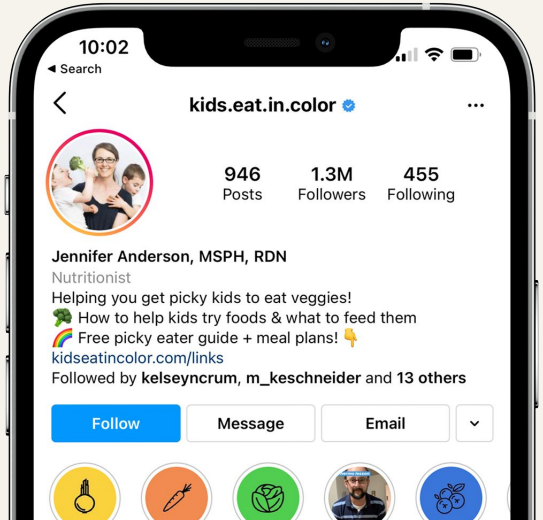
Mom-Influencing Industrial Complex

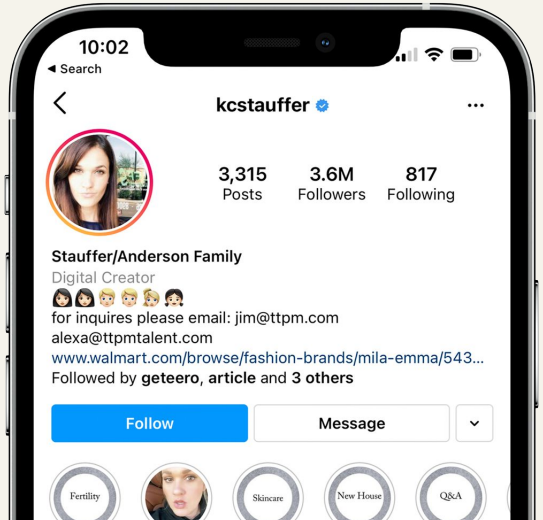
The typical equation for Instagram Influencers is:
$100 x 10,000 followers per post.

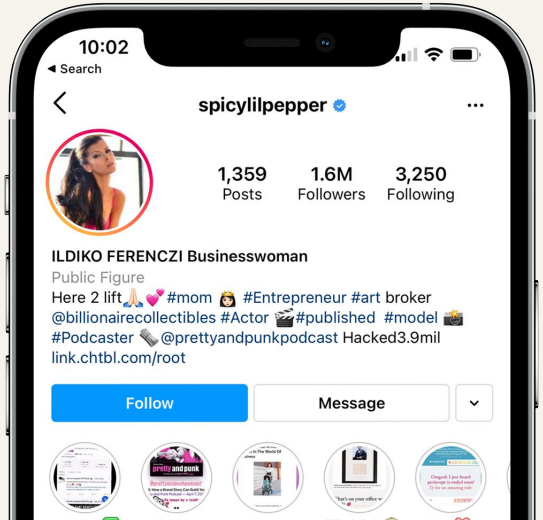
This equation means top **influencers with 500K+ followers can make upwards of $5,000 per post**. Most influencers post once per day. If only half their posts are sponsored, they can make at least $910,000 per year.

Much more common than the top influencers pushing a million dollar salary, are influencers with 250K+ followers. **These influencers can make $2,500 per post and easily $450K per year, landing them near the top 1% of income earners in America.**

Even more common are women who make $50K- $70K per year by monetizing their Instagrams.







A Range of Possible Futures for Gen Z as Parents

Gen Z's Mental Health Challenges

Will Gen Z's overwhelmingly poor mental health negatively impact their ability to provide nurturing, reciprocal relationships with their children?

Or, will their first-hand experience with mental health disorders and receiving therapeutic care make them more empathetic, attuned,, responsive parents?

Gen Z's Digital Fluency

Will growing up immersed in technology and social media negatively impact healthy social development, creating unhealthy ways of relating to each other and the world?

Or, will their digital nativism make them less enamored with technology and social media than the previous generations, making them more likely to see the harmful impacts and find healthier ways to interact with it in their personal and family life?

Gen Z's Worry of a Dystopian Future

Will Gen Z's pragmatism and concern for their future discourage them from bringing children of their own into the world — or if they do have children, will they pass on their anxieties?

Or, will having children of their own motivate them even more to create a more inclusive, equitable, sustainable world — and instill these values in the next generation?

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