



PARENT GUIDE

GEN ALPHA



Who is Gen Alpha?

They're still trying to figure that out themselves!

Have you ever looked across the table at your Gen Alpha son or daughter and felt like you were looking at someone you just met? How could this person—your very own kid—be so totally and completely different from you? From what they care about and how they communicate to the values they hold, it can feel like the generation gap between you and your rapidly growing child is wider than you ever thought possible.

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The good news?

We're here to help you understand the rising generation!

In the United States, the most recent generation of children born and coming of age in the 21st century is Gen Alpha. With the youngest members being born in 2024 and the oldest freshly entering their teen years, the events, characteristics, and views that will shape them are yet to be determined in a lot of ways. Their lives and their world are both still unfolding. With that in mind, we'll use this guide to look at how generations have changed over time, what has shaped Gen Alpha so far, and how you can use that knowledge to better understand and connect with the kids in your life.



What is a “generation”?

We can **define a “generation”** as “a group of people born within a certain period of time whose shared age and experiences shape a distinct worldview.”

As you move through this guide, remember that whenever we're talking about large masses of people, we can't avoid generalizing or stereotyping at times. There's simply no way to summarize trends across a culture while still covering the perspectives and experiences of every individual.

We think that taking a step back to notice and observe how generations are different from each other is a helpful practice. As **Business Insider explains**, “Defining generations helps researchers see how coming of age during certain historical events and technological changes influence the way people see the world.”

With that in mind, let's dive in!





GEN ALPHA



Which generations came before Gen Alpha?

To start, note that not everyone agrees on the exact name for each generation, nor do they agree on the precise year when each begins and ends. We've done our best to give estimates based on our research.

The Greatest Generation, born 1901 – 1924

Defining events:

- The Great Depression
- FDR's New Deal
- WWII
- Pearl Harbor

What are they known for?

News anchor Tom Brokaw is credited with giving this group the well-known moniker of the “Greatest Generation.” At times, they are also called the “G.I. Generation” because of their service in World War II. The members of this generation are known for their strong work ethic, high morals, and sense of duty. They helped to develop the infrastructure of modern America, and they gave rise to the now-common suburban middle class. The **majority** of this generation saw themselves as religious, and the education level of the average American increased during their lifetime.



The Silent Generation, born 1925 – 1945

Defining events:

- Korean War
- Cold War
- Space race/moon landing



What are they known for?

Described by some as “grave and fatalistic,” the Silent Generation is known for not wanting to go against established institutions. They had higher employment rates than both the Greatest Generation and the Baby Boomers after them. On average, women had children at a younger age than some previous generations. They tended to stay home with them for the duration of childhood, while men placed a high value on being family providers and on company loyalty. Things like divorce or having children out of wedlock became incredibly taboo for this group who were characterized by conformity.

Baby Boomers, born 1946 – 1964

Defining events:

- Vietnam War/protests
- The Civil Rights Movement
- Watergate/Nixon resignation
- The assassinations of JFK, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy
- Woodstock

What are they known for?

The “Baby Boomers” get their name from the dramatic increase in the birth rate following World War II. They’re actually the only generation **officially named by the U.S. Census Bureau**. In contrast to the Silent Generation, Boomers became known for their willingness to challenge authority, likely because the period when they came of age was one of great social and cultural change. Besides the Civil Rights Movement, there was the controversial Vietnam War, the sexual revolution, and the growing culture of rock and roll. Premarital sex (a.k.a. “free love”) and divorce became much more common. Gender roles began to subtly shift as well, with more women beginning to work outside the home. As time moved on, Boomers who grew into successful adults saw their views of traditional institutions and authority shift from being more skeptical to being more positive overall.



Generation X, born 1965 – 1980

Defining events:

- Fall of the Berlin Wall
- The AIDS crisis
- Premiere of MTV

What are they known for?

