

Greenberg Millennial Study
Synthesis of Demographic and Psychographic Findings
Ruy Teixeira
February 11, 2008

What We Now Know About the Millennial Generation

Everyone knows the Boomers are a huge generation that's aging and is about to seriously stress our Social Security system. But few realize that the Millennials are even larger. This is true no matter what definition you use. (A young generation often does not have a common name and clear start/end dates until a consensus emerges among demographers and social commentators over time.) For example, if you start Millennials in birth year 1978, after the “baby bust”(which Generation X is typically linked to) had ended and an era of steadily rising births had begun, and continue to 2000—as is common in market research—the size of this generation is truly staggering: 95 million (though only about half are adults) out of a population of 300 million, compared to 78 million Boomers. By 2018, Millennials, by this definition, will be 100 million strong and they will all be old enough to vote. Even taking citizenship into account, there will still be 90 million citizen-eligible Millennial voters.

But even if you use 1996 as the last birth year for the Millennials, so that the number of birth years covered by this generation is the same as that covered by the Baby Boom (1978-1996 vs. 1946-64), this generation is still larger than the Boomers: 80 million today and 83 million by 2016, when the tail end of the generation votes in their first presidential election.

The great size of the Millennial Generation is partly because many are children of the Boomers (the "echo boom"). The size of the generation is also boosted by the children of the unprecedented numbers of immigrants in the last several decades. The Millennials are the most diverse generation by far. According to March, 2006 Census data, only 61 percent of Millennial adults are nonhispanic white, 18 percent are Hispanic, 14 percent are black and 5 percent are asian.

Similar to the Boomers, the Millennials are poised to impact the country at every life stage and in myriad ways - but particularly in politics. By 2008, the numbers of citizen-eligible Millennial voters will be nearing 50 million. By the presidential election of 2016, Millennials will be a third or more of the citizen-eligible electorate, and roughly 30 percent of actual voters—and this is making no assumptions about possible increased turnout rates among Millennials in the future, which could make their weight among actual voters higher. Moreover, from that point on, the Millennials' share of actual voters will rise steadily for several decades as more and more of the generation enter middle age.

On the level of sheer partisan politics, the increased numbers of Millennials in the voting pool could have substantial effects, since they have voted more heavily Democratic than other generations in their first few elections. For example, in 2006, 18-29 year olds overall voted 60-38 Democratic for Congress, with the 18-24 year old group going 58-37 Democratic (note how similar the strength of Democratic support is between the smaller group of Millennials and the larger group, implying that 25-29 year olds—transition

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Millennials—did not vote terribly differently from their early Millennial counterparts). In 2004, 18-29 year olds (dominated by the 18-26 year olds who qualify as Millennials) voted 54-45 Democratic for president (55-44 for the House). But note here that 18-24 year olds—Millennials all—voted 56-43 Democratic for president while the older 25-29 year old group—mostly *not* Millennials voted only 51-48 Democratic. Even in 2002, a terrible Democratic year, 18-24 year olds (the first time Millennials constituted this group) still voted Democratic 49-47.

According to the Pew Gen Next survey, 48 percent of 18-25 year old Millennials now identify with or lean toward the Democratic party, compared to just 35 percent who identify with or lean toward the Republicans. The latter figure represents a huge crash in support for the Republicans among this age group—Gen Xers of the earlier '90s of this age were identifying at a 55 percent rate with Republicans.

Gen Xers continue to be the most Republican generation today, while the Millennials are emerging as the most Democratic generation by a substantial margin. Other polls of Millennials or Millennial-dominated age groups confirm this solid Democratic lead in party ID. Indeed, on election day in 2006, the exit polls showed the Democrats with a 12 point lead on party ID among 18-29 year old voters. And polls taken since then typically give the Democrats even larger leads on party ID among this age group, as well as very substantial leads on generic Presidential and Congressional vote intentions for 2008. Numerous political science studies confirm that party identifications and associated voting behavior, once formed in a generation's twenties, tend to persist over the life course.

But, if we stopped here, with the Millennials' large numbers, their impressive diversity and their apparent Democratic leanings, we would be selling the potential of this generation short—very short. A review of available public data plus data from our new 2,000 person Millennials survey (which I will dub the Greenberg Millennials Survey and refer to hereafter as the GMS) and our 12 millennial focus groups (GMFGs) reveals that the personality of this rising generation goes far beyond partisan politics to embrace social transformation on a grand scale—a scale commensurate with the extent of the problems they see bedeviling their generation and the planet as a whole.

The elements of this dynamic Millennial personality are outlined in detail below.

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The Millennial Personality

1. They are optimistic, future-oriented, embrace innovation and have a strong sense of generational identity

Findings from the GMS indicate that millennials have a clear sense of generational identity. By 10:1 (90 percent to 9 percent) they agree that their generation “shares specific beliefs, attitudes, and experiences” that set them apart from generations that have come before them. And, by 68-31, they feel their generation has a great deal or a fair amount in common with young adults of their generation in other countries, rather than just a little or nothing at all. They even say, by 54-44, that they have more in common with young adults of their generation in other countries than they have with Americans of older generations.

Note, however, that millennials are not convinced that the needs and goals of their generation are necessarily *opposed* to that of older generations in their own country. Half believe that “[t]he needs and goals of my generation are similar to those of older generations, and our best course is to work together to advance common interests”, rather than “[t]he needs and goals of my generation are fundamentally at odds with those of older generations, and accomplishing our goals will require removing those currently in power and replacing them with ourselves” (49 percent).

The GMS also asked millennials to rate a series of events or trends for their importance in shaping the attitudes and beliefs of their generation. The clear leader was “the rise of the Internet, cell phones, text messaging, e-mail, and similar advances in personal technology” with an average importance rating of 8.3, where 10, the highest rating, represents extremely important and 0, the lowest rating, represents not at all important. Moreover, 48 percent of millennials gave this trend a perfect 10 rating for its effect on effect on their generation. The next most important influence was the terrorist attacks of 9/11, with an average 7.9 rating and 36 percent giving it a perfect 10. Closely behind was the war in Iraq with an average 7.7 rating and 31 percent assigning it a perfect 10. It is intriguing to note the extent to which the war in Iraq is now almost coequal with 9/11 as an influence on this generation.

Following these top three influences were a series of eight trends that millennials judged very important in shaping their generation but not as important as the rise of the internet, 9/11 and the Iraq war. These influences are:

- *America’s dependence on fossil fuels like coal, natural gas, and oil*
- *America’s dependence on foreign oil*
- *The growing racial and ethnic diversity of the US*
- *Declining quality and rising inequality in America’s public education system*
- *The rising cost of health care and growing number of uninsured*
- *Lack of long-term job and retirement security*

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- *Increase in obesity and chronic disease*
- *Rapid shift of the U.S. economy from manufacturing to services, information, and technology*

They all received average importance ratings of between 7 and 7.2, had between 18 and 22 percent give the trend a perfect 10 and between 48 and 53 percent give it a rating in the 8-10 range.

The three influences judged least important by millennials were global warming (an average rating of 6.5), the partisan divide in US politics (6.2) and corporate scandals like Enron (5.7)

The GMS also asked millennials whether their generation was more likely or less likely than earlier generations of Americans to be characterized by various attitudes and behaviors. Topping the list was *embracing innovation and new ideas*. Over three quarters (78 percent) thought millennials were more likely than earlier generations to embrace innovation and new ideas, compared to a mere 7 percent who thought millennials were less likely than earlier generations to do so, for a net score (more likely minus less likely) of +71. *This is by far the strongest result for any of the 14 characteristics tested.* (Consistent with this finding, another question in the GMS found 87 percent of millennials agreeing with the statement “Throughout our history, America's success has been built on innovation and entrepreneurship. As we confront the many challenges facing us today, it is that same spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship that is needed to maintain America's strength in the 21st century”).

The next strongest results in this series were for making environmental protection a top priority and starting a new business. For environmental protection, the result was 67 percent more likely, compared to 13 percent less likely, for a net score of +54. The analogous figures for starting a new business were 64/14/+50.

Three other characteristics received “more likely than previous generations” responses of over 50 percent: supporting working with other countries to achieve shared goals (60/15/+45); supporting an emerging third party (56/18/+38); and expressing personal spiritual beliefs outside of organized religion (56/22/+33).

