

Generational Diversity Profile

Jackson County, Arkansas



Getting Started Tool
February 2016 edition

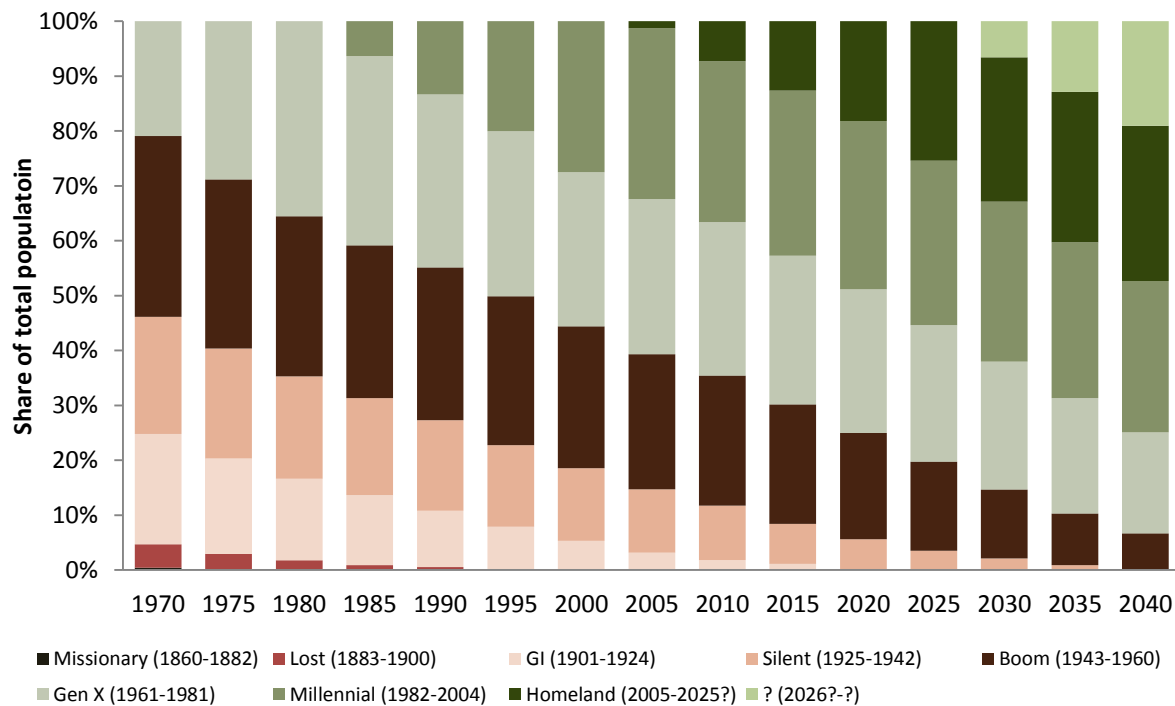
Introduction

The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship believes in **empowering research** – making data-driven decisions about economic development to be more strategic and, ultimately, create the kinds of economic development outcomes and long-term community prosperity you desire. We work hard to build tools and resources that communities can use to access and understand data and turn that raw information into knowledge you can apply in your community. This **Generational Diversity Profile** is one of our **Getting Started Tools**. This example profile was prepared for Jackson County, Arkansas, by the Center, for our partner, Communities Unlimited (www.communitiesu.org). Other **Getting Started Tools** include our **Development Opportunity Profile** and our **Philanthropic Opportunity Profile**.

Successful people, organizations and communities recognize, understand and embrace change. Generational change is one of these dynamic forces. Learning how to engage and empower new generations is a key to greater community and organizational success. What do we mean by generational change? Figure 1 illustrates historical and projected generational change for Lorain County, Ohio (west of Cleveland). Over a 70-year period – the short life span of an average person – four generations largely disappear (i.e., Missionary, Lost, GI or Greatest Generation, and Silent). The once-dominant Boomer Generation is retiring in massive numbers (estimated at 10,000 persons per day retiring in the U.S.) while Gen X and Millennial Generations are becoming more dominant in career and leadership roles. The Homeland Generation is growing up and, by 2030 a new generation yet to be named will come into being.

