

# Keeping Up With The Joneses



This newly identified demographic is hot on the heels of their Boomer brethren.

by Ellen C. Wells  
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**W**atch out Boomers. Your misidentified and underestimated younger siblings are vying for attention at retail. Nicknamed “Generation Jones,” this group, born between the years 1954 and 1965, has been teased out from the fuzzy intersection of Baby Boomers and Generation X. And making up 26 percent of the U.S. adult population – the largest single segment of the five distinct adult generations - Jonesers are in the position to impact the Green Industry with their mounting worth and distinct attitudes and values.

Generation Jones has come into its own now, thanks to Jonathan Pontell, a trend/marketing consultant based in Los Angeles. Himself a Joneser, Pontell recognized within the fringes of Boomers and Xers a group whose beliefs and psychological make-up didn't quite match either profile. Not able to identify with the Howdy Doody gang or the angst required for multiple piercings, this “lost generation,” as Pontell calls it, has lived a good portion of its adult life misidentified and under the shadows of their rock-star-status older siblings.

## What Makes Them Tick

But just what has been so misunderstood about Jonesers, setting them apart from “the world is my oyster” Boomers and the “life sucks” Xers? As Pontell explains, Jonesers as young children in the 1960s grew up in a time that had an unprecedented focus on children and affluence. Their World War II-era parents, filled with a sense of giving and commit-

ment, promised their children the world. This doting brought about big expectations – bigger than those of the Boomers – and led to a generation that felt entitled to the promised utopia. But when the world turned a bit more sour in the 1970s, Pontell says, this impacted their psyche in such a way as to leave teens and young adults with a sense of unrequited promises. They were left with cravings, with a “jones” for the things promised them by their devoted parents.

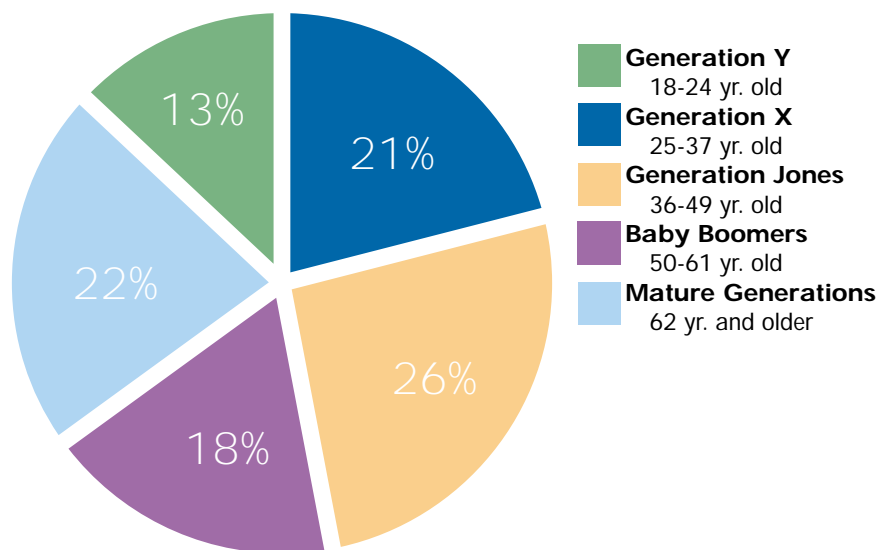
Decades have passed but the Jonesers are still jonesin'. Now, however, they have a bit more buying power than when they depended on their paper route. “Jonesers have worked hard for 20 or more years,” Pontell says. “At this point, they have a lot of cash in their pockets.”

According to Scarborough Research, people in this demographic account for 43 percent of individuals with an income of greater than \$100,000 per year. Pontell explains that, seeing that Jonesers came

of age in the '70s at a time when interest rates were low, they view credit and debt as acceptable, if not necessary, ways to maintain the lifestyles they were promised as children and they believe they deserve.

The hard work isn't letting up for Jonesers any time soon. The 40-year-olds are people working the most number of hours, and the Jonesers are in the thick of it. Pontell explains they are also taking care of young to teenage children because Jonesers put off marrying later than previous generations. As if that was not enough, Jonesers are also beginning to care for aging parents. With this triple threat, Pontell says, Jonesers find themselves swamped with activities and decisions. Jonesers' time is precious to them.

Entitlement and time restrictions aside, Generation Jones can also be characterized by its nostalgia, which harkens back to a simpler time, or to at least a time that is distinctly its own.



# A GENERATION JONES QUIZ

If you know that the first video aired on MTV was the Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star," you may be a member of Generation Jones. What else do you remember?

