



AN ANALYSIS OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

TEACHER VERSION

Subject Level:

High School Sociology

Grade Level:

10-12

Approx. Time Required:

180 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze information about societal changes during millennials' young adulthood and determine how the millennial generation differs from other generations.
- Students will be able to create and present a newsletter explaining characteristics of millennials as young adults in the United States.

Activity Description

Students will look at data showing how the “millennial” generation differs from other generations. They will analyze and evaluate social changes evident in the data. Then they will work with a partner to compose a newsletter.

Suggested Grade Level:
10-12

Approximate Time Required:
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Topics:

- Millennials
- Roles of young adults in society
- Social structure

Skills Taught:

- Analyzing change over time
 - Comparing and contrasting
 - Interviewing
 - Public speaking and presenting
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Materials Required:

- The student version of this activity, 8 pages
- A computer, with Internet access and Microsoft Word, for at least each partner group

Activity Items

The following item is part of this activity. This item and its source appear at the end of this teacher version.

- Item 1: New Census Bureau Statistics Show How Young Adults Today Compare With Previous Generations in Neighborhoods Nationwide

This activity also uses the following online tool:

- Young Adults Then and Now
<https://census.socialexplorer.com/young-adults/#/>

This tool uses data from the American Community Survey, conducted monthly by the U.S. Census Bureau, which is designed to show how communities are changing. Through asking questions of a sample of the population, it produces national data on more than 35 categories of information, such as education, income, housing, and employment.

For more information to help you introduce your students to the Census Bureau, read *“Census Bureau 101 for Students.”* This information sheet can be printed and passed out to your students as well.

Standards Addressed

See charts below. For more information about the standards, read *“Overview of Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed in Statistics in Schools Activities.”*

National Standards for High School Sociology

Domain 1: The Sociological Perspective and Methods of Inquiry

| Assessable Competencies | Essential Concepts |
|--|--|
| 1.1 Students will identify sociology as a scientific field of inquiry. | 1.1.2 Hypotheses 1.1.4 Scientific study of society |
| 1.2 Students will compare and contrast the sociological perspective and how it differs from other social sciences. | 1.2.1 Impact of social context on human behavior 1.2.3 Sociological imagination |

| Assessable Competencies | Essential Concepts |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1.3 Students will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the major methods of sociological research. | 1.3.1 Surveys and interviews |

Domain 2: Social Structure: Culture, Institutions, and Society

| Assessable Competencies | Essential Concepts |
|--|--|
| 2.3 Students will evaluate important social institutions and how they respond to social needs. | 2.3.1 Social institutions such as: family, education, religion, economy, and government 2.3.2 Social statuses and roles |
| 2.4 Students will assess how social institutions and cultures change and evolve. | 2.4.1 Shifting historical context such as: industrial revolution, urbanization, globalization, the internet age |

Domain 3: Social Relationships: Self, Groups, and Socialization

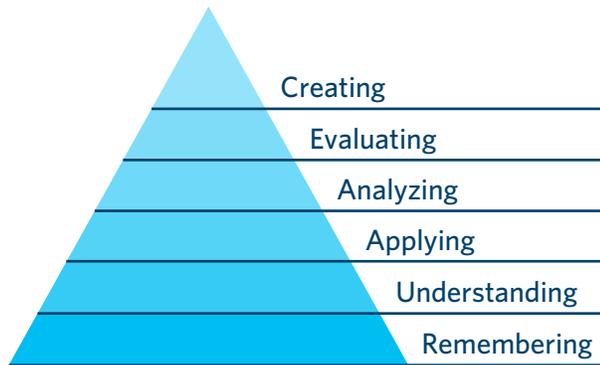
| Assessable Competencies | Essential Concepts |
|--|--|
| 3.1 Students will describe the process of socialization across the life course. | 3.1.1 Primary agents of socialization: family, peers, media, schools, and religion |
| 3.2 Students will explain the process of the social construction of the self. | 3.2.2 Role-taking |
| 3.3 Students will examine the social construction of groups and their impact on the life chances of individuals. | 3.3.1 Reference groups 3.3.3 In-groups and out-groups |

Domain 4: Stratification and Inequality

| Assessable Competencies | Essential Concepts |
|---|--|
| 4.1 Students will identify common patterns of social inequality. | 4.1.3 Racial and ethnic inequality 4.1.4 Class inequality |
| 4.2 Students will analyze the effects of social inequality on groups and individuals. | 4.2.1 Life chances |

Bloom's Taxonomy

Students will **analyze** and **create** a newsletter using data from 1980 to 2013.