Gen Xers come between two large generations: Boomers and Millennials. In contrast to those before and after, this generation has less of a tendency to see themselves as unique. They're often negatively stereotyped as cynical and passive. In reality, they're individualistic, motivated to learn, and have an entrepreneurial bent. They're also the first generation to see women achieve a higher level of education than men. Unfortunately, they're also known for taking on a lot of personal debt, being raised by parents who divorced or checked out in favor of career, and they often marry later and divorce sooner than previous generations.



Millennials (Gen Y), born 1981 – 1996

Defining events:

- 9/11
- Great Recession
- The rise of global Internet

What are they known for?

In 2016, Millennials surpassed Boomers and became the largest living generation. Millennials show a greater aversion to labels and institutions compared to previous generations. In other words, they're less likely to identify with a political party, marry, join the military, or identify with a religion. They are, however, much more likely to identify as LGBTQ+ compared to previous generations. Overall, they're known for being more optimistic than cynical and pushing against previous cultural norms.

Millennials are **three times as likely not to be married** when compared with the Silent Generation at the same age, and Millennial women are twice as likely to be in the workforce as women from the Silent Generation. Economically, it became more common for Millennials to continue living at home between the ages of 25 and 35.



Gen Z, born 1997 – 2009

Defining events:

- COVID-19 pandemic
- #MeToo movement
- Overturning of *Roe v. Wade*
- Trump election/Brexit



What are they known for?

Gen Z is known for being a unique combination of anxious and hard-working. Because of that, some think they'll end up being the most entrepreneurial generation. They are growing up in a far more diverse world than previous generations, specifically regarding race and gender identity. According to a 2022 Gallup poll, **20.8%** of Gen Z identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community—an increase of 18 percentage points over the Baby Boomers.

Gen Alpha, born 2010 – 2024

Defining events:

- Advancements in AI
- Political polarization
- Prevalence of streaming services and social media

What are they known for?

Because the youngest members of Gen Alpha just entered the world last year, there is still much to discover about who this generation is. Their defining events and characteristics are still very much under development.

But for now, we can surmise that Gen Alpha will have **more than 2 billion members globally by 2025**. Named after the first letter of the Greek alphabet, Gen Alpha represents the first generation born solely in the 21st century. As such, they're likely to be more connected to technology than any generation prior. They have near constant access to smartphones, tablets, social networks, and streaming services. They've been born into a time of cultural polarization, increased challenges with mental and physical health, and immediate access to information (both accurate and not!). Of course, how these and future aspects of culture will shape them is still to be determined as they grow and develop in an ever-changing world. As **Springtide Research Institute** indicates, "Our understandings about Gen Alpha will shift and change as they grow and mature, and as the world evolves alongside them."



How does Gen Alpha compare to Gen Z?

Technology

For members of Gen Z, the integration of technology into their daily lives was a growing necessity. In their lifetime, **the internet became a key part of everyday life**, and social media showed up in the early 2000s. Those combined to create a world where things like smartphones, laptops, and tablets weren't just a preference; they were a must-have to make it in an overwhelming digital world.

Like their Gen Z predecessors, members of Gen Alpha are born into a world where digital and technological literacy is a must. So-called “digital natives,” their generation began the same year the iPad was launched, Instagram was created, and “app” was named **word of the year**. As a result, they not only have unprecedented access to and understanding of technology, they also are quick to adapt to new platforms, devices, and technological programs.

Unlike the generations before them (Gen Z included), Gen Alpha is growing up in the age of AI and other technological innovations that have the potential to change so much about the world—and the future.

Mental Health

Gen Z puts a high priority on seeking mental health treatment and using resources like therapy and medication. They're well-versed and comfortable with tossing around “**therapy-speak**” as part of their everyday vernacular. However, this level of comfort with discussing mental health doesn't necessarily mean they're mentally healthier. According to the **American Psychological Association**, only half of Gen Zers surveyed feel they do enough to manage their stress. They're far more likely to report a clinical mental health diagnosis—with anxiety disorders and clinical depression being among the most common diagnoses—and to have known someone who attempted or committed suicide, as the rates **tripled** amongst teens in their lifetime.