What does all of this change mean for your community or organization? How do you embrace new, young leaders whose lives have been shaped by very different events and technologies than yours? This **Generational Diversity Profile** is intended to help your community or organization understand generational change and its implications for your development and success. Like our other **Getting Started Tools**, this profile is intended to spark conversations by pulling together existing secondary data and other research to help you better understand these trends. We encourage you to reflect on your own community and even do some primary research – head out and talk to the young people in your community and in your organization. Invite them to talk about generational change and get their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges to engaging across the generations.

Figure 1. Generational Composition of Lorain County, Ohio, 1970-2040



Names and Timeframes

There are no officially determined generational names or timeframes. Names have evolved organically and become accepted over time. For example, Gen Y and Z are names that are still in use but are now considered largely part of the more recognized Millennial Generation.

Generation Defined

The term “generation” refers to more than simply a span of time. Each generation is shaped by events or circumstances that take place during its lifetime. Cultural revolutions (e.g., women entering the workforce, civil rights movement), major world events (e.g., the Vietnam War, tearing down the Berlin Wall), technological change (e.g., the Industrial and Internet revolutions) and economic events (e.g., the Great Depression, globalization) create a set of common experiences within each generation. The common bonds created within a generation often help to distinguish or separate it from earlier generations and those coming into prominence. These forces also help to shape the values and expectations that each generation brings to their decision making about career, family, and community.

In addition, members of the generation take on different social roles as they move through the life stages of youth, young adulthood, midlife and elderhood. Often, tension is created at the cusps of this change, with young people seeking to assume leadership roles and elders continuing to feel they have experience to offer. Managing this potential intergenerational tension is often a challenge for communities and organizations.

According to Neil Howe and William Strauss, “generations follow observable historical patterns and thus offer a very powerful tool for predicting future trends.” As we stand on the threshold of that future, we can see it will be shaped primarily by three generations – Boomer, Gen X and Millennial. Howe and Strauss have identified common traits across the generations that provide a useful starting point for leaders who want to better understand the generations that make up their community, now and in the future (Table 1).

Table 1. Generational Defining Factors

Gen	Birth Years	Age in 2016	Shaping Events	Status
Missionary	1860-1882	134-156	Post Civil War - Industrialization - Urbanization	Passed
Lost	1883-1900	116-133	Industrialization - Urbanization - World War I	Passed
GI or Great	1901-1924	92-115	Great Depression - World War II - Post War Expansion	Passing
Silent	1925-1942	74-91	Great Depression - World War II - Expansion - Korean War	Passing
Boomer	1943-1960	56-73	Expansion - Suburbanization - Vietnam War - Liberalization	Retiring
Gen X	1961-1981	35-55	Liberalization - Technology - Economic Stagnation	Careers
Millennials	1982-2004	12-34	Technology - Economic Stagnation	Emerging Careers
Homeland	2005-2025?	0-11	9-11 - Terrorism - Great Recession - Weak Economic Recovery	Growing Up
Next?	2026-?	Unborn	???	Unborn

Generations Profiled

Five generations are still relevant in most communities – Homeland, Millennials, Gen X, Boomer and Silent. Members of these generations continue to be influential in our communities because of the history they can share, the leadership they provide, or the new thinking they bring. The following short descriptions of each generation, drawn from Howe and Strauss, will begin to provide some insight as you consider the challenges and opportunities associated with generational change. More detailed information is available through our [website](#).

Homeland (2006-2025?) Generation is the most ethnically and racially diverse generation in history. Today’s early members of the Homeland Generation are the children of Gen Xers, the largest immigrant generation per-capita born in the 20th century. As recession babies, they are thus far also the product of declining birth and fertility rates, and older parents. Some trends that shape this generation include extremely protective parenting along with more traditional parenting style, a new push for academic achievement and earlier school enrollment as well as a renewed focus on social development.

Millennial (1982-2004) Generation acquires new skills faster than earlier generations. They also face economic uncertainty – growing student debt, increased housing prices, lower entry-level wages. They have built and continue to rely on strong virtual and social networks, in essence redefining community. They value cooperation and organization rather than out-of-the-box initiatives, and are often viewed as pampered and dependent. They are less concerned with gender, race and ethnicity and more concerned with issues of economic class and privilege.

