The Big Picture

Demographics

The Millennial Generation, at nearly 92 million strong, is the largest in the United States. It is also the most diverse. Its sheer size and multiethnic nature, already a factor in American society, will play an ever-greater role in cultural, political, and economic trends. To the right is a population tree, which shows the American population broken down by age and sex. The shaded section in the middle of the tree represents the percentage of minorities at each age of the population.

Baby Boomers

The generation that currently holds most of society’s levers of power is slowly moving toward the exits. Boomers, ages 45 to 63 at the end of 2009, are beginning to retire, and they will soon make way for younger generations, both in the workplace and in society more broadly.

Millennials

Ranging in age from 7 to 28 at the end of 2009, Millennials are just getting started. Although fewer than half are currently adults, nearly all will be in the workforce and eligible to vote by the end of the decade. As these Millennials continue to advance into adulthood, their unique characteristics will reshape American society.

NOTE: All race categories are non-Hispanic; people who identify with two or more races in census data are not shown (less than 2 percent of total population).

SOURCE: Monthly estimate of resident population, by single year of age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin (11/1/09); U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division
Employment

Adult Millennials have been hit hard by the recession, with their rate of unemployment half again as high as that of older workers. But the situation looks still worse when you factor in those who have stopped looking for work or opted to remain in school. The percentage of Millennials with jobs—called the employment-population ratio—has dropped much more sharply than that for other age groups. (See chart below.) The U.S. map to the left depicts where Millennials currently live (the black dots) and how they are faring on a state-by-state basis: the darker the state, the better the jobs climate. Toward the positive end of the spectrum is a state such as Wisconsin, in which a healthy ratio of adult Millennials are in jobs; at the other end is a state like California, which is struggling mightily to find jobs for its 5.4 million adult Millennials.