Other strong results included joining an independent of issue-based political movement (49/23/+25), supporting those in the armed forces (48/24/+24), engaging in volunteer activities or community service (45/26/+20), trying to directly influence and communicate with elected officials (45/29/+15) and engaging in political activism (42/29/+13).

Interestingly, the characteristic that millennials thought least likely to characterize their generation as opposed to previous generations was trusting government and political leaders. The response here was just 17 percent more likely, compared to 63 percent less

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likely for a net score of -46. Believing government has a positive role to play also received a fairly negative response of 24/49/-25. As shown later in this report, this belief in the cynicism of their generation toward government does not square that well with the expressed beliefs of millennials in many polls, including the GMS, on the role of government, at least in a potential sense. But it is interesting that they see their generation as a whole as leaning toward cynicism about government.

The other negative result was on joining a church or other organized religion. Close to half (46 percent) believe their generation is less likely than previous generation to join a church, compared to a quarter who think their generation is more likely, for a net score of -21.

A June 2007 Democracy Corps survey of 18-29 year olds millennials also contains some interesting results on generational self-image. In that poll, 79 percent thought “hopeful” described most people their age very well or well, 78 percent thought “independent” well-described their age group and 77 percent thought “forward-looking” and “progressive” well-described their generation. When asked how well these terms described themselves, 93 percent thought forward-looking well-described them and 90 percent, 91 percent and 86 percent, respectively, felt that about the terms hopeful, independent and progressive. Intriguingly, though millennials were overwhelmingly convinced (87 percent) that “materialistic” well-described people their own age, only 35 percent felt that term well-described themselves.

In terms of optimism, according to the Pew Center’s September, 2006 “Gen Next” survey of today’s 18-25 year olds, 84 percent believe that, compared with young adults 20 years ago, they have better educational opportunities, 72 percent believe they have access to higher paying jobs (though note this figure is slightly less than reported by the same age group—which we would classify as Gen Xers--in a Time/CNN 1990 poll), 64 percent they believe they live in more exciting times and 56 percent believe they have better opportunities to bring about social change (the latter two figures are higher than they were in the 1990 poll). This suggests that the Millennial Generation has a fundamentally optimistic outlook in some very important ways.

In terms of their overall views, as measured in this Gen Next survey, 50 percent thought it was better to be a young adult today than 20 years ago, compared to 45 percent who thought those 20 years ago had the better deal (this is exactly the same split the Time/CNN poll found in 1990 among Gen Xers).

Another sign of optimism in the Gen Next survey among 18-25 year olds was that, while most believe they currently do not have enough money “to lead the kind of life you want” (63 percent among those not employed and 70 percent among those who are employed), almost all of those individuals believe they *will* have enough money to do so in the future.

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Other Pew surveys also show considerable optimism among Millennials. In a February, 2006 survey, 18-29 year olds (Millennials would include the 18-28 year olds in this group) were the most optimistic age group in assessing whether today's children would grow up better or worse off than people are now (45 percent better/39 percent worse—other age groups were more negative than positive by margins of from 17-27 points). And in a July, 2006 survey, 18-29 year olds were the most optimistic about whether they would move ahead in life (as measured by self-placement on a “ladder of life” going from 0 as lowest to 10 as highest) in the next five years; 72 percent thought they would, compared to 13 percent who expected no change and 8 percent who thought things would get worse. They were also more likely to believe they had made progress in life in the last five years (58 percent thought so, while 20 percent thought they'd stayed the same and 18 percent thought they'd slipped).

Of course, while fundamentally optimistic, Millennials do not wear rose-colored glasses when looking at themselves and the world around them. Evidence of their concern about a host of specific problems bedeviling the country is reviewed in later sections. More generally, a result from the GMS indicates they are worried that these problems might drag the country down over time. A plurality in that survey (46 percent) believed that 20 years from now their generation will live in a country that is worse off than the one we live in today, compared to 34 percent who thought the country will be better off. And, in a June 2007 CBS/NYT/MTV survey of 17-29 year old millennials, almost half (48 percent) thought their generation will be worse off than their parents' generation, compared to 50 percent who thought their generation would be the same (25 percent) or better off (25 percent).

In addition, the Pew GenNext survey found a mixed judgment on whether financial security was better for this generation than for young people 20 years ago (47 percent yes/44 percent no, which was significantly lower than the sentiments registered in the 1990 Time/CNN poll). And on buying a house, the view was distinctly negative: 62 percent thought it was harder for today's youth than for youth 20 years ago.

And certain aspects of the way things have changed in the last 20-30 years elicit clearly negative views from Millennials (though even here Millennials tend to be less pessimistic than older generations about these changes). Pluralities or majorities of 18-29 year olds believe: there is less job security for the average worker today than 20-30 years ago; there is more on the job stress; retirement benefits are worse; and you need to work harder to make a decent living.

Update: Insights from the Focus Groups

By and large, the GMFGs confirm much that the survey data indicated about millennials' sense of generation identity. The rise of the internet, cell phones, text messaging, etc. did emerge from the GMFGs as the most powerful trend shaping generational identity. The other trends pinpointed by the survey data were also deemed important by GMFG

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participants. The influence of 9/11, America's dependence on fossil fuels like coal, natural gas, and oil, America's dependence on foreign oil, the growing racial and ethnic diversity of the US, declining quality and rising inequality in America's public education system, the rising cost of health care and growing number of uninsured, lack of long-term job and retirement security and increase in obesity and chronic disease all struck responsive chords in the GMFGs.

The GMFGs also confirm millennials' belief in the power of innovation and new ideas, especially as applied to the challenge of developing alternative energy sources and protecting the environment. GMFG participants in general had little faith that old ways of doing things and old ideas could possibly be adequate to dealing with large, long-range problems.

Less flatteringly, participants in the GMFGs tended to characterize their generation as quite materialistic and oriented toward the acquisition of money and technological toys. Interestingly, this materialism was frequently couched not as a rejection of idealism—which most millennials embrace in one form or another—but rather as a response to the difficulties and insecurities young people confront in today's fluid economic environment.

2. They are unusually civic-minded and politically engaged, including at the ballot box, believe in collective social action and have a strong sense of generational mission.

One of the most significant findings from the GMS is millennials' interest in collective social action. When asked about the best way to address the challenges facing the country, the leading choice by far was "through a collective social movement" (60 percent made that their first or second choice) over through individual action and entrepreneurship (35 percent), through the media and popular culture (33 percent), through government action (40 percent) or through international cooperation (30 percent). Note that the number choosing a collective social movement (38 percent) as their first choice was more than twice the number that chose any other option as their first choice.

Consistent with this belief in collective action, millennials have a strong and activist sense of generational mission. The results of these four questions from the GMS show just how robust that sense of mission is:

In our country, each generation has a responsibility to wisely use the country's resources and power so that they can provide the next generation a secure, sustainable country that is stronger than the one they inherited (91 percent agree, 53 percent strongly agree).

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Young Americans must take action now to reverse the rapid decline of our country. If we wait until we are older, it will be too late (89 percent agree, 48 percent strongly agree).

Life in the future in America will be much worse unless my generation of Americans takes the lead in pushing for change (85 percent agree, 42 percent strongly agree).

My generation of Americans has better opportunities to make a difference and produce structural change than previous generations (79 percent agree, 31 percent strongly agree).

Moreover, millennials explicitly reject the idea that individuals shouldn't step forward and try to make a difference. Over three-quarters (78 percent) say they are willing to make significant sacrifices in their own life "to address the major environmental, economic, and security challenges facing our country". And, by 4:1, millennials say that:

Addressing the big issues facing my generation starts with individuals willing to take a stand and take action. (80 percent)

rather than:

Individuals can't make a real difference in addressing the big issues facing my generation. (20 percent)

Consistent with these sentiments, volunteerism is unusually high among Millennials. According to UCLA's American Freshman survey—conducted for the last 40 years, with several hundred thousand respondents each year—83 percent of entering freshman in 2005 volunteered at least occasionally during their high school senior year, *the highest ever measured in this survey*. And 71 percent said they volunteered on a weekly basis¹.