From what we can tell so far, Gen Alpha is following in the footsteps of Gen Z in this category. While they're **noted** to be “more emotional, conscious, confident, and freer than their Gen Z counterparts,” that doesn't mean they aren't also suffering under the same mental health crisis called out as an “epidemic” by the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) as well as the American Association of Pediatricians.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, more teens and young people reported isolation, depression, anxiety, and a general sense of unease and unhappiness. This includes Gen Alpha. **Data focused on Gen Z** found that half of young people reported depression, and **initial research** into Gen Alpha hints at a similar number related to both depression and anxiety.

Religion/Values

Barna calls Gen Z the “first truly ‘post-Christian’ generation,” and that's proven so far to be rather accurate. They typically see truth as subjective to experience, and seek to “do their own research” on controversial topics. With that, Gen Z's view of the church and religious institutions has been shaped in many ways by negative headlines and experiences with faith leaders. With scandals surrounding abuse, financial crimes, and misuse of power all coming to light as they came of age, Gen Zers are more likely to see the Christian church as a broken institution and Christian leaders as people to be skeptical of overall.



For their part, Gen Alpha seems to be following suit. Most 13-year-olds (the oldest members of Gen Alpha to date) **report being at least slightly religious or spiritual**. This is likely because most live in homes where religion, faith, or spirituality are part of the conversation or routine of their lives. According to a report by **Springtide Research Institute**, 22% of those surveyed identify as non-religious, while some 66% claim Christianity as their faith. However, less than half of those surveyed saw religion as being an important part of their everyday lives.

Diversity

Gen Z is the first generation to be seen as **“truly global”** in regards to diversity and worldview. They have an increased awareness of other cultures, ethnicities, and worldviews thanks in part to both online exposure to cultural trends around the world and an increase in social and racial diversity in their own communities. In 2020, **Pew Research** named Gen Z as more racially and ethnically diverse than any previous generation.

That is, until Gen Alpha came on the scene. Now, they’re the generation on track to become the most racially diverse generation yet. Because of that, they have an increased awareness of diversity and the value and challenges it brings. Most 13-year-olds **surveyed by Springtide Research Institute** indicated that their closest friends include people whose racial identity is different than their own. While these experiences and viewpoints are certainly not new or exclusive to Gen Alpha, what is unique is their willingness to address them honestly and openly amongst racially diverse groups. **A majority (56%) of Gen Alpha** see racial and ethnic diversity in the United States as a positive thing.

Sexuality

A trend we saw in Gen Z was a **less traditional view of sexuality**. In 2021, **20.8% of Gen Z** identified as LGBTQ+. They’re more likely to see gender as fluid and non-binary and dip their toes into testing the limits of gender norms and identity. Members of Gen Z are also more likely to support same-sex marriage and transgender rights than their predecessors.

With this in mind, Gen Alpha is growing up in a world where conversations about sexuality and gender are commonplace. Born after the Marriage Equality Act and raised amid the fight for more rights for transgender members of society, a traditional view of sexuality and heterosexual relationships is no longer their baseline. Culture observers predict that **more and more young people are understanding themselves as LGBTQ+ at younger ages**, making previously controversial things like coming out as gay, changing pronouns, or choosing to lean into non-traditional gender norms much more common for members of Gen Alpha.





What makes Gen Alpha unique?

How they learn

Thanks at least in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional education has undergone incredible change, and Gen Alpha will grow up in a world where hybrid forms of education that integrate both in-person classroom experiences and online learning are prominent. As **Springtide Research Institute** puts it, “online and digital learning will be a core part of their educational experience.”

