

Center for Creative Leadership® Emerging Leaders Research Survey Summary Report

Executive Summary

Despite what is seen on television, heard on radio, and written in newspapers, magazines, books, the differences between generations are not as stark as we have been led to believe. Though there are some real differences (e.g., older people are more likely to be married and to be higher in organizational hierarchies than are younger people), there are at least as many similarities (e.g., almost everyone believes they are contributing to society in their current jobs) as there are differences. We recommend that people treat potential generational differences as they do every other possible demographic difference – very, very carefully, and without relying on stereotypes.

Background

The CCL® Emerging Leaders Project Research Questionnaire was a comprehensive survey containing both quantitative and qualitative response items to help understand the similarities and differences between generational groups in the workplace. The final sample had valid responses from 3417 respondents. As the focus of the research was on generational similarities and differences, the sample was divided into generational cohorts based on year of birth. The sample was divided into five generational cohorts:

- **Silent Generation** (born 1925-1945) 8% (274),
- **Early (Baby) Boomers** (born 1946-1954) 29% (985),
- **Late (Baby) Boomers** (born 1955-1963) 30% (1040),
- **Early (Generation) Xers** (born 1964-1976) 30% (1021),
- **Late (Generation) Xers** (born 1977 to 1982) 3% (90).

The survey items focused on the following topic areas:

- **Demographics:** Who are the respondents? What are their educational backgrounds? Do they have children, mortgages, spouses, etc.?
- **Respondents' International Experience**
 - **Life:** How much international experience have people had in their life?
 - **Work:** How much international work do people do in their current position?
- **Respondents' Work Patterns:** How do people actually work? How many hours do they work? Do they telecommute?
- **Respondents' Career Patterns:** What do careers look like now? Do people intend to stay with their current employers? If so, for how long? How long do people think they should stay with an employer?
- **Respondents' Management Experience and Issues:** How much experience do people have with management, what types of responsibilities do they think they have, and what types of management challenges do they see themselves having?
- **What Respondents Want to Learn:** In what areas/topics are people most interested in getting development?
- **How Respondents Want to Learn:** How do your people prefer to learn different types of information and skills?
- **Respondents' Coaching/Mentoring Preferences:** Do people think coaching/mentoring is useful? What do they want from a mentor/coach?

The following is a description of the basic findings in the above areas. This description is not exhaustive, and is a brief explanation of some of the interesting findings about generational similarities and differences.

Demographic Summary of Respondents

The CCL® Emerging Leaders Research Project has 3417 valid observations. The gender composition of the sample is 57% female and 43% male. Men and women were not equally distributed across the cohorts in this sample:

- Silent Generation: 64% female, 36% male,
- Early Boomers: 60% female, 40% male,
- Late Boomers: 48% female, 52% male,
- Early Xers: 58% female, 42% male,
- Late Xers: 80% female, 20% male.

Overall, most respondents report that they hold at least a Bachelors Degree. The respondents report highest degree obtained at the following aggregated response levels:

- 10.2% less than Bachelors Degree
- 31.9% Bachelors Degree (BA, BS),
- 44% Masters Degrees (MA, MS, MBA)
- 3% Professional Degree (MD, JD, DDS)
- 5.3% Doctorate(Ph.D.).

The Silent Generation and Early Boomers report a higher proportion of respondents with Masters Degrees than younger age cohorts.

Responses also indicate that both Early and Late Xers are more likely to be enrolled in school or taking classes than all other age cohorts.

Overall, responses on marital status were as follows for the sample:

- 18% Single/Never Married
- 69% Married
- 9% Divorced
- 3% Domestic partnership
- 1% Widow/Widower

Late Xers were more likely to be single or never married (72% of Late Xers) than other age cohorts (18%).

The Silent Generation, Early Boomers and Late Boomers report that 73% of them have children, compared to 43% of Early Xers and 8% of Late Xers.

Early Boomers (48%) and Late Boomers (56%) are more likely to be providing financial support for children compared to other age cohorts (26%).

The Silent Generation and Early Boomers (17% across both age cohorts) are more likely to be caring for family members other than children compared to all other age cohorts.

Respondents' International/Multi-Cultural Experience

In this sample, 90% of all respondents report English as their primary language, report the United States as their country of birth, and report the United States as their current country of residence.

In this sample, all age cohorts report that they primarily lived in one country (75% of all respondents), with the distribution of responses being fairly uniform across all age cohorts.

