



## Generation Alpha faces up to post-COVID world



Generation Alpha is the first generation that will exist entirely in the 21st century.

### EXCLUSIVE

By **STEPHEN LUNN**, SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR  
11:00PM APRIL 23, 2021 | 50 COMMENTS

They started playing games on iPads while still in prams — online before they could walk. Almost every part of their education, formal and informal, is via a glass screen. Same with their social life.

They have greater access to more information from a younger age than anyone previously. But TV is a T-Rex, books a hard sell. And going outside to play with friends is the exception, not the norm.

On the other hand they are likely to be empathetic, curious about the world and caring about the environment, and already believe they can be agents of change.

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Meet Generation Alpha, our complicated 0 to 11-year-olds. The first generation that will exist entirely in the 21st century. And, according to social researcher Mark McCrindle, the generation that could be most transformed by COVID-19.

In a book entitled Generation Alpha, Mr McCrindle argues you only have to look at the Oxford and Collins dictionaries' words of the year since they were born to understand how different their lives are compared to previous generations, even the Gen Zs born between 1995 and 2009.



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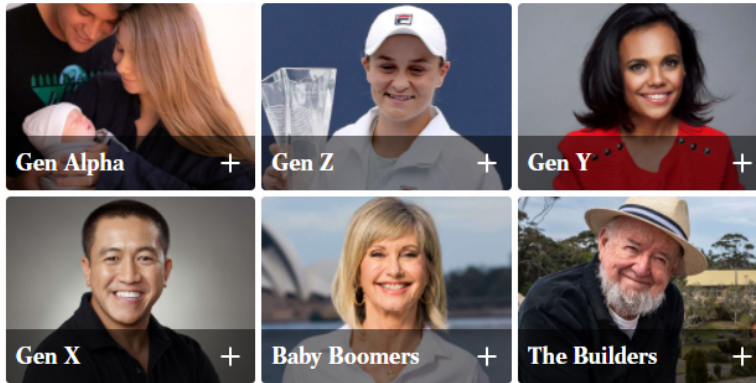
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“2011 — App; 2012 — Cloud; 2013 — Hashtag; 2014 — Selfie; 2015 — Face with tears of joy (not even a word); 2016 — Post-truth; 2017 — Fake news; 2018 — Toxic; 2019 — Climate emergency; 2020 — COVID-19, lockdown, social distancing, iso, Black Lives Matter, cancel culture, superspreader, take your pick,” he writes.

Mark McCrindle. Picture: AAP

## Talking about your generation

How McCrindle defines the generations



READ MORE: [Generation Alpha: what's in store for them?](#)

The constant digital connection makes Gen Alpha global in outlook, open to influences, and influencers, from Sydney to Tokyo to LA. This can be a good thing. For every Billie Eilish clip they watch on YouTube is another from Greta Thunberg.

Mr McCrindle cites Monica Dreger, an executive at toy company Mattel, who says Gen Alphas already believe they can influence societal change and are prepared to take action to do so.

“She is seeing kids as young as seven or eight talking about environment issues and what they can personally do, which she has never seen in a generation before,” he writes.

But digital ubiquity also makes them more vulnerable to the darker elements of the web. And parents have mostly lost the battle for control of screen time, he said.



Psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg.

Mr McCrindle thinks COVID-19 could signal significant changes for Generation Alpha. “Many have seen their parents working from home, and while that was rare, now it’s mainstream,” he told The Australian. “Family time at home can be a more regular part of their life; things like cooking and board games.”

And after having been denied school, for months for some, they may well appreciate those interpersonal relationships more.”

But he acknowledged living through COVID hasn’t been all easy going. “A lot of kids haven’t seen relatives, particularly grandparents, who may



live overseas, for a long time now. At that age this is really significant," he said.



Australian Childhood Foundation chief executive Joe Tucci.

Psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg, a specialist in adolescent and children's mental health, worries about Generation Alpha.

## Words of the year during the lifetime of Generation Alpha



- 2011 - App
- 2012 - Cloud
- 2013 - Hashtag
- 2014 - Selfie
- 2015 - Face with tears of joy (an emoji, not even a word)
- 2016 - Post-truth
- 2017 - Fake news
- 2018 - Toxic
- 2019 - Climate emergency
- 2020 - There was no single word chosen in 2020, but Mark McCrindle suggests: COVID-19, lockdown, social distancing, iso, Black Lives Matter, cancel culture, superspreader ... the list goes on!

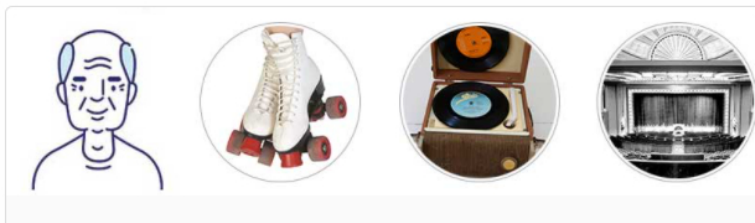
Source: *Generation Alpha*, Mark McCrindle and Ashley Fell

"I'm seeing a lot of young people who haven't done well through COVID. There has been a high number of calls to Kids Helpline from children 10 and under," Dr Carr-Gregg said.

