

Are Gen X-ers still slackers?
Will Gen Y-ers ever move out of home?
Why are Zeds so spoiled?

Based on more than a decade of research, *The ABC of XYZ* is designed for educators, business managers and parents who want a short and lively introduction to Australia's living generations. The book explores what a generation is, how its definition has changed over the years, and the trends that are emerging for the future. It examines generational conflicts in the school, home and workplace, and the ways in which they can be understood and resolved, and what might lie beyond Z.

Written by one of Australia's foremost social researchers, this revised edition of *The ABC of XYZ* reveals the truth behind the labels and is essential reading for anyone interested in how our current generations live, learn and work.



Mark McCrindle,
Social Researcher



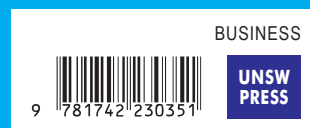
'A rollicking journey across time, generations and values ... forensically dissected by one of the best social analysts in Australia.'

Bernard Salt, demographer and columnist; Partner, KPMG

'When it comes to generational change, there are few who have the depth of research and breadth of understanding that Mark McCrindle does. His observations are accurate, his insights are profound and his predictions are compelling.'

Michael McQueen, author of The 'New' Rules of Engagement

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the
ABC of
XYZ



Mark McCrindle
with Emily Wolfinger

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the
ABC
of
XYZ

Understanding the Global Generations



Mark McCrindle
with Emily Wolfinger

**AS SEEN ON Channel Seven Sunrise, Channel Ten
7pm Project, Channel Nine Today Show**



The ABC of XYZ

MARK MCCRINDLE is a social researcher with an international reputation for tracking the emerging trends and analysing the diverse generations. He is the Founder and Director of McCrindle Research (www.mccrindle.com.au), whose clients include over 100 multinational organisations. His highly valued research and reports have developed his renown as a futurist, demographer and social commentator.

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To Arbie (Ruth), my dear wife. I married way over my head – thanks for helping me swim. And to our own little tribe of Gen Zeds: Acacia, Jasper, Zari and Brighton, and our Gen Alpha: Corban.

Mark McCrindle

To my parents, Elizabeth and Allan, thank you for showing me the way – and for your encouragement. And to my boys – husband Rudi and son Joey – and daughter, Pearl – you are my inspiration.

Emily Wolfinger

the
ABC
of
XYZ

Understanding the Global Generations



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with Emily Wolfinger

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| FOREWORD

There are those who regard generational theory as something akin to astrology: 'X-ers, beware ascendant Y-ers in the workplace ... and Boomers, late in life you will be irresistibly drawn towards the sea.'

But this assessment is both unkind and misinformed. The fact is that there are very real differences between the life experiences of the generations, especially over the latter decades of the 20th century. Boomers were raised in large traditional families where the father was the sole breadwinner; Ys are often single kids raised by two working parents. These facts immediately separate the childhood experiences of two generations. But generational theory goes further to link factors exogenous to the home. Music, fashion, politics, as well as gender relations, all evolve and pass key milestones at different times.

One of the most important social events of recent decades was the evolution of the women's rights movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Regardless of individual family circumstances, a person transitioning from teenage to late 20s over the period of this social revolution cannot but have been shaped by these events – especially compared with someone completing the same 'age transition' 20 years earlier.

In this regard, generational theory is a complex amalgam of personal demographics and relationships, as well as of broader social and political influences. Indeed, so numerous are the influences on the values and ideals of each genera-

tion that it becomes difficult – some say almost impossible – to untangle what it all means. And, of course, the reason why this is important is because collective generational thinking can drive consumer and worker behaviour.

It is easier to connect with workers once you understand how they see the world. It becomes easier to develop products and services if you understand the mind and mood of the target market: not that knowing about generational theory means success in communication is guaranteed.

For example, I am always mightily amused, and somewhat offended, by businesses seeking to connect with Baby Boomers by showing footage of hippies at Woodstock in 1969 or by playing the pop music of the late 1960s. While these images and sounds connect with a generation, it assumes that the generation has not moved on. Other quite significant stuff has happened in Baby Boomer lives since they grooved and bopped to Jimi Hendrix.

One of the issues with generational theory is that it is extraordinarily popular: I am quite sure the media would run a generation story every day if they could get the content. Not that ‘content’ seems to be an important consideration in some media stories about the generations. But this is also why the work of Mark McCrindle is so important. Drawing on a mix of quantitative surveys and focus group research, Mark deftly illuminates the light and shade of the different generations. And he goes further to show how these differences might be used in business and by management.

The ABC of XYZ is a rollicking journey across time, generations and values that have been forensically dissected by one of the best social analysts in Australia.

Bernard Salt

| INTRODUCTION

Generational issues are a perennial favourite. Analysing one’s own generation and comparing it to the next is of great interest to the media and the public alike. With more generations coexisting than ever before – in the home, school, workplace and marketplace – this interest has never been more so than today.

Indeed, media coverage on the generations, particularly the younger, emerging generations, abounds in an attempt to appease our desire to better understand and engage with each other: our employees, colleagues, students and children. I am contacted almost daily – by the media, business men and women, and parents – to talk about the generations. With this saturation of media on the generations, identifying what is fact and what is hype and conjecture can be a challenge.