They are also more politically engaged. In the 2006 American Freshman survey, *more freshman reported they discussed politics frequently as high school seniors (34 percent) than at any other point in the 40 years covered by the survey*. And, according to the December, 2006 Pew Research Center Gen Next data, Millennials who are 18-25 today (birth years 1981-88) are running about 10 points higher than Gen X'ers at the same age on following what's going on in government and in level of interest in keeping up with national affairs. In a Greenberg Quinlan Rosner (GQR) April, 2005 survey of 18-25 year olds, respondents gave themselves an average of 7 on a 10 point scale on how well "I read a lot about politics" describes them (higher, interestingly, than the 5.6 they gave themselves on reading about technology)).

More recently, in a January, 2007 Pew Research Center survey, 77% of 18-29 year olds said they are interested in local politics, up 28 points from 49% in 1999 - the highest increase of any age group surveyed. The survey also found that 85% of 18-29 year olds

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report they are "interested in keeping up with national affairs," a 14 point increase from 71% in 1999 and nearly the same level of interest as adults of all ages (89%).

Millennials also come out well in measures of election-related political engagement. According to the University of Michigan's National Election Study (NES), 18-29 year olds in 2004 (an age group dominated by Millennials, who were 18-26 at the time), were either higher or matched previous highs on a wide range of political involvement indicators, when compared to 18-29 year olds in previous elections. These indicators included level of interest in the election, caring a good deal who wins the election, trying to influence others' vote, displaying candidate buttons or stickers, attending political meetings and watching TV programs about the campaign².

More detail on political engagement is provided by the Harvard Institute of Politics (IOP) November, 2007 survey of 18-24 year olds. In that survey, 50 percent said they had signed an online petition, 28 percent had written an email or letter advocating a political position, 23 percent had contributed to an political discussion or blog advocating a political position, 21 percent had attended a political rally, 15 percent had donated money to a political campaign or cause and 12 percent had volunteered on a political campaign for a candidate or issue. In addition, 60 percent said they followed news about national politics closely.

In the same survey, 63 percent also thought political engagement was an effective way of solving important issues facing the country, 66 percent thought such engagement was an effective way of solving important issues facing their local community; the analogous figures for community volunteerism were 61 and 80. The GMS found somewhat stronger results, with 69 percent saying political activism was a very or somewhat effective way of solving the major challenges facing our country and 73 percent saying community volunteerism was an effective way of solving those challenges.

Given millennials' strong support for collective action, sense of generational mission and high levels of activism and political interest, it is not surprising that Millennials' voter turnout so far has been exceptional. In the 2004 election, Census data indicate that the 18-24 year old group, completely composed of Millennials, increased their turnout 11 points to 47 percent of citizens in that age group and 18-29 year olds—dominated for the first time by Millennials—increased their turnout 9 points to 49 percent. These increases were far, far higher than among any other age group.

In 2006, Millennials also increased their turnout levels relative to the last congressional election. Census data show that 18-29 year olds (almost all Millennials at this point) increased their turnout from 23 percent to 26 percent of citizen-eligible voters, a 3 point gain relative to 2002. This gain was once again higher than among any other age group.

Studies from 2006 also suggest that turnout went up even more in precincts where a special face-to-face, door-to-door effort was made to get young voters to the polls. An

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analysis by CIRCLE of nonpartisan voter turnout efforts in student-dense precincts indicated that turnout, on average, doubled over 2002 in these precincts. Evidence continues to accumulate that direct contact (as opposed to phonebanking) turnout efforts are extraordinarily effective with Millennial voters.

Of course, turnout among Millennials, even with these increases, still lags substantially behind older cohorts. But the gap has narrowed. And if we take into account volunteerism and community activism levels that are already on a par in most respects with older cohorts, it is clear that Millennials are poised to make a big impact on society with their unusually high rates of civic participation, political involvement and voting.

Consider all this too in the context of the great numbers of this generation continuing to enter the electorate until the middle of the next decade.

By 2008, the numbers of citizen-eligible Millennial voters will be nearing 50 million. By the presidential election of 2016, Millennials will be well over a third of the citizen-eligible electorate, and just under a third of actual voters—and this is making no assumptions about possible increased turnout rates among Millennials in the future, which could make their weight among actual voters higher. Moreover, from that point on, the Millennials' share of actual voters will rise steadily for several decades as more and more of the generation enters middle age.

Update: Millennials in the 2008 Primaries

Millennials are continuing their trend toward increased voter participation in dramatic fashion. Here's a summary by CIRCLE of youth (18-29 year olds—all millennials) turnout in early primaries where comparison to previous elections was possible:

[Y]outh turnout rose dramatically in Iowa, Florida, and New Hampshire. In Iowa, the youth turnout rate rose to 13 percent in 2008 from four percent in 2004 and three percent in 2000. Young voters expanded as a proportion of all caucus-goers, and the total number of Iowans who caucused grew, producing a three-fold increase in youth participation. Similarly, in New Hampshire, the youth turnout rate rose sharply to 43 percent in 2008 compared to 18 percent in 2004 and 28 percent in 2000. Young people increased their turnout more than the older voters. The youth turnout rate increased by 15 percentage points over 2000 while the turnout rate for those ages 30 and above increased by only six percentage points. In Florida, the youth voter turnout tripled compared to 2000 despite the fact that the Democratic primary was not fully contested.

These trends continued into Super Tuesday. The basic results, in states which had previously participated in Super Tuesday, were as follows: in California, youth turnout went up from 13 percent to 17 percent; in Connecticut, youth turnout went up from 7 to 12 percent; in Georgia, youth turnout tripled; in Massachusetts, youth turnout doubled; in

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Missouri, youth turnout tripled; in New York, youth turnout was steady while overall turnout fell; in Oklahoma, youth turnout tripled; and in Tennessee, youth turnout quadrupled. Granted these turnout increases are measured against a low base but they are impressive nonetheless. And typically the percentage point increase in youth turnout exceeded the percentage point increase among voters as a whole.

Update: Insights from the Focus Groups

Despite these facts on the ground, GMFG participants did not tend to see themselves or their generation as particularly active or politically engaged (though they did tend to see themselves as increasingly *interested* in the events shaping their world—a precursor to action). This somewhat negative self-assessment was closely connected to millennials' sense of the large-scale challenges their generation faces and central role they believe their generation must play if these challenges are to be met. They appear to measure their and their generation's activism—actually high relative to earlier generations of young people—against that standard and find it wanting.

In explaining this activism shortfall, GMFG participants cited a number of barriers to action for them and their generation: a sense that activism today just doesn't work as well as, say, back in the 1960's; a sense that the system today is just too rigged to change; a feeling they weren't old enough for their actions to make a real difference; the idea that things have to get much worse to really rouse their generation into action; and a sense that achieving real change is just too hard for their generation, especially given a bent toward self-gratification.

But the appetite is nevertheless there for working toward large-scale change, the only kind of change millennials believe will be effective. And they see a collective movement as being necessary for such change to occur. Perhaps only such a movement can overcome the various barriers millennials see as holding them and their generation back. As the focus group report argues, a movement that could engage and mobilize millennials would probably need to build on distinctive aspects of the millennial personality: a view that overcoming tradition is both necessary and a central strength of their generation; a wish to embody in your life and actions that kind of change you are seeking to make; an unabashed willingness to use their economic power as consumers; a deep embeddedness in social networks; a clear-eyed assessment of the difficulties of change, which leads them to seek not just action, but plans for successful action; and, of course, an appreciation of the potential of the new technologies that have done so much to shape this generation. In short, if millennials are to become active in a big way, it will have to be through a collective social movement that is deeply rooted in the culture and worldview of their generation.

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3. They are overwhelmingly pro-environment, believe strongly we need to move away from dependence on fossil fuels and embrace the need for major investments in new energy technologies.

Millennials' activist sense of generational mission embraces a number of different causes, as we shall see later. But one of the central causes, if not *the* central cause, is the need to protect the environment, combat global warming and make the transition to a new energy paradigm that does not rely of fossil fuels. As noted earlier, one of the strongest elements of millennials' generational identity is making environmental protection a top priority—two-thirds said their generation is more likely than earlier generations to have this orientation.