Generation X (1961-1981) is becoming more risk averse as they age, seeking more security in family and jobs. While they value being free agents, they look to become steady anchors in their communities. Distrustful of large institutions when they were younger, these attitudes have softened as they age. They are protective of their children, providing financial support as they move through school. While they work to keep their social environment strong, their role in politics is more uncertain.

Baby Boom (1943-1980) Generation – the product of the post-war baby boom – looks to remain active consumers of culture and wise elders to the next generation. They demand a variety of living environments and are likely to become consultants and independent contractors rather than fully retiring. They are closer to their children’s generation in terms of attitudes and financial health than they were to their parent’s generation. They urge young people to serve community ahead of self, but they are also losing their own political power and will not stay as political as they once were.

Silent (1925-1942) Generation moved from a period of political and economic strife to become part of the sharpest rise in scholastic achievement in the U.S. ever recorded. They formed families early, had a long-term commitment to their companies, and were more affluent than any generation before them. They also contributed to innovation and advancing the country’s socio-political institutions. They take civic responsibility seriously, making up a large portion of voters to this day and safeguarding advancements such as Social Security and Medicaid. While Howe and Strauss use the term “Silent” to describe this generation, this label belies their political engagement overall and community leadership role in many rural communities.

You should recognize that the descriptions above are generalizations – you will find exceptions in each generation. We encourage you to use these as guidelines for exploring the attitudes and aspirations of members of each generation in your own community.

Why Understand Generational Change

Understanding generational change is important for three primary reasons:

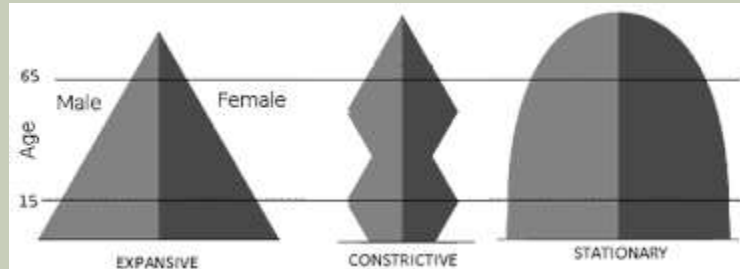
- Change in Power and Control
- Demographic Renewal
- Diversity

Change in Power and Control. If you were part of the Baby Boom Generation, you remember the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, defined by conflict over the Vietnam War, concerns over “big brother” government, experimentation with alternative life styles and activities that our parents considered immoral and wrong. Yet Boomers grew up, married, had families and pursued careers. They are now the “establishment” that they scorned and they are watching as their children – Gen X and Millennials – redefine family, career and social norms. This transition of power and control over commerce, government and society’s values happens with each generation. Sometimes these changes create significant conflict, such as during the 1960s and 1970s. Other transitions happen more smoothly. Cross-generational engagement and dialogue create deeper understanding and empathy, and empower people, communities and organizations to be more thoughtful, intentional and successful with the eventual transitions of power and control from one generation to the next.

Demographic Renewal. In a world where population growth is an environmental and economic concern, not all places can take demographic renewal for granted. In Japan, parts of Europe, rural America and urban Detroit, demographic renewal is not a given, it is a challenge. Some communities are aging and failing to attract sufficient new people to ensure demographic renewal. Some have experienced an economic catastrophe that has driven out those with the capacity to move, leaving the most vulnerable behind. Other communities, by design or default, are becoming generationally segregated. Examples include intentional retirement communities where residents must be 55 or older to buy properties or rural communities where too many young and middle-aged adults have left, leaving large populations of children and elders behind. Whatever the underlining reason, failure to meet the demographic renewal test can result in loss of local schools, health care facilities, critical retail services (e.g., grocery store), empty Sunday school classes and eroded communities.

