

Generational Differences and How They May Impact the Way We Manage Safety

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 - USAF, Bioenvironmental Engineer – IH and Environmental
 - Hazardous Waste Remediation
 - Construction Management & Contractor Safety
 - OEM Gas Engine Manufacturing
 - Tier 1 Auto Supplier
 - Consulting in a variety of industries – Metals, Utilities, Recycling, Auto Components
- Focus on Job Analysis, Hazard Identification, Risk Analysis & Assessment, Management Systems, Safety Improvement
- ANSI/ASSP Z10 Occupational Health and Safety **Management Systems** Committee, US TAG for ISO TC 283 Occupational Health & Safety



The Baby Boomer/Gen-Xer

Audrey Zigulis, GSP

- 7 Years in Health, Safety and Environmental Roles
 - Environment, Health and Safety Manager, AUTOKINITON
 - Safety Specialist, Southwire Company
 - Contract Safety Coordinator, Sixth Sense Safety Solutions
- Focus on Culture and Employee Engagement



Millennial

Reason for This Presentation

The Great Generational Divide

How to Manage 5 Generations!

The Grey Tidal Wave!

➤ *“What to do with those Gen [whatevers!]”*

OPINION Piece ... The Wall Street Journal (March 2024)

- “Work now requires meaning, purpose”
- McKinsey study – employees feel work needs to help meet need

“Why do Millennials and Gen Z’ers want their work to provide psychic rewards?”

WSJ Opinion, “Inside View” by Andy Kessler, March 3, 2024

"I was cut on the job. That's just the price you have to pay to have a job."

Programs largely driven by Workers' compensation laws/forms/processes

- *prevent the injury but still largely fault-driven*

40's/50's more engineering but still not "prevention through design"

OSH Act of 1970, OSHA – maybe more shift to "compliance" - unsafe workplace emphasis

OSH Management Systems – frameworks, not just the worker, not just the workplace

*Now more focus on - **what can we learn "before" an incident***



Generational “Gaps”

Based Upon:

- Values
- Beliefs
- Work Ethics
- Skills
- Preferences

But First, We Have a Question for You:

- When you came in here, were you thinking the talk was from the perspective of:
 - ❖ The Safety Coordinator/Supervisor/Manager?, or
 - ❖ The Workforce, or
 - ❖ Both?

Topics of Presentation

- Generation Descriptions/Characterizations
- Generalizations, and Challenges to Them
- Application to Common Safety Management Needs
- 4 Points to Keep in Mind

What We Would Hope For:

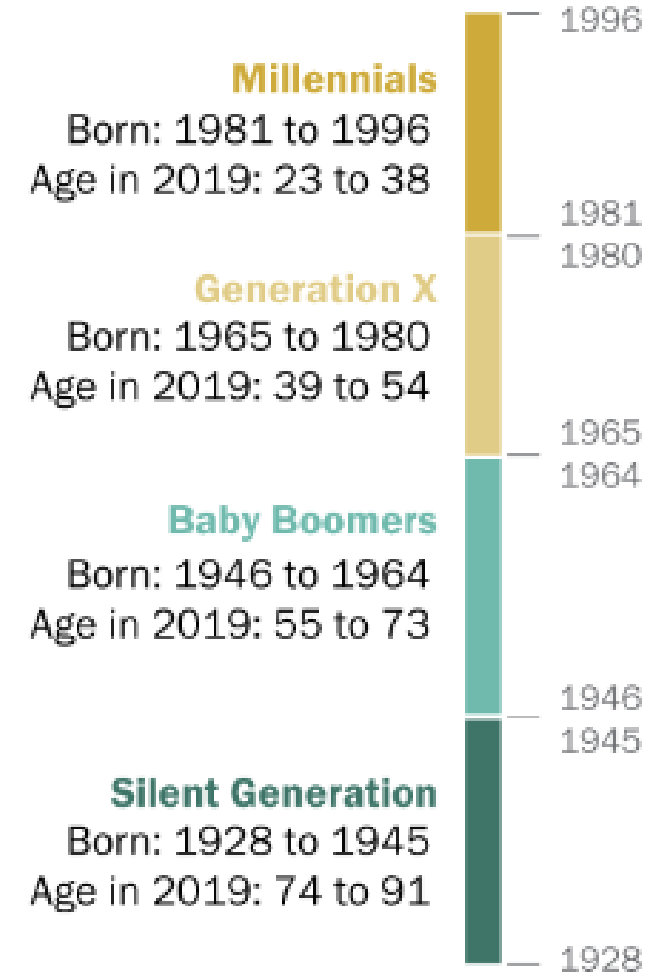
➤ Please think about, and be willing to share:

- ❖ Something you/your company did specifically to account for generational differences in safety management, that **WORKED**

Commonly Discussed Generations – and Generalizations

- Probably nothing you haven't heard something about before

The generations defined



Source: Pew Research Center

“Millennials overtake Baby Boomers as America’s largest generation,” April 28, 2020

Let's Discuss A Couple of Situations:

- Situation 1: Employee is climbing on or into equipment – relying on light curtains for unjamming something
 - Not routine/repetitive, part of normal production operations
 - Unadopted/unmodified: How would we approach the situation?

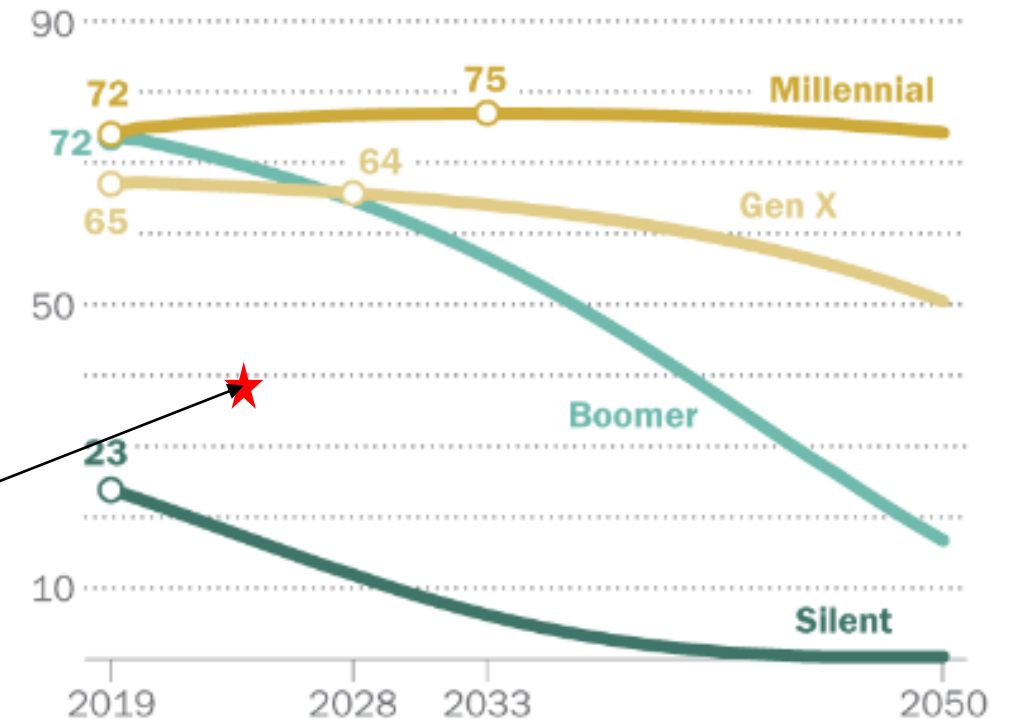
- Situation 2: Employee comes to us feeling that the company is not doing enough for them with regard to safety
 - Company is compliant with MIOSHA/OSHA requirements
 - Greg's potential unadopted/unmodified response
 - Audrey's potential unadopted/unmodified responses, and differences between ages

Size of Groups

- The “Traditionalists”: 1928-1945
- Baby Boomers: 1946-1964
- Gen X: 1965-1980
- Millennials (Gen Y): 1981-1996
- Gen Z (iGen): 1997-2012
- (*And then Gen Alpha*)