Not only do millennials embrace embrace the cause of environmental protection and a new energy paradigm, they have a real sense of urgency about it. For example, in the GMS, 74 percent say “We must make major investments now to innovate the next generation of non-fossil fuel based energy solutions”, compared to just 26 percent who say “We should continue on our current path, gradually shifting the mix of sources used to meet our energy needs.” In addition, 94 percent agreed that “Our country must take extreme measures now, before it is too late, to protect the environment and begin to reverse the damage we have done” (74 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

The sentiments underlying this sense of urgency are vividly highlighted by responses to three other GMS questions:

Our nation's continuing dependence on oil on has weakened our economy and stifled innovation, left us dependent on foreign countries - some of whom sponsor terrorism against us - and dragged us into unnecessary wars (93 percent agree, 79 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem)

Man-made causes are destroying our environment and the Earth's delicate ecosystem. As a result, we could see massive, irreversible damage to the Earth's landscape during our lifetimes. (91 percent agree, 74 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem)

Our reliance on fossil fuels is a by-product of the interests of those currently in power. We need to invest in and innovate new energy sources in order to protect our quality of life and prosperity (96 percent agree, 76 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem)

In light of these views, it should come as no surprise that millennials are sympathetic to very ambitious ideas for changing our paradigm on energy and the environment. For example, the following proposed solution received an average effectiveness rating of 7,

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where 10, the highest rating, represents extremely effective in dealing with that challenge and 0, the lowest rating, represents not at all effective in dealing with that challenge. Moreover, 71 percent gave it a rating of between 6 and 10 and about half (49 percent) rated it between 8 and 10 on the effectiveness scale.

Launch a concerted national effort, similar to the Apollo Program that put a man on the moon, with the goal of moving America beyond fossil fuels and inventing the next generation of energy, based on new technologies such as hydrogen or fusion. This aggressive plan would require a huge national investment but would produce millions of new jobs, could dramatically reduce environmental damage, and free us from our dependence on fossil fuels and foreign oil.

Given the scale of the proposed solution, this is an impressive response.

Evidence from other surveys is consistent with the GMS findings. According to the Pew Gen Next survey, Millennials overwhelmingly believe that the country should do “whatever it takes” to protect the environment, that stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost and that people should be willing to pay higher prices in order to protect the environment. They also, according to the Magid Associates 2006 survey of Millennials, were more likely than any other age group to favor environmental protection, even at the cost of economic growth. And in a March, 2005 Gallup poll, 58 percent of 18-29 year olds (Millennials are 18-27 within this group) said protecting the environment should be given priority “even at the risk of curbing economic growth,” while just 32 percent prioritize economic growth “even if the environment suffers to some extent.” This compares to 48-41 and 44-38 splits among those 50-64 and 65+, respectively.

Concern about global warming, as in the GMS, is also high. In the June 2007 Democracy Corps poll of millennials, 61 percent thought that “global warming represents an immediate threat and we need to start taking action now”, rather than “global warming represents a long-term threat and we need to study the problem before taking drastic action”

Millennials are also concerned about the possibility of large-scale environmental disasters and the ability of government to prevent them. In a GQR December, 2005 survey of 18-25 year olds, 71 percent thought it was very or somewhat likely that environment damage caused by global warming would happen in their lifetime and 88 percent thought a natural disaster would wipe out another US city, like happened to New Orleans. And 60 percent and 49 percent respectively did not trust the government to deal with the problem.

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The GMFGs confirm the centrality of protecting the environment, promoting alternative energy and combating global warming to the millennials' generational agenda. In particular, GMFG participants fully endorsed the idea that reliance on fossil fuels, since it both threatens our national security and contributes to global warming, must be eliminated as rapidly as possible. And they were willing to endorse very bold efforts to try to accomplish this goal. Indeed, the most aggressive program outlined in the survey research ("Launch a concerted national effort, similar to the Apollo Program that put a man on the moon, with the goal of moving America beyond fossil fuels and inventing the next generation of energy, based on new technologies such as hydrogen or fusion"), when presented to GMFG participants, did not phase them, but was rather regarded as common sense, given the scale of the problem that needs to be solved.

A quest to develop the next generation of energy sources also seemed to personally engage GMFG participants more than some of the other big challenges presented to them. They saw this as an area within which they could really make a difference and where advancing American technology could potentially achieve something quite spectacular. It connects well to this generation's sense of who they are and their comfort level with advanced technology.

4. They are deeply concerned about a host of large-scale economic problems affecting the country, particularly health care, but also including education, inequality, the decline of middle class jobs and the national debt.

In the GMS, millennials register very high levels of concern about the health care system in the US and endorse the need to fundamentally overhaul it. These views are highlighted by the following two questions:

With costs rising out of control and the quality of health coverage declining, the health care system in our country is broken, and we need to make fundamental change (96 percent agree; 80 percent say this situation is either a 'a crisis that our country must address immediately' or a major problem).

The health of our country is collapsing under an epidemic of chronic, preventable diseases as we slowly poison our own bodies through environmental pollution, overmedication, and unhealthy diets (93 percent agree; 71 percent say this situation is either a 'a crisis that our country must address immediately' or a major problem).

It is worth noting that among the 15 situations tested, the first situation above elicited the highest levels of millennials saying the situation was a crisis to be addressed immediately. It also had the highest levels saying it was either a crisis or a major problem.

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The solution proposed below to the health and health care crisis also elicited the highest effectiveness rating from millennials of the nine solutions tested. Millennials gave this solution an average effectiveness rating of 7.3 and 75 percent rated it between 6 and 10 on the 10 point effectiveness scale.

Provide quality health care and nutrition for all children in our country, regardless of their financial condition. Poor nutrition is creating an epidemic of preventable chronic diseases, including diabetes and obesity, that will cost our country billions of dollars and ruin the lives of millions of children.

Consistent with this, in the June 2007 CBS/NYT/MTV survey of 17-29 year olds, millennials endorsed having one health insurance program administered by the government cover all Americans, rather than the current system, by a 62-32 margin. This contrasts with a 47/38 split among all adults in a February, 2007 survey that asked the same question.

Millennials also register high level of concern about the educational system, as shown by the GMS question below.

We have an unequal education system in our country, where students in affluent areas enjoy better resources and learning environments while those in rural areas and inner cities too often receive an inferior education (92 percent agree; 71 percent say it is ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

This translates into a desire to reform the educational system to mitigate this inequality and meet global challenges. The solution proposed below to educational system problems elicited the second highest effectiveness rating from millennials of the nine solutions tested. Millennials gave this solution an average effectiveness rating of 7.2 and 73 percent rated it between 6 and 10 on the 10 point effectiveness scale.

Provide equal funding for public education and learning resources for all children and all communities, regardless of economic class. This is a critical investment in the human potential of our country and its ability to compete in a global economy.

Concern about inequality is generally high and goes far beyond the educational system, as shown by the question below, also from the GMS:

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Hurricane Katrina revealed the extent to which our country is divided into two Americas, one of which lacks many basic needs and is largely ignored by our government. The growing gap between the wealthy and the rest of us must be addressed, because no democracy can survive without a large, vibrant middle class. (90 percent agree; 70 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

Related to this, there are strong concerns that middle class jobs and benefits are eroding drastically in today’s economy:

The changing nature of America's economy, where we import most of our goods and export millions of jobs to developing countries, is threatening America's middle class (92 percent agree; 69 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

Long-term jobs that provide comprehensive health benefits and retirement security are becoming a thing of the past, and individuals in our generation will have to provide for their own health care and retirement security (93 percent agree; 74 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

Finally, the GMS also finds very high levels of concern about the national debt and strong support for a serious effort to deal with it. The high level of concern is demonstrated by results from two GMS questions:

The growing burden placed on our country by our massive national debt is hurting our economy, stifling job growth and investment and making it harder for American businesses and entrepreneurs to be competitive in the global marketplace (94 percent agree; 74 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

The federal debt is exploding, with no end in sight, shifting a tremendous burden onto future generations to pay for the failed leadership of the current generation and weakening America's economic growth for decades to come (92 percent agree; 65 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

And support for a bold solution is indicated by response to the proposal below. Millennials gave this proposal an average effectiveness rating of 6.8, with 69 percent rating it between 6 and 10 on the 10 point effectiveness scale.

