

Generation Alpha: Mark McCrindle Q & A with the New York Times



Social researcher and demographer [Mark McCrindle](#) recently sat down with the New York Times to discuss the generation he named - Generation Alpha.

Q. So what comes after Generation Z - and how were they named?

When I was researching my book *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations* (published in 2009) it became apparent that a new generation was about to commence and there was no name for them. So I conducted a survey (we're researchers after all) to find out what people think the generation after Z should be called and while many names emerged, and Generation A was the most mentioned, Generation Alpha got some mentions too and so I settled on that for the title of the chapter *Beyond Z: Meet Generation Alpha*. It just made sense as it is in keeping with scientific nomenclature of using the Greek alphabet

in lieu of the Latin and it didn't make sense to go back to A, after all they are the first generation wholly born in the 21st Century and so they are the start of something new not a return to the old.

Q. Will these generational labels survive the test of time?

I have found from my generational research that generic labels rather than descriptive ones are likely to last. Names like the Baby Boomers, which describe a unique demographic phenomenon at the birth of a generation, or even Millennials, based on the timing when the leading edge were coming of age, are aberrations. A label like Gen X, Gen Z and Gen Alpha provide 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 turning 50 this year. Similarly for the Millennials or Gen Y- labels like "the dot com kids" and "the iPod generation" are short-sighted.

[Read Mark's interview in The New York Times here.](#)

Q. Are companies and marketers already starting to focus on this demographic?

There are more than 2.5 million Gen Alphas born globally every week. When they have all been born (2025) they will number almost 2 billion. They start school next year and will be the most formally educated generation ever, the most technology supplied generation ever, and globally the wealthiest generation ever. They will comprise the largest generation of middle class consumers our world has ever seen and they are also "upagers" - older younger and influencing parental purchasing earlier and so it is no surprise that marketers are trying to better understand and prepare for this generation.

Q. How do you try to gather intelligence about a group of people this young?

We can learn a fair bit about them by analysing some key area starting with the demographics which gives us some forward forecasts: age of parents (older), cultural mix (more diverse), socioeconomics (slightly wealthier), family size (smaller), life expectancy (longer). Then there is the research of their parents, the Millennials (or Generation Y) which

gives us a sense of how they will be raised (moving more frequently, career changing, materially endowed, technologically supplied, outsourcing aspects of parenting such as child care etc). Finally there is the analysis of the youngsters themselves and their formative years and we can learn a lot from this too (app-based play, increased screen time, shorter attention spans, digital literacy but less social formation etc).

Q. Technology was obviously a defining factor for Generation Y and has been even more so for Generation Z. How much more tech-intensive can the lives of Generation Alpha possibly become and what might be the consequences?

Generation Alpha are part of an unintentional global experiment where screens are placed in front of them from the youngest age as pacifiers, entertainers and educational aids. This great screenage in which we are all living has bigger impacts on the generation exposed to such screen saturation during their formative years. They began being born in 2010, the year the iPad was launched, Instagram was created and App was the word of the year and so have been raised as screenagers to a greater extent than the fixed screens of the past could facilitate. 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 car they learn to drive on, or the interactive school desk where they learn will transform how they work, shop, learn, connect and play. We were raised in a world where glass was something you looked through but for them it is something you look at. For us it was “hands off the glass” but for this kinaesthetic generation, glass is a hands on medium. Not since Gutenberg transformed the utility of paper with his printing press in the 15th Century has a medium been so transformed for learning and communication purposes as glass- and it has happened in the lifetime of Generation Alpha.

Q. What are some other social factors, beyond technology that seem likely to shape the Generation Alpha identity?

They are upagers in many ways: physical maturity is on setting earlier so adolescence for them will begin earlier- but beyond the physical, social, psychological, educational, commercial sophistication begins earlier- which can have negative as well as positive consequences. Interestingly for them while adolescence begins earlier, it extends later. The adult life stage, once measured by marriage, children, mortgage and career is being pushed back. This generation will stay in education longer, start their earning years later and so stay at home with their parents later than was previously the case. The role of parents therefore spans a longer age range- often still with the adult kids at home even into their

late 20's. This generation will no doubt stay with this trend and in Australia we've labelled the stay at home 20-somethings the KIPPERS which stands for Kids In Parents' Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings!

Q. What comes after Generation Alpha?

Generational definitions are most useful when they span a set age range and so allow meaningful comparisons across generations. That is why we define the generations by the following years of birth:

Baby Boomers: 1946-1964

Generation X: 1965-1979

Generation Y (Millennials) 1980-1994

Generation Z: 1995-2009

Generation Alpha: 2010-2024

And so it follows that Generation Beta will be 2025-2039.

If the nomenclature sticks then we will afterwards have Generation Gamma and Generation Delta etc 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!

[Read Mark's interview in The New York Times here.](#)

About Mark McCrindle.



[Mark McCrindle](#) is an award-winning social researcher, best-selling author, TedX speaker and influential thought leader, and is regularly commissioned to deliver strategy and advice to the boards and executive committees of some of Australia's leading organisations.

Mark's understanding of the key social trends as well as his engaging communication style places him in high demand in the press, on radio and on television shows, such as Sunrise, Today, The Morning Show, ABC News 24 and A Current Affair.

His research firm counts amongst its clients more than 100 of Australia's largest companies and his highly valued reports and infographics have developed his regard as a data scientist, demographer, futurist and social commentator.

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