Projected population by generation

In millions



Note: Millennials refer to the population ages 23 to 38 as of 2019.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of U.S. Census Bureau population estimates released April 2020 and population projections released December 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Brief Recap - Generations and Characterizations

Baby Boomers: (1946-1964)

60-78 years old

Team players

- Idealists
- Respect hierarchy
- Workaholics sometimes, motivated by perks
- Some worked pre-OSHA

Brief Recap - Generations and Characterizations

Generation X: (1965-1980)

44-59 years old

- Saving, building up funds, results
- Feel they've paid their dues, and who are you to tell me?
- Independent workers who value feedback
- Advocate work and life balance; change jobs if not fit
- Could have issues with reporting to people younger than them

Brief Recap - Generations and Characterizations

Millennials: (1981-1996)

28-43 years old

- “Digital” generation
- “The democratization of knowledge, expertise”
- Showered with attention and praise growing up
- Skills over degrees; want recognition for talents
- Different set of values: more purpose-led

Brief Recap - Generations and Characterizations

Gen Z: 1997-2012

12-27 years old

- Visual learners
- Less hierarchical
- More focus on mental health
- More remote work, different ways of socializing, more “work vs. life”
- “What do I need to do to earn what I want?”
- Relative inexperience

Post-Covid Changes in Society

- WSJ Article, March 14, 2024: *Not Retired, They Just Have Zero to Prove*, by Callum Borchers.
- WSJ Article, March 11, *Americans Don't Care as Much About Work. And It Isn't Just Gen Z*, by Greg Ip.

Career and work just aren't as central as they used to be

Brief Recap - Generations and Characterizations

Common Values Between Generations:

- Family
- Trustworthy leaders
- Knowledge of how they are doing on the job; need feedback
- Learning and development opportunities
- Value of the internet

➤ **Historical Thinking: Each Group Values Different Things**

- Modify expectations and adapt culture to fit
- Most but not all discussion has been from more of a “business” context

➤ BUT Can We Use the Same Considerations for “Safety and Health?”

- With caution, Yes.
 - “Business” impacts “safety” and vice versa. *Can be one and the same*
 - Some of these can generational trends can affect attitudes which can affect safety outcomes
- Avoid “absolute” typecasting: insulting to some, and untrue