In another **Springtide report**, researchers found that “members of Gen Alpha are accustomed to high-speed learning, making random connections, processing visual and dynamic information, and learning through game-based activities.” The same report indicates they also tend to work individually rather than in groups, displaying leadership behaviors rather than taking on a collaborative role. **A study on Gen Alpha by McCrindle** predicts their generation is likely to stay in school longer than previous generations.

What they care about

Gen Alpha is poised to follow the Gen Z trend of caring deeply about social issues impacting their local communities and the world at large. According to a **recent market research report**, “Gen Alpha are what researchers call ‘upagers,’ meaning they’re more socially aware at a young age.”

But what issues are they aware of and caring about in the world right now? At the top is diversity and representation in media, with **up to one-third saying** this is something they pay attention to in the shows, movies, and books (etc.) that they consume. They see helping others and working to see everyone treated fairly as a top priority. In addition, being raised in a time when conversations about climate change and sustainability are prominent, Gen Alpha is set to continue this crusade as so-called “**eco-warriors**.” As GWI, a consumer research company, **reports**, “It’s likely many Gen Alphas will expect big organizations to do the heavy lifting on sustainability and will show loyalty toward those who do. Teens currently rate caring for the planet higher than recycling, which is a sign they’re already making distinctions between individual behavior and large-scale goals.”



How they communicate

Of those 13-year-olds surveyed by **Springtide Research Institute**, 97% have access to a smart phone at home or for personal use. 90% have access to computers and gaming systems, and 82% have access to tablets. And one of the main things Gen Alpha is doing with these devices is going online to communicate and connect with others. According to **Business Insider**, one quarter of parents say their kids have friends online that they've never met in person. They're most likely to interact with friends—both those they know in person and those they don't—in DMs, private messages, or created group chats rather than on public forums or platforms.

Perhaps the most surprising place Gen Alpha is going to communicate? Online gaming! **Business Insider** says that “gaming has become the most social ecosystem on the planet,” and “Roblox, Minecraft, and Fortnite have been highly successful in facilitating social experiences that bring young people together.” Gen Alpha's comfort level in connecting with others behind screens isn't unexpected. As **Springtide** reports, visual and video elements have been and will continue to be core to most of Gen Alpha's everyday experiences—including in education, entertainment, and yes, social communication and connection, too.

Where they're online

While Gen Alpha's social media consumption is predicted to be just as frequent as Gen Z's, the social media platforms they use in that consumption will likely be different. Thanks to their Millennial parents' habitual use of social media to share videos, photos, and stories, most members of Gen Alpha will have an online presence that began at birth. **Business Insider** calls this “sharenting,” a term coined to indicate the ways in which their parents have shared photos, anecdotes, and milestones about their Gen Alpha offspring as part of their own parenting.

Of those surveyed by **Springtide Research Institute**, an overwhelming majority (99%) of 13-year-olds report using social media. At the top is YouTube, with 82% saying this is the primary place they're online. Coming next is TikTok at 62% and Snapchat at 51%. Then, older platforms like Facebook (45%), Instagram (41%), and Twitter/X (20%) rank slightly behind. Finally, the online gaming platform Twitch comes in at 17%, though research expects its prominence to grow as Gen Alpha grows up.





What are Gen Alpha's challenges?

Screen time and brain rot

If you've come this far in our guide, then you already know just how prevalent the use of technology is for Gen Alpha. In short, their screen time is already through the roof, and it's only set to keep going and growing as they keep going and growing themselves.

McCrindle reminds us that Gen Alpha has been exposed to screens to pacify, entertain, and educate them from a young age. Their research goes on to say that "this great screen age in which we are all living has bigger impacts on the generation exposed to such screen saturation during their formative years." Backing this up, **Springtide Research Institute** reports that 43% of those surveyed in Gen Alpha said they're "addicted" to their smartphones already, with 39% spending up to four hours daily on their phones and 23% pushing more than six hours.