Diversity. We tend to talk about diversity in terms of race, ethnicity or gender. Is a neighborhood or community composed primarily of one race or one ethnicity? Are women well represented among the leadership of a community or a company? Generational diversity is a consideration as well. A healthy demographic profile is a measure of resilience. A community with representation across the generations – new people coming into the community as elders pass on – is more diverse. If a community lacks generational diversity – for example, a rural community with an older population – it is less resilience in the face of change. There are fewer young people to bring new ideas and energy to the community. There are fewer working age adults to drive the economy. There may be fewer businesses as entrepreneurs close their doors because there is no one to take the reins.

One way to evaluate the demographic and generational health of a community is with a “population pyramid.” The graphic and definitions below are drawn from www.study.com:



Expansive pyramid reflects high birth and death rates, such as might be observed in a developing country.

Constrictive pyramid reflects a population that is generally older on average, as the country has long life expectancy, a low death rate, but also a low birth rate. This pyramid is becoming more common, especially when immigrants are factored out, and is a typical pattern for a very developed country with a high level of education, easy access to and incentive to use birth control, good health care, and few negative environmental factors.

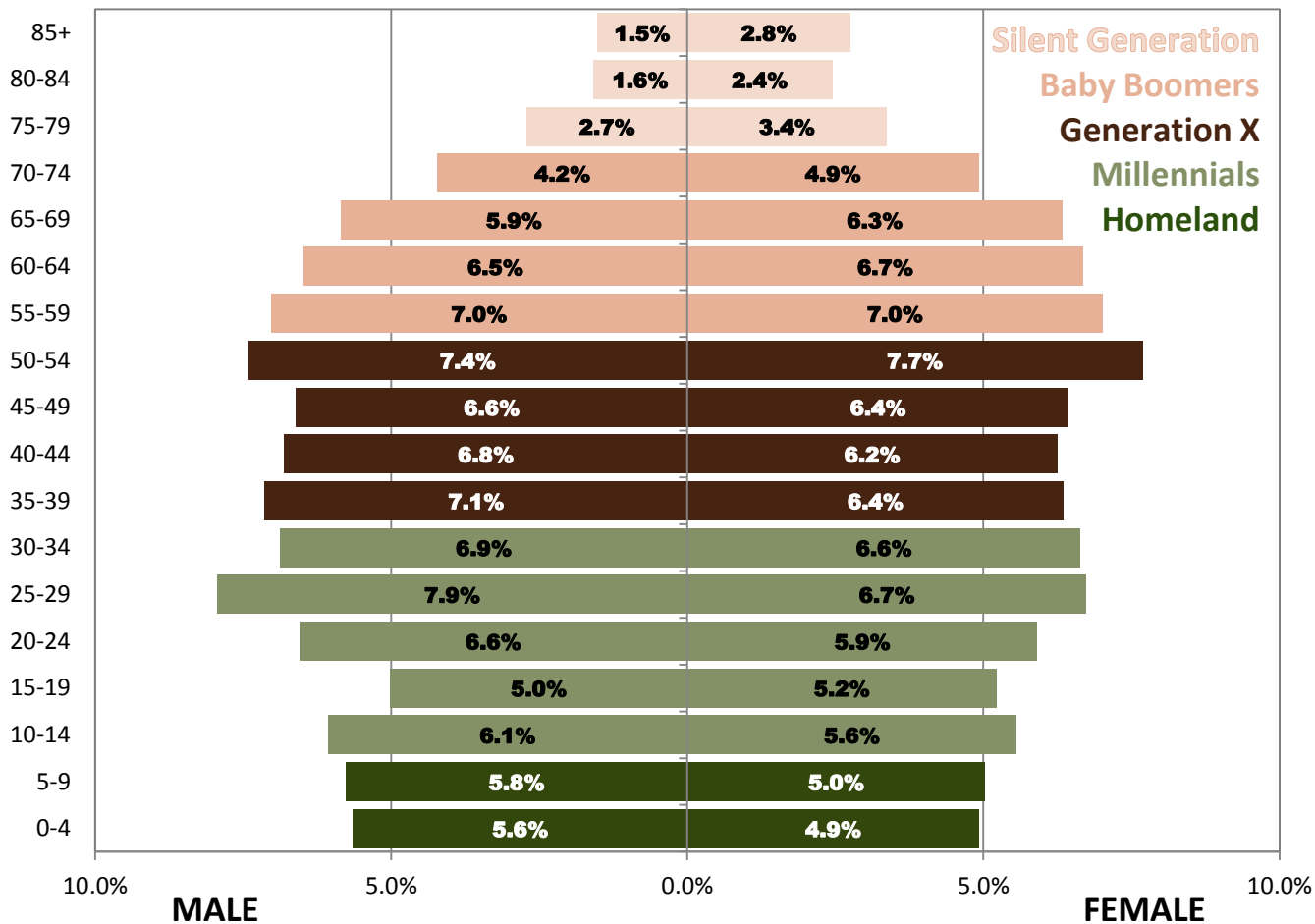
Stationary pyramid reflects a relatively even distribution of population in each age group – across the generations. The population is stable as seen in some European countries such as Austria.