While some generational commentary reads much like an astrological chart, genuine research-based generational studies now form an important part of sociology.

Yet it is more than an academic discipline. The insights and applications that flow from robust generational analysis is of great value to business leaders, educators and parents. Generational segmentation, like any professional discipline, is only useable when conducted by experts.

Caution is needed because generational stereotypes and conjecture find their way into the workplace and the press. We’ve all heard the hype that ‘Young people today do not have any sense of commitment’. But these are feelings, not

People should give more weight to:	People should give less weight to:
Social researchers	Pop commentators
Statistically valid studies	Evidence by case study alone
Empirical evidence	Anecdotal evidence
Research-based results	Experience-based reports
Segmentation analysts	Motivational speakers
Demographers, sociologists and social psychologists	Self-appointed experts
Social science methodology	Speculation
Research findings	Opinion pieces

McCrinkle, M. & Beard, M. (2006) In defence of Gen Y, *Marketing*, <www.mccrinkle.com.au/resources.htm>, accessed 19 November 2010

findings. Once these ‘findings’ are out in the media, they are reported on in numerous papers and programs, morphing, somewhat like the Chinese whisper, into something even further removed from the truth.

Understanding the generations is playing an increasingly bigger role today in the process of understanding each other, with more diversity now existing between the generations than ever before. For business leaders and marketers, generational segmentation is a logical first step. Indeed, it is fallacious to dismiss the longstanding practice of generational segmentation purely because of some misleading generalisations. Clayton Christensen and Michael Raynor, writing for the *Harvard Business Review*, warn: ‘Beware of work urging revolutionary change of everything. This is the fallacy of jumping directly from description to theory.’¹ To dismiss a generalisation (such as ‘Generation Y are brand-fickle consumers’) with another generalisation (like ‘The Generation Y segment is a myth’) is illogical. The very argu-

ment collapses on itself. It is self-evident that variety exists within a generation.

I am reminded of that apocryphal story about a Baby Boomer journalist who was writing an article about Gen Y. Approaching an 18-year-old for comment he said: ‘In my research for this article I’ve found two big problems with Generation Y. The first is your ignorance of the basics of life and culture, and the second is your apathy – you have been labelled as “slackers”. So what is the worst of these two problems for you personally – your ignorance, or your apathy?’ The young man stood there trying to make sense of this tirade when he decided to give a succinct answer. ‘Mate,’ said the young man looking the Boomer in the eye, ‘I don’t know, and I don’t care.’

What this highlights is that Y-ers know what’s going on behind the subtext and we don’t need to be patronising or to stereotype them – or any other generation. Certainly the times, events, education and workplace experiences are very different today, but we don’t need to assume that the 4.7 million Australians born from 1980–94 neatly fit into some category.

Why we wrote this book

For the last decade I have spent much of my time researching the emerging generations and conducting focus groups across different market segments. Back in 1999 I began running workshops and delivering presentations on the emerging Generation X. By 2005 it seemed that the X-ers were passé, as all of the focus had shifted to Generation Y. Today the focus is increasingly on Generation Z as their parents, educators, business leaders and marketers try to understand

and engage with this new generation. In the past several years, when giving talks on the generations at seminars and conferences, I was often asked ‘Do you have a book on that?’ Therefore, in 2009 I finally decided to turn many years of generational research into a definitive book on the new generations, and the first edition was released in November 2009. By early 2010, there was need for a second print run, and so this is the second edition.

The ABC of XYZ is based on comprehensive research, including quantitative and qualitative research, as well as desk research (both primary and secondary). Quantitative research was gathered from almost 200 surveys completed by more than 100 000 research participants via our online panel AustraliaSpeaks.com. Qualitative research was gathered during dozens of focus groups conducted at our research facility in Sydney (www.researchrooms.com). In addition to national statistics (from the Australian Bureau of Statistics), we drew on the works of other generational writers and demographers including Australians Hugh Mackay, Peter Sheahan, Rebecca Huntley, Michael Grose and Bernard Salt, and Americans Claire Raines, Rosemary Herceg, Neil Howe and Bill Strauss.

Before writing this book, I was often asked if I had written anything on Generation Z. There is a lot of interest in the Zeds, but very little written on them, especially from a business perspective. In *The ABC of XYZ* we look at Gen Z in detail – from parenting this ‘cotton wool’ generation to educating and leading them. Michael Grose’s well-received *XYZ: The new rules of generational warfare*, published in 2005, is the only Australian book which looks at the Zeds at length, albeit from a parenting perspective.

Rebecca Huntley’s *The World According to Y* looks at those

Australians entering their 20s and Peter Sheahan, generational expert, brought out a book in 2005 on Generation Y, titled *Generation Y: Surviving with Generation Y at work*. However, no book since Hugh Mackay’s *Generations*, published in 1997, has discussed more than one Australian generation in depth. In *The ABC of XYZ* we look at all seven living Australian generations. We commence by detailing the demographics of the generations and their times, listing the trends and technologies which have defined them, and discussing their values, attitudes and lifestyles. The chapters following on from this are dedicated to the younger generations, X, Y and Z – and the generation born from 2010, Generation Alpha. In these chapters we look at parenting and raising Zeds and younger Y-ers through to marketing to the sceptical X-ers, Y-ers and Zeds.

