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# What's The Deal With Generation Alpha?



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*Social researcher Mark McCrindle uses "Generation Alpha" to describe the population born after Gen Z.*

For years, it seemed news outlets were fixated on the [millennial](#) generation (aka Generation Y) and the many items and industries it supposedly “[killed](#).”

Before that, there was Generation X, aka “the MTV Generation.” Now there’s a strong interest in Generation Z — the mysterious “[Euphoria](#)” [cohort](#).

But what comes after X, Y and Z? Some consider the final nature of those labels to be a perfect metaphor for the state of the world.

Still, as long as people are continuing to procreate, there must be a name for the generation that follows Generation Z and some sense of its defining characteristics.

So what are those characteristics? HuffPost spoke to demographers and other experts studying generational shifts to find out.

## Meet ‘Generation Alpha’

In 2005, social researcher Mark McCrindle [coined the term “Generation Alpha”](#) to identify the group born after Generation Z. He defines the generation as those born from 2010 to 2024, while Gen Z

spans 1995 to 2009 and Gen Y spans 1980 to 1994 (though many push the millennial birth years back a bit later).

“The emerging generations these days sound a bit like alphabet soup,” McCrindle told HuffPost over email. “Just over a decade ago, when I was researching my first book ‘The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations,’ it became apparent that a new generation was about to commence and there was no name for them. So I conducted a survey to find out what people think the generation after Z should be called.”

While the survey produced many names, Generation A was the most commonly mentioned, but that term didn’t sit well with McCrindle. “[It] didn’t make sense that this new generation, the first to be fully born in the 21st Century, and which will see many of them live into the 22nd Century, to be labelled by going back to the beginning,” he wrote.

Instead, he looked to the model of hurricane names. There were so many storms during the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season that the names ran through the usual Roman or Latin alphabet and had to use the Greek alphabet.

“In keeping with this scientific nomenclature of using the Greek alphabet in lieu of the Latin, having got to Generation Z, I settled on the next cohort being Generation Alpha — not a return to the old, but the start of something new,” said McCrindle.

## Key Characteristics

While the traits that come to define generations often don’t start to manifest until their members’ adolescence or early adulthood, it’s possible to identify certain notable features of Generation Alpha at this point.

“The share of this new generation spending at least part of their early formative years in living arrangements that do not include both of their biological parents is higher than any generation observed in the previous century,” said Elwood Carlson, a demographer and professor of sociology at Florida State University. “When you look at a child in this generation, you never know what kind of family life they have experienced.”

Carlson also noted that this newest generation in the U.S. will have a high share of children with foreign-born parents and children who are foreign-born themselves, representing more countries around the world than previous generations.

*“This generation of children will be shaped in households that move more frequently, change careers more often and increasingly live in urban, not just suburban, environments.”*  
- Social researcher Mark McCrindle

[Racial diversity](#) is another feature of the newest generation, according to William H. Frey, a demographer and current senior fellow with the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. “Already Generation Z-ers [in the U.S.] are [minority white](#). But I think as we get into this new generation, this will be something that in a way defines them in terms of their ability to accept people of different backgrounds, and the idea of racial division may not exist to them to the extent that it exists in our country now,” he said.

Frey and Carlson also noted that the newest generation will face more economic inequality.

“The range of household incomes experienced by the children in this new generation is wider than for any previous generation in at least half a century, for two reasons,” said Carlson. “First, the inequality of wealth and income has been growing wider and wider in American society generally, and second, the births of children have been concentrating among the have-nots. The people with the money don’t have children, and the people with the children don’t have money.”

McCrindle echoed some of Carlson’s and Frey’s observations.

“The Alphas are largely the children of Generation Y and as parents are older, having fewer children, more culturally diverse and earning more (generally two-income earning) than their parents’ generation,” he said. “This generation of children will be shaped in households that move more frequently, change careers more often and increasingly live in urban, not just suburban, environments.”

*yall the scariest generation is the generation right after gen z. those fucks are like 5 and already terrifyingly aware. also they're apparently called "gen alpha" like what kind of metal rock band name ....*

— em (@buckobornes) [November 15, 2018](#)

McCrindle also believes those in Generation Alpha will stay in education longer, start their earning years later and thus live at home with their parents later than was previously the case — even into their late 20s.

