

US History

Social & Economic History of the 1950s

Learning Target:

I can observe the phenomenon of the baby boom in postwar America and identify its effects on the economy, culture, and relevance today.

4. The Baby Boom

-The period of extreme population growth in America following World War II from approximately 1945 until 1960

Statistics –

- 1945-1960 births hit record highs – 75 million births
- Contrast that to 1930-1945 – 44 million births
- 1957 was the peak year of the baby boom
- The decade of 1950-1960 was the largest 10-year increase in the US population

Effect on the American Economy –

-Stimulates the American economy by creating a need for products for new families

-Example –

-1958 Life Magazine reported that:

- Baby products were an \$800 billion market
- Toy Sales were a \$1.25 billion market
- Diaper Services were a \$50 million market
- American Seating Company –

Major supplier of school furniture tripled its business

-“Clearly, each little bundle of joy was also a blessing to American businessmen.”

Impact Today –

1. Positives –

-Baby boomers are getting older and creating new business opportunities

2. Negative –

-Retirement costs for baby boomer’s children & Social Security problem

Conclusions –

1. The baby boom was the most obvious expression of postwar optimism. People have children when times are good. They can afford children.
2. The baby boom further fueled the economy and helped to sustain prosperity.
3. The baby boom was both a cause and an effect of the prosperous economy.