Generational Profiles: Jackson County Arkansas and the U.S.

Every community has a unique generational profile. Using research from Esri, we prepared a **Generational Profile** for Jackson County, Arkansas (Figure 2) and for the U.S. (Figure 3). Jackson County is experiencing a constrictive demographic pattern, with fewer people in the more recent generations (Homeland and younger Millennials) and more Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation. To achieve a more stable generational profile, leaders might want to consider strategies to attract young adults and their families. If population growth is desired, additional attention should be given to retaining young families and providing diverse career opportunities so young adults can stay in the county as they advance their careers.

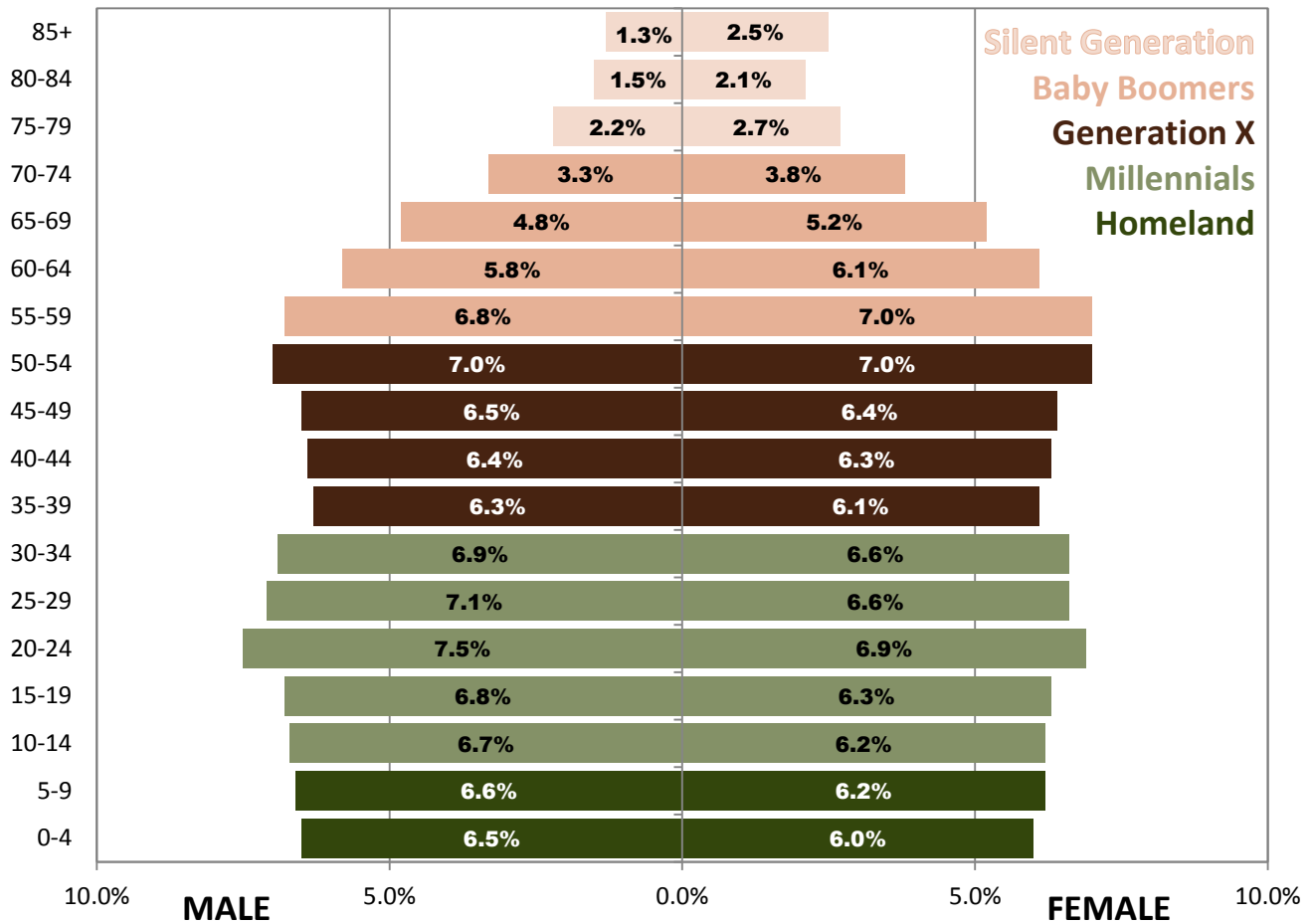
In contrast, the U.S. profile is relatively stationary. Net growth is slowing (due to declining birth rates) but continuing to grow (primarily due to positive migration). The U.S. profile reflects demographic renewal through a combination of natural increase and in-migration. However, America’s demographic profile can change over time based on changes in immigration, birth rates and life expectancy. For the U.S., like its communities, the primary unknown is migration. Modest changes in out-migration and in-migration can have a rapid impact on a community’s demographics both today and into the future.