The ABC of XYZ is unique in that it is a comprehensive guide to understanding and engaging with *all* living generations. While this book focuses on Australia’s generations X, Y and Z, it also looks at these generations internationally and discusses the other generations at length. It is of course in understanding the generations that came before the X-ers, Y-ers and Zeds, as well as the generations globally, that one can gain a true understanding of them.

We briefly touch on the Federation Generation, of whom very little has been written. While the terms Zed, Y-er, X-er, Boomer and Builder are used with great familiarity, most have never heard of the Federation Generation, born between 1901 and 1924. In the final chapter we address the question the media and our clients probably ask most: ‘What will the next generation be like and what will it be called?’

In short, *The ABC of XYZ* covers a lot of ground, from

defining what a generation is to looking at our youngest generation, the Alphas.

More than a guide on the generations, with a focus on Australia's Generations X, Y and Z, this book was written to be a fun and entertaining read. We have added useful and interesting tables, graphs and break-out boxes. While primarily a book for business people – managers, employers, leaders and marketers – *The ABC of XYZ* was also written with educators and parents in mind, with a chapter dedicated to educating the younger generations and, also, parenting and raising them. This book will be of interest to:

- employers and managers at all levels: the interest is both professional (to help them understand younger employees) and personal (most Baby Boomers have Generation Y children, and many X-ers have Gen Z children)
- educators: I am privileged to address hundreds of teachers at education conferences across the Asia Pacific region each year. My company, McCrindle Research, hosts the annual Education Future Forum <www.futureforum.com.au>, Australia's only one-day seminar focused on the key social, technological, governmental, economic and demographic trends redefining the education sector. This demonstrates both the interest this sector has in engaging with the new generations and the need among educators to understand them
- other employees: in addition to greater differences existing between the generations, we now have more generations interacting in our workplaces than ever before – the need to understand the generations has never been greater

- marketers: at McCrindle Research we have an extensive list of clients, which includes most of Australia's largest corporations; what this shows is that generational analysis plays an important role in the marketing sector
 - parents: when I talk to clients at conferences, the interest I see in the generations, particularly Australia's youngest generations, is not only on a professional level but a personal one too, as many clients are parents also.
- The ABC of XYZ* is a book for anyone who has ever experienced generational angst and wants to gain insight into the mindset of other generations, particularly the emerging Generations X, Y and Z. Readers will also learn more about their generation, and the factors that helped shape their own personality, attitudes, values and lifestyle.

1 GENERATIONS DEFINED

'One generation passes away, and another generation comes.'

Ecclesiastes 1:4

With any discussion on the different generations, an important first step is to define the term 'generation'.

Traditionally, a generation has been defined as 'the average interval of time between the birth of parents and the birth of their offspring'.¹ This biological definition has placed a generation for millennia at around 20–25 years in span. While in the past this definition has served sociologists well, it is irrelevant today. Because cohorts are changing so quickly in response to new technologies, changing career and study options and shifting societal values, two decades is far too broad a generational span.

Also, if we apply a biological definition today, a generation would span a larger time than ever as childbirth is pushed back later than ever. On average, the time between birth of parents and birth of their offspring has stretched out from two decades to more than three. In 1982, the median age of a woman having her first baby was 25, while today it is 31.²

So today generations are defined sociologically rather than biologically. A generation refers to a cohort of people born within a similar span of time (15 years at the upper

end) who share a comparable age and life stage and who were shaped by a particular span of time (events, trends and developments).

Generational experts William Strauss and Neil Howe agree that generations are shaped by a particular span of time: 'A generation is a group of people who share a time and space in history that lends them a collective persona.' They also say that the 'span of a generation is roughly the length of a phase of life'. However, with the traditional life stages and their respective responsibilities no longer applicable to today's children and youth, this definition is not entirely helpful. Childhood is increasingly being cut short, while the traditional adult responsibilities typically emerging in the 20s and 30s are being delayed. Thirty is the new 21!

More so now than ever, the commonalities of today's generations cut through global, cultural and socio-economic boundaries. Due to globalisation, largely made possible through the various technologies of today, the youth in Australia, the USA, the UK, Germany and Japan are shaped by the same events, trends and developments: they are avid users of social media and online technologies, are witnessing an unprecedented ageing in their populations, and are more financially endowed and formally educated than any generation preceding them.

Even beyond these developed countries young people are logged on and linked up. From Beijing to Bangalore, from Buenos Aires to Brisbane, we have a generation accessing the same websites, watching the same movies, downloading the same songs and being influenced by the same brands. Today we have the world's first global generation. Therefore we define a generation as a group of people born in the same era, shaped by the same times and influenced by

the same social markers – in other words, a cohort united by age and life stage, conditions and technology, events and experiences.

Generational characteristics: not a passing fad

Some may argue that such attributes as the limited attention span of Gen Y, Australia's current adolescent and young adult population, is a trait of all young people regardless of the time they were born into, or a passing fad and not a generational trait that they will carry through to mid-life and old age. However, generational characteristics are not merely a factor of life stage, or a fad that they will outgrow. While people of various ages are living through the same events, the age at which one is exposed to a political shift, technological change or social marker determines how embedded it becomes in one's psyche and worldview.