Teacher Notes

Before the Activity

Students must understand the following key terms:

- **Adolescence** – the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood
- **Baby boomers** – people born in the decades following World War II, from about 1946 to 1964
- **Millennials** – people born in the early 1980s through the early 2000s
- **Social status** – a person’s position in society in relation to others
- **Social role** – the expected behaviors, rights, responsibilities, and privileges that come with a social status

Teachers should also show students “Economic Mobility Challenges Facing Young Adults”

(www.c-span.org/video/?323975-5/washington-journal-economic-mobility-challenges-facing-young-adults) from an episode of C-SPAN’s “America by the Numbers,” stopping at 1:26.

During the Activity

After students explore **Young Adults Then and Now** with their partners in part 1 of the activity (60 minutes), teachers should explain that, for homework (part 2), each student must interview two people from different generations (examples appear in the activity) and take notes. Teachers should add that students can ask their interview subjects any questions about the topics they investigated while analyzing census data.

For part 3 of the activity (60 minutes), teachers should direct students to work in pairs to create a newsletter, using a template from Microsoft Word (instructions for the 2011 edition included). Teachers should encourage students to include specific census and interview data that highlight the points they want to focus on. Article length is up to the teacher’s discretion. Teachers should consider assigning part of the newsletter assignment for homework if time runs out.

In part 4 of the activity (60 minutes), teachers should direct the class to meet with their partners to figure out how they want to present their newsletter. Teachers should provide students with specific guidelines and criteria for the assignment and lead the class through the presentations.

After the Activity

To kick off a group discussion, teachers should ask students what they learned in the activity that surprised them the most. Teachers should be sure to answer the essential question: What evidence shows how society changed during millennials’ young adulthood?

Extension Ideas

- Teachers could prompt students to discuss to what extent they value their social world, making a connection between the psychological stages of adolescence and the social meaning of adolescence. Teachers could reference the “novice” phase of Levinson’s developmental stages, which is designed for young men but could include young women.
- Teachers could show students the “Generation Like” (www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/generation-like/) Frontline episode to help students find differences between digital natives and members of older generations.

Student Activity

Printable student versions are available [here](#).

Activity Item

The following item is part of this activity and appears at the end of this teacher version.

- Item 1: New Census Bureau Statistics Show How Young Adults Today Compare With Previous Generations in Neighborhoods Nationwide

This activity also uses the following online tool:

- Young Adults Then and Now
<https://census.socialexplorer.com/young-adults/#/>

Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to analyze information about societal changes during millennials' young adulthood and determine how the millennial generation differs from other generations.
- I will be able to create and present a newsletter explaining characteristics of millennials as young adults in the United States.

Part 1 - Conduct Research

First, look at **Item 1: New Census Bureau Statistics Show How Young Adults Today Compare With Previous Generations in Neighborhoods Nationwide** — a news release published by the Census Bureau on December 4, 2014. Read the release; then summarize your key findings below.

Student answers will vary but may include the following:

- **More millennials lived in poverty between 2009 and 2013 and had lower rates of employment compared with their counterparts in 1980.**
- **Millennials from 2009 to 2013 were more educated than young adults were in 1980.**
- **About 8 in 10 young adults drove to work during this time; this ratio has not changed much since 1980. Alabama had the greatest percentage of young adults driving to work (95 percent); New York had the smallest (53 percent).**

This PDF also provides a summary of key findings: www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/newsroom/c-span/2015/20150130_cspan_youngadults.pdf

With a partner, explore and discuss the Census Explorer tool — **Young Adults Then and Now**. You can access this tool by typing this URL into your browser: <https://census.socialexplorer.com/young-adults/#/>.

Look for and analyze unique pieces of data to explain how the nature of young adulthood changed in America from 1980 through 2013. Be sure to compare data on social changes, such as the percentage of 18- to 34-year-olds living with a parent, across time (1980 to 2009–2013) and across geography (nationally versus in your state, or in your state versus in your metropolitan area/county). Summarize your key findings below.

Tip: By clicking on the “Show Full Report” button, you can view the data in multiple formats (charts, tables, or maps).

