

Audience Insights

Communicating to the Responsible Generation (Aged 64-84)



An August 2008 Harris Interactive poll evaluated how Americans view the different generations, and results from the poll indicated that adults between 64–84 years of age* prefer the title “responsible generation” to represent their age group. The responsible generation consists of approximately 50 million people in the United States born between 1925 and 1942.¹

*At the time of the poll.

Insights into the Responsible Generation

1. Of 60% who attended high school, 38% earned a high school diploma and 26% earned a college or post-graduate degree. Whites completed high school at the highest rate (81%) as compared to 58% of blacks and 42% of Hispanics. Asians held the highest number of bachelor degrees (32%).²
2. Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be living in poverty—23% of blacks and 19% of Hispanics as compared to 7% of whites.³ Whites have a net worth six times that of blacks.⁴
3. Two-thirds are married, while 29% are widowed, divorced, or separated. Men are more likely to be married than women.^{2,5}
4. Make up 8% of the workforce, and boasts the fastest rise in income in today’s workforce.²
5. Fifty-five percent say they rely on TV to keep them informed, and consider TV their main source of entertainment.⁶
6. Increased use of Internet among this generation.⁷
3. Value discipline, self-denial, and hard work. They demonstrate obedience to authority, commitment, responsibility, and financial/social conformity.⁶
4. Cautious and conservative with their money, but have a “now-or-never” attitude when splurging on big-ticket items.⁸
5. More women than men (71%, 59%) influence household purchasing decisions.⁹
6. Prefer face-to-face or written communication, in general.

Audience Insights can help you to communicate more effectively with your audience in order to influence their behavior. CDC’s Strategic and Proactive Communication Branch (SPCB) divides audiences into segments with similar needs, preferences, and characteristics and provides CDC programs with audience-specific information, marketing expertise, and communication planning. To develop **Audience Insights**, secondary data is collected and analyzed from CDC-licensed consumer databases, books, articles, and the Internet. **For more information, email SPCBHealthMktg@cdc.gov or contact Fred Fridinger, Chief, SPCB, at FFridinger@cdc.gov.**



Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Responsible Generation at-a-Glance

These composite profiles are for illustrative purposes only.



"I belong to a generation of helpers, and have a deep commitment to volunteering my time and service to helping others."

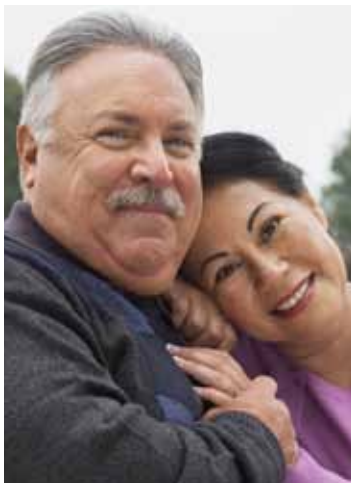
Margaret Daniels

Retired: Textile Worker

Age: 73

Widowed

- ❖ Member of the League of Women Voters; active in her church.
- ❖ Reads the local newspaper to stay informed about her community.
- ❖ Worries about fixed income carrying her through retirement.
- ❖ Biggest health concerns are preventing disease and staying physically fit.



"We have worked hard and now have the ability and opportunity to spend time with family and friends, and to finally enjoy the fruits of our labors."

Roberto and Rosa Mitchell

Retired: Postal Worker and School Teacher

Age: Roberto, 75; Rosa, 70

Married

- ❖ Love to travel, explore new places, and experience adventures.
- ❖ Saved money over the years to afford dream vacations, automobiles, and good restaurants during retirement.
- ❖ Both AARP members.
- ❖ Roberto diagnosed with heart disease and takes daily medication.



"I was taught to believe hard work, strong morals, and sound ethics define a person's character."

Thomas Rim

Employed: Small Business Owner

Age: 68

Married

- ❖ College educated; owns a small appliance store.
- ❖ Shops at Macy's and Wal-Mart Super Center.
- ❖ Uses Internet to send emails, for banking services, and to search for health information.
- ❖ Concerned about rising health care costs; saves to prepare for the future.
- ❖ Physically active and maintains a healthy diet.

Targeted Health Communication

Knowing the **habits and preferences** of the responsible generation can help you plan health communication and marketing efforts for this audience.

- ❖ Probe their sense of social awareness, commitment to public service, and sense of empowerment when doing formative research. Consider how you can use this information to focus your messages, campaigns, and calls-to-action.

Forge relationships with the Association for the Advancement of Retired Persons (AARP) and other well-known and trusted agencies. They can serve as dissemination channels and provide additional insights into the responsible generation.

