# Millennials deemed uncool by Gen Z as TikTok fuels generational fashion and humour clash



# Cringe or a New Cool? The Generational Shift from Millennials to Gen Z

The rise of social media has profoundly transformed cultural dynamics over the past two decades—nowhere is this more evident than in the growing perception of millennials as "uncool" among Generation Z. Once at the forefront of digital innovation, millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, find themselves subject to humorous yet biting critiques from their younger counterparts, dubbed "zoomers." The noticeable shift, as highlighted by observations from millennials themselves, stems from generational differences in taste, humour, and social behaviour.

Natalie Ormond, a representative of the millennial cohort, candidly articulates her steadfast adherence to low-cut trainer socks, rebuffing the Gen Z trend of longer socks peeking out over leggings. “The more invisible the sock, the better,” she insists, embodying a nostalgic attachment to her choices. This rivalry over fashion choices has intensified as TikTok proliferated, serving as a battleground where generational members express their disdain for one another's habits—whether that involves millennial breakfast habits like avocado toast or outdated fashion staples like skinny jeans.

Cultural commentary on TikTok effortlessly encapsulates the multi-faceted ridicule directed at millennials. The platform has surged to prominence as Gen Z showcases their distinct aesthetic preferences—many of which ironically mirror trends from the earlier years of millennial fashion. For instance, styles such as dresses over jeans and a pivot away from skinny jeans illustrate generational recycling, as millennials attempt to shed trends that are now seen as outdated and cringe-worthy.

The humour that separates the generations is also telling. While millennials often lean into self-deprecation, Gen Z favours absurdism and meta-humour—characteristics shaped by different social landscapes and anxieties. A 25-year-old observer notes, “Gen Z’s sense of humour has emerged from climate anxiety and a harsh job market, resulting in a vibe of: if I don’t laugh, I’ll cry.” This divergence in comedic styles reflects broader shifts in how each generation engages with cultural and societal issues.

However, the narrative is not entirely one-sided. Many millennials bristle at the dismissive attitudes of Gen Z, claiming an unfair judgement that overlooks their contributions. Lizzie Cernik, aged 41, expresses frustration at the apparent amnesia regarding the foundations laid by earlier millennials—“We paved the way for Gen Z to be killing it on TikTok with our crappy Myspace accounts,” she insists. This perspective resonates with many, who argue that millennials created the digital ecosystems now exploited by younger generations.

The urgency of these cultural shifts was heightened by the pandemic, which many believe served as a watershed moment for millennials. As parties and nightlife came to an abrupt halt, a generational vacuum was created, allowing Gen Z to assert their dominance over online trends and aesthetics. Beauty editor Laura Pearson echoes this sentiment, remarking that the post-lockdown era heralded a fresh wave of influencers who entered spaces once dominated by their millennial predecessors. Yet she maintains that the need to label or define oneself within generational confines is ultimately a social construct that can be dismissed.

Generational conflict isn't a new phenomenon; millennials have previously rallied against the baby boomers with the popular retort "OK boomer." Now, culling the zeitgeist of their formative years, millennials reflect on their current status—often bemused by their rebranding as the “uncool” generation, even as they maintain a sense of acceptance towards Gen Z.

Interestingly, academics like Dr Carolina Are, a social media researcher, argue that this growing perception of millennials as unfashionable stems from their approach to online presence. Millennials cultivated a polished online persona, narrowly depicting their lives as idyllic, whereas Gen Z embraces a more chaotic authenticity that is seen as more relatable. “Gen Z users seem to be embracing the chaos of our world a lot more, while also being aware of the harms of social media,” Are explains.

The generational divide extends into other aspects of life—like the art of the selfie. Millennials capture images that favour angles and lighting, while Gen Z relishes spontaneity, employing unconventional techniques that embrace imperfections. This embrace of authenticity establishes an unfettered access point to their emotions and narratives, contrasting sharply with the curated nature of millennial social media feeds.

Moreover, the peculiar trend of humour is not merely a symptom of age but a reflection of lived experiences and the socio-economic conditions shaping both generations. The continuous evolution of what is deemed "cool" proves that trends circulate endlessly, often returning with slightly altered representations—a cyclicality reminiscent of fashion as explored in other discussions about the generational aesthetic divide.

In the end, perhaps it is not so crucial whether millennials are deemed uncool, for self-identity is often shielded from external judgement. Daisy Jones, a cultural journalist, argues that true coolness does not reside in strict adherence to the latest trends, but rather in one’s comfort with oneself. As she puts it, “Being constantly obsessed with what’s on trend… isn’t very interesting to me.”

As millennials navigate this new cultural landscape, it is essential that they remember their worth and contributions—not only to their generation but to the culture as a whole. At this juncture, the acceptance of personal dramas and the celebration of each generation's unique offerings might just be the hallmark of modern cool.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool), [[3]](https://www.businessinsider.com/fashion-trends-millennials-hate-gen-z-loves-2023-8)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool), [[4]](https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2021/2/16/22280755/tiktok-gen-z-millennials-skinny-jeans-side-part)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool), [[5]](https://www.businessinsider.com/millennials-versus-gen-z-it-generation-cool-fashion-trends-pandemic-2021-9)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool), [[6]](https://www.eviemagazine.com/post/a-millennial-takes-on-gen-zs-favorite-trends)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool), [[7]](https://www.wokewaves.com/posts/gen-z-trends-millennials-dont-get)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool)
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* Paragraph 10 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/08/cringe-how-millennials-became-uncool> - An article from The Guardian discussing how millennials have become uncool in the eyes of Gen Z. It highlights various aspects such as fashion choices, food preferences, and communication styles that have led to this perception. The piece also delves into the generational divide and the factors contributing to millennials being labeled as 'cringe' by the younger generation.
3. <https://www.businessinsider.com/fashion-trends-millennials-hate-gen-z-loves-2023-8> - A Business Insider article exploring seven fashion trends that millennials tried to leave behind but Gen Z has embraced. The piece discusses the resurgence of styles like dresses over jeans, wraparound sunglasses, patchwork clothing, and baker boy hats, highlighting the cyclical nature of fashion and the influence of Gen Z on current trends.
4. <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2021/2/16/22280755/tiktok-gen-z-millennials-skinny-jeans-side-part> - A Vox article examining the cultural shift where Gen Z critiques millennials' fashion choices, particularly skinny jeans and side parts. It discusses how these trends have been deemed uncool by the younger generation and the broader implications of generational fashion preferences.
5. <https://www.businessinsider.com/millennials-versus-gen-z-it-generation-cool-fashion-trends-pandemic-2021-9> - A Business Insider piece analyzing how the pandemic accelerated the cultural shift from millennials being the 'it' generation to Gen Z taking over. It covers changes in fashion trends, social media usage, and the influence of platforms like TikTok in shaping new generational preferences.
6. <https://www.eviemagazine.com/post/a-millennial-takes-on-gen-zs-favorite-trends> - An Evie Magazine article where a millennial perspective is shared on Gen Z's favorite trends, including baguette bags, tiny sunglasses, square-toed heels, high-waisted mom jeans, and chunky sneakers with long socks. The piece reflects on the differences in fashion aesthetics between the two generations.
7. <https://www.wokewaves.com/posts/gen-z-trends-millennials-dont-get> - A WokeWaves article listing 25 Gen Z trends that millennials don't understand, such as low-rise jeans, BeReal over Instagram, and gender-neutral fashion. The piece highlights the generational gap in understanding and embracing new cultural and fashion trends.