National statistics further demonstrate that generational diversity is not just a matter of life stage. For example, the average age at first marriage for Gen Y today is 28 for a female and 30 years for a male.³ In 1982, when the youngest of the Boomers were in their early 20s, the average age at marriage was 22 for females and 24 for males.⁴ Among the factors deemed responsible for Generation Y's unwillingness to commit to binding relationships are relaxed moral codes and high divorce rates. As is evidenced by these statistics, delaying the markers of adulthood (such as marriage, having children, getting a mortgage and a steady career) is characteristic of the Y-ers, just as loyalty – to spouse, boss, brand and country – is characteristic of the Builders. The

old Jesuit saying holds true: ‘Give me a child until he is seven, and I will show you the man.’⁵

Of course, youth of all eras demonstrate some similar characteristics such as an experimental lifestyle, questioning the status quo, idealism and pushing the boundaries. However, you would not say that those growing up in the 1970s were the same as those who came of age in the 1990s and those who are coming of age today. While age influences behaviour and attitudes, greater impacts are made by the culture in which one lives out one’s youth, as well as social markers – significant events during one’s formative years. There is an ancient saying that bears much truth: ‘People resemble their times more than they resemble their parents.’⁶

The technology, mass marketing, politics and pop culture in which today’s youth have grown up have ensured a significant difference to previous youth cultures. And because of the different times, conditions and social markers, these generations have different aspirations and worldviews. The younger generations – Y and Z – are environmentally and politically conscious. Recent Australian elections revealed increased youth voting for the Greens political party, as well as an increasing concern and demand for the creation of new and positive environmental policies. This is especially reflected in the younger generations’ support of popular cultural events such as WaveAid, Make Poverty History and Live Earth, which demonstrate awareness of the need for charity and environmental lobbying. Such attitudes are further reinforced by the music artists they support, with performers like Sandi Thom and John Butler writing songs about how they were ‘born too late into a world that doesn’t care’ and how we should treat our planet with respect.

Strauss and Howe theorise that just as history moulds

generations, generations mould history. In their books *Generations* and *The Fourth Turning*, they divide Anglo-American history into seasonal cycles and label the generations according to which cycle they were born into. The four cycles can be compared to a swinging pendulum. The pendulum sways from one side to the other, always succumbing to gravity and stopping at its lowest, central point. Similarly, Strauss and Howe’s cycles of history are repeated in the following manner: a crisis period (one extreme), a high period (the other extreme) and the awakening and unravelling periods (the quieter periods).

The pendulum-like cycles of history are poetically summed up by famous novelist DH Lawrence in *Classical American Literature*: ‘Men fight for liberty and win it with hard knocks. Their children, brought up easy, let it slip away again, poor fools. And their grandchildren are once more slaves.’

Hugh Mackay and Phil Ruthven, well-known Australian social researchers, draw on the work of Strauss and Howe for Australia’s generations – from the Federation Generation to the young Zeds. A valid criticism of the cyclical models of generations is that they give an impression of generations as seasons, neatly rotating through the eras. Most social analysts find the symmetry too compliant for a real-world situation with infinite variables and influences. However, the broader point holds true – each generation is a factor of its times and a reaction to the generation that went before it.

Prophet/Idealist – the Baby Boomers

Born during a high, spend young adult years in an awakening, midlife during an unravelling and old age in a crisis. This generation was born into the high of the postwar boom. The

civil rights movement, which characterised the Boomers as young adults, is the most recent example of an awakening.

Nomad/Reactive – Generation X

Born during an awakening, spend young adult years during an unravelling, midlife during a crisis and old age in a new high. The X-ers lived out their young adult years in the pre-September 11 world of relative peace and prosperity.

Hero/Civic – Generation Y and the Federation Generation

Born during an unravelling, spend young adult years during a crisis, midlife during a high and old age in an awakening. Gen Y-ers, as young adults, are now living through the crisis period of post-September 11. The Federation Generation – the parents of the Builders – are also of this generation type. Born during a time of peace when Australia finally secured

nationhood, the Federation Generation entered adulthood at a crisis point marked by World War I and the Great Depression. They fought in both World Wars and experienced the high of the postwar boom as they entered their 40s. A very small percentage of this generation is still living.

Artist/Adaptive – The Builders and the Zeds

Born during a crisis, spend young adult years in a new high, midlife in an awakening and old age in an unravelling. The Builders were born into the crisis period of the Great Depression and World War II, and started their families as young adults during the postwar boom. They were in their 40s and 50s when their children, the Boomers, led the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The Zeds have been born into the crisis period of terrorism, the global recession and climate change. They are predicted to spend their young adult years in a time of economic and social renewal.

