NEWS LESSON

Why Does the Generation Gap Feel So Wide?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. When do age differences become most noticeable?
2. Which causes more misunderstanding: different values or different ways of communicating?
3. Can two people born forty years apart have more in common than two people the same age?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**labels**	☐	A	a person who is trying to get a job
2	**invented**	☐	B	harm that makes something worse
3	**constantly**	☐	C	not often
4	**examined**	☐	D	made up for the first time
5	**sound**	☐	E	words used to describe a group of people
6	**rarely**	☐	F	sensible and based on good reasons
7	**candidate**	☐	G	all the time, again and again
8	**damage**	☐	H	looked at very carefully

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

We talk constantly about Gen Z, millennials and boomers. Research suggests those labels can explain less than we imagine.

1 One colleague books a meeting. Another replies that a two-line message would have done the job. Both think the other has misunderstood how work is supposed to happen, and both reach for the same explanation: it must be a generation thing.

2 The phrase is useful because it ends an argument quickly. It is also everywhere. Marketing campaigns, newspaper columns and management courses all sort people into Gen Z, millennials and boomers, until the categories start to feel like facts about human beings rather than labels invented to describe them.

3 Some of the evidence behind the feeling is solid. Eurostat reported in April 2026 that 89.3% of people aged 16 to 29 in the EU used social networks during 2025, compared with 67.3% of the population aged 16 to 74. Younger people in Europe really are online in greater numbers, and that shapes how they arrange their lives.

4 What the figure cannot do is explain why. A difference in behaviour might come from age itself, because people at a particular life stage have different amounts of free time and responsibility. It might come from the period everyone is living through, since a new app or a financial crisis arrives for all ages at once. Only what is left belongs to a particular group of people born around the same time, and separating those three things is genuinely difficult.

5 Workplaces have tested the labels and found them wanting. A 2020 evidence review by the US National Academies examined whether generational categories were useful for managing staff and concluded that they were not. The categories mixed up age, career stage and historical change so thoroughly that decisions based on them were unlikely to be sound.

6 There is a further problem for readers outside North America. The familiar generation names grew out of American history, with its own wars, economic cycles and cultural moments. Applied to Spain, Ukraine or Argentina, they carry an assumption that everyone lived through the same decades in the same way, which is rarely true.

7 Meanwhile the labels do real damage. A 2023 European survey found that 45% of people believed age discrimination was widespread, and 52% named age as the main characteristic that could disadvantage a candidate during recruitment. That pressure falls on the youngest applicants as well as the oldest.

8 None of this means age is irrelevant. It means age is one explanation among many, and usually not the most interesting one. Two colleagues who assume they have nothing in common because of a birth year will probably stop looking, and they will miss the ordinary question underneath the argument, which is how each of them actually prefers to work.

Sources: Eurostat, 89% of young people in the EU used social networks in 2025. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. According to the National Academies review, managers should not rely on generational categories. T F NG
2. The generation names were created to describe people in Spain, Ukraine and Argentina. T F NG
3. Eurostat also asked young people which social network they used most. T F NG
4. The share of people using social networks was more than 20 percentage points higher among 16 to 29 year olds than among 16 to 74 year olds. T F NG
5. The text says age discrimination when applying for jobs affects only older applicants. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

applied	campaigns	categories	disadvantage	recruitment	solid	stage	thoroughly

1. The company changed its _____ process so that candidates of any age were treated alike.
2. Poor internet access can _____ students who live far from a city.
3. The report was based on _____ evidence, not on opinion.
4. The inspector checked the building _____ before she signed the report.
5. The same rule cannot be _____ to every country.
6. Several television _____ about road safety appeared this year.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the meeting started, one colleague _____ that it was unnecessary. (DECIDE)
2. Some companies _____ generation labels for years. (USE)
3. A manager should _____ people as individuals. (TREAT)
4. If two colleagues stop talking, they _____ the real problem. (MISS)
5. Eurostat's figures _____ in many articles last year. (QUOTE)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Decide whether the gap shows contrast, a warning or an addition, then check the punctuation around it.

despite	hence	moreover	nevertheless	otherwise	unless	whereas

1. Writers use the labels freely, _____ researchers are far more careful.
2. _____ the clear difference in online habits, age does not explain character.
3. Managers should ask each person what they need. _____ , they will rely on stereotypes.
4. Younger people are online more. _____ , that alone does not show why.
5. The labels often mislead. _____ , they can affect who gets a job.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Which difference between age groups is real in your community, and which one is exaggerated?
2. Should workplaces change their rules for different age groups or ask each person what they need?
3. What shared activity could help two generations understand each other better?

9 Role-play: planning a weekend away

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the grandmother

You want to plan a family weekend away. You prefer to phone people and talk. Ask your grandson to join a call tonight. Listen to his reasons and agree on a way to plan.

Student B · the grandson

You prefer to send one message to the group chat. Explain why this works for you. Say what you don't like about long phone calls, then look for a fair solution.

Useful phrases

I'd rather talk on the phone, if that's okay.
I didn't mean to upset you.
It's quicker for me to send a message.
Let's try it your way first.
How would you prefer to arrange this?
Could we do both, a message and then a call?

Afterwards, tell the class: what did you agree, and was the compromise fair to both sides?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 E · 2 D · 3 G · 4 H · 5 F · 6 C · 7 A · 8 B

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 recruitment · 2 disadvantage · 3 solid · 4 thoroughly · 5 applied · 6 campaigns

6 Verb forms

1 had decided · 2 have used · 3 treat · 4 will miss · 5 were quoted

7 Language focus

1 whereas · 2 Despite · 3 Otherwise · 4 Nevertheless · 5 Moreover

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