

# PewResearchCenter

JANUARY 16, 2015

## This year, Millennials will overtake Baby Boomers

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This year, the “Millennial” generation is projected to surpass the outsized Baby Boom generation as the nation’s largest living generation, according to the population projections released by the U.S. Census Bureau last month. Millennials (whom we define as between ages 18 to 34 in 2015) are projected to number 75.3 million, surpassing the projected 74.9 million Boomers (ages 51 to 69). The Gen X population (ages 35 to 50 in 2015) is projected to outnumber the Boomers by 2028.

The Millennial generation continues to grow as young immigrants expand their ranks. Boomers – a generation defined by the boom in U.S. births following World War II – are older and shrinking in size as the number of deaths exceed the number of older immigrants arriving in the country.

Generations are analytical constructs and it takes time for popular and expert consensus to develop as to the precise boundaries demarcating one generation from another. The Pew Research Center has established that the oldest “Millennial” was born in 1981. The Center continues to assess demographic, attitudinal and other evidence on habits and culture that will help to establish when the youngest “Millennial” was born or even when a new generation begins (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/03/11/the-next-america-on-the-daily-show/>). To distill the implications of the census numbers for generational heft, this analysis assumes that the youngest “Millennial” was born in 1997.

Here’s a look at some generational projections:

### Millennials

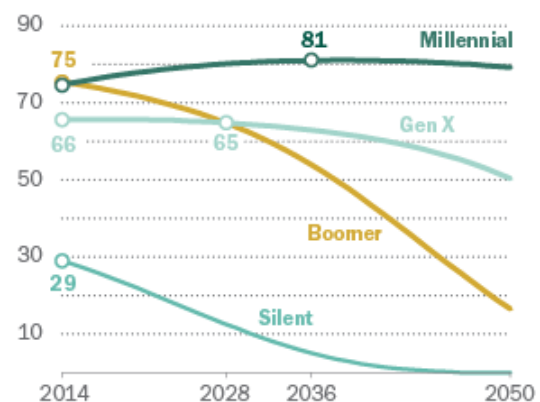
- The Census Bureau projects that the Millennial population was 74.8 million in 2014. By 2015 Millennials will increase in size to 75.3 million and become the biggest group.
- With immigration adding more numbers to its group than any other, the Millennial population is projected to peak in 2036 at 81.1 million. Thereafter the oldest Millennial will be at least 56 years of age and mortality is projected to outweigh net immigration. By 2050 there will be a projected 79.2 million Millennials.

### Generation X

- For a few more years, Gen Xers are projected to remain the “middle child” of generations – caught between

### Projected Population by Generation

In millions



Note: Millennials refers to the population ages 18 to 34 as of 2015.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of U.S. Census Bureau population projections released December 2014

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two larger generations of the Millennials and the Boomers. They are smaller than Millennials because the generational span of Gen X (16 years) is shorter than the Millennials (17 years). Also, the Gen Xers were born during a period when Americans were having fewer children than later decades. When Gen Xers were born, births averaged around 3.4 million per year, compared with the 3.9 million annual rate during the 1980s and 1990s when Millennials were born.

- Though the oldest Gen Xer is now 50, the Gen X population will still grow for a few more years. The Gen X population is projected to outnumber the Boomers in 2028 when there will be 64.6 million Gen Xers and 63.7 million Boomers. The Census Bureau projects that the Gen X population will peak at 65.8 million in 2018.

### Baby Boomers

- Baby Boomers have always had an outsized presence compared with other generations. They were the largest generation and **peaked at 78.8 million in 1999**.
- There were a projected 75.4 million Boomers in 2014. By midcentury, the Boomer population will dwindle to 16.6 million.

## The Generations Defined

### The Millennial Generation

Born: 1981 to 1997  
Age of adults in 2015: 18 to 34\*

### Generation X

Born: 1965 to 1980  
Age in 2015: 35 to 50

### The Baby Boom Generation

Born: 1946 to 1964  
Age in 2015: 51 to 69

### The Silent Generation

Born: 1928 to 1945  
Age in 2015: 70 to 87

### The Greatest Generation

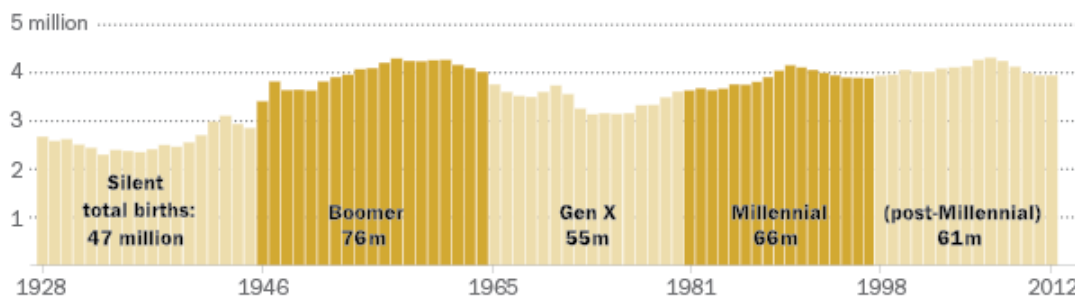
Born: Before 1928  
Age in 2015: 88 to 100

\* No chronological end point has been set for this group. For the purpose of following a cleanly defined group, Millennials are defined as those ages 18 to 34 in 2015.

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## Births Underlying Each Generation

*Number of U.S. births by year and generation*



Source: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services National Center for Health Statistics

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