Balance the federal budget, but also eliminate the 8 trillion dollars of national debt that have been built up over decades of irresponsible spending. This debt makes it impossible

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for our country to keep pace and leaves us indebted to other countries who are potential competitors.

Another budget-related proposal also received a positive response. The proposal below on fully funding Social Security and Medicare received an average effectiveness rating of 6.7, with 66 percent rating it between 6 and 10 on the 10 point effectiveness scale

Fully fund Social Security, Medicare, and other social insurance commitments being passed on to future generations, which have doubled to over 40 trillion dollars just since 2000 and are increasing by several trillion every year. These commitments must be met by current generations because it would be morally wrong to pass on unfunded liabilities of this size to our own children.

Evidence from other surveys is consistent with findings from the GMS, particularly on inequality and jobs. In the 2004 NES, 84 percent of Millennials (18-26 year olds) said that the gap between rich and poor had grown in the last 20 years and 94 percent thought that the change in the gap between rich and poor was a bad thing. These figures are slightly than those for older generations. And in the Magid Associates 2006 survey of Millennials, “transition” Millennials (those 18-22, born 1984-88) were more likely than any other age group to favor governmental action to reduce economic differences among Americans; “cusp” Millennials (those 23-38, born 1978-83) attitudes are similar, but not quite as strong.

Also, despite their personal optimism about their own future, they do worry about how poorly the economy has been performing for ordinary people. In June, 2005 Democracy Corps polling, 62 percent of 18-29 year olds (note: only the 18-27 year olds in this group qualify as Millennials) believed that the economy wasn’t doing well and that jobs were scarce, incomes stagnant and benefits being cut back, compared to 35 percent who thought the economy was doing well, with rising incomes and home ownership.

They also worry about how difficult it has become to find a reliable path to success in today’s increasingly unequal and insecure economy. In a GQR April, 2005 survey of 18-25 year olds, 72 percent thought that a college education is no longer enough to guarantee a good living in this economy. And they support measures to push back against rising inequality: in the 2006 election, 18-29 year old voters, more than any other age group, were supportive of raising the minimum wage in various referenda (74 percent vs. 66 percent for all voters).

Update: Insights from the Focus Groups

The GMFGs, consistent with the GMS, documented millennials’ deep feelings about the health care crisis and interest in large-scale change in this area. They see the health care crisis, including cost, quality and coverage problems, as not just a tragedy for the country, but as a problem of catastrophic proportions for their own generation—a problem that

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makes the society they live in and are inheriting so much worse than it needs to be. They are also hugely concerned with the prevention aspects of the health care crisis and believe the country in general, and their generation in particular, is being encouraged to consume food and prescription drugs that worsen health, even as they enhance corporate profit margins. In their view, this is outrageous and should be combated by a new emphasis on healthy diet and lifestyles. They are less sure about how exactly to reform the health care system, but clearly see big change as necessary, leading to a system where universal access is combined with a far stronger emphasis on prevention.

GMFG participants were also concerned with the various aspects of economic insecurity that affect today's labor market and the jobs they hope to attain. And they definitely saw rising inequality as a problem that was having a deep effect on their society and themselves. They particularly worried about how inequality is entrenched in the educational system and is putting an unfair burden on many members of their generation, whom are not getting the education they need. They appeared willing to support aggressive action to address this problem, including diversion of tax revenue to areas that are educationally distressed. But GMFG participants did not feel a comparable level of urgency about economic problems that were more distant from their day-to-day experiences and concerns—the primary example here being the national debt.

5. They strongly believe in a co-operative, multilateral approach to foreign policy and solving global problems.

Millennials as a generation seem more oriented toward a multilateral and cooperative foreign policy than their elders (as corresponds to their self-image, discussed earlier in this report). Pew Values data show that 18-25 year old Millennials in 2002-03 were split down the middle on whether military strength is the best way to ensure peace, while older adults endorsed this idea 61-35³.

In 2004 Pew data, only 29 percent of 18-25 year old Millennials believed that “using overwhelming force is the best way to defeat terrorism”, compared to 67 percent who thought “relying too much on military force leads to hatred and more terrorism”. By contrast those 26 and over were much more closely split (49-41). In addition, 62 percent of 18-25 year olds believe the US should take into account the interests of its allies even if it means making compromises with them, compared to 52 percent of their elders. And in November, 2004 Democracy Corps polling, 57 percent of 18-29 year olds (note: only the 18-26 year olds in this group qualify as Millennials) believed that America's security depends on building strong ties with other nations, compared to just 37 percent who believed that, “bottom line”, America's security depends on its own military strength. This was the most pro-multilateralist sentiment of any age group.

Moreover, when the same question was asked of 18-29 year olds in 2007 in the GMS, when all members of that age group were millennials, sentiment was even stronger on the multilateral side. In that survey, 69 percent said that America's security depends on

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building strong ties with other nations, compared to only 30 percent who thought that America's security depends on its own military strength

Millennial 18-25 year olds also tend to be less worried about terrorists attacking the US. In 2004, 53 percent of this age group said they were very or somewhat worried about this, compared to 63 of those 26 and older. In addition, just 27 percent of these Millennials say they are more suspicious of those with Middle Eastern origins since 9/11.

They also take different lessons from 9/11. In an April, 2005 GQR poll, 18-25 year olds believed by 55-44 that the attack on 9/11 means America needs to be more connected to the world, rather than have more control over its borders. And in the 2004 NES, 57 percent of Millennials (18-26 year olds) said that promoting human rights was a "very important" goal of US foreign policy, a figure substantially higher than among any other generation.

Millennial 18-25 year olds are now most hostile to the war in Iraq and to Bush's handling of it. In 2006 Pew polls, an average of 26 percent of this age group approved of Bush's handling of the Iraq war, compared to 69 percent who disapproved. In the 2006 exit polls, 62 percent of 18-29 year old voters disapproved of Bush's handling of Iraq, including 43 percent who strongly disapproved and 65 percent—more than any other age group—thought the US should start withdrawing troops from Iraq. In addition, a majority of those voters did not think the Iraq war had improved the longterm security of the United States. Similarly, in an April, 2005 GQR poll of 18-25 year olds, 63 percent of this age group thought the war in Iraq wasn't worth the costs and 64 percent thought the Iraq war wasn't part of the war on terrorism. And in the June, 2007 Democracy Corps poll of millennials, 65 percent thought "the current course cannot bring stability [in Iraq] and we need to start reducing the number of US troops in Iraq" and 66 percent thought "we should withdraw our troops from Iraq" rather than give the president's plan a chance. Finally, in the June 2007 CBS/NYT/MTV survey of 17-29 year old millennials, only 31 percent thought the war in Iraq had made US safer from terrorism, compared to 66 percent who thought it had either made no difference (47 percent) or made the country less safe (19 percent).

As for patriotism, Millennials in the same poll gave themselves a 7.2 out of 10 on whether they consider themselves a patriotic person, higher than any other trait tested except for being a healthy person. But almost 70 percent say they would be unwilling to join the US military.

Insights from the Focus Groups

While this area was not one explored in any detail in the GMFGs, two factors in millennials' experience appeared to move them strongly toward a global mindset and orientation: 9/11 and the internet. The former forced them to see their country as part of a global system that could not be ignored and the latter has made it vastly easier to know

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about and interact with people in other parts of the world. For millennials, the idea that national boundaries should not constrain one's perspective and interests is more than an abstraction—it's increasingly the way they live their lives.

6. They believe strongly in the potential of government to do good, while holding serious reservations about the ability of today's politicians and political parties to realize that potential.

The scale at which millennials want to tackle problems suggests a potentially large role for government. Consistent with this, millennials do exhibit an unusually positive role about the potential of government to do good and solve problems (despite, as noted earlier, their self-image of being less convinced than earlier generations about this potential).