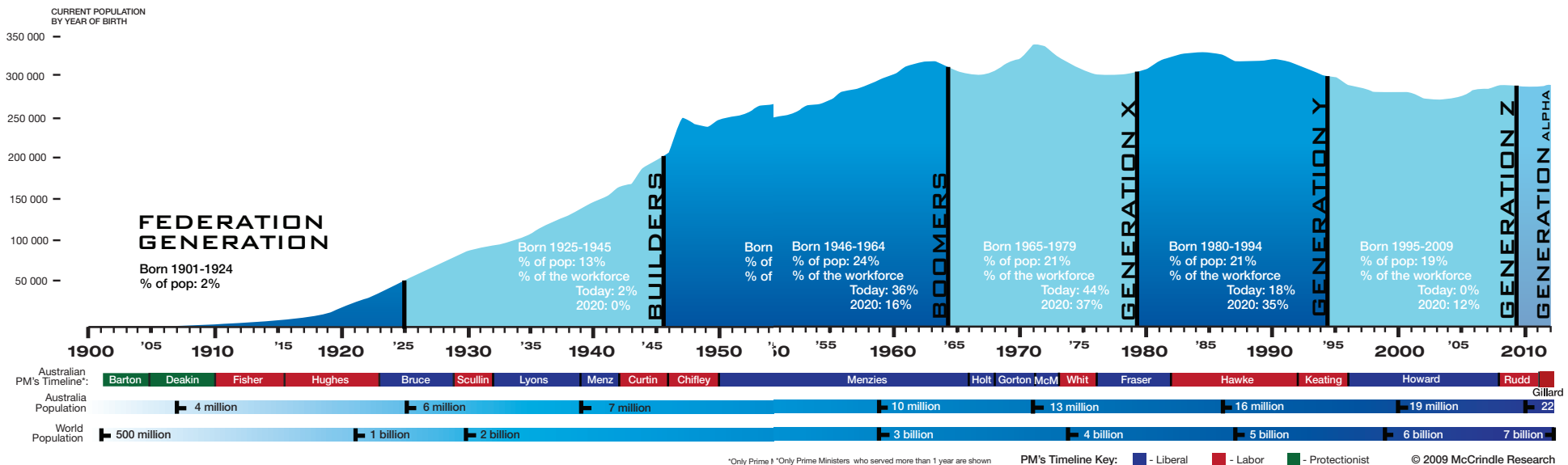


Figure 1.1 | Australian generations

Understanding your generation

While most of us have heard of the Builders, Boomers, Gen X-ers, Y-ers and Zeds, not many would be aware that another, older generation is still living, the youngest in their 90s, which means there are seven living generations in Australia (including Generation Alpha – more on this generation in the final chapter). This generation is called the Federation Generation.

Federation Generation

The Feds, Australia's oldest living generation, and the first to be labelled and profiled, started in the year Australia became a nation (1901), hence their name. The last of this generation were born in 1924. They were young men and women during the Depression and the World Wars, fighting in both wars. The Builders are often mistakenly seen as the generation that fought in World War II and while many older Builders did, it was the Federation Generation men who made up the bulk of World War II soldiers.

The Federation Generation witnessed some of the most iconic events and have seen unprecedented change. They were alive when the *Titanic* sank and when Australian women were given the right to vote. They are the parents of the Builders and the great-grandparents of the Zeds!

Feds in the spotlight

Louis Armstrong
Marlene Dietrich
Adolf Hitler

Builders

The Builders, Australia's current senior generation, were born between 1925 and 1945, during the Depression and the war years.⁷ They were commonly referred to as the 'greatest' generation and Hugh Mackay, in his book *Generations*, labels them the 'lucky' generation because of the years of relative comfort that followed World War II.⁸

The JAZZ age

Billie Holiday, 'God bless the child'
Louis Armstrong, 'When the saints go marching in'
Ella Fitzgerald, 'My funny valentine'

Since the early 1920s, with the exception of the baby boom years, the child population as a proportion of the general population has steadily declined – from 32 per cent to under 20 per cent today. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Australia's total fertility rate (TFR) reached its lowest point, up to that time, of only 2.1 babies per woman, compared to 3.1 less than a decade earlier.⁹ Obvious contributors to this decline in TFR in the 1930s were great poverty and joblessness – effects of the Depression experienced throughout the western world.¹⁰

TIME Person of the Year

1927 Walter P Chrysler, founder of the Chrysler Corporation
1930 Mohandas K Gandhi, political and spiritual leader of India
1938 Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of Germany 1934–45

Boomers

The end of World War II was the key event to shape the generations in the western world. Rarely in history is there

an event that so impacts a culture as this one did. The years after the war were the mirror opposite of the war years, with the Depression and war replaced by economic growth and full employment. Austerity was overtaken by technological advancement and increasing freedom. Yet even more significantly, in the years after World War II, there was an unparalleled baby boom and immigration program. This 19-year population boom literally birthed a generation.¹¹ The Boomers came close to doubling Australia's population between 1946 and 1964 – from 7 to 12 million.

The ROCK 'N' ROLL age

Elvis Presley, 'Blue suede shoes'
The Beatles, 'Let it be'
Simon & Garfunkel, 'Mrs Robinson'

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines the Baby Boomers as 'those who were born in Australia or overseas during the years 1946 to 1964'.¹² The fertility rate began its rapid rise in 1946, peaking in 1961, and by 1965 it had dropped again to just below the 1946 level.¹³

TIME Person of the Year

1949 Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
1940–45
1952 Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom 1952–current
1961 John F Kennedy, President of the United States 1961–63

Generation X

The Gen X-ers are also clearly demographically defined as those born between 1965 and 1979 inclusive. In 1965 the number of births began to increase from the post-Baby

Boomer low, peaking in the early 1970s before dropping back to another low in 1979. Just to show how solid this definition of Generation X is in Australia, in 1965 there were 223 000 births and after a rise and fall there were, in 1979, again 223 000 births. The peak year was 1972 when there were 268 711 births – a record number of births that stood for more than three decades. By comparison, only in 2007 did Australia set a new birth record of 276 361 even though the population was 60 per cent larger than it was in 1972.¹⁴

The DISCO/PSCHEDELIC/SOUL age

Bee Gees, 'Stayin' alive'
Bob Dylan, 'The times they are a-changin''
James Brown, 'Papa's got a brand new bag'

Originally labelled Baby Busters, Post Boomers or Slackers, only the label Generation X (or X-er) has stuck.