Figure 2. Jackson County, AR Generational Profile



Generation	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Homeland	11.4%	9.9%	11.5%
Millennials	32.5%	30.0%	31.1%
Generation X	27.9%	26.7%	28.7%
Baby Boomers	23.6%	24.9%	21.9%
Silent Generation	5.8%	8.6%	6.9%

Figure 3. U.S. Generational Profile



Generation	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Homeland	13.1%	12.2%	12.6%
Millennials	35.0%	32.6%	33.8%
Generation X	26.2%	25.8%	26.0%
Baby Boomers	20.7%	22.1%	21.4%
Silent Generation	5.0%	7.3%	6.2%

Implications for Community and Economic Development

Growing more successful businesses, organizations and communities is a team sport. We know that it takes a balance of different personality types – the idea generator or dreamer; the planner; the implementer. It also requires collaboration across the generations. Building multi-generational teams is critically important particularly as one dominant generation (Baby Boomers) is now transitioning to retirement and newer generations (Gen X and Millennials) are assuming leading roles in government, commerce and the non-profit world. What are the implications of generational diversity for your community's continued development? We draw on a range of resources (see Reading Library) to provide insights into:

- Values and Attitudes
- Economic Prospects
- Technology Use
- Civic and Philanthropic Engagement

Values and Attitudes

The Gen X and particularly Millennial generations are the product of a childhood spent in relative peace and prosperity. Unlike their parents and grandparents, they were not confronted with events that challenged or incited them. They are the most racially, ethnically and religiously diverse generations, with 43% of Millennials being non-white. This diversity brings a level of tolerance unseen in earlier generations and also contributes to more diverse values and attitudes. Millennials in particular are more likely to identify as political independents and are driven by issues and not party affiliation. For older members of these generations, we begin to see some impacts of the Great Recession – an upsurge in those pursuing graduate degrees since 2007, much lower rates of marriage for 18-32 year olds as compared to past generations, and a spike in the number of younger people living at home.

Economic Prospect

Particularly for Millennials, changes in the economy are driving their attitudes toward work, career and life balance. Even before the Great Recession, the U.S. economy was restructuring toward a more outsourced, downsized model. For the post-World War II generation, the opportunity to get an education, go to work for a large private or public employer, and settle into a lifelong career was a reality – and the norm. This norm, or social compact, began to erode as early as the 1970s. Millennials came of age watching their parents forced to change jobs and even redefine careers later in life. Their own perceptions of company loyalty were shaped by these events. Then many of them entered the workforce during a time of massive job loss, creating even more uncertainty about their career paths. Faced with the rise of the “freelance economy” – according to Bernholz, 43% of Americans do not have a full-time employer – younger people are rethinking how they can and will make a living.