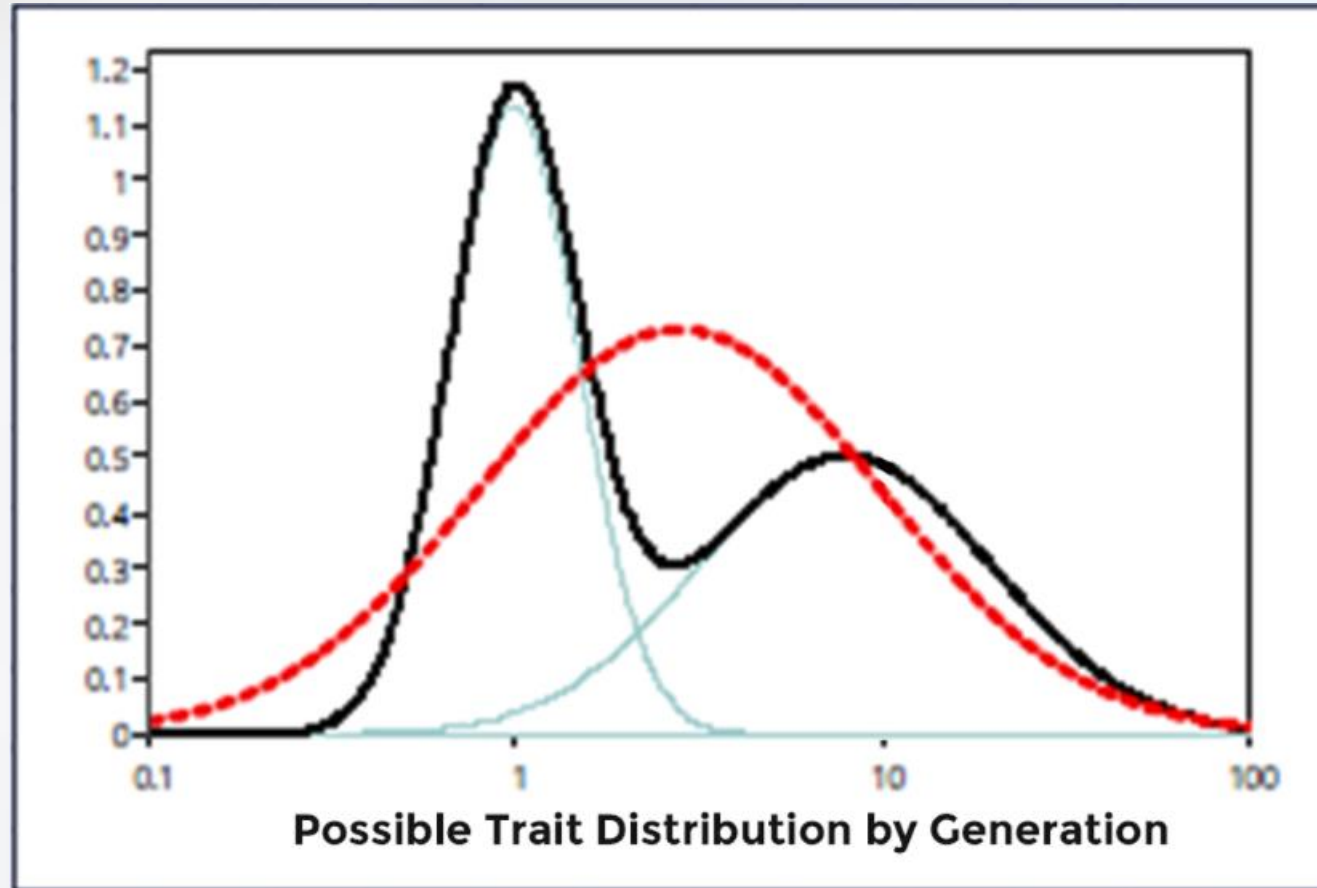
Exact application depends on CONTEXT

The Multigenerational Workforce and Safety



Source: www.opm.gov, *Leading a Generationally Diverse Workforce*

➤ Here are Some Key Points:



- One group can influence other groups.
- New workers are joining a new culture – and can create, influence.
- Individual **personalities can be stronger** than generational factors

➤ External Context and Forces Can Be Strong Drivers that Impact Workers

- The local organization's culture: who "owns" safety
 - Even, the part of the organization one works in
- Business – market share, profit margins
 - Are you working for Amazon, a City, or a 10-person company
- Union influence on what "safety" looks like

➤ Perspectives of Newer Safety Manager (“Ah ha!”)

- One personal example:
 - Workforce in Texas
 - Significant Generation X
- The influence of culture

CDC/NIOSH Future of Work Initiative Priority Topics

Issues that Impact Workplace, Work, and Workforce

Emergency and Disaster Preparedness and Response • Exposures and Hazards • Extreme Weather Conditions • Globalization • Industry 4.0 • OSH 4.0 • Policies • Politics • Resources • Social Disruption

WORKPLACE

ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN	Autonomy • Burnout and Stress Prevention • Healthy Leadership • Job Flexibility • Leave Systems • Scheduling • Social and Corporate Responsibility • Workplace Built Environment • Workspace • Work-Life Fit
TECHNOLOGICAL JOB DISPLACEMENT	Automation • Digitalization • Job Quantity and Quality • Occupational Polarization • Productivity Enhancement and Quality Improvement through Automated Manufacturing • Stable, New, and Redundant Work
WORK ARRANGEMENTS	Alternative • App-Based • Contingent • Contractual • Direct Hire • Distributed • Free-Lancer • Job Sharing • Non-Standard • On-Call • On-Demand • Part-Time • Platform • Precarious • Seasonal • Single vs. Multi-Employers • Temporary

WORK

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	Deep Learning • Machine Learning • Neural Networks
ROBOTICS	Autonomous, Collaborative, Industrial, Managerial, Service, and Social Robots • Autonomous Vehicles • Human-Machine Interaction • Unmanned Aerial Systems • Wearable Exoskeletons and Exosuits
TECHNOLOGIES	Additive and Smart Manufacturing, and 3D Printing • Advanced, Cloud, and Quantum Computing • Bio-Manufacturing • Bio-Technology • Clean and Green Technologies • Digitalization • Information and Communication Technologies • Internet-of-Things • Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials • Sensors • Sensor Surveillance • Smart Personal Protective Equipment