Student answers will vary, but students should be able to cite specific changes, over time and across geographies, in the young adult population.

Part 2 – Conduct Interviews

Before you started this activity, your teacher showed you a clip of Jonathan Vespa, a demographer with the Census Bureau, on C-SPAN’s “America by the Numbers.” In the video, Vespa discussed the Census Explorer tool and emphasized that from 2009 to 2013 millennials appeared to be doing better in certain areas than baby boomers did when they were young adults. For example, millennials were earning more than their parents earned at their age, and they were more likely to have a college degree.

For tonight’s homework, interview any two people from two different generations who are not millennials. Ask them questions about their generations that will let you compare their answers later with what you know about the millennial generation. (One grandparent and one parent might be ideal candidates for your two interviews, for example, if both were born before 1980.) This comparison will provide data for a newsletter you and your partner will create and present during the next class. Refer to data from **Item 1** and **Young Adults Then and Now** and to the C-SPAN clip in your questions. You and your partner may want to use the same questions in your interviews so that you can develop consistent themes for your newsletter. Take notes during the interviews, as you will be asked to turn them in.

The content of students’ notes will vary depending on the questions asked and subjects interviewed.

Part 3 – Create Newsletter

Working with your partner, use **Item 1, Young Adults Then and Now**, your key findings, and your interview notes to create a newsletter with data-driven articles about the millennial generation and how it differs from other generations — which you will later present. Your teacher will provide specific guidelines for article length.

In your newsletter, you and your partner should explain how census data, and your interview data, show that the social roles, social statuses, and lives of millennials differ from those of people in older generations. Consider how changes related to such things as marriage, employment, and place and type of residency have potentially affected how millennials have made choices, fulfilled social roles, and transitioned into adulthood. You are welcome to use personal stories in your newsletter to support your ideas — just make sure that you clearly differentiate them from data points.

To create your newsletter use Microsoft Word.

- **Microsoft Word:** Open the program, go to “File” at the top of your screen, and click “New from Template.” From the templates menu along the left side of the pop-up window, select “Newsletters” and choose any format.

Student projects will vary.

Part 4 - Present Newsletter

Meet with your partner to decide how you will present your newsletter. Your teacher will provide you with specific guidelines.

Item 1: New Census Bureau Statistics Show How Young Adults Today Compare With Previous Generations in Neighborhoods Nationwide

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 04, 2014

New Census Bureau Statistics Show How Young Adults Today Compare With Previous Generations in Neighborhoods Nationwide

December 04, 2014

Release Number: CB14-219



- Compare Young Adults Across the Decades with Census Explorer
- Access ALL of the new American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- Access the new Census Explorer mapping tool

Young adults today, often called the millennial generation, are more likely to be foreign born and speak a language other than English at home, compared with young adults in 1980, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's latest statistics from the American Community Survey released today.

"Many of the differences between generations examined within these latest data reflect long-term demographic and societal changes," said Jonathan Vespa, a Census Bureau demographer. "Three decades of decennial census statistics combined with the latest American Community Survey statistics give us a unique view of how — and where — our nation is changing. In this case, we can look at the changing characteristics of young adults over the last few decades."

Five years of data collected between 2009 and 2013 provide statistics on more than 40 economic, housing and social topics, such as commuting, educational attainment and home value. As the nation's largest ongoing household survey, the American Community Survey produces statistics at all levels of geography, down to the block group level. Today, for the first time users can access block group level statistics on the census.gov tool rather than via a separate FTP site.

Highlighting some of the topics available from the American Community Survey, the Census Bureau released "Young Adults: Then and Now," a new edition of the interactive mapping tool Census Explorer. The tool illustrates characteristics of the young adult population (age 18-34) across the decades using data from the 1980, 1990 and 2000 Censuses and the 2009-2013 American Community Survey. The American Community Survey, which is a part of the decennial census, replaced the "long form" questionnaire soon after the 2000 Census.

www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2014/cb14-219.html

Item 1: New Census Bureau Statistics Show How Young Adults Today Compare With Previous Generations in Neighborhoods Nationwide (Continued)

Comparing Generations

The 73 million young adults currently 18 to 34 years old, often referred to as millennials, comprised the largest such population in the last three decades. Nonetheless, their share of the population is actually smaller today than in 1980, when the young adult population included the baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964. The baby boom is distinguished by a dramatic increase in birth rates following World War II and comprises one of the largest generations in U.S. history.