- ❖ Consider tie-ins with leisure activities popular among this generation to make your messages more interesting, meaningful, and relevant. Work with local libraries or community gardens, or any place where they spend their leisure time.
- ❖ Work with faith-based organizations, area agencies on aging, or veteran groups to design messages that speak to their core values of faith, family loyalty, commitment, and honor.

Collaborate with health care providers to engage older adults in the health decision-making process. This generation relies on their health care providers for health information and direction, and is most likely to comply with their directives.

- ❖ Use the Internet as part of a comprehensive communication plan that includes other channels (e.g., health care providers, media). Post health messages on Web sites they trust, such as Yahoo, Google, and AOL. Limit the use of blogs, online diaries, and wikis; they are not popular with this generation.

Facts About the Responsible Generation

- ❖ There are approximately 32 million people from this generation living in the United States.⁵
- ❖ Women outnumber men (54% as compared to 46%), and this trend will continue with increasing age.⁵
- ❖ The predominant race/ethnicity today is white (80%), followed by black, Hispanic, and Asian.¹⁰
- ❖ American Indian/Alaska Natives represent <1% of this population.¹⁰
- ❖ This generation experienced little competition and significant economic prosperity during their working years and now control approximately two-thirds of the country's financial assets, with whites maintaining the largest proportion of these assets.²
- ❖ They are veterans of the workforce and respect authority. They believe in government, patriotic duty, making things work, and dreaming big.¹¹
- ❖ This generation is well-known for traditional work values and ethics, being highly disciplined, working hard, and playing by the rules to ensure the work gets done.^{2,12}
- ❖ More people from this generation are becoming mentors in the workplace.²
- ❖ Those who are retired are 2.5 times more likely to use the telephone than to write when communicating with friends and family.¹³

Responsible Generation by Self-Designated Race/Ethnicity, 2006

Data represents adults aged 65-85 years in 2006*

	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Responsible Generation	31,964	80%	9%	5%	3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Race, Age and Sex for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006;" Release Date: May 17, 2007.

*Researchers differ about the age range of this group.

Health-Related Behaviors and Attitudes

The responsible generation view themselves as active people who are in the prime of their lives.²

- ❖ They (50%) are willing to pay anything where it concerns their health.⁹
- ❖ They (54% men, 60% women) strive to maintain a healthy diet.⁹
- ❖ Their biggest health concerns are being physically fit (62% men, 58% women) and preventing disease (46% men, 50% women).¹⁹
- ❖ About 40% say they exercise on a regular basis.⁹
- ❖ Adults from this generation say they are happy with their lives and standard of living; more than 66% link their happiness to time spent with family and friends.⁹
- ❖ More than 70% believe they have the power to change their lives.⁹

Visits to health care providers, 2008			
Provider Type	Number of visits	Men, %	Women, %
Primary Care Doctor	1–2	36.1	35.4
	3–4	35.2	36.7
	5–6	13.8	14
Specialist Doctors	1–2	43	46
	2–4	19.1	21.3
	5–6	8.2	6.2

Source: Porter Novelli's HealthStyles National Survey, 2008.

- ❖ More than 70% believe it is important to see a doctor when they are sick; they will only use medications prescribed by their provider.⁹
- ❖ More than 70% say they rely on their health care provider for health information and to guide them through medical or health matters.⁸ More Asians look for health information online than any other race/ethnic group (33% as compared to 19% white, 17% black, and 10% Hispanic).⁹

- ❖ The three leading chronic health conditions among the responsible generation in 2006 were hypertension, heart disease, and cancer. Blacks experienced the highest number of cases of hypertension (50% as compared to 40% white, 32% Hispanic and 38% Asian). These were the same as in 1997–1998.^{9,20}
- ❖ Asians experienced fewer cases of back pain and arthritis than any other group.⁹
- ❖ The most frequent injuries among men (46%) and women (60%) are unintentional falls.²¹
- ❖ Seventy-one percent who go online use the Internet to search for health care information, with 53.4% seeking information about specific symptoms, and 50.2% seeking treatments for a specific illness.²² This generation shows a preference for well-established, strongly branded sites, rather than new sites or sources of content, such as wikis and blogs.¹⁶
- ❖ Forty-three percent say they consider the CDC a trusted source for health information.¹⁹



Media Habits

People from the responsible generation still prefer traditional media (e.g., TV, local newspapers, magazines) for news and information over new media (e.g., Internet, blogs, wikis).

