

# SUMMING UP THE GENS

## FROM BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS



Designed by Freepik

by Kate Walker

Every 15 years we spawn an entirely new generation of human beings, and keeping track of who's X, Y or Z can be confusing. Luckily, every new spawning comes with distinct character traits.

### The Flower-power Rebels

Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) might have grey hair and arthritis now, but back in their youth they were wild ones. After World War II, everyone wanted peace and freedom, and BB's made a festival of it. They stuck flowers in their hair and belted out deafening rock music. Took the pill (contraceptive), made free love and protested against everything the establishment held dear. They invented *counter culture*, in other words.

Barely out of short pants, they turned fashion on its head. While conceiving babies out of wed-lock, they gave birth to the

mini-skirt, flared trousers and platform shoes. They liberated women from their bras and made sex icons of men, al la hip-swivelling Elvis and Mick Jager with his strut. They dropped out, tuned in, and turned on. Started the space race, invented television and watched man walk on the moon. They were the original break-out kids who rookied the whole thing – they launched the modern world.

### The Latchkey Moguls

Gen X (born 1965 to 1979) were the offspring of all that free love and dropping out. For this reason, they tended to grow up in single parent families. Or homes where both parents went out to work, hence the need for door keys to let themselves in. As babysitters, they had TV (in colour by 1975) and home computers through the 80s. The internet was still in diapers, but they had Rubix cubes and

Walkmans to keep them going off the rails. Compared to their parents, they were conservative and so well behaved.

They saw the cold war end and the threat of nuclear annihilation fade with it. But their breathe-easy time was short-lived. It came unstuck in 1973 with the Gulf oil crisis, followed by the '87 stock market crash – happening just when Gen X-ers were setting out in life, bent on earning a quid. Money was on everyone's mind. Greed and roller-coaster finances created billionaires overnight. And just as many bankrupts. No wonder Gen X was glued to TV shows like *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. And given to power-dressing in shoulder pads that would have done a grid iron player proud.

## The Digital Masters

Gen Y Millennials (born 1980 to 1995) opened their eyes on a world where everything that could blink, ping and connect human-to-human came on line. And being *connected* has coursed through their life-blood ever since. They cut their teeth on mobile phones. Became citizens of the ethernet. Invented online conferencing and collaborated en masse, churning out innovations so fast it was impossible to keep up, even with instant messaging.

Call it irony but their daily, online, virtual lives made them die-hard crusaders after the real thing. They began a globe-trotting exodus, and not just to Disneyland. They hankered after extreme sports and wilderness adventures, in the process inventing a whole new consumer *courtury*: outdoor

adventure clothing. At home, their free-wheeling spirit expressed itself in fashion that was loose and casual, ripped and layered – necessary for being wired to your computer one day, and hiking, biking or bushwhacking the next.

## The Chaos Kids

Gen Z zoomers (born 1996 to 2010) are children of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which they ushered in with hope and a great hurrah! Only to be silenced a year later by the 9/11 terrorist attack. Then the Thailand tsunami, the global financial crisis, the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, the Fukushima meltdown, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Zoomers learnt fast that the world could be unpredictable, hence it's not surprising they're a Gen of disdain and extremes.

They're the poorest Gen to date, yet they spend like there's no tomorrow. Why save? Fashion wise, they favour baggy and tight, colourful and bleak, designer and de Paul, and often all six clubbed together. Greed has little hold on them. Social platforms have too much. They're scornful of the mess previous Gens have created, having witnessed the world's greatest failures in social equality and technology. Yet, steered by their sympathies, they still believe in the wonders that people and technology can perform. If anyone is going to save the planet, it will be Gen Z.

~~~~~