The struggle with screen time and its subsequent effects seems to be strongly felt by Gen Alpha. Take the Oxford University Press selection of 2024's word of the year: "**brain rot.**" **The publishing house defines the term** as "the supposed deterioration of a person's mental health or intellectual state, especially viewed as the result of overconsumption of material (now particularly online content) considered to be trivial or unchallenging." **According to ABC News**, usage of the term increased by 230% from 2023 to 2024, an indicator that the fears and concerns of the negative impact of social media and online content and the possible mental health burnout that comes with the overconsumption of both are incredibly prevalent in the world Gen Alpha will grow up in.

Mental health in a post-COVID world

Members of Gen Alpha have been born into or are being raised in a post-COVID world. While most young teenagers in Gen Alpha say the pandemic had a "**mixed impact**" on their lives in general, early research indicates that the pandemic may have impacted Gen Alpha more negatively than they realize. Britannica **suggests** that Gen Alpha will "likely be affected more than those of any other generation by the COVID-19 pandemic... They will be the first generation to grow up largely or entirely in a world touched by COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it."



With predicted high numbers of anxiety and depression again for this group, **some researchers** suspect a direct link between COVID and Gen Alpha's mental health. Four in 10 pre-teens and teenagers in Gen Alpha **say** that feelings of loneliness come up at least sometimes every month, while half say they feel worried or anxious in that same period. And the numbers don't look much better as we look at the younger members of Gen Alpha. Most parents rank mental health as a "**primary concern**" for their young kids. Those working closely with young members of Gen Alpha have observed that they're "**already showing signs of depression**," a concerning statement as this generation is only just beginning to grow and develop.

A lack of resilience and the struggle to bounce back

Like most generations before them, Gen Alpha is in the midst of the age-old debate on nature vs. nurture. Raised by primarily Millennial parents who have embraced "**positive parenting**," a trend that emphasizes spending more time with their children, Gen Alpha are set to grow up with an increased parental presence and involvement in their lives.

In and of itself, that's great news! But coupled with the fact that **40% of kids** with parents under 18 say they worry about their child's mental health and almost ½ describing themselves as "over protective," there's a potential downside to consider for Gen Alpha here. One clinical psychologist **suggests** that, "parents are doing all kinds of things to prevent kids from feeling anxious. The problem with that is that avoidance makes anxiety grow."

In general, members of Gen Alpha are showing early signs of a struggle to bounce back from challenges and troubles and a lack of development of resilience. **Early research** attributes this in part to COVID lockdowns where kids spent their early developmental years online, separated from peers, and with increased parental presence on a day-to-day basis.

At least one psychologist **suggests** that children are "less able to deal with conflicts and the normal bumps and bruises of interacting with other people because they'd had less practice with it." **Springtide Research Institute** found that "because of a variety of factors... they're not developing the coping skills needed to form resilience." As one psychologist suggests, Gen Alpha needs more opportunities to struggle and fail so that "**they can learn they are strong enough to do that.**"

Short attention spans and high algorithm expectations

A clear connection to their upbringing in a truly digital world, Gen Alpha struggles with maintaining a long attention span with... well, just about anything. They're marked by **a struggle with shorter attention spans**, thanks in large part to being born in a world of digital immediacy and access. Things like **touch screen and voice activation** are base-level standards for Gen Alpha, contributing more to their need for immediate results. While they're well-versed in accessing multiple devices or focusing on multiple screens at once, the **unexpected result** is that they now struggle to focus on any one screen based activity for long amounts of time.

Along with this shorter attention span, Gen Alpha have high expectations for what should hold their attention. They're "**adept at scanning for information**," so much so that they expect to have to do little more than scan to find what they need to know. With that, they also expect curated, tailored experiences or information to be presented to them. If it's not what they're looking for just when they look for it, then it's not what they want. The Institute for Generation Research points to a direct correlation between the tailored algorithms they get online and the expectation for the same in other areas. Gen Alpha is likely to "**demand resources and experiences** that are highly tailored to them... Algorithms will shape the actions of Gen Alpha."