- In 1980, 30 percent of the population was age 18 to 34, compared with 23 percent today.
- The percentage of young adults today who are foreign born has more than doubled since 1980 (15 percent versus 6 percent).
- All states have higher proportions of foreign-born young adults than 30 years ago.
 - The increase was larger in the West and Northeast, where 21 percent and 18 percent, respectively, are now foreign born, compared with 12 percent and 8 percent 30 years ago.
 - Only 9 percent of young adults in the Midwest and 14 percent in the South are foreign born, up from 3 and 4 percent, respectively, in 1980.
- One in four young adults, or 17.9 million, speaks a language other than English at home. That proportion is higher still in New York, New Jersey, Texas, New Mexico and Nevada (where it is about one in three) but is highest in California (where it is about one in two).

More millennials are living in poverty today, and they have lower rates of employment, compared with their counterparts in 1980:

- One in five young adults lives in poverty (13.5 million people), up from one in seven (8.4 million people) in 1980.
- Today, 65 percent of young adults are employed, down from 69 percent in 1980.
- Prior generations of young adults were more likely to have ever served in the armed services: 9 percent were veterans in 1980, compared with 2 percent today.

Millennials are more educated than young adults in 1980:

- 22 percent have a college degree, up from 16 percent in 1980. States with the largest share of young college graduates are in the Northeast, including Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey.

Unlike in prior generations, the majority of millennials have never been married, reflecting continued delays in getting married:

- Only about three in 10 young adults have ever been married, down from six in 10 in 1980.
- The state with the highest share of married young adults is Utah (51 percent); the lowest is Rhode Island (25 percent).

Some things have not changed:

- Young adults continue to rely on a car to get to work: about eight in 10 drive to work, which is largely unchanged compared with 1980. Alabama has the highest share (95 percent); New York has the lowest (53 percent).

Note that the Census Bureau does not define generational terms beyond “baby boom generation.” The term “millennial” is used here only to reference the 18-34 age range used in Census Bureau statistics.

Item 1: New Census Bureau Statistics Show How Young Adults Today Compare With Previous Generations in Neighborhoods Nationwide (Continued)

“Young Adults: Then and Now” in Census Explorer

Young Adults: Then and Now looks at socioeconomic characteristics of 18- to 34-year-olds using the 2009-2013 American Community Survey and the 2000, 1990 and 1980 Censuses. The interactive data tool has estimates for the national, state, metropolitan, county and neighborhood (census tract) level.

Topics include:

- Demographic:
 - Total population
 - Percent non-Hispanic white alone
 - Percent minority (Note: “Minority” refers to people who reported their ethnicity and race as a group other than non-Hispanic white alone)
- Earnings:
 - Year-round, full-time median earnings
- Poverty:
 - Percent living in poverty
- Labor Force:
 - Percent employed
- Foreign Born:
 - Percent foreign born
- Education:
 - Percent with a bachelor’s degree or higher
- Veterans:
 - Percent veterans
- Language:
 - Percent language other than English spoken at home
- Family:
 - Percent never married
 - Percent living in their parents’ home
 - Percent living alone
- Commuting:
 - Percent of workers who drove or carpooled

About the American Community Survey

The American Community Survey is the only source of small area estimates for social and demographic characteristics. It gives communities the current information they need to plan investments and services. Retailers, homebuilders, police departments, and town and city planners are among the many private- and public-sector decision makers who count on these annual results. Visit the Stats in Action page to see some examples.

These statistics would not be possible without the participation of the randomly selected households in the survey.

Item 1: New Census Bureau Statistics Show How Young Adults Today Compare With Previous Generations in Neighborhoods Nationwide (Continued)

Citation Guidance

Note to Correspondents: When sourcing the data in this release, please use "American Community Survey: 2009-2013."

Note: Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons made in the reports have been tested and found to be statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level, unless otherwise noted. Please consult the tables for specific margins of error. For more information, go to https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/documentation_main/.

Changes in survey design from year to year can affect results. See https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2013_release/ for more information on changes affecting the 2009-2013 statistics. See https://www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/comparing_2013/ for guidance on comparing 2009-2013 American Community Survey statistics with previous years and the 2010 Census. For information on the 1980 Census Long Form estimates, please see : http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1980a_usC-08.pdf.