TIME Person of the Year

1971 Richard M Nixon, President of the United States 1969–74
1975 American Women
1979 Ruhollah Khomeini, political leader of the 1979 Iranian
Revolution

Generation Y

The Y-ers are those born between 1980 and 1994 inclusive. Again the definition is demographically reliable. In 1980 the number of births once more began to gradually increase, hitting a peak of 264 151 births in 1992 – at the time the highest number of births since 1972. The births then dropped away through the rest of the 1990s, hitting

the lowest birth rate ever in 2001 (1.7 babies per woman) before beginning a recovery which has lasted the rest of the decade.

The POP/INDIE age

Spice Girls, 'Wannabe'
Madonna, 'Secret'
Nirvana, 'Smells like teen spirit'

Many attempts have been made to give alternative labels to Generation Y, from the trendy 'Millennials' and 'Dot.com Generation', to the more disparaging acronym KIPPERS (Kids In Parents Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings). But the alphabetised theme in naming the generations remains, and so the global label that has stuck is Generation Y.

TIME Person of the Year

1982 The computer
1987 Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, Head of State of the former USSR
1994 John Paul II, Pope of the Roman Catholic Church
1978–2005

Generation Z

As birth rates picked up in 1995, we had the beginnings of Generation Z. Marketers are tempted to begin a generation at a key year like, say, 2000, but there is no demographic or sociological justification for such date picking. The birth rates, in addition to the social changes and trends, give a solid basis to generational definitions.

The SINGER-SONGWRITER age

Guy Sebastian, 'Angels brought me here'
Good Charlotte, 'I don't wanna be in love'
Amy Winehouse, 'Rehab'

Generation Z demographics show the full results of Australia's declining fertility rates of the last few decades. However, the total fertility rate bottomed out at 1.77 (children per woman) in 2001 and the total births have increased every year since then, hitting new all-time records from 2006 with the TFR rising to 1.81. This mini-baby boom followed Peter Costello's urging of Australian couples to 'have one for mum, one for dad and one for the country' – and the promise of a \$3000 baby bonus in 2004!¹⁵ Prior to the mini-baby boom, the government actually increased the baby bonus from \$3000 to \$4000¹⁶ and today it stands at \$5000. Australia's TFR now stands at a relatively high 2.0 babies per woman (nearly back to replacement rates!).¹⁷

TIME Person of the Year

2000 George W Bush, President of the United States 2000–09
2006 You
2008 Barack Obama, President of the United States 2009–
current

Notwithstanding an increase in births in Australia, the Zeds have been born into a time when the TFR is at or below the replacement level of 2.1 on an unprecedented, global scale. In fact 104 countries are either at or below the replacement level.¹⁸

Table 1.1 | Total fertility rate (TFR) in 2000 and today

Country	TFR (2000)	TFR (Today)
Mali	6.89	7.29
Nigeria	5.66	4.91
Sudan	5.47	4.48
Pakistan	4.56	3.60
India	3.11	2.72
Mexico	2.67	2.34
Sri Lanka	1.98	1.99
United States	2.06	2.05
Iceland	2.08	1.90
New Zealand	1.80	2.10
Australia	1.79	2.00
China	1.70	1.79
United Kingdom	1.63	1.66
Germany	1.38	1.41
Italy	1.29	1.31
Russia	1.25	1.41
Japan	1.29	1.21
Singapore	1.16	1.09
Hong Kong	1.27	1.02

Central Intelligence Agency (2009), *The world factbook*, <www.cia.gov/index.html>, accessed 12 February 2009.

In response to declining child populations, governments around the world are offering incentives to encourage couples to have children. The last time governments offered incentives on such a similar scale was just after World War II.

Given the new definition of a generational span (15 years), 2009 marked the end of Generation Z and 2010 the start of the next generation.

Generational labels

Prior to the Baby Boomers, the practice of labelling a generation did not exist. Labels, where they did exist, were limited to a particular span of age, such as ‘this generation of young people’. However, because of the clear demographic impacts of the post-WWII generation, the term ‘Baby Boomer’ entered the vernacular. Sixty years on, this label remains the default term describing the cohort born in the birth-boom years of 1946–64. With the emergence of the Boomer label came the beginnings of a generational nomenclature.