For example, millennials in the GMS strongly endorsed the idea that:

Government needs to do more to address the major challenges facing our country (63 percent)

rather than:

Government is already too involved in areas that are better left to individuals or the free market (37 percent)

Similarly, millennials in the GMS said that:

Government has a responsibility to pursue policies that benefit all of society and balance the rights of the individual with the needs of the entire society (63 percent)

rather than:

The primary responsibility of government is to protect the rights of the individual (37 percent)

But millennials' views about whether today's government, political leaders and political parties are meeting these responsibilities are decidedly negative, consistent with their self-image as a generation less likely than earlier generations to "trust government and political leaders". Consider these results from two GMS questions about the current role of government:

Government is dominated by special interests and lobbyists, who give millions of dollars in campaign contributions to politicians, who in turn give even more back to those special interests, while the rest of us are left holding the bag (95 percent agree; 73

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percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

From the failed response to Hurricane Katrina to persistent fraud, corruption, and abuse, our government has failed to meet its most basic responsibilities and violated the very taxpayers who fund it (90 percent agree; 71 percent say this situation is either a ‘a crisis that our country must address immediately’ or a major problem).

Similarly, 82 percent of millennials in the GMS agree (45 percent strongly) that “[o]ur current political and corporate leaders are abusing their power for selfish gains, wasting our nation's resources for their own short-term gain and threatening our long-term security”.

Millennials, as discussed earlier, tend to lean Democratic in elections and in party identification. However, despite these partisan leanings, *both* political parties and the two party system in general tend to be regarded with considerable dissatisfaction by millennials. For example, millennials overwhelmingly say that:

Democrats and Republicans alike are failing our country, putting partisanship ahead of our country's needs and offering voters no real solutions to our country's problems (70 percent)

rather than:

The two-party political system in our country is working because it offers voters a clear choice between two different visions for our country's future (29 percent)

Not surprisingly, given these sentiments, millennials express considerable interest in the possibility of a third party that might offer an alternative to the Democrats and Republicans:

There should be a third political party in our country that fits between the Democrats and Republicans and offers a viable alternative to the two major parties (76 percent agree, 35 percent strongly agree).

This is consistent with their generational self-image as a generation more likely than earlier generations to “support an emerging third political party”.

Findings from other surveys are generally consistent with GMS findings on millennials’ positive view of government’s potential role. For example, in June, 2005 Democracy Corps polling, 63 percent of 18-29 year olds (note: only the 18-27 year olds in this group qualify as Millennials) believed the role of government should be to promote the principle of a strong community and policies that expand opportunity and promote prosperity for all, not just a few, compared to 35 percent who thought the role of

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government should be to promote the principle of self-reliance and policies of limited government and low taxes. This split was by far the most pro-active government/strong community of all the age group; 30-39 year old X'ers for example were split 50-45 on this question.

Similarly, the 2006 CIRCLE Civic and Political Health of the Nation survey of 15-25 year olds found strong endorsement among this age group of the idea that "government should do more to solve problems" (63 percent), rather than "government does too many things better left to businesses and individuals" (31 percent), a view that is essentially unchanged in that survey since 2002.

And in a June, 2007 Democracy Corps poll of 18-29 year olds, millennials even declared themselves in favor of "a bigger government providing more services" (68 percent), rather than "a smaller government that provides fewer services" (28 percent).

In addition, the Harvard IOP October, 2006 survey of 18-24 year olds found considerable evidence of a rejection of political cynicism among millennials. , 71 percent disagreed that "politics is not relevant to my life right now"; 84 percent disagreed that "it really doesn't matter to me who the president is"; 55 percent disagreed that "people like me don't have any say about what the government does"; 59 percent disagreed that "political involvement rarely has any tangible results"; and 56 percent disagreed that "it is difficult to find ways to be involved in politics". In addition, 67 percent agreed that "running for office is an honorable thing to do"; the analogous figures for community service and getting involved in politics were 88 and 60.

Similarly, in the Magid Associates 2006 survey of Millennials, "transition" Millennials (those 18-22, born 1984-88) were more likely than any other age group to reject the contentions that special interests get their way in government, that politicians don't care about ordinary people and that politicians are more concerned with their party than the good of the entire country; "cusp" Millennials (those 23-38, born 1978-83) followed close behind transition Millennials in their relatively non-cynical attitudes.

Findings are more mixed, however, on the idea that, if the federal government runs something, it is necessarily inefficient and wasteful. On the positive side, according to Pew Values surveys, 18-25 year olds in 2002-03 disagreed with that idea by exactly 2:1 (64-32), while 18-25 year old Gen Xers who were asked about the idea in 1987-88 were split down the middle, 47-47. However, the 2006 CIRCLE survey of 15-25 year olds suggested that possibly this sentiment has become more negative among young people since 2002-03 (though the question asked in that survey is somewhat different). And the GMS found 18-29 year old millennials leaning toward agreement (54-45) with the proposition that government is necessarily inefficient.

And a number of surveys suggest that, consistent with the GMS findings summarized above, millennials believe today's government and political leaders are falling far short

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of their potential to do good and solve problems. For example, in the 2006 Harvard IOP survey, 78 percent agreed that “elected officials seem to be motivated by selfish reasons”; 74 percent agreed that “politics has become too partisan”; 69 percent agreed that “the political tone in Washington is too negative”; and 75 percent agreed that “elected officials don’t seem to have the same priorities that I have”.

Insights from the Focus Groups

The GMFGs strongly support the survey findings that, for millennials, while government has much potential to do good and *should* be doing good, at this point, it is falling woefully short of that potential. Participants in the GMFGs expressed considerable contempt for the current crop of political leaders and the system that is producing them. They see these leaders as venal and self-serving, making little effort to deal with the challenges that are putting America and the world as a whole at risk. They are “fiddling as Rome burns” in the old phrase and millennials fear they will inherit the consequences.

GMFG participants were particularly incensed at the influence of lobbyists and special interests on government and politicians. They believe this corruption pervades the system and makes it very difficult to accomplish positive change. In their view, rooting out this corruption is critical to getting the country moving in the right direction again.

Given these views, it is not surprising that the GMFGs found little satisfaction with the two parties as currently constituted. They may lean Democratic when they vote, but Republicans *and* Democrats came in for withering criticism as institutions not up to the task of change and more responsive to the wishes of lobbyists than the needs of the country.

That said, conservatives and the policies they have come to represent were a particular focus of millennials’ ire. They are seen as hopelessly out of touch and reactionary in the classic sense of the term. But that did not mean GMFG participants were therefore comfortable with the label of liberal. Indeed, they tended to reject conventional labels as not well representing their views and preferences. Interestingly, though this was not a spontaneous form of self-identification, the word “progressive”, when brought to their attention, did seem to capture much of the way they like to think about themselves.

Millennials’ rejection of current political institutions also extended to institutions outside the government, especially dominant business interests. Perhaps the chief difference here was that GMFG participants did not necessarily expect big business to act in a way that promoted the common good, while they had some expectation or hope that political institutions could act in this way. Much of the vitriol toward government and parties is therefore an expression of frustrated idealism as much as anything else.

7. They have a religious sensibility, though a more general spirituality and secularism are rising.

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In 2006 combined Pew data, 44 percent of 18-25 year old Millennials say they are protestant, 25 percent say they are Catholic and 20 percent say they have no religious affiliation or are agnostic/atheist; among those older than 25, the analogous numbers are 55/25/11. Note also that among 18-25 year olds in 1988 (Gen Xers), the numbers are 52/29/11. So, there is a clear trend away from Protestantism, especially, and toward religious disaffiliation. This pattern is even more pronounced in a 2005 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner (GQR) survey of 18-25 year olds for Reboot, where almost a quarter (23 percent) have no religious preference or are agnostic/atheist, 4 percent are Jewish or Muslim and another 7 percent are other non-Christian; only 41 percent identify themselves as Protestants and 63 percent with any Christian faith. In the 2007 GMS, the figure for no religious affiliation among 18-29 year olds actually reaches a full third—33 percent.

Millennials are also trending toward nonobservance. In the Pew data, 32 percent attend at least once a week compared to 40 percent of those over 25; 16 percent say they never attend compared to 12 percent among those over 25.

These 18-25 year old Millennials are also particularly unlikely to believe in creationism: 63 percent believe humans and other living things have evolved over time compared to 33 percent who believe living beings today as they ever have been. This endorsement of evolution is significantly higher than among older generations include their immediate predecessors, the Gen Xers.

But these data do not mean that Millennials are necessarily moving away from religion, provided religion is broadly defined to include a religious or spiritual sensibility. A 2006 survey of college students by Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP) found 7 out of 10 college students saying that religion is very or somewhat important in their lives. In addition, a quarter of those students reported that they had become more spiritual since entering college.