These economic changes might bode well for a rise in entrepreneurship as younger people choose to **make a job** rather than **take a job**. However, without support from the broader community, increased entrepreneurship may be challenging. Younger people are graduating from college with more student debt than past generations. And, younger homeowners saw their primary asset – their home – decline in value during the Great Recession without a full recovery post-recession. Younger potential entrepreneurs have fewer assets to use to support an entrepreneurial venture, as their net worth took a significant hit during the Great Recession. For a community considering how best to encourage economic development, it will be critical to understand the economic reality and prospects of the younger generation that is taking the stage in the business community and workforce.

Technology Use

How younger generations interact with the world has been shaped significantly by their use of technology. The Millennials are the first “tech native” generation, raised connected to the Internet. Cell phones have replaced landlines for most of this generation. They are used to instant access to data on everything, from voter preferences to movie reviews to the location of the nearest craft brewery. They are redefining “community”; with more than 80% of Millennials on Facebook, their community is as broad as the reach of their technology. This connectedness influences the way they plan, shop, vote, work and give of their time and talent.

Civic and Philanthropic Engagement

Americans have a long and deep philanthropic history. According to the Gallup poll on charitable giving, more than 8 in 10 Americans give regularly of their time, talent and treasure to charitable causes. However, this philanthropic behavior manifests itself differently across the generations. Place-based philanthropic institutions, such as community foundations, have cultivated relationships with the Silent and Boomer generations over time, working with them as donors and volunteers. These donors have a commitment to their community that is expressed through their gifts. The philanthropic personalities of Gen X and Millennial generations are still emerging. Based on Pew research, we know that these younger generations are motivated by their **interests** as much as their **community**. They are moved by concerns about the environment and also their own jobs, careers, and healthy lifestyles. They are less concerned about supporting existing institutions, such as foundations, and more interested in achieving impact with their giving. They are as likely to give to an aligned cause halfway around the world as they are to support something simply because it is local. The viral success of the Ice Bucket Challenge was a testimony to the type of engagement to which younger people responded. Local communities need to understand what motivates younger leaders and donors in order to understand how to really engage them in the life of the community.

Using this Generational Diversity Profile

This **Generational Diversity Profile** relies on secondary data and research about the generations as a whole. The first step in using this profile in your community is to do some groundtruthing with others in your community or organization. You might start with these questions:

- Do the perceptions ring true for the generational representatives in our community (e.g., Millennials)?
- What generational differences are we seeing with our younger staff, volunteers, donors, or community leaders? What is true about the older generation of leaders who are retiring from those roles?

This profile is also meant to be used as a conversation starter in your community or region. We encourage you to use this profile – and the resources referenced here – with a diverse group of community stakeholders and residents, drawn from a range of generations, to begin a cross-generational dialogue. You might focus the conversation on some of the topics shared above – values, attitudes toward work and life balance, interests related to philanthropy and volunteerism. A great way to enhance cross-generational understanding is to create opportunities for community residents from different generations to work together on a project. The Chamber might consider engaging new and more seasoned entrepreneurs in the design of an entrepreneurs’ network. The local community foundation might create a young donors advisory group to work with the board to identify opportunities to grow the next generation of philanthropists.

You can also use this profile as a way to begin conversations about generational understanding within your particular organization. Here are some questions that you might pose at a board or staff meeting:

- What generational trends or shifts are we seeing in our organization (staff, volunteers, those we serve)?
- What questions do these changes raise for our work?
- How are we engaging a range of generations in our work?
- How are the interests and motivations of younger generations (Millennials and others) changing the way that we work?
- Where do we need to improve our capacity to work across the generations in our community?

The people in your community are your greatest asset. To put all those assets to work, you need to understand the generational changes taking place and challenge yourselves to work in a way that includes the talent of all.

