**"Millennial"** is the buzzword of the moment — with much of the national conversation focused on stereotypes and anecdotes. But are young adults today really all that different from those of previous generations?

A review of data shows that millennials *do* have characteristics that set them apart. Unlike their parents' generation, millennials are ushering in an age when minorities will lead the U.S. population. Many of them aren't too keen on marrying early. They are the most educated generation — but even so, a majority remains undereducated. And since they entered the workforce in the midst of a sluggish economy, many also remain underemployed.

Despite those hard realities, millennials as a group are optimistic about what their future holds.

We've charted some of the most interesting aspects of the millennial generation below. When compared with past generations, these shifts show how millennials are redefining what it means to be young in America.

*A note on dates: There is no consensus on the exact years that generations begin and end. For this post, we've defined millennials as those born between 1980 and 2000; Generation X, between 1965 and 1979; and baby boomers, between 1946 and 1964. Also, these charts represent averages — there will always be exceptions to these trends.*

**Size**

The baby boom, so-named because of the huge spike in births in the U.S. after World War II, is often thought of as the country's largest generation. But today, millennials outnumber the boomers by [11 million people](http://money.cnn.com/interactive/economy/diversity-millennials-boomers/) — having boosted their numbers through a wave of immigration, just as boomers have aged and started to die.

To put this in perspective, [the most common age](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=PEP_2013_PEPALL6N&prodType=table) in America right now is 22. By 2020, according to a [Brookings Institution analysis](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brookings-now/posts/2014/06/11-facts-about-the-millennial-generation), 1 in 3 adults will be a millennial.