It was inevitable, therefore, that commentators would look for terms to describe subsequent generations. And in the case of the generation following the Boomers perhaps Canadian author Douglas Coupland presented the solution they were looking for. Then just exiting his twenties, Coupland published his first novel, *Generation X: Tales for an accelerated culture*, in 1991. This fictional work explored his generation and – intentionally or otherwise – created a label that stuck. Ironically, the book was about a generation that defied labels – ‘just call us X’, he said. Yet the label remained, spawning the labels for Generations Y and Z also.¹⁹

It is amazing how many labels emerge for each generation, some repeating themselves again and again. The Builders, who lived through the Great Depression and World War II, share many of their generational labels with their parents, the Federation Generation, as they share characteristics: the Veterans, the Pre-War Generation, the GI Generation, the Seniors, the War Generation, Hero Generation and the Golden Oldies.

As illustrated in Table 1.2, the various labels given to Australia’s living generations – the Federation Generation

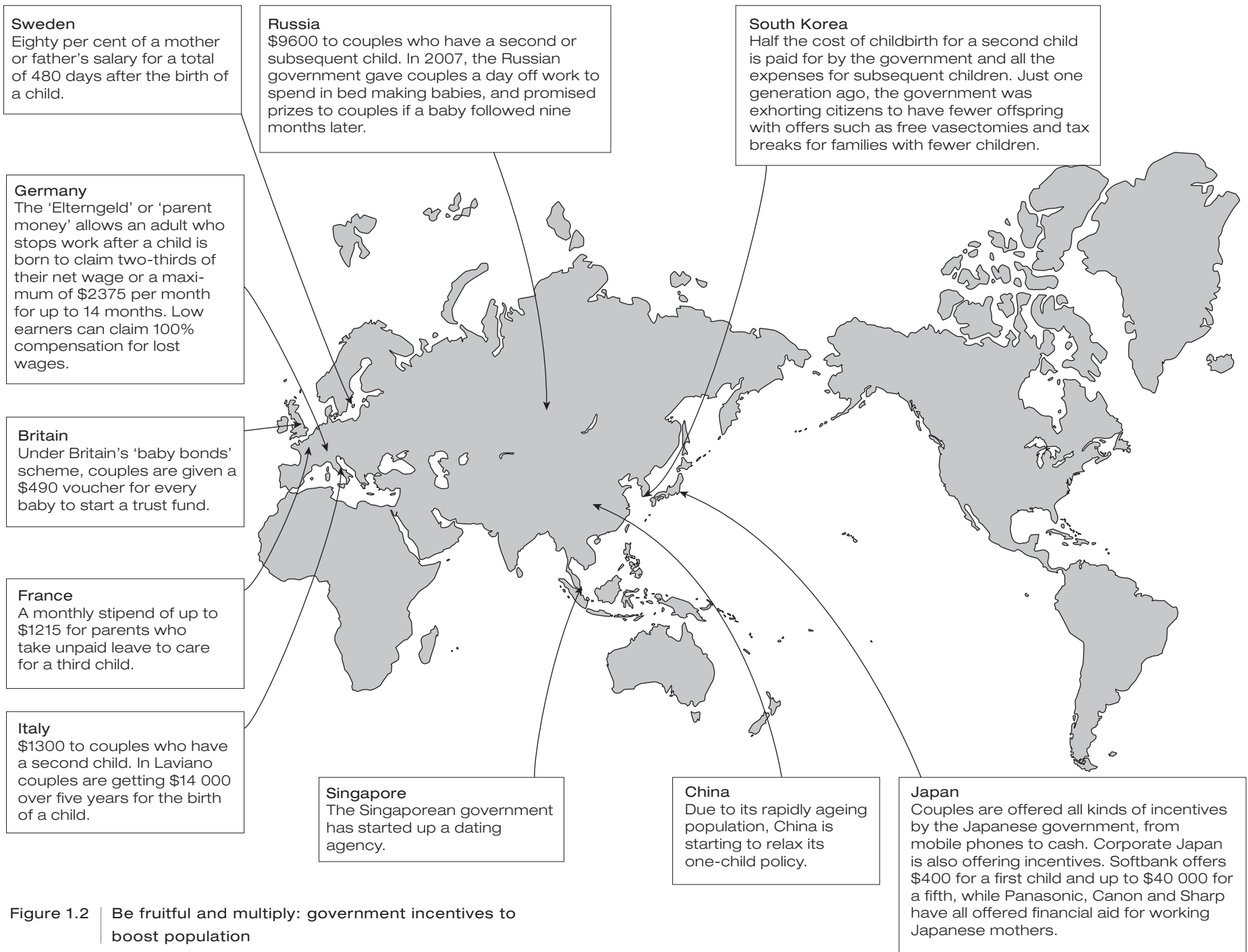


Figure 1.2 | Be fruitful and multiply: government incentives to boost population

Table 1.2 | Labels across the generations

Builders	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
The lucky generation	The baby boomers	The options generation	The millennials	Zeds (Australian English)
The veterans	Generation Jones (cusp generation)	Post-boomers	Net generation	Zees (American English)
Pre-boomers	The stress generation	Baby busters	Dot.com generation	Also, the millennials
The greatest generation	The sandwich generation	Slackers	Echo boomers	The new millennials
The silent generation (Those who were too young or too old to fight in WWI or WWII)	The new generation	Whiners	iGeneration	Also, iGeneration
The frugal generation	The me generation	MTV generation	Google generation	Also, the Internet generation
The pre-war generation	The love generation	The twenty/thirty-somethings	MySpace generation	Also, the C generation
The Depression generation	The lost generation	The backend boomers	Mypod generation	Also, the code generation
The beat generation	War babies	The doom generation	Nintendo Generation	Also, the content generation
The GI generation	Leading-edge boomers	X-er	The cynical generation	The neo-Disney generation
The seniors	Trailing-edge boomers	The generation after	The connected generation	Generation vista