A 2004 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner survey of 18-25 year olds (birth years 1979-86) for Reboot found that 27 percent of this generational group say "religion and god are a central part of their lives" and another 46 percent have positive, if less definite, feelings about "their religious identities". The latter group tends to be more informal and expressive in their religious practices, rather than focused on conventional church and synagogues attendance. Another 27 percent were classified as "god-less" for whom religion plays little role, but who may have spiritual or ideological aspects to their religious identity.

In the same survey, when asked whether they were religious, spiritual or neither, 44 percent said they were religious, 35 percent said they were spiritual and 18 percent said neither. Also, 51 percent agreed that it is not necessary to believe in god to be moral an

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have good values and 56 percent agreed that religion is about personal salvation and churches, etc are where people can build their personal relationship to god.

In addition, 55 percent said they pray before meals at least weekly, 38 percent said they talk about religion informally with friends that often, 36 percent said they attend worship services that often and 33 percent said they read religious books, newspapers or magazines that often. The analogous figures for at least monthly are 64, 68, 54 and 55.

Illustrating the strong role of a spiritual dimension, a GQR April, 2005 survey of 18-25 year olds found that respondents gave themselves an average of 5.6 on how well “I consider myself a religious person” described them, but gave themselves a 6.6 on how well “I consider myself a spiritual person” described them. And in the GMS, almost three-quarters of millennials (73 percent) said “regardless of any religious affiliation or beliefs”, they considered themselves to be “a spiritual person”. This is fully consistent with millennials’ self-image, noted earlier, as a generation more likely than earlier generations to “express personal spiritual beliefs outside of organized religion”.

8. They are extremely tolerant

Millennials have a very open and positive attitude toward immigration, much more so than older generations. In the Pew Gen Next poll, 18-25 year olds, by 52-38, said immigrants strengthen the country with their hard work and talent, rather than are a burden on the country because they take our jobs, housing and health care, compared to very narrow pluralities in this direction among Gen Xers and Boomers and 50-30 sentiment in the other direction among those 61 and over. And in a 2004 Pew survey, 67 percent of 18-25 year old Millennials thought the growing number of immigrants strengthens American society and only 30 percent believed this trend threatens our customs and values—again, much stronger positive sentiment than among any other generation.

On race, as a number of journalistic accounts have noted, there is strong trend toward seeing race as fundamentally a non-issue. In 2003, almost all (89 percent) of white 18-25 year old Millennials said they agreed that “it’s all right for blacks and whites to date each other”, including 64 percent who “completely” agreed. Back in 1987-88, when the same question was posed to white 18-25 year old Gen Xers, just 56 percent agreed with this statement. Gallup data from a 2005 poll underscore these findings; 95 percent of 18-29 year olds said they approve of blacks and whites dating and 60 percent of this age group said they had dated someone of a different race. In addition, 82 percent of white 18-25 year old Millennials in 2003 disagreed with the idea that they “don’t have much in common with people of other races”.

But it is their views on sexual preference issues that are perhaps the most strikingly liberal. On gays, the views of Millennials are far, far more liberal than their elders. For example, in a 2007 Pew survey, an outright majority (56 percent) of 18-29 year olds

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supported allowing gays and lesbians to marry, while the public as a whole opposed gay marriage by a 55-37 majority. Other examples: in a 2004 Pew survey, a slight plurality (47-46) of 18-25 year old Millennials said they favored allowing gay marriage, while the rest of the adult population was strongly opposed (64-30); the same age group in a 2006 survey, favored allowing gays to adopt children by 61-35, while other adults were opposed 50-44; in the November, 2004 Reboot study of 18-25 year olds, a majority (53 percent) said they favored legalizing gay marriage; and in a GQR August, 2005 survey of 18-25 year olds, 82 percent reported that they personally knew or worked with someone who was gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered.

They are also concerned about political trends that put tolerance at risk. In an April, 2005 GQR poll of 18-25 year olds, 64 percent believed Bush and the Republicans had gone too far in invading people's personal lives and 58 percent thought the country needs to work harder at accepting and tolerating gays, rather than work harder at upholding traditional values.

Insights from the Focus Groups

As with globalism, this was not a big subject of the GMFG discussions. Nevertheless, it is striking just how much tolerance of diversity and difference defines this generation's perspective. They pride themselves in fact on this tolerance and see it as distinctive to their generation. And they believe therefore that divisive social issues will have far less effect on their generation than on previous generations.

9. They see the genders as completely equal

Even more so than with race, gender equality is rapidly becoming a non-issue with Millennials. In the 2004 National Election study, respondents were asked to place themselves on a 7 point scale relative to the following statements: "Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry and government. Others feel that women's place is in the home.", where 1 is the strongest support for women's equal role and 7 is the strongest support for women's place being in the home. Two-thirds of Millennials selected 1, the strongest support for women's equal role and 88 percent of Millennials picked 1, 2 or 3 on the 7 point scale (indicating they felt closer to the equal role statement than to the women's place in the home statement)—both figures that are higher than for any other generation.

In another NES question, whether government should see to it that women receive equal treatment on the job—Millennials (18-26 year olds in their 2004 survey) were significantly stronger than other generations in the women's equality direction; 85 percent of Millennials felt that government should do this, compared to 68 percent of X'ers and 71 percent of Boomers.

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To some extent, Millennials are just responding to the lived reality of their generation—gender equality is a “fact on the ground”, as it were. Indeed, women are not only equal in their experience but frequently taking the lead. For example, today girls tend to outperform boys in elementary and secondary school, getting higher grades, following more rigorous academic programs and participating in advanced placement classes at higher rates. They also now outnumber boys in student government, in honor societies, on school newspapers and in debating clubs. And more girls are attending college than boys: 56 percent of today’s undergraduates are women, compared to 44 percent who are men. Reflecting this disparity, women now earn 170,000 more bachelor’s degrees each year than men do. Finally, while in 1970 fewer than 10 percent of medical students and four percent of law students were women, today women are roughly half of the nation’s law and medical students, not to mention 55 percent of the nation’s professionals as a whole.

10. They are less engaged in high risk behavior than the young people who preceded them

The first Millennials entered their senior years in high school in 1996 and 1997. Those years generally marked the peak of drug use by 12th graders (as measured by the National Institute on Drug Abuse’s annual Monitoring the Future survey), which had been rising throughout the early 1990’s, when that later X’ers were reaching that grade. Since then drug use has been declining for almost all drugs tracked by the survey. For example, 42 percent of 12th graders in 1996 said they had used some illicit drug in the last year, compared to 37 percent in 2006. Perhaps of even more significance, drug use is now being delayed by adolescents. In 1996, 24 percent of 8th graders said they had used an illicit drug in the last year; that’s now down to 15 percent.

Note, however, that these levels are still higher than they were in the very early 1990’s, before measured drug use started increasing. But if current trends continue, measured adolescent illicit drug use should fall below those levels in several more years.

Note also that most of the measured illicit drug use today is of marijuana. As mentioned above, 37 percent of 12th graders reported having used an illicit drug in the last year—but 32 percent reported using marijuana in the last year. The highest usage illicit drug besides marijuana was cocaine, at 6 percent (this is one drug where usage levels have been pretty steady since the mid-nineties).

Alcohol is unsurprisingly the highest usage drug of all. 67 percent of 12th graders report at least some use in the last year. But even here, usage is down from about 75 percent in the mid-nineties.

Teens are also waiting longer to have sex. According to the Guttmacher Institute, some 13 percent of females and 15 percent of males 15-19 in 2002 had sex before they were 15; that’s down from 19 and 21 percent respectively in 1995. In addition, currently 75

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pregnancies occur every year among females age 15-19; that rate is down 36 percent since its peak in 1990. Births among this age group are also down by 31 percent over this time period.

In terms of crime, relative to the peak of juvenile (12-17 year olds) violent crime in 1994, recent rates have declined dramatically. For example, in 1994, the rate of violent crime by juveniles was 40 percent above its average for the last several decades; the latest data show that rate is now 15 percent below its average. Also, between 1994 and 2002, the number of murders involving a juvenile offender fell 65%, to its lowest level since 1984.

