Generation Snowflake

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**Generation Snowflake**, or **Snowflake Generation**, is a term referring to young people, typically university or college students, who seek to avoid emotionally charged topics or dissenting ideas and opinions. The term is associated with criticism of [safe spaces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safe_space) and [trigger warnings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trigger_warnings) [See Trauma Trigger ] in academic settings.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-GQ-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Bryony-2)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Belfast-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Spec-4) The term has also been used to refer to [Millennials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennials).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-GQ-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Bryony-2)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Kingwell-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-RumbelowDelicate-6) Sources attribute the characteristics ascribed to Generation Snowflake to parenting methods, particularly those that focus on boosting [self-esteem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-esteem).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Spec-4)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Bryony-2)

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Background[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Generation_Snowflake&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: Background)]

The term originated in the United States, a reference to parents reportedly raising their children as ["special" and "precious" snowflakes](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/special_snowflake_syndrome).[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-7)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-RumbelowDelicate-6)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-8) Author [Claire Fox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claire_Fox) used the term in 2015, in reaction to a confrontation between university students shown on a viral video and [Yale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yale) faculty head, [Nicholas Christakis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Christakis).[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-GFox-9) The confrontation arose after Christakis' wife, [Erika Christakis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erika_Christakis), a lecturer at the university, had suggested students should "relax a bit rather than labeling fancy dress Halloween costumes as culturally insensitive".[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-GFox-9) Fox described the video showing the students' reaction as a "screaming, almost hysterical mob of students".[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-GFox-9) Fox said the backlash to the viral video led to the disparaging label "generation snowflake" for the students.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-GFox-9)

The term "snowflake generation" was one of [Collins Dictionary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collins_English_Dictionary)'s 2016 words of the year.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-10)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-11)

Characteristics[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Generation_Snowflake&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: Characteristics)]

According to Claire Fox, Generation Snowflake members "are genuinely distressed by ideas that run contrary to their worldview"; they are more likely than previous generations of students to report that they have mental health problems.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Spec-4) A UK Higher Education Policy Institute survey of university students in 2016 "found that 76% would ban speakers who had views that offended them, while half (48%) wanted universities to be declared [safe spaces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safe_space) where debate can only take place within strict rules."[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Belfast-3) Fox and journalist [Bryony Gordon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bryony_Gordon) described these traits as being coupled with a strong sense of entitlement.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Bryony-2)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Spec-4)

After [University of Oxford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford) law school implemented trigger warnings in 2016, with the purpose of alerting law students of “potentially distressing subject matter such as criminal cases involving rape and murder”, [GQ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GQ) writer Eleanor Halls attributed this to Generation Snowflake questioning: "How are these lawyers going to do their jobs? Are they going to turn down important cases if they broach the topic of rape and murder?"[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-GQ-1)

American political commentator [Michelle Malkin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelle_Malkin) argued the provision of the [Affordable Care Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affordable_Care_Act), which requires employer-based health coverage to extend to adult children up to 26 years of age, has contributed to Generation Snowflake, saying that the mandate has "cultural consequences" via "reducing the incentives for 20-somethings to grow up and seek independent lives and livelihoods".[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Malkin-12)

Fox argues that Generation Snowflake was created by over-protecting people when they were children and she argued the emphasis on self-esteem in childhood resulted in adults "tiptoeing around children’s sensitivities" to avoid "damaging their wellbeing".[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Spec-4)In the UK, Tom Bennett was recruited by the government to address behaviour in schools.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Bennett-13) He commented that Generation Snowflake children at school can be over-protected, leading to problems when they progress to university and are confronted with "the harsher realities of life".[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Bennett-13) Bennet argues being sheltered from conflict as children can lead to university students who react with intolerance towards people and things that they believe may offend someone or toward people who have differing political opinions, leading to a phenomena called "no-platforming", where speakers on controversial topics such as [abortion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abortion) or [atheism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism) are prohibited from speaking on a university campus. [[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Bennett-13)

The negative connotations of the term Generation Snowflake have been criticized for having been applied too widely: Bennett also commented that "It's true that our children have never had it so good...It's true that, for some of these children, losing fast wi-fi is a crisis and being offended on the internet is a disaster....But then I remember the other ones, and I reckon they all balance each other out."[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-14)

Richard Brooks wrote in [*The Daily Telegraph*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Daily_Telegraph) that "students have always been instrumental in turning the tide of public opinion",[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-15) and [Mark Kingwell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Kingwell), philosophy professor at [University of Toronto](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Toronto) has objected to the use of the term to characterize political protesting as "whining", in response to protests by [millennials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millennials) following [Donald Trump's election as president of the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_2016).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-Kingwell-5)

Generation Snowflake characteristics have been discussed in relation to the skills required by entrepreneurs.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_note-16)

See also[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Generation_Snowflake&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: See also)]

* [Political correctness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_correctness)
* [*The Great Indoors*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Indoors_(TV_series))

References[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Generation_Snowflake&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: References)]

* 1. ^ [Jump up to:***a***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_ref-GQ_1-0) [***b***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_ref-GQ_1-1) [***c***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Snowflake#cite_ref-GQ_1-2) *Halls, Eleanor (12 May 2016).*[*"Millennials. Stop being offended by, like, literally everything"*](http://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/millennials-created-generation-snowflake)*.*[*GQ*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GQ)*. New York. Retrieved 9 July 2016.*
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Further reading[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Generation_Snowflake&action=edit&section=5)]

* [*"Generation Screwed or Generation Snowflake? Britain's young are doing better than many think"*](http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21710293-last-year-average-weekly-wage-people-aged-22-29-grew-35-real-terms-much-faster)*.*[*The Economist*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Economist)*. London. 19 November 2016. Retrieved 18 November 2016.*

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* [Social justice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Social_justice)
* [Political correctness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Political_correctness)
* [Words coined in the 2010s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Words_coined_in_the_2010s)