## They’re Also ‘Generation Glass’

Another element that helps define Generation Alpha is technology. McCrindle’s birth year start date of 2010 happens to be the year the iPad was released, Instagram was launched and “app” was the [American Dialect Society’s word of the year](#). He believes the omnipresence of technology in those formative years leads to increased digital literacy and gamification of learning but also shorter attention spans and impaired social formation.

“[They] have been raised as screenagers to a greater extent than the fixed screens of the past could facilitate,” said McCrindle. “For this reason, we also call them Generation Glass because the glass that they interact on now and will wear on their wrist, as glasses on their face, that will be on the Head Up Display of the driverless car they are transported in, or the interactive school desk where they learn will transform how they work, shop, learn, connect and play.”

These advancements mean that technology for Generation Alpha “is not something separate from themselves, but rather, an extension of their own consciousness and identity,” said Natalie Franke, the head of community at the business management platform HoneyBook. She believes many people in this generation may prefer the virtual world to the physical world and that they’ll also have more opportunities for creativity.

*Primary school kids have iphones. Man when i was their age i used to spread PVA glue on my hands, wait for it to dry and peel it off.*

— SOLSKJAER FC 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿 (@SkrillerZiller) [March 22, 2018](#)

“As apps, AI and even self-driving cars reduce the time it takes to shop, do chores, get places and even go to the doctor, Gen Alpha will find themselves with more time than the generations before them,” she told HuffPost. “I predict this will lead to an unprecedented rise in creativity, education and self-care with Gen Alpha spending more time exploring their passion, prioritizing mental wellness and seeking education for the simple joy of learning.”

Franke also believes technological advancements, combined with the rising cost of college, will allow Generation Alpha to reject traditional education and pursue learning through other avenues. That attitude promotes “the passion economy” as younger generations may continue the growing trend of freelancing and starting their own businesses.

## Does It Have To Be ‘Alpha’?

While names like Generation X and Generation Alpha may seem boring, timing-based labels like Baby Boomers or Millennials are actually aberrations, according to McCrindle.

“I have found from my generational research that generic labels rather than descriptive ones are likely to last,” he said. “A label like Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z or Gen Alpha provides a blank canvas on which a generation can create their own identity rather than have a descriptive label, relevant for just a segment of the cohort or for a period of time, pinned on them. And while some Gen Xers bemoan that label, for a while there it was ‘slackers’ and ‘baby busters,’ and labels like ‘latch key kids’ and ‘the MTV generation’ as they were also called seem ridiculous for this generation who are now entering their mid-fifties.”

Similarly, labels like “the dot com kids” and “the iPod generation” for millennials (aka Gen Y) have come to seem short-sighted, McCrindle added.

*“This newest American generation displays unprecedented diversity in almost every dimension one can examine — ethnicity, nativity, income, family arrangements, you-name-it.”*  
- Elwood Carlson, demographer and professor of sociology

Carlson, however, prefers generational names with descriptive value rather than “this ‘ABC’ stuff” which he believes makes these groups “sound like interchangeable parts in a factory” and betrays a general lack of imagination.

“This newest American generation displays unprecedented diversity in almost every dimension one can examine — ethnicity, nativity, income, family arrangements, you-name-it,” he said. “If they are going to have a name, it should be a name that reflects this disunity, this diversity, this growing inequality of life chances. In fact, this unprecedented diversity of life experiences is going to make it more problematic than ever to say that they have any common denominator as a generation — except perhaps this diversity itself, which may prevent any clear or coherent generational identity from taking hold among them.”

Carlson offered “the Divergents” as a possible label befitting this generation.

## What Comes After Alpha?

If the members of Generation Alpha are coming into the world today, it may also be time to look forward to what the following generation will be.

“Generational definitions are most useful when they span a set age range and so allow meaningful comparisons across generations,” said McCrindle, emphasizing that he identifies Generation Alpha as spanning the years 2010 to 2024. “So it follows that Generation Beta will be born from 2025 to 2039,” he continued. “If the nomenclature sticks then we will afterwards have Generation Gamma and Generation Delta. But we won’t be getting there until the second half of the 21st Century, so there is plenty of time to reflect on the labels.”