Australian Childhood Foundation chief executive officer Joe Tucci is also less optimistic Generation Alpha can navigate COVID-19 without longer term effects. "COVID has given a name or a face to worry, and worry has become a more powerful emotion in this generation of kids," he said.

## Entertainment evolution

The iconic toys, music devices and screen content particular to each generation. Tap for more detail. Source: *Generation Alpha*, Mark McCrindle and Ashley Fell



### 1. The Builders: 1925-1945



### 2. Baby Boomers: 1946-1964



### 3. Generation X: 1965-1979



### 4. Generation Y (Millennials): 1980-1994



### 5. Generation Z: 1995-2009



### 6. Generation Alpha: 2010-2024

#### STEPHEN LUNN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

Stephen Lunn is The Australian's Social Affairs Editor, covering social policy issues including ageing, disability, welfare, immigration and population policy. He has previously been the paper's environment wri... [Read more](#)



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**Scott** 2 DAYS AGO

Here is an idea; a new product line - Mattel "Enviro Toys" perchance???

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**Scott** 3 DAYS AGO

I reject this version of reality and suggest my own - kids reflect their parents. Their parents are not easily stovepipe into the groupings suggested in this article. We are all evolving, learning and doing on a daily basis. Give us some credit for shaping our own future and that of our children, and not just following the diktat of transparent "fashion".

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**Jennifer** 3 DAYS AGO

If children are politically aware of putative environmental issues, then it is because they have been indoctrinated by schools, parents and social media. Walk past any primary school and you will see litter strewn all over the place. These kids don't care for their immediate environment, so how could they practically care for that beyond the school gate?

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**Peter** 3 DAYS AGO

I must have missed where it said that children play, explore, interact, fall down get up, win and lose and all the other things that allow a child to grow and learn. But they will have the need for glasses from too much screen time. Bad posture from bending the neck for prolonged periods over a screen. Children that young don't learn about environmental issues. They are indoctrinated into a cause.

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**Helen** 3 DAYS AGO

Well said Peter, it is indeed indoctrination. What about the view parents are losing the battle against screen time. Parents are the adults and set the example and boundaries. It's time parents parented.

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**Patrick** 4 DAYS AGO

If these kids can decide what they personally can do about the environment that will be a real positive. Most people seem to be telling everyone else what they should do. Some personal responsibility in this area would be radically positive.

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**jennifer** 4 DAYS AGO

One thing I think we will see in the next 2-3 years is a lot more children requiring reading glasses. Screens ruin your eyes.

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**Warren** 4 DAYS AGO

I'm reading a lot of judgemental comments from (I suspect) older readers - I'm a boomer too - 57. As a teacher, I know families all across the allow/don't-allow spectrum. The issues and consequences either way are so complex, but that's the world we live in now (for better or for worse). Let's not be too quick to judge young parents - as McCrindle points out, parenting today is a totally different story, and (as Gandalf says) "even the very wise cannot see all ends". Ellen

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**Scott** 3 DAYS AGO

Love the Gandalf reference ...

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**geoff** 4 DAYS AGO

Perhaps shocking to raise.....but the spectre of major conflict in a world confronting state aggression and belligerence, not seen since the 1930's will inevitably change all the prophecies about the future.

So called climate change, de-platforming, the cancel culture and fake news will all evaporate when national security demands forceful action. Whether it be "generation XY or Z" a call to arms will focus minds above the trivial, which all too often demands today's attention.

In the past, imposed censorship protected much of the population from the realities, but in a more connected world, those realities will be in full view. My hope is that whatever generation is the focus of today's thoughts; that resilience, stoicism, candour and commitment beyond self are the attributes of all. In hope. Sceptical Geoff.

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**Aloha** 4 DAYS AGO *(Edited)*

I'd like to think and hope so Geoff but the recent generations have been and are being dumbed down.

It will be interesting how they react when faced with a real threat to the existence of humankind which a verbal rebuke will only make the oppressor more aggressive and violent.

There is definitely an underlying current of badness in all this and I believe that's it's a combination of communism and the greedy elites to need to control the world's wealth. Our politicians just keep living in their bubble just like previous world war precursor events.

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**Scott** 3 DAYS AGO

It's funny Aloha; I recall conversations with my parents along the lines that my generation had been "dumbed down" based on the curriculum that I studied. Given I went to school in the 60s I find the current conversation about "the youth of today" very instructive but not really contributing much to the identification of solutions.

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**Aloha** 4 DAYS AGO *(Edited)*

A generation being taught via Google, Twitter, false truths, victim hood, opinionated media, unrealistic consumerism etc we've got a lot to look forward to.

Progress is not always good and history tells us that sometimes it's good to hold progress, sit back and take a breath, realign laws, working environments and the general society needs, then start again.

Personally I think in 10 years time we will be in a whole lot of trouble with China and corrupt elites fighting over who controls the power of the people. US greed is selling our souls to communist autocratic powers.




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**Jermayne** 4 DAYS AGO

I am excited. I am wondering what breakthroughs they will discover. I am

observing how different they are from past generations. The evolution might be hard to fathom, comprehend or even accept, but this is how humans have been since we lived in caves - always finding and discovering new ways, things and developing new habits.

Some are making a living wanting them to be like baby boomers or previous other generations. The present will always find fault with the past and future generations in this context. Has been and will be until kingdom come.


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