Builders	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
The war generation	The beatniks	The gap generation	The digital natives	The futuristic generation
Hero generation	The hippies	The generation covered in the stench of hopelessness	Click 'n go kids	The corporations generation
The booster generation	The worst generation ever	Boomerang generation	Generation whY	New silent generation
The conservatives	Now generation	Generation 2000	Generation C	The gamers generation
The golden oldies	TV generation	Generation X men/women	The content generation	Homeland generation
	Spock generation	Also, Generation Jones (cusp generation)	The celebrity generation	The up-ageing generation
	Vietnam generation	The latchkey kids	The code generation	Generation wherefore?
	Disco generation	The 13th generation (America only)	The apathetic generation	Generation comic book movies
	The breakthrough generation	Tweeners	Ygen	Generation Leopard
	Generation gap	The Pepsi generation	Gyen	The aluminium generation
			The houseless generation	The green paper generation

through to Gen Z – reflect the times that have shaped their generational profile. Names given to the Builders conjure images of the war and the Depression; the Boomer labels reflect events such as the population boom following World War II and the shedding of traditional moral codes after the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s (the Love Generation and the Lost Generation, for example). For the X Generation it was the material prosperity of the times (the options generation) and the aftermath of the sexual revolution (the Baby Busters), and for Gen Y, the digital age that heralded its birth.

Many of these generational labels can be applied globally – or at least to the developed world and some developing nations – because, as we discussed above, generational commonalities cross global boundaries. Generational labels that have not been adopted globally can often be applied to the generations of other countries. In Finland, the X-ers are derogatorily called ‘Pullamössösukupolvi’ (the Bun Mash Generation) by the Boomers because, according to older generations, they have never experienced any difficulties in their lives, yet complain about their lot. Similarly, the X-ers of Anglophone nations have been called ‘Whiners’, ‘Slackers’ and the ‘Options Generation’, while in France they are referred to as ‘Génération Bof’ because of their fondness for the word ‘bof’ as youth, translated into English to mean ‘whatever’. In Russia they were called ‘a generation of stokers and watchmen’, meaning they took non-challenging jobs in order to have more free time. In reality, the X-ers of Russia, like their Anglo counterparts, entered the workforce at a low point where employment levels were at a high, and so took what jobs they could.

In Finland, the younger generations call the Boomers

‘Kolesterolisukupolvi’ or the ‘Cholesterol Generation’ because of their poor dietary habits. Similarly, the Boomers have been called the ‘Me Generation’ and the ‘Now Generation’ in Anglophone countries.

The Gen Y-ers of Japan are often referred to as ‘freeters’ because so many of them work part-time. In Australia, young people, along with mothers, sustain the part-time workforce, and never before have they been so slow to enter full-time employment. In 1986, eight in ten young people aged between 15 and 24 were engaged in full-time employment compared to only six in ten today.²⁰

Prior to the 20th century, generations and generational labels did not have that global aspect to them. For example, the labels of deceased English generations such as the Arthurian (1433–60) and Elizabethan generations (1541–65) reflect the events and trends of England at the time they were born.

Most of the generational labels listed in Table 1.2 do not apply to the developing and undeveloped countries whose citizens have been held back from the developments that have defined their First World contemporaries. Likewise, many labels of Second and Third World generations do not apply to First World generations. For example, in some Latin American countries, the X-ers have been referred to as the ‘Crisis Generation’ because of the political upheaval experienced by their countries when they were young. In Russia, Generation X-ers have been called ‘the last Soviet children’ because they were the youngest generation to witness the downfall of communism in their country, and the ‘Glasnost–Perestroika Generation’ as they were among the first to adopt the ideals of glasnost and perestroika in post-communist Russia. With seven generations now coexisting,

generational conflict is becoming an increasing problem. In a global survey we conducted on workplace conflict involving 12 countries, a minority (23 per cent) identified gender gaps as a cause of issues in the workplace, and only slightly more (35 per cent) blamed cultural differences. The majority (42 per cent) said that generational gaps were the cause of problems. In the next chapter we take a look at generational angst and some of the situations in which it is manifest.

2 | **GENERATIONAL WARFARE**

'Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.'

George Orwell

Today, up to seven generations coexist in the home, workforce and community. Therefore, a good understanding of each generation is key to better workplaces, businesses, homes, governments and classrooms, especially when considering how diverse the generations have become. Without an understanding of the times and events that characterised each generation – their attitudes, values, priorities and goals – generational conflict can arise. So how do we gain this understanding? One way is through generational segmentation.

Generational segmentation is the process of analysing the population by its generational cohorts. A generational cohort, as we have seen, is born into and shaped by a particular span of time. Within the Builder, Boomer, Gen X, Gen Y and even Gen Z cohorts, further segments exist. It is in having a good understanding of the generational segments and, where relevant, the sub-segments that exist within these generations that managers, employers, leaders, teachers and marketers can be more effective. Parents, too,