## QUESTIONS:

1. The classic mall of Jonesers 1980s culture – first made famous as the epicenter of "Valley Girls," then featured in the movie "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" – shut down in 1999. What was its name?

2. The Big Three of our mid-1980s music culture were all born in 1958. Name them.

3. One song overwhelmingly ended the most high school dances across America in the '70s. Name that tune.

4. What did Joneser Brooke Shields have between her and her Calvins?

5. Yeah, Jonesers were the "Sweathogs" of the tv show "Welcome Back Kotter." How many do you remember?

6. What rumor about Mikey (from Life cereal ads) fizzed among Jonesers in the 1970s?

7. We were the first generation of kids with video games. What was the beloved original?

8. A Joneser played the title role in the made-for-TV movie, "The Boy in the Plastic Bubble." Who was he?

9. Three movies with ensemble generational casts were released at the same time in the mid-1980s. "The Big Chill" for Boomers, "The Breakfast Club" for Xers. Which one was for Jonesers?

10. Which actress in what movie inspired the "torn sweatshirt/bare shoulder/leg warmer" look among Jonesers in the 1980s?

• answers below

"This generation is particularly nostalgic," says Pontell. He explains that living under the nostalgia of another generation has made Jonesers quite fond of movies, television, songs, toys and celebrities that speak to their own experiences as children and young adults.

## It's In The Numbers

Crunching the sales numbers indicates that Generation Jones is making quite an impact on the home front. Pontell says Jonesers are the largest segment to make a major home improvement in the last year (42 percent) and the largest considering the purchase of a second or vacation home (39 percent). They also are the largest group to purchase big-ticket garden items like power equipment and tools, and they are heavily involved in business decisions to purchase landscaping and grounds maintenance services. Jonesers are the major audience for HGTV and *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine, and represent 38 percent of the people who consider gardening as their hobby.

What's driving this involvement is not necessarily a fondness for the Green Industry but is likely connected to their stage in life. People in their 40s are well into the work-and-children portion of their lives. "Jonesers' involvement in the home and garden industry is a function of their point in their life cycles," Pontell argues. "At this stage, home-and-garden-related items are what they are most interested in." According to Pontell, 48

percent of homeowners are Jonesers. And nearly half (46 percent) of homes valued above \$400,000 are owned by this demographic.

## Takin' It To Retail

The Jonesers are ready and willing to make home-and-garden purchases. The question is, how can garden retailers appeal to their open wallets?

Pontell suggests appealing to Jonesers' lack of time by adding simplicity, convenience and time-saving aspects to products and retail procedures. "Jonesers are swamped and have too many things to do," Pontell explains. "Figure out how to make life easier for us." At retail, this can be displaying "solutions" together, such as everything they'll need for creating a seasonal display or gifts on the go.

"Be explicit," Pontell adds. "Jonesers have no time to absorb or relate to nuances in marketing. Be direct in your marketing, telling them upfront what you're offering."

"Nostalgia marketing is very effective with Jonesers," Pontell says. As mentioned before, marketers have lumped this group in with the Boomers for so long, and Jonesers are now grateful for marketing programs directed toward them. We have already seen auto makers appealing to Gen Jones with ads featuring songs by Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith, and the like. "Songs take you somewhere," he says. "Throw in Jonesers high-school music in a soundtrack, even if the songs are merely sampled in today's music."

This generation is also particularly fond of celebrities and characters of their younger days. Nostalgia, Pontell explains, gives Jonesers a positive feeling about the product.

Appealing to their sense of entitlement is effective for Jonesers, as well. "The phrase 'you deserve it' works well with Jonesers," Pontell says. And being raised with the belief that they do in fact deserve to reap the rewards of a prosperous society, they are more likely to make those big-ticket purchases. For garden retail, "you deserve it" items are outdoor living products such as furniture, grills and equipment that makes life easier, like lawn tractors and snow blowers. Design and maintenance offered by garden professionals – the garden center – are also services Jonesers feel they are entitled to at this busy point in their lives.

Pontell also offers organics as something that appeals to Jonesers. He explains that Boomers were the leading edge of the organics and ecology movement in the '60s and '70s, but "as Joneser children, it wasn't just a fad, it was part of their ongoing generational personality."

Jonesers may not have lots of time to explore your garden retail operation, but their buying power and stage of life are worth your time to plan a strategy directed at them. After all, you deserve their business. TGC

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1. The Galleria. 2. Michael Jackson, Madonna, Prince. 3. "Stairway to Heaven." 4. "Nothing." 5. Barbarino, Epstein, Boom-Boom, Horsack. 6. He supposedly died from drinking soda with Pop Rocks. 7. Pong. 8. John Travolta. 9. "St. Elmo's Fire." 10. Jennifer Beals, "Flashdance."