11. *They are extremely tech savvy.*

Rates of internet usage (86 percent) and email usage (77 percent) are very high among Millennials (18-25 year olds) in the Pew December, 2006 Gen Next survey, as one might expect. And more than half (54 percent) say they have used a social networking site like Facebook or MySpace. (According to a Harvard IOP survey, this figure rises to 97 percent among current college students.)

Similar figures come from a May, 2006 Young Voter Strategies poll of 18-30 year old (note: the last two years of this group are late X'ers not Millennials). About 90 percent use email and the internet; 62 percent say they check their email *daily* and 70 percent say they use the internet *daily*. A little over half use Facebook/MySpace at least occasionally and about two-thirds use IM; 18 percent and 28 percent, respectively, use these technologies daily.

Even stronger results come from a GQR April, 2006 survey of 18-25 year olds. In that survey, respondents reported spending an average of 21.3 hours a week online, including time spent doing email and IM. The June 2007 Democracy Corps survey, 18-29 year old millennials reported a lower average weekly time online of 15.1 hours.

Also in the April, 2006 GQR survey, 86 percent reported using email every day, 56 percent said they read news online every day, 41 percent said they used MySpace, Facebook or something similar every day and 40 percent said they IM'ed every day. Over half (52 percent) said they had a personal page on MySpace and 34 percent said they had one on Facebook.

But perhaps the most striking and distinctive aspect of Millennials' technology usage is their embrace of mobile media. For example, in a March, 2005 mKids World Study survey (reported in NPI's 2006 study, *Mobile Media in 21st Century Politics*), 28 percent of 18-24 year olds reported text messaging regularly, compared to 16 percent of 25-34 year olds and just 7 percent of 35-54 year olds. Even more impressive, in the 2005 Pew Gen Next survey, a majority (51 percent) of 18-25 year olds said they had sent or received a text message *in the past 24 hours*, compared to 22 percent of those 26-40 and 10 percent of 41-60 year olds.

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Millennials are generally optimistic about the social and economic impact of new technologies. In the May, 2006 Young Voter Strategies poll, 69 percent of Millennials believe new technologies (such as the internet, cell phones, text messaging, IM, ipods, etc) make people more efficient, 64 percent believe they make you closer to old friends and family and 69 percent believe they make it easier to make new friends (the latter two figures are substantially higher than among older generations). On the other hand, 84 percent believe these new technologies make people lazier (more than any other age group), 67 percent believe they make people more isolated and 68 percent believe they make people waste time.

In a June, 2006 Pew survey, 18-25 year old Millennials were more likely than any other age group to believe that email and new ways of communication have helped American workers (88 percent). They were also the only age group where a majority thought that the automation of jobs has helped American workers (54 percent). And in an April, 2006 GQR survey of 18-25 year olds, 86 percent agreed that the benefits of the internet far outweigh dangers it presents.

Millennials are increasingly using the internet to facilitate political activism and involvement. In 2004, two thirds of 18-29 year olds got at least some voter registration information from the web and a quarter said the web was either their first or second most important source of campaign information. In addition, an April, 2005 GQR poll of 18-25 year olds found that over 70 percent of this age group had researched candidates' positions on the internet during the 2004 election campaign. There have been steady declines in the proportions of this age group getting their campaign info from TV or print media.

12. Millennial demographics.

The amazing diversity of the millennial generation has already been mentioned. According to March, 2006 Census data, only 61 percent of millennial adults are nonhispanic white, 18 percent are Hispanic, 14 percent are black and 5 percent are asian (note: these data include one extra birth year (1977) but that should not affect the figures very much for our purposes).

This is perhaps the most important purely demographic fact to keep in mind about the millennials. But it is worth reviewing some of the other significant aspects of millennials demographic/economic profile.

Enrollment rates in postsecondary education are increasing; in 2004, the rate for 18-19 year old millennials was 64 percent. The enrollment rate for Boomers of that age in 1970 was only 48 percent. Similarly, the enrollment rate for 20-24 year olds was 35 percent in 2004, compared to 22 percent in 1970.

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According to 2005 Census data, about 28 percent of workers in their twenties had a BA or higher. Note that median years for college completion have gone up from four to five years between 1970 and 2000 and that 45 percent of college students are now 21 and older compared to just 25 percent in 1970.

Over a third (35 percent) of 19-24 year olds lack health insurance, as do 31 percent of 25-29 year olds.

Millennials are saddled with more debt. Today, the average college graduate leaves school \$20,000 in debt, compared to \$12,500 in 1992-93 (inflation-adjusted dollars). Average credit card debt among 18-24 year olds increased over 100 percent between 1992 and 2001.

In a GQR April, 2005 survey of 18-25 year olds, 61 percent said they had health insurance, 47 percent said they don't live with their parents, 44 percent said they supported themselves financially, 19 percent said they were married and 16 percent said they had kids. In the GMS survey, 63 percent of 18-29 year olds said everyone in their household had health insurance, 30 percent said they were married and 30 percent said they had kids.

In a GQR August, 2005 survey of 18-25 year olds, 57 percent reported their parents were still married, while 24 percent said they were divorced, 5 percent said they were separated and 9 percent said they were never married.

In the same survey, 87 percent reported that their mother worked while they were growing up, either fulltime or parttime. Of that group, half said their mothers always worked, a quarter said their mothers started working when they were in elementary school and 14 percent said their mothers started working when they were in middle school or high school.

The average age of marriage has gone up from the early 20's in 1970 to 27.5 years for men and 25.5 years for women today. About 65 percent now cohabit at least once prior to marriage, compared to just 10 percent in the 1960's.

There have been drastic declines in the proportion of 18-25 year olds who are married. In 1970, almost half of 18-25 year old Boomers were married; today only about 15 percent of 18-25 year old millennials are. In addition, according to Census data, 60 percent of 18-25 year old millennials were never married in 2005 compared to just 21 percent of boomer 18-25 year olds in 1970.

In the Pew GenNext study, among those with both parents living, 38 percent of 18-25 year old millennials and 36 percent of Xers have parents that are divorced or separated. These divorce rates have increased the number of blended families and as a result younger generations are more likely than the older ones to have stepparents and step-

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siblings who play an important role in their lives. More than one-in-five millennials (21 percent) and 19% of Xers have a living stepparent who is important to them. Similarly, 14 percent of millennials and 11 percent of Xers have stepbrothers or stepsisters who have played an important role in their lives. Note that millennials and Xers look basically the same on these indicators.

Sociological researchers Furstenberg et. al. found that by age 30, a much smaller percentage today (46 percent of women and 31 percent of men) have finished school, left home, gotten married, had a child and reached financial independence. In 1960, 77 percent of women and 65 percent of men had reached all those standard markers of adulthood by age 30.

It's worth saying a few final words about the subgroup demographics of millennial attitudes. This is a big subject of course and we have much material about specific attitudes thanks to the GMS. By consulting the crosstabs from the survey, very detailed information about variation across subgroups can be gleaned for every attitude or preference covered by the survey.

That said, some general observations about the subgroup patterns can be made. First, it is remarkable how many of the attitudes tapped by the survey are strong across virtually all subgroups. Indeed, the core attitudes that give this generation a distinctive mission and interest in changing the world appear to be widely shared among the various groups within the generation.

To the extent there is variation, the strongest patterns tend to be found by gender and education. That is, women tend to have stronger views than men on the need for change in many of these areas (especially anything that has to do with economic security broadly defined—health, education, jobs and so on) and to have more of a sense of crisis about the various problems bedeviling the country. Similarly, the higher the level of education, the more there tends to be support for change and a sense of crisis.

Given these patterns it should come as no surprise that highly educated millennial women, particularly those with a postgraduate background, tend to be some of the strongest supporters of this generation's change agenda, with some of the highest levels of urgency about the problems that need addressing.

¹ Some data sources indicate that rates of volunteering among Millennials may actually have been highest right after, and presumably in reaction to, 9/11—but differences in question wording and population surveyed prevent a definitive judgment on this possibility.

² Note however, that indicators of citizen duty do not seem particularly high at this point, at least among the 18-25 year old component of this group: just 42 percent endorse the

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statement “I feel it’s my duty as a citizen to always vote” and only half say they feel guilty when they don’t get a chance to vote.

³ Note however that these relatively dovish sentiments were also held by equivalent Gen Xers in 1987-88 in relation to *their* elders’ views.