Birth Cohorts

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http://www.iastate.edu/~soc.134
Basic demographic terms

✓ Demography: the study of human population
✓ Demographer: sociologist who studies trends in population characteristics
✓ Three major components
  ✓ Fertility: the incidence of childbearing in a country’s population
  ✓ Mortality: the incidence of death in a country’s population
  ✓ Migration: the movement of people into and out of a specified territory
Birth cohorts

✓ Birth cohort: set of people who were born during the same era and who face similar societal circumstances brought about by their shared position in the overall age structure of the population (p. 463)

✓ Birth cohorts effect everyday lives in two ways:
  • Cohort effect: phenomenon in which members of a birth cohort tend to experience a particular life event or rite of passage—puberty, marriage, childbearing, graduation, entry into the workforce, death—at roughly the same time (p. 463)
  • Period effect: phenomenon in which a historical event or major social trend contributes to the unique shape and outlook of a birth cohort (p. 464)
U.S. population & growth rates, 1900-98

- Baby boom
- High immigration & birth rates
- Great Depression, low immigration
- 1918 flu epidemic

U.S. population (thousands)

Annual growth rate
Total births & birth rates in U.S., 1910-95
Some generational labels

- GI Generation: 1910s & 1920s
- Depression Generation: 1930-39
- War babies: 1940-45
- Baby Boomers: 1946-1964 (78 million)
- Baby Busters (Gen X): 1965-1979 (60 million)
- Echo Boomers (Millennium Gen, Gen y): 1980-late 90s (70-80 million)