Reading Library

This reading list includes items referenced in the profile and others that you might find useful as you further exploration generational diversity:

- [Philanthropy and the Social Economy: Blueprint 2016](#) (Lucy Bernholz, Annual Industry Forecast by Grantcraft).
- [Poll on Charitable Giving](#) (Gallup)
- [Millennials Research](#) (Pew Research Center – a great set of reports on what is now America’s largest generational cohort)
- [Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation](#) (Neil Howe and William Strauss, 2009)
- [Sloan Center on Aging and Work](#) (Boston College center focused on understanding the transition for older Americans)
- [ReFirement: A Boomer’s Guide to Life After 50](#) (James Gambone, 2000; insights into the generation on the cusp of a great transition)
- [Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit](#) (Peter Brinckhoff, 2007)
- [Generational Diversity Whitepaper](#) (Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, 2015)
- [Generational Diversity: New Research on Transfer of Wealth Opportunities](#) (Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, 2015, presentation to Council of Michigan Foundations annual conference)
- [Generational Diversity Session Resource List](#) (Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, 2015, resources shared with Council of Michigan Foundations annual conference)
- Tool for intergenerational conversations – Having these conversations is the first step in engaging the generations. One resource may be your state’s cooperative extension service. Here’s one example [set of tools](#) from Pennsylvania State University’s extension services.

Other Center Resources

These additional [Empowering Research](#) tools can help you better understand your community and economy, the first step toward creating a vision and optimal prosperity plan. To learn more, go to the [Get Started](#) page on our [website](#).

More Generational Diversity Resources

- [Generational Diversity analysis](#)
- Generational Scenario analysis

Development Opportunity Profile brings together a range of secondary data so that you understand the regional context and the population, employment and income trends for your community. We also identify the primary drivers of your community's economic success so you'll be in a better position to focus in on your community's genuine development opportunities.

More Development Opportunity Resources

- **Economic Diversity** *report*
- **Economic Cluster** report
- **Manufacturing sector** report
- **Tourism sector** report
- **Agriculture sector** report
- **Community conversation** report

Philanthropic Opportunity Profile draws on research unique to your community to help you better understand the drivers of wealth in your community and the potential for community-based philanthropy to support your economic development dreams and plans.

More Philanthropic Opportunity Resources

- [Donor Opportunity analysis](#)
- [Transfer of Wealth Opportunity analysis](#)
- **Philanthropic Sector** analysis
- **Charitable Giving** analysis

We can also help you share this research with key stakeholders in your community through webinars, workshops and other types of engagements.

- Consultations
- Webinars
- Toolkits
- Keynotes
- Customized workshops and training institutes
- Coaching support
- Community-based projects and initiatives

About the Center

The Center for Rural Entrepreneurship's mission is to help community leaders build a prosperous future by supporting and empowering business, social and civic entrepreneurs. With our roots and hearts in rural America, we help communities of all sizes and interests by bringing *empowering research* together with *effective community engagement* to advance *community-driven strategies* for prosperity.

Our **Solution Area Teams** – [Entrepreneurial Communities](#); [Community Development Philanthropy](#); [New Generation Partnerships](#) – empower community leaders to find their own answers to the economic development challenges and opportunities they face.

To learn more about the Center, go to www.energizingentrepreneurs.org.

421 S. 9th Street, Suite 245
Lincoln, NE 68508
(402) 323-7336

Our Team



Don Macke is Co-Founder and Director of the Entrepreneurial Communities solution area. Through this work, Don helps communities and regions throughout North America grow entrepreneur-focused economic development strategies. He works with a group of strategic partners across the country to deliver customized economic development solutions.



Deborah Markley is Co-Founder and Managing Director of the Center. Deb guides the Center's measurement and research agendas, including development and implementation of tools for measuring success, practice-driven research, and evaluation of model entrepreneurship development systems and initiatives in rural places.

Ann Chaffin is Senior Associate for Marketing Communications with the Center. Ann heads the Center's Communications team and is responsible for overseeing and branding all content the Center distributes and keeping communications current and professional for each of our solution areas.



Dana Williams is Project Associate with the Center. Dana provides management assistance and operational support across the Center, including providing executive assistance to each of the Center's solution areas and has been actively engaged in product development, supporting the creation of a number of online toolkits.



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