How can we support Gen Alpha?

While there are all kinds of things we can do to pour into, show up for, and encourage Gen Alpha as they grow up, we're going to focus on just a few key ways we as Christians can support them.

- 1. Care about what they care about.** As a generation concerned with everything from social issues to the latest trends in technology, it's our job to find ways to care about the same. Ask questions, learn more, and find ways to get involved with causes and hobbies they're all about. When we care about what they care about as the church, we're showing them that it's not just us, their fellow believers, who care, but God Himself who takes an interest in what captures their hearts.
- 2. Emphasize authenticity and honesty.** Gen Alpha values authenticity. They can sniff out false narratives, dishonesty, and disingenuous sentiments better than most. If we as a church want to build their trust, we have to lead with honesty and authenticity. If, as Rob Hoskins **writes** for The Feed Team, they "expect honesty and transparency from the people and institutions they interact with, including their church," then we must "prioritize transparency and authenticity in... messaging and interactions with Gen Alpha to establish trust."
- 3. Create opportunities for connection.** As members of Gen Alpha are primarily finding social connection with others through a screen, it's important that the church finds a way to create a similar opportunity for them to connect, socialize, and find community with others in person. Again, as Hoskins **puts it**, as a faith community, we have a "unique opportunity to provide this sense of physical belonging and connection to Gen Alpha by creating spaces and programs that allow them to build meaningful relationship with one another and with older generations as they grow in their faith."
- 4. Meet them where they are.** We know Gen Alpha lives primarily online. So if we want to find them, we have to start by going where they already are. **The Christian Post suggests** "countless voices are crowding" the younger generations online, but the adults in their lives are "mostly in the dark as to what they're experiencing, listening to, learning, and adopting." The Church has a responsibility to "**enter into that space to better understand, communicate with, and care for**" Gen Alpha.
- 5. Reframe the way they see failure.** As this generation struggles with developing resilience and the coping mechanisms required to bounce back, it's important to let them fail a little (and they will!). But it's also important to work to reframe the way they see failure. Praise their efforts rather than the outcome, and "**encourage them to think about what they'd do differently next time**" rather than giving them the answers they're looking for quickly and easily.



6. Model faith for them in your own life. As Gen Alpha has spent more time with their parents or guardians than any previous generation so far, they're likely to look to you for answers on just about anything they question or deal with in life. And even when they don't explicitly express it, keep in mind they're watching how you live. So, work to model **"an attitude of growth and learning"** in all areas of your life, faith included.

7. Pray for them. We've saved the best for last here! You can never underestimate the power of prayer, especially for your kids and those you care about in the next generation. No matter how young they may be, it's never too early to start praying for a faith that's strong, resilient, and well-rounded to develop in the hearts of your Gen Alpha kids.



Conclusion

Speaking of prayer, it's our prayer that this guide will help you better understand Gen Alpha as they continue to grow and develop. As you seek to love, understand, and lead the next generation, be patient and compassionate with both yourself and the members of Gen Alpha you care for and serve. Just like you, they're humans made in the image of God navigating life in this broken world.

No matter how much the world changes and advances around Gen Alpha, their need for a Savior—just like our own—remains the same. So let's commit to pointing them toward Him as we disciple, encourage, and show up in their lives.

Discussion Questions

- What do you see as the greatest strengths of Gen Alpha?
- What do you see as the greatest weaknesses of Gen Alpha?
- What do you think other generations misunderstand about the current generation?
- What do you think Gen Alpha should appreciate about other generations?
- What have you learned from people in other generations?
- What's one thing you think you can learn more about from Gen Alpha?
- What do you think are the best ways to connect with members of Gen Alpha?
- In what ways do you think faith can be helpful or relevant to Gen Alpha?

What's one way you think people can pray specifically for Gen Alpha as they grow up?