- ❖ Younger members (in their 60's) are part of the fastest-growing group of Internet users.⁷
- ❖ Ninety-four percent of this generation online is white, as compared to 79% of the general online population. Minorities from this generation make up less than 6% of the online community, with Hispanics having the smallest proportion of all races (less than 5% of the entire online Latino population).¹⁶
- ❖ There are slightly more male Internet users than females from this generation (56%, 49%).⁹
- ❖ The average amount of time they spend online per week is 1–4 hours.⁹
- ❖ Health searches, e-shopping, and online banking activities are increasing with this group.¹⁷

Top Five Web Sites Visited in Last 30 Days	
Men	Women
1. Google.com	1. Google.com
2. Yahoo.com	2. Yahoo.com
3. Mapquest.com	3. AOL.com
4. AOL.com	4. Mapquest.com
5. eBay.com	5. Weatherchannel.com

Source: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Spring 2008). Population Study.

- ❖ They feel more comfortable with Web sites that protect their privacy, show local information, or make it easy to find what they are looking for.⁶
- ❖ They access the Internet from home (33% women, 40% men) most frequently; only 3% of women and 4% of men say they go online at work.⁹
- ❖ Men from this generation are more active in online activities than women, with the exception of shopping and blogging, where they have similar activity levels.

- ❖ Online activities vary by race/ethnicity. More Asians from this generation use email than all other races (48% as compared to 34% white, 16% black, 15% Hispanic). They are also more active in online banking (25% as compared to 13% white, 4% black, 6% Hispanic).⁹
- ❖ The responsible generation is least likely (<5%) to use online blogging, chat rooms, social networks, and streaming video.⁹ Of these they do use, men are more active in social networks and women are more likely to use Instant Messaging.¹³

Online Activities		
	Men, %	Women, %
Email	35	29
News/Weather	20	14
Online Banking	14	10
Financial/Stock Trading	10.5	4
Shopping	8	8
Blogging	2	2
Chat Rooms	1	0.75
Streaming Video	2	0.75

Source: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Spring 2008). Population Study.



Traditional Media

This generation has the highest access to cable television in their home than any other group, and is the least interested in reading national newspapers. Combined readership for three popular national newspapers is 32%. However, they value local newspaper coverage and more than 50% say they read local newspapers to stay informed about their community.

- ❖ The most popular television networks among the responsible generation are CBS (72%), ABC (68%), NBC (64%), and FOX (50%).⁹
- ❖ Combined readership for three popular national newspapers (*NY Times*, *USA Today*, and *Wall Street Journal*) is 32%.¹ When they do read national newspapers, the sections they read most are the front page, editorial page, food & cooking pages, comics, and TV/radio listings.⁹
- ❖ Magazine readership varies by race/ethnicity in this generation. Whites and Asians are reading *AARP–The Magazine* (53%, 64%) and *Reader's Digest* (44%, 48%), blacks read *Ebony* (53%) and *Jet* (49%), and Hispanics read *Parade* (36%).⁹

Interests and Hobbies

People from the responsible generation are active and seek opportunities to try new hobbies, travel to new places, and try new cuisines. This is true across all races/ethnicities and genders.

- ❖ The responsible generation is a generation of helpers and has a deep commitment to service through volunteering.⁶
- ❖ They are considered to be the most team-oriented and patriotic generation.¹⁴
- ❖ Approximately 69% of people in this generation are members of organized groups, such as civic clubs, AAA, churches, and the Arts.⁹ They are also the generation currently in control of AARP.

Top Five Leisure Activities/Hobbies	
Men	Women
1. Dining out	1. Reading books
2. Listening to music	2. Dining out
3. Reading books	3. Listening to music
4. Gardening	4. Gardening
5. Card games	5. Card games

Source: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Spring 2008). Population Study.

Spending Habits

When they have the means, this generation is willing to splurge on items they deem worthy. Otherwise, they shop in discounted chain stores and are not swayed by advertising.

- ❖ Adults from this generation are independent decision-makers. They are cautious and conservative with their money but have a “now-or-never” attitude when splurging on big-ticket items, such as automobiles and dream vacations.⁸
- ❖ CVS and Walgreen's are the pharmacies most frequented regardless of gender and race/ethnicity.⁹
- ❖ Hispanics believe it's worth paying more for brand-name prescription medications (30% as compared to 16% white, 23% Asian, 26% black).¹⁵
- ❖ Wal-Mart Super Center is the most popular retail chain with this generation regardless of gender or race/ethnicity. Over 55% shop at Wal-Mart.¹⁸
- ❖ Women tend to shop at Dollar General and Family Dollar, while men tend to shop at The Home Depot and Lowe's.¹⁸
- ❖ Forty-six percent of Asians shop at major retailers, like Macy's, as compared to 22% black, 23% Hispanic, and 20% white.⁹
- ❖ Nearly 70% believe it is worth paying extra for quality products.⁹
- ❖ More than 50% say they do not make purchasing decisions based on advertisements alone, but they believe ads do help them learn more about products available.⁹

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