

# What Generation Are You?

## A Conversational Activity to Promote Connection

[www.icwelcome.org](http://www.icwelcome.org)

### **Goal of the exercise:**

To create connection and start conversation; to help everyone remember their own family's story of migration; to share stories together; to get to know each other through each other's relationship to immigrant experiences.

### **Introducing the exercise:**

The majority of people who currently reside in the United States are immigrants or descendants of people who emigrated. Some of those stories are told as tales of glory and triumph, such as those of the pilgrims and European immigrants. Some of those stories are tied to deep sorrow and loss, such as the journey of those who arrived (and many who died) as victims of the international slave trade and colonialism. Recent stories of loss include those of refugees and asylees who were forced to flee their countries because of war, violence, and persecution. In this "getting to know you" activity, we want to first learn of each other through our respective migration stories.

### **Items Needed:**

1. Name tags and markers
2. Printed handout: "What Generation Are You?"
3. While not mandatory, ideally this activity can happen around tables while sharing a meal together

### **Instructions to the group**

1. Find your generation on the chart (on the printed handout)
  1. These generational numbers represent what scholars, journalists and others mean when they refer to generations
  2. Many people mistakenly refer to the generation of children born in the US as the first generation
2. Write your name and a number representing your immigrant generation on your nametag
3. Facilitators can model the outcome by having your name tags completed
4. Ask if there are any questions
5. Special cases to keep in mind, such as African Americans, Native Peoples, colonial subjects (Guam, Puerto Rico, etc.), adoptees, refugees and other non-standard cases of migration
  1. For some individuals, historical or personal circumstances depart from the "standard" story. Some experiences reflect historical traumas such as the Trail of Tears, the slave trade, wars and famine. Some individuals may have a non-traditional family structure.
  2. For non-standard cases
    - i. Remind participants they can pass if they feel uncomfortable.
    - ii. Suggest they answer the question in terms of the relationships and experiences most important to them.

When nametags are filled out, instruct the group to share together from the list of questions provided on the printed sheet. Depending on the size of the entire group, sometimes it may be necessary to divide into smaller groups to promote connection and conversation. This activity seems to work best with groups of 5-10 individuals.

Ideally, you can run this activity over a shared meal and have question sheets at each table and allow conversation to occur as the meal is eaten together. If this is the case, the facilitators should try to have different generations at each table and bi-lingual individuals spread throughout to help with any linguistic and communication needs that may be present in order to promote the goal of diverse connections and conversations.

Questions to explore together (included in the printed handout):

1. Which side of the family has immigrants, maternal or paternal?
2. What country are you or your ancestors from?
3. Do you speak a language other than English?
4. What is a word of welcome or a greeting in the language of your country of origin?
5. Do you own family items that have been handed down through the generations?
6. If 1st generation, how did you travel here? Where did you arrive?
7. Have you ever visited the country of origin of your ancestry?
8. Do you prepare foods from your country of origin?
9. Are there any customs of your country of origin you observe?
10. Is there a "typical" immigration story shared in your family?
11. Has your immigrant heritage ever been a source of embarrassment? pain? pride?
12. Do you participate in any cultural activities of your country of origin?
13. Do your religious affiliations tie back to your country of origin?
14. Do you communicate with family and friends in your country of origin?
15. Do you celebrate any specific holidays of your country of origin?

To Lengthen: Allow people to change groups or tables. Or an optional set-up to this activity is a "speed-dating" set-up in which individuals share 1-2 questions with each person and move on to the next person (so by the end of the activity each individual will have met each other individual in the group).

Optional group discussions:

Discuss reasons for migration. Consider how normal migration is for us. How many in the group migrated to their current city of residence? How many were born in their current city of residence? Migration is a fundamental part of the human experience. Leaving home is usually a difficult, if not painful experience, but not all migration is the same. A move from one part of the community to another can be a big deal but all things being equal, a move from El Salvador or Nigeria to the current community is usually a bigger deal. But sometimes the reasons for leaving one place to move to another can be very similar.

Optional discussion: How welcomed were you in your current community when you first moved here? Are there things we all could be doing better to welcome the next group of newcomers to our community?

**For more activities and resources:** [www.icwelcome.org](http://www.icwelcome.org)

# What Generation Are You?

Identify the most recent generation of your family to immigrate to the United States.

FIRST NATIONS	NATIVE PEOPLES
1 <sup>ST</sup> GENERATION	THE IMMIGRANTS
2 <sup>ND</sup> GENERATION	CHILD OF IMMIGRANTS
3 <sup>RD</sup> GENERATION	GRANDCHILD OF IMMIGRANTS
4 <sup>TH</sup> GENERATION	GREAT GRANDCHILD OF IMMIGRANTS
5 <sup>TH</sup> GENERATION	GREAT GREAT GRANDCHILD OF IMMIGRANTS
GENERATION ?	GENERATION UNKNOWN

## Questions to cultivate conversation:

1. Which side of the family has immigrants, maternal or paternal?
2. What country are you or your ancestors from?
3. Do you speak a language other than English?
4. What is a word of welcome or a greeting in the language of your country of origin?
5. Do you own family items that have been handed down through the generations?
6. If 1st generation, how did you travel here? Where did you arrive?
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