WORKFORCE

DEMOGRAPHICS	Diversity and Inclusivity • Multi-Generational • Productive Aging • Vulnerable
ECONOMIC SECURITY	Adequate Wages • Equitable and Commensurate Compensation and Benefits • Minimum Guaranteed Hours
SKILLS	Continual Education, Learning, and Training • Re-Skilling and Up-Skilling

NIOSH [2021]. The NIOSH future of work initiative research agenda. By Tamers S, Pana-Cryan R, Ruff T, Streit J, Flynn M, Childress A, Chang CC, Novicki E, Ray T, Fosbroke D, Geraci C. Cincinnati, OH: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2022-105, <https://doi.org/10.26616/NIOSH PUB2022105>.

Figure 1. Priority Topics and Sub-topics of the NIOSH Future of Work Initiative

➤ Let's Unpack This:

- No absolutes. Generational categories might be “clues” but should not result in assumptions
 - Recognize our generational biases
 - There can be more variation within persons WITHIN a “generation” than between!
- We hurt ourselves and lose opportunities by focusing too much on generational differences
 - Potential to disregard the older worker and discount the younger worker

➤ Some General Ideas for Addressing and Thinking About Safety:

- Help millennials and Gen Z recognize potential and develop safety skills
- LISTEN. Millennials and Gen Z have amazing potential that can help safety (“Why are they not *listening?*”)
- Tap into experience/wisdom of Baby Boomers

➤ Keep In Mind: Different Generational Preferences:

- Multigenerational Preferences for Communication Methods
- Multigenerational Preferences for Recognition
- Multigenerational Aptitude and Preferences for Use of Artificial Intelligence

➤ Multigenerational Training Considerations:

- On-boarding
- Microlearning (little learnings here/there)
- Gamification, Virtual reality
- Apps
 - Fall protection related, crane signals, NIOSH Heat Safety Tool, many others
- *Introducing knowledge/techniques as needed*

➤ **Multigenerational Viewpoints on Safety Goals and “Safety Success”**

- Success may look different to different generations
- Finding “sweet spot” in balance
- Finding and achieving commonality
 - For example, working on safety culture which in turn impacts key metrics

➤ **Managing Generational Conflict:**

- Show that past achievements have value – but there is a need to adapt to new ways of working.
- Bring different generations together and LEARN.
 - **REVERSE** mentoring programs (inform/commonalities)
- Foster good social dynamics - to learn across generations, but ALSO to minimize potential conflict

➤ Managing Generational Conflict:

- Communication skills training – for older but also younger. Manner of communication.

“Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.”

- Gerald R. Ford

Workplace Design Impacts Safety, Too:

- Design for adaptability
- Older: mobility, strength changes, vision changes
- Gen Z: may lack experience in physically demanding jobs