Early Boomers, Late Boomers and Early Xers are more likely to report Spanish as their primary language, but the respondents still only add up to around 1% of the total sample size.

Thirteen percent of Early Xers and 13% Late Xers are more likely to have spoken two or more languages prior to age 13. Overall, 11% of all respondents reported speaking more than two languages prior to age 13.

Overall, 24% of all respondents speak two or more languages now. Forty percent of Late Xers are more likely to speak two or more languages now, more than any other age cohort. In addition, 21% of Late Xers are likely to conduct business in more than one language, more than all other age cohorts, of which only 10% report conducting business in more than one language. This is consistent with the desire of the Late Xer cohort to pursue foreign language as a developmental interest.

Overall, 35% of all respondents traveled internationally before the age of 18. The likelihood of this occurrence increases with younger age cohorts. In comparison with other age cohorts, a significantly larger proportion of the Late Xer cohort (50% of the cohort) report that they traveled internationally before age 18.

Although 84% of all respondents have traveled internationally after age 18, the likelihood increases with age. In comparison with other cohorts, a significantly smaller proportion of the Late Xer cohort (64%) report having traveled internationally after age 18. This may be attributable to not yet having sufficient disposable income to do so.

While 56% of all respondents report that they work with people in more than one time zone, Late Boomers are more likely (64% of Late Boomers) to do so than all other age cohorts. In addition, Late Boomers are more likely to have to do some international travel in their jobs (30% of Late Boomers) than all other age cohorts (25% of all respondents). Late Xers are least likely to do so, with only 5% of that age cohort reported that they do.

Late Boomers are also more likely to have their work span more than one country. In this sample, 34% of Late Boomers have their work span in more than one country, compared to 28% within all other age cohorts.

Only 2% of all respondents report that they are currently living as expatriates. However, Late Boomers and Early Xers are slightly more likely to do so than the other age cohorts (approximately 3% of the Late Boomer and Early Xer cohorts).

Respondents' Work Patterns

Overall, only 24% of all respondents report working 40 hours or less per week. Later Xers are more likely to report working 40 hours or less per week (64% of Late Xers) than other age cohorts (an average of 27% across Silent Generation, Early Boomers, Late Boomers, and Early Xers). In addition, 53% of all respondents report working between nine to ten hours per day, with 30% reporting work days of eight hours or less. Late Xers are more likely to work eight hours or less per day (65% of respondents in this age cohort). Approximately 45% of all Silent Generation, Early Boomers, Late Boomers and Early Xers report that they work between 41 to 50 hours per week. **Overall, people who are at higher levels in their organizations work more hours regardless of age cohort than those who are at lower levels in their organization, and older people are typically at higher levels in their organizations than are younger people.**

Late Boomers and Early Xers are more likely to work one to two weekends per month than the Silent Generation, Early Boomers, and Late Xers.

Late Xers are more likely to work on flexible time schedules than are other age cohorts. This is most likely role dependent, as workers in older age cohorts are more likely to have managerial responsibilities that require more structured hours to meet organization and client needs.

Among all age cohorts, 75% indicate that their employers offer flexible work schedules, and 42% indicated that they work flexible time schedules. Late Xers are more likely to work flexible schedules than other age cohorts.

Overall, 35% of respondents work for organizations that offer telecommuting. However, most respondents do not telecommute (79% of all age cohorts). Late Boomers and Early Xers are slightly more likely to telecommute, though only one to five hours per week.

Respondents' Career Patterns

The older cohorts (Silent Generation, Early Boomers, and Late Boomers) are more likely to have worked for four or more organizations, spent an average of four years with each organization, have been with their current organizations over four years, and have been in their current positions over two years. Early Xers and Late Xers are more likely to have worked for three organizations or less, to have worked three years or less for an organization, to have worked three years or less with their current employer, and to have been in their current positions for two years or less.

Early Boomers and Late Boomers are more likely than other age cohorts to say that they intend to stay with their organizations for the next three years.

The following summarizes specific attitudinal items related to career patterns:

- While both the Silent Generation and Early Boomers would like to stay with their current organizations for the rest of their working lives, Late Boomers and Early Xers are more neutral in this position. Late Xers are more negative in their response, indicating the desire to explore their career options.
- While all groups believe that they have job security, the Silent Generation and Late Xers are more likely to feel this way.
- All groups trust their organizations to keep their promises, but The Silent Generation is more likely to feel this way.
- All groups believe that their organizations will develop them as employees.
- All groups believe that individuals should stay at an organization only for as long as it is useful to the individual, and the younger an employee is, the stronger this belief.
- All groups are neutral when asked if they believe that that job performance results in advancement.
- While all groups are neutral when asked if they believe that organizational advancement is based on skill at office politics, Late Boomers and Early Xers are more likely to believe this than are the other groups.
- All groups like their work and are happy in their jobs, but the older an employee is, the stronger this feeling.
- All groups indicate that they receive great reward from the work they do, from the people they work with, and they believe that they are contributing to society in their current jobs.
- All groups are neutral in the reward they receive from their paycheck.
- All groups indicate that they receive great satisfaction from their accomplishments at work.
- All groups indicate that they are rewarded by their accomplishments outside of work, and the younger an employee is, the more they report being rewarded by their accomplishments outside of work.

Respondents' Management Experience and Issues

Overall, 66% of respondents hold management positions, although both Early and Late Xers are less likely to hold management positions than are other groups.

Percent in management:

- Silent Generation: 74%,
- Early Boomers: 69%,
- Late Boomers: 75%,
- Early Xers: 56%,
- Late Xers: 9%.

Respondents are most likely to report to someone who is between 45 and 55 years old (45%), followed by someone between 36 to 45 years old (31%). Late Xers are more likely to report to someone between 36 and 45.

Late Boomers are most likely to manage both people and projects (63% of this age cohort) compared to all other age cohorts. Early Xers and Late Xers are more likely to manage projects only (25% of these age cohorts) compared to all other age cohorts (14%). Silent Generation, Early Boomers, and Late Boomers are more likely to manage people only (11%) compared to Early Xers and Late Xers (7% of these age cohorts). Late Xers are more likely to manage neither people nor projects (40% for this age cohort) compared to all other age cohorts (9%).

The following summarizes specific attitudinal items related to management issues:

- All groups indicate that they want to be in senior decision making roles. Late Xers are strongest in this belief.
- All groups trust their current boss, and agree that they would like to stay with their current boss as long as they can. But the older an employee is, the stronger their belief.
- Early Boomers and the Silent Generation cohorts tend to agree that upper management of their organizations clearly articulate their goals and priorities, while both Early Xers and Late Xers are more neutral. People who are higher in their organizations answer this question more positively than do people lower down in their organizations.
- All groups do not find it difficult to work with, for, or to manage people of *older* generations. However, the younger an employee is, the more difficulty they express in working with/for/or managing people from older generations. Early Xers and Late Xers are more likely to express difficulty with working with, for, or managing people of older generations.
- All groups do not find it difficult to work with, for, or to manage people of *younger* generations. However, the younger an employee is, the more difficulty they may express in working with/for/or managing younger generations. Early Xers and Late Xers are more likely to express difficulty with working with, for, or managing people of younger generations.
- All groups do not find it difficult to work with, for, or to manage someone *their own age*. However, the younger an employee is, the more difficulty they may express in working for someone their own age. Early Xers and Late Xers are more likely to express difficulty with working with, for, or managing people their own age.
- Early Xers and Late Xers are more likely to sense tension between people of different generations at work than the Silent Generation, Early Boomers, and Late Boomers.

Respondents and Learning

Do Respondents Think Learning is Important?

The following summarizes specific attitudinal items related to management issues:

- All age groups strongly agree that they are learning in their jobs.
- All age groups strongly agree that it is important to learn on the job; the younger an employee is, the stronger their belief is. This result reinforces the idea that younger employees recognize the need to learn, to gain expertise, to develop skills, and to increase credibility.
- All groups agree that they are developing the skills they need for the future on the job, and the younger an employee is, the stronger their belief is.
- All groups agree that their current jobs are aligned with their interests. The Silent Generation expressed this most strongly.

What Respondents Want to Learn

Respondents were asked to rate the likelihood that they would seek development in a variety of topic areas using a five point Likert-type scale (anchors were Very Likely, Likely, Neither Likely Nor Unlikely (neutral), Unlikely, and Very Unlikely).

Likely

45% of people said they were Likely or Very Likely to seek development in the following areas in the in the next year:

- Leadership
- Vision
- Performance appraisal
- Team-building
- Problem solving/decision making
- Public speaking/presentation skills
- Quality/process improvement
- Managing change
- Strategic planning
- Self-awareness
- Conflict management
- Management/business skills
- Communication skills
- Computer training
- Skills training in my field of expertise

Overall, *Leadership* and *Skills training in my field of expertise* were the areas in which respondents were the most likely to indicate they would seek development. With regard to *Computer training*, the Late Xer, Early Boomer, and Silent Generation age cohort groups express a higher level of interest for *Computer training* than the Early Xer and Late Boomer age cohort groups.

Neutral

Though a small percentage of respondents said they either were or were not interested in the following areas of development, the largest percentage were neutral about seeking development in the following areas in the next year:

- Diplomacy/politics at work
- Hiring/interviewing
- Time management

- Diversity
- Career coaching skills
- Career planning
- Life balance
- Creativity
- Ethics

Though most respondents were neutral with regard to training in the area of *Diversity*, Late Xers and Silent Generation age cohorts do have a stronger preference for training in *Diversity* than do other cohorts. As younger cohorts are also more interested in internationally-oriented development, this result may indicate that these age cohorts may have a greater awareness of the concept of “global citizenship.” With regard to the Silent Generation, this result may indicate a recognition of the change of the current business environment from its past structure to a global economy, and their wish to develop a greater awareness.

There are three distinct groups of interest level in *Career Planning*: Silent Generation/Early Boomers (Neutral), Late Boomers/Early Xers (Neutral to Likely), and Late Xers (Likely). There is a distinct increase in desire for this training that is inversely related to age; the younger an employee is, the more likely they would like to receive training in this area. This would support the contention that younger age cohorts are interested in this skill to guide their career development.

Unlikely

Overall, 45% of respondents said they were Unlikely or Very Unlikely to seek development in each of the following areas in the next year:

- International business knowledge
- International customs/cultural adaptability
- Entrepreneurialism
- Sales
- Foreign language

Overall, younger people are more likely to say they would be interested in development in international business knowledge, international customs, and foreign languages. This result suggests that younger people have a greater focus on the global nature of their work than do older people. With regard to entrepreneurialism, the younger an employee is, the more they would like to receive training in this area. This may indicate that younger age cohorts have a greater need to actively participate in, and be supported in, innovative endeavors within their organizations.

How Respondents Want to Learn

Soft Skills:

All age cohorts prefer to learn "soft skills" through:

- One-on-one coaching
- On the job interaction
- Peer interaction/feedback
- Assessment and feedback
- Classroom instruction (live)
- Discussion groups

They do not want to learn soft skills through

- Web based training
- Workbooks/manuals
- Satellite/broadcast TV/distance learning programs

- Computer based training
- Computer based games or simulations
- Games or simulations (non-computer based)
- Books/reading
- Case studies
- Outdoor experiential program

Hard/Technical Skills:

All age cohorts prefer to learn “hard/technical skills” through:

- On the job interaction
- Classroom instruction (live)
- Workbooks/manuals
- Books/reading
- One-on-one-coaching

They do not want to learn “hard/technical skills” through:

- Web based training
- Computer-based training
- Assessment and feedback
- Satellite/broadcast TV/distance learning programs
- Computer based training
- Computer based games or simulations
- Games or simulations (non-computer based)
- Discussion groups
- Case studies
- Outdoor experiential programs

Respondents’ Coaching/Mentoring Preferences

Overall, 88% of all respondents believe that having a mentor/coach is useful for career development. Early Xers are most likely to believe this. The preferred choices overall for a coach/mentor are a senior colleague (24% of all respondents), an expert in the person’s field/discipline (17%), or a chosen coach (16%). Late Xers have a stronger preference for an expert in their field (28% within Late Xers cohort), while other age cohorts show a stronger preference for a senior colleague (25% among Silents, Early Boomers, Late Boomers, Early Xers). Most people would prefer to choose their own coach (80%), and 88% prefer face-to-face meetings as the primary interaction medium with their coach/mentor.

While all groups express desire for monthly or weekly meetings with their coach, Late Boomers expressed a preference for monthly meetings with their coach, while Early Xers and Late Xers preferred more frequent (weekly) meetings.

Most groups desire to focus on career and leadership development issues in their coaching/mentoring relationships. Early Boomers have a slight preference for leadership development issues, while the Silent Generation, Late Boomers, Early Xers and Late Xers have a slight preference for more general career issues.

Most groups feel that they have the skills necessary to coach someone they work with; however, Late Xers are less likely to feel this way.