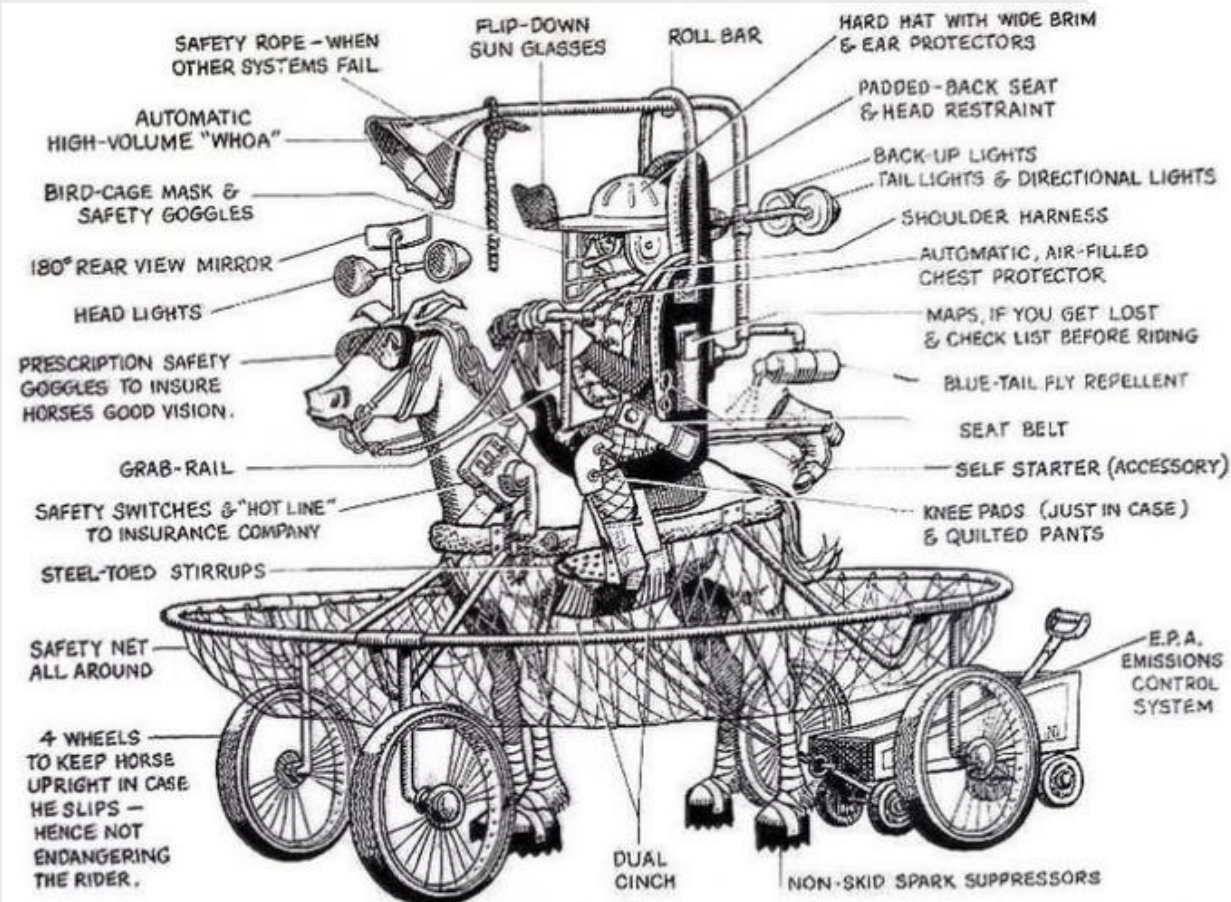
Remember physical range of motion and capability variations exist not only between generations but also even specific ages



➤ **Multi-Generational and Multi-Cultural Differences in Risk Perception**

- Older generations
- Younger generations
- Cultures of risk-taking

Differences in risk perception and acceptance



Question: Is this generational?

➤ Let's Get "Intentional" and Strategic For a Minute:



Some Sample Applications

Safety Element	Generation	Things to Consider	How Are We Doing That?
Training	Traditionalists		
	Baby Boomers	Structured, formal, expert-led Face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for formal coursework in X, Y, Z - Coaching from senior leaders in program Leadership 451
	Gen X	Self-paced learning and problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training course 123 provides mix of traditional and digital methods - Training course 456 provides practical examples that require some engagement but also self-study
	Millennials	Interactive, hands-on, collaborative, self-directed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training courses X, Y, Z developed with gamification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - microlearning for ABC - personalized learning paths
	Gen Z	Adaptable, quick to learn. Bite sized content, microlearning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Virtual reality, simulations - Peer to peer interactions

And so on for Meaningful Participation, Hazard Identification, Safety Inspections, Safety Committees, etc.

Can We Have One or Two Volunteers, Please, to Share:

- Something you/your company did specifically to account for generational differences in safety management, that **WORKED**

➤ In Summary, Four Key Ideas to Consider:

- No absolutes. Don't put people in a box.
- Where feasible – design assignments, physical environment, policies with flexibility
- Consider using a deliberate process to ensure inclusion and maximize benefits.
- Pay attention to communication:
 - Media used
 